

Japan abandons costly X-ray satellite lost in space

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In this Feb. 17, 2016 file photo, an H-2A rocket carrying an X-ray astronomy satellite called "Hitomi", is launched from the Tanegashima Space Center in Kagoshima Prefecture, southern Japan. Japan's space agency has abandoned its

efforts to restore the operations of a multimillion-dollar satellite that was to probe the mysteries of black holes using X-ray telescopes. (Kyodo News via AP, File)

Japan's space agency has abandoned its efforts to restore the operations of a multimillion-dollar satellite that was to probe the mysteries of black holes using X-ray telescopes.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency announced Thursday that it would stop trying to fix the satellite after determining that it was "highly likely" that its two [solar arrays](#) had broken off at their bases.

Contact was lost with the satellite on March 26, more than a month after its launch from southern Japan on Feb. 17.

The satellite, named Hitomi, was much larger than previous Japanese scientific satellites, measuring 14 meters (46 feet) in length and weighing 2.7 tons. It was designed to study X-rays emitted by black holes and other objects in space. The X-rays cannot be detected on Earth, because they are blocked by its atmosphere.

The space agency initially thought it had received signals from the lost satellite on three occasions, but later concluded that the frequencies of the communications indicated they were not from Hitomi.



In this Thursday, April 28, 2016 photo, an official of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency talks about an X-ray astronomy satellite called "Hitomi", which two solar arrays had broken off at their bases, in the agency in Tokyo, Japan. Japan's space agency has abandoned its efforts to restore the operations of a multimillion-dollar satellite that was to probe the mysteries of black holes using X-ray telescopes. (Munehide Someya/Kyodo News via AP)

NASA was a principal partner in the Japan-led mission, which involved eight other nations, including Canada and the Netherlands.

Japan's Kyodo News agency reported that Japan spent about 31 billion yen (\$290 million) on the project, and NASA had invested about \$70 million.

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