

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE

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July 23, 2004

The President  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to express my concern over NASA's announcement that it intends to terminate the Tropical Rainfall Measuring Mission (TRMM) later this year. I believe that such a step is ill-advised and will increase the risk to life and property from hurricanes, typhoons, and other severe storms over the next two years. As you know, such storms have devastated Texas and many other parts of the United States on numerous occasions over the last half-century. I urge you to take whatever steps are necessary to preserve this unique space-based capability so that it may continue to support hurricane forecast operations for as long as possible.

TRMM has been one of NASA's most successful Earth science missions, exceeding both its estimated operational lifetime and its performance specifications. The spacecraft and its sensors continue to operate flawlessly, and there is no indication that its systems are in danger of degrading any time soon.

The data produced by TRMM have "*given unprecedented insights into rainfall producing cloud systems over tropical land masses and oceans*", according to NASA. In addition, TRMM has proven to be an invaluable resource to weather forecasting agencies around the world in improving hurricane and typhoon tracking. In the United States, both the National Hurricane Center and the U.S. Navy's Joint Typhoon Warning Center use TRMM to reduce risk to lives and property from hurricanes and typhoons.

The primary objection to operating TRMM for an additional two years appears to be financial rather than safety-related. However, your Administration should be able to find a few tens of millions of dollars over the next four years to preserve a key means of improving coastal and maritime safety. A viable funding arrangement can certainly be developed between NASA and the other agencies that use TRMM's data if you desire it to happen.

I hope that you will intervene to help protect our citizens from the increased risk that would result from a termination of TRMM's operations this year.

Sincerely,



NICK LAMPSON  
Ranking Democratic Member  
Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics