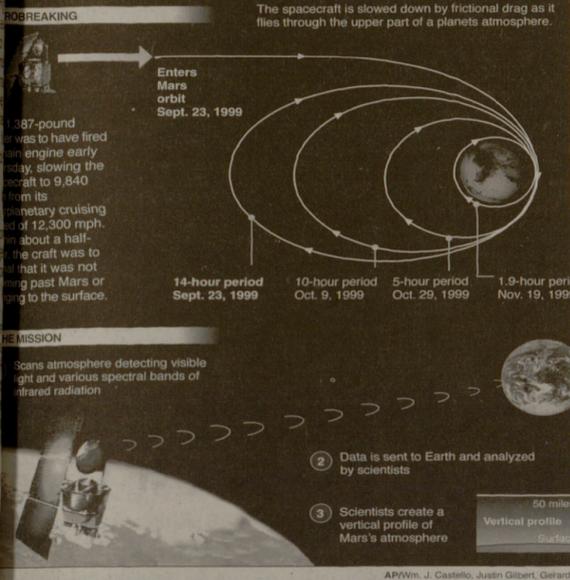


# Mars probe lost in space

## Lost in space

NASA's Mars Climate Orbiter fails to re-establish contact with Earth

The orbiter, launched Dec. 10, 1998, should have regained contact with Earth at 2:26 a.m. on Thursday at the latest. Mission managers were scrambling to regain contact and said several features aboard the probe were designed to reconnect it with Earth in case of a computer shutdown or other common spacecraft problems. The probe is supposed to make systematic observations of the atmosphere and surface of Mars. The mission is scheduled to span one martian year, 687 Earth days.



PASADENA, Calif. (AP) — A \$285 million NASA spacecraft that traveled 416 million miles to Mars vanished yesterday as it was supposed to go into orbit around the Red Planet and was feared destroyed.

It was the second time in six years a NASA spaceship was lost just after it reached Mars. The Mars Climate Orbiter, which was on a mission to study the planet's weather and look for signs of water, apparently flew too close to the Martian atmosphere and broke apart or burned up, the space agency said.

Human or software error was probably to blame, NASA officials said. The apparent failure occurred after the \$118 million Mars Orbiter probe disappeared in 1993, a mission that was threatened by a large portion of NASA's exploration budget, and the agency is trying to show that it can design "faster, cheaper and better" missions.

NASA officials said failures are to be expected since probes are now launched every 26 months. They also pointed to their successes, such as the Mars Global Surveyor spacecraft and the Mars Pathfinder, which landed on the planet with a little rover to much acclaim in 1997.

"When you're launching missions at such a vast and rapid rate, there is simply statistically a higher chance of a loss," Carl Pilcher of NASA's Office of Space Exploration said.

"We went into this with our eyes open, and we understood that greater rate could mean a loss. We're going to persever."

Carl Pilcher, NASA's Office of Space Exploration

The Orbiter carried instruments designed to study the atmosphere and the fate of water that was believed to have once pooled in huge oceans on the planet.

The information is key to understanding whether life ever existed or can exist there.

In 1993, the Mars Observer vanished as its fuel lines were being pressurized before the craft's descent into orbit. An investigating panel concluded that a fuel line had probably broken during the long journey through space.

The Climate Orbiter was the first of two probes arriving at the Red Planet this year in a \$327.5 million exploration program.

The Orbiter's companion, the Mars Polar Lander, was launched separately and is due to arrive Dec. 3. NASA said that mission will not be compromised by the destruction of the Climate Orbiter.

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton vetoed the Republicans' \$22 billion tax-cut bill yesterday as "too big, too bloated" — apparently offering chances for any sweeping reduction this year. Republicans charged Clinton "has stolen this tax cut from working American families."

With his signature in a Rose Garden ceremony, Clinton guaranteed an election-year tax argument between Republicans and Democrats as they fight for control of the White House and Congress.

"At a time when America is moving in the right direction," the president said, "this bill would turn us back to the failed policies of the past."

Republicans shot back that taxes are too high and that Americans deserve a break. House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., said it was "kind of a sad day."

Clinton signed the veto message on a wooden desk on a warm, sunny autumn morning before an audience of Cabinet members, White House staff and Democratic allies

from health and minority groups. The Marine Band's brass quintet entertained the crowd with George Gershwin's "Summertime" and other melodies.

After months of White House warnings, there was no suspense about Clinton's veto, the 26th of his presidency. With Congress struggling to adjourn by Oct. 29, it appeared highly unlikely Republicans would accept Clinton's suggestion to send him a smaller tax bill, in the \$300 billion range that he had proposed.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., said Congress would look at another tax package next year. Hastert said the GOP would not give up on tax relief but "it may be later and not sooner" — suggesting that Republicans would rather take the issue to the voters in next year's elections than compromise with the president.

The White House said GOP presidential candidates — Republican front-runner George W. Bush, in particular — should say whether they agree with their leaders in Congress.

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### Engineering Leadership Conference

Friday October 1, 6:30 pm - ? and Saturday October 2, 9:15 am - 4:15pm

The ELC is a two-day conference designed to build unity and leadership skills among engineering students, although it is open to all students. Included are socials, workshops, a design project competition, and dinner and lunch.

Cost \$5.00. You can register by filling out registration forms found outside 204 Zachry and 219 Wisenbaker and placing them inside the box marked "Engineering Leadership Conference" along with your \$5 registration fee. Registration Deadline: September 29 at 5pm.

For additional information, call the Student Engineers' Council at 847-8567 or visit us online at <http://sec.tamu.edu/elc>

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