

DOOMED SATELLITE

LANDED IN PACIFIC, NASA SAYS

by

Irene Klotz

Reuters

27 Sept 2011

<http://uk.news.yahoo.com/doomed-satellite-landed-pacific-nasa-says-204048232.html>

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CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida (Reuters) - Debris from a defunct six-tonne NASA science satellite that crashed to Earth on Saturday fell harmlessly in a remote area of the South Pacific Ocean, NASA said on Tuesday.



Experts estimated that as much as 1,100 pounds (495 kg) of debris survived the bus-sized satellite's fiery plunge through the atmosphere, which started at midnight EDT on Saturday (0400 GMT on Sunday).

The Joint Space Operations Center at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California determined that the U.S. space agency's Upper Atmosphere Research Satellite (UARS) entered the atmosphere over the Pacific Ocean at 14.1 degrees south latitude and 170.2 west longitude, NASA said in a statement.

That location is in Pacific in the rough vicinity of Samoa. The debris was then scattered between 300 miles and 800 miles (480 km to 1,300 km) from the re-entry point, NASA said.

"This location is over a broad, remote ocean area in the Southern Hemisphere, far from any major land mass," NASA said, adding that the agency "is not aware of any possible debris sightings from this geographic area."

Measuring 35 feet long and 15 feet in diameter (10.6 km long and 4.6 km in diameter), UARS was among the largest spacecraft to plummet uncontrollably through the atmosphere.

NASA now plans for the controlled re-entry of large spacecraft, but it did not when UARS was designed.

The 13,000-pound (5,897 kg) satellite was placed into orbit by a space shuttle crew in 1991 to study ozone and other chemicals in Earth's atmosphere. It completed its mission in 2005 and had been slowly losing altitude ever since, pulled by the planet's gravity.

UARS was one of about 20,000 pieces of space debris in orbit around Earth. Something the size of UARS falls back into the atmosphere about once a year.

(Editing by Jane Sutton and Will Dunham)

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**NASA's UARS SATELLITE
LANDED IN THE PACIFIC OCEAN
FAR AWAY FROM LAND**

by

Mark Brown

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<http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2011-09/28/uars-impact-point>

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The American space agency Nasa has made its final update about the impact point of the decommissioned UARS satellite, which plummeted back down to Earth at the weekend.

The satellite -- which was deployed in 1991 to study the Earth's climate and provided conclusive evidence that human-produced CFCs were responsible for the hole in the ozone layer -- ran out of fuel and, six years after the end of its scientific life, dropped towards the planet.

While most of the craft burned up in the atmosphere, about 26 components weighing a total of around 1,200 pounds (544 kg) would have survived the fiery re-entry and reached the surface of Earth. Before its impact, Nasa experts estimated a one-in-3,200 chance that a satellite part could hit someone.

Now, the agency has released a statement to say that no person, structure or major landmass was hit by the craft when it fell back to earth at 4 AM GMT, on 24 September. Instead, the satellite safely splashed into the Pacific Ocean, in the general vicinity of the Christmas Islands. "Nasa is not aware of any possible debris sightings from this geographic area," the statement reads.

The Joint Space Operations Center at Vandenberg Air Force Base concluded that the satellite entered the atmosphere over the Pacific Ocean at 14.1 degrees south latitude and 170.2 west

longitude. The satellite then broke apart and elements continued falling for another 300 to 800 miles to the northeast.

"This was not an easy re-entry to predict because of the natural forces acting on the satellite as its orbit decayed," said Nick Johnson, Nasa's chief scientist for orbital debris. "Space-faring nations around the world also were monitoring the satellite's descent in the last two hours and all the predictions were well within the range estimated by JSpOC."

We're not out of the woods yet, though. The German astronomical satellite ROSAT will fall to Earth in about a month or two and while it's much smaller than UARS -- 2 tonnes, compared with the 6-tonne Nasa orbiter -- its heat-shielding mirrors will ensure more of the craft will survive re-entry.

"The latest studies reveal that it is possible that up to 30 individual pieces weighing a total of 1.6 tonnes may reach the surface of the Earth," a spokesperson for the German Aerospace Center (DLR) wrote. Mind your head.

<http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2011-09/28/uars-impact-point>

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