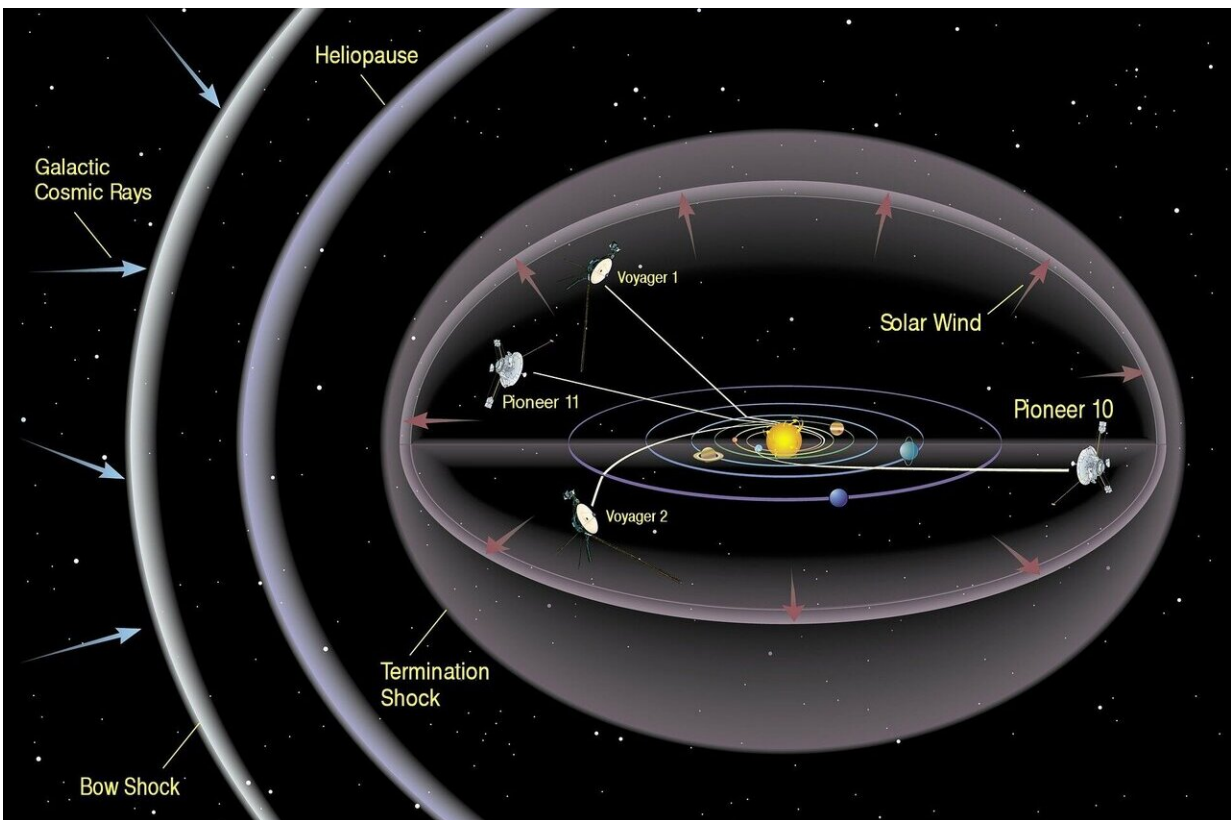


NASA listens for Voyager 2 spacecraft after wrong command cuts contact

July 31 2023, by Marcia Dunn



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NASA is listening for any peep from Voyager 2 after losing contact with the spacecraft billions of miles away.

Hurting ever deeper into interstellar space, Voyager 2 has been out of touch ever since flight controllers accidentally sent a wrong command more than a week ago that tilted its antenna away from Earth. The spacecraft's antenna shifted a mere 2%, but it was enough to cut communications.

Although it's considered a long shot, NASA said Monday that its huge dish antenna in Canberra, Australia, is on the lookout for any stray signals from Voyager 2, currently more than 12 billion miles (19 billion kilometers) distant. It takes more than 18 hours for a signal to reach Earth from so far away.

In the coming week, the Canberra antenna—part of NASA's Deep Space Network—also will bombard Voyager 2's vicinity with the correct command, in hopes it hits its mark, according to NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, which manages the Voyager missions.

Otherwise, NASA will have to wait until October for an automatic spacecraft reset that should restore communication, according to officials.

Voyager 2 was launched in 1977 to explore the outer planets, just a couple weeks ahead of its identical twin, Voyager 1.

Still in touch with Earth, Voyager 1 is now nearly 15 billion miles (24 billion kilometers) away, making it humanity's most distant spacecraft.

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Citation: NASA listens for Voyager 2 spacecraft after wrong command cuts contact (2023, July 31) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-07-nasa-voyager-spacecraft-wrong-contact.html>

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