

☰ Topic Page: [National Aeronautics and Space Administration](#)

Definition: **NASA** from *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

<http://www.helicon.co.uk/cgi-bin/redirect.pl4?w0000803>

Latest news from NASA, plus the most recent images from the Hubble Space Telescope. The site also contains answers to questions about NASA resources and the space programme, and a gallery of video and audio clips and still images.

articles

NASA



Image from: [Kennedy Space Center The 1994 November 3 launch... in Astronomy Encyclopedia](#)

Summary Article: **National Aeronautics and Space Administration**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(NASA), civilian agency of the U.S. federal government with the mission of conducting research and developing operational programs in the areas of space exploration, artificial satellites (see satellite, artificial), rocketry, and space telescopes (see Hubble Space Telescope) and observatories. It is also responsible for international cooperation in space matters. NASA came into existence on Oct. 1, 1958, superseding the National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics (NACA), an agency that had been oriented primarily toward laboratory research. While the NACA budget never went higher than \$5 million and its staff never exceeded 500, the NASA annual budget reached \$14.2 billion in 1995, and its staff reached a maximum size of 34,000 in 1966 (21,000 in 1995), with some 400,000 contract employees working directly on agency programs.

The creation of NASA was spurred by American unpreparedness at the time the Soviet Union launched (Oct. 4, 1957) the first artificial satellite (*Sputnik 1*). NASA took over the Langley (including the Wallops Island, Va., launch facility), Ames, and Lewis research centers from NACA. Soon after its creation, NASA acquired from the U.S. army the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (operated by the California Institute of Technology). Later, the Army Ballistic Missile Arsenal (now the Marshall Space Flight Center) at Huntsville, Ala., was placed under NASA control.

The best-known NASA field installations are the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center near Houston, Tex., where flights are coordinated, and the John F. Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral, Fla., where space shuttle and other space program launches have taken place. Other facilities include the Dryden, Glenn, Goddard, and Stennis centers and NASA headquarters, in Washington, D.C. Operationally, NASA is headed by a civilian appointed by the president and has four divisions: the offices of Space Flight, Space Science Programs, Aeronautics Exploration and Technology, and Tracking and Data Acquisition. Despite some highly publicized failures, NASA has in many cases successfully completed its missions within their projected budgets; the total cost of the Apollo project, for example, wound up very close to the original \$20-billion estimate. Currently, NASA oversees all space science projects and launches approximately half of all military space missions.

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Chicago

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