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NASA Scientists Warn Trump's Budget Cuts Risk Human Safety

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Nearly 300 current and former NASA employees, including at least four retired astronauts, signed an open letter titled “The Voyager Declaration,” warning that proposed cuts could compromise human safety, weaken national security, and undermine NASA’s scientific mission.

The letter, called *The Voyager Declaration*, was signed by 363 NASA personnel past and present, and sent to Acting Administrator Sean Duffy. It strongly criticises recent decisions that many believe are politically driven, rather than guided by science or safety.

Kyle Helson, a research scientist at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center and the University of Maryland, said the cuts appear "unstrategic" and "not motivated by actual improvements in mission safety." He warned that the accelerated changes could raise the risk of catastrophic failures similar to the 1986 Challenger disaster.

The proposed budget would reduce NASA's overall funding by roughly 25% about \$6 billion, and nearly halve funding for its Science Mission Directorate. NASA spokesperson Bethany Stevens has attempted to ease concerns, saying, "NASA will always prioritise safety," and insisted that any cuts would preserve roles essential to that mission. However, many staff remain unconvinced.

Signatories raised concern that senior leadership has discussed moving ahead with cuts before Congress approves funding, and lawmakers have warned that implementing reductions without congressional authority may violate appropriations law.

Many of the signatories chose to remain anonymous out of fear of losing their jobs. Past cases at the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Institutes of Health show that speaking out under such conditions can come with serious risk. Helson, who works in partnership with a university and is not a direct NASA employee, said he feels a duty to speak up for those who can't.

The letter criticises the disruption of international collaborations and fears that cancelling current missions could result in permanent loss of critical data and long-term scientific progress. It also pushes back on cuts to staffing, training, and diversity programmes that support innovation and future space development.

In their words, "We speak out not in defiance, but in dedication to NASA's mission." The message from these scientists is clear: safety, science, and service to the public must come before politics.