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# SpaceX's Dragon chosen by NASA to extend life of Hubble mission

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NASA is planning to deploy SpaceX's Dragon spacecraft to extend the Hubble telescope's lifespan for another two decades, buying the agency more time to figure out how to dispose of space junk.

Elon Musk's private space company signed the "Space Agreement Act" last Thursday alongside NASA, which will launch a study into the viability of using the Dragon craft to "nudge" the Hubble into a higher, more stable orbit, allowing it to remain in commission.

Enlisting Musk's company will save the government millions, if not billions, in R&D money if they were to use their own craft, the agency said.

"This study is an exciting example of the innovative approaches NASA is exploring through private-public partnerships," said Thomas Zurbuchen, NASA's chief of science.

SpaceX announced a timeline of about six months to put together a plan on how to execute the Hubble mission.

Billionaire and former astronaut Jared Isaacman will also join the project through his privately funded space initiative, the Polaris Program.



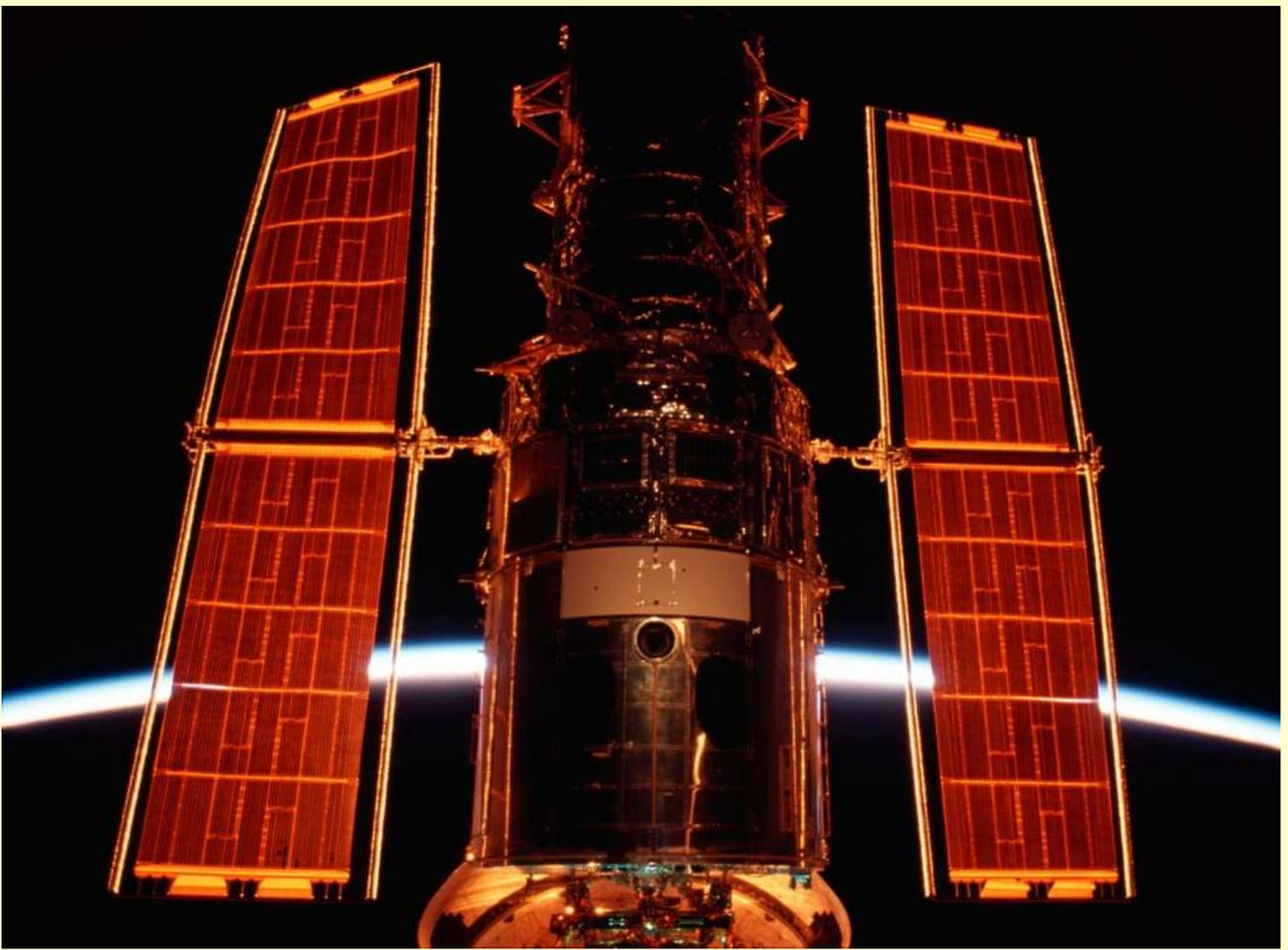
SpaceX's Dragon Spacecraft

NASA

"As our fleet grows, we want to explore a wide range of opportunities to support the most robust, superlative science missions possible," Zurbuchen added.

The Hubble has been in orbit for 32 years, and NASA has its current expiration set at 2030 following the deployment of its successor, the James Webb telescope, last year.

Extending the telescope's life span also relieves pressure on NASA of how to dispose of the \$1.5 billion soon-to-be obsolete gadget.



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Intentionally exploding satellites is no longer accepted as a solution given the high volume of space debris that has accumulated in low-earth orbit following decades of such practice.

Concern about space debris spurred the FCC on Thursday to set a new parameter for retrieval of satellites to no more than five years after their mission is complete, a sizable reduction from the previous rule of 25 years. -

The Hubble still provides scientific value, Zurbuchen said.

“It’s wholly appropriate for us to look at this because of the tremendous value this research asset has for us as well as others,” he told CNBC.

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