

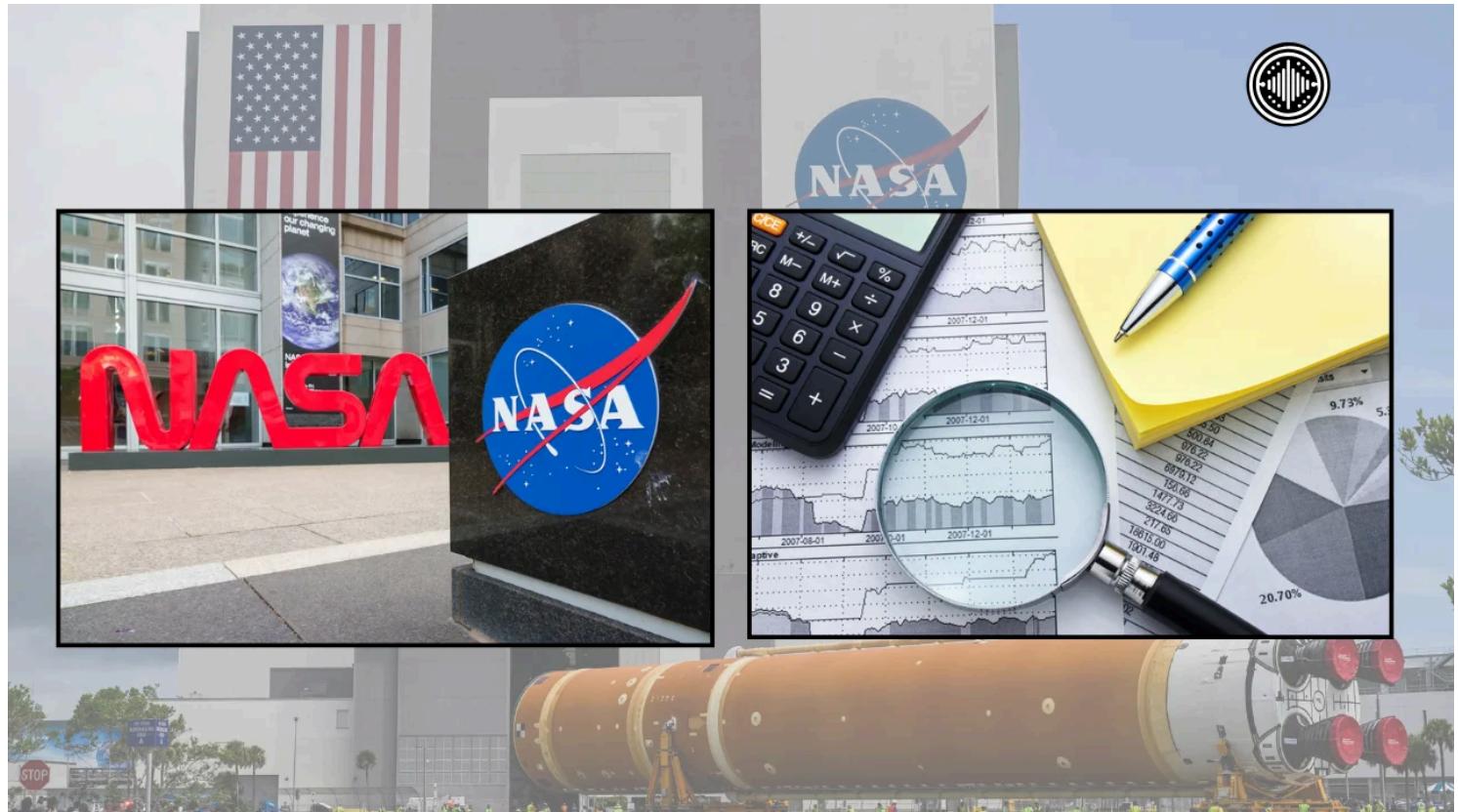
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Over 2,000 Senior NASA Staff Set to Exit Amid Cuts

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In a sweeping shift at one of America's most iconic government agencies, about 2,145 senior-ranking NASA employees in GS-13 to GS-15 positions are preparing to leave mainly through voluntary early retirement, buyouts, and deferred resignations according to internal documents reported by Politico and Reuters.

The workforce reduction, reported by *Politico* and based on internal documents, signals a period of significant transition for the agency as it adapts to growing budget pressures and policy uncertainty.

The employees expected to depart fall mostly within the GS-13 to GS-15 range, senior positions within the U.S. government pay scale that often include experienced scientists, engineers, and managers. According to the report, the agency is encouraging departures through voluntary options such as early retirement offers, buyout incentives, and deferred resignation programs.

This move comes at a time when NASA is already facing considerable challenges. With the Trump administration proposing a roughly 24–25% budget cut for FY 2026—reducing NASA's budget from approximately \$24.9 billion to about \$18.8 billion—the shakeup reflects deep concerns about the agency's ability to sustain its space exploration and science programs.

“NASA remains committed to our mission as we work within a more prioritized budget,” said NASA spokesperson Bethany Stevens in a statement to Reuters. Her comment underscores the agency's attempt to maintain stability while navigating a changing landscape.

NASA's workforce of approximately 17,400–18,000 civil servants has been facing increasing uncertainty amid rumors of layoffs, project cancellations, and center consolidation discussions. Layoff rumors and project cancellations have cast a shadow over long-standing science and exploration programs. NASA continues without a permanent administrator: Acting Administrator Janet Petro has been in charge since January 2025 after the White House withdrew nominee Jared Isaacman in late May amid political tensions. His removal followed rising political tensions and appears to have derailed earlier efforts to fill the leadership gap.

The timing of this staff exodus raises concerns not only for current projects but also for the agency's ability to plan long-term missions. Senior-level staff are often central to operations, decision-making, and the continuity of expertise. Losing such a large number of experienced personnel could affect programs already in motion, including satellite research, planetary missions, and international collaborations.

Still, many inside and outside the agency remain hopeful that NASA can weather this storm, as it has through many turbulent chapters before. As one of the world's most respected science and engineering organizations, NASA's mission extends beyond politics, but adapting to a leaner workforce will require strategic planning and strong leadership in the months ahead.

As the agency braces for this major workforce transition, the space community and the public will be watching closely to see how NASA moves forward in a time of both challenge and change.

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