



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

NASA Offers Satellite Technology to Help Fight Amazon Deforestation

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The American space agency NASA has offered its satellite technology to Brazil to help identify destruction in the Amazon rainforest.

NASA Administrator Bill Nelson made the offer during a recent trip to Brazil. The NASA chief visited the country's space agency – the National Institute for Space Research – in the southeastern city of Jose dos Campos. Nelson's trip to South America also included visits to Argentina and Colombia.

Brazilian Science Minister Luciana Santos showed Nelson around the institute and explained some of the space agency's programs.

During a news conference, Nelson described one new NASA satellite that he said would be completed by January. He said the satellite, called NISAR, will even be able to capture images of what is happening in real time below the forest cover.

"It is going to be able to look through the **canopy** of the jungle so that we can see if someone has burned the undergrowth and that would **ultimately** kill the big trees," Nelson said.

NASA says the new satellite will support a project called SERVIR Amazonia. It helps provide Earth science data to scientists and decision-makers across the Amazon area to record environmental changes in near real-time. The project helps predict climate threats like deforestation and food insecurity. It can also provide data to emergency workers during natural disasters.

Brazil's space agency has launched a series of satellites in partnership with China since 1999. Those satellites aim to gather data on agricultural operations and the environment.

Brazil depends on satellite imagery to watch over the Amazon. But cloud cover often makes it difficult for satellites to capture clear and timely images. The NASA chief said the satellites NASA plans to place into orbit early next year will add an "extreme ability to understand what is happening" to the rainforest.

Nelson, a former U.S. senator who once flew to space, also met with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in Brasilia. After the meeting, he told reporters he thanked the president "for his continuous effort to save the Amazon rainforest."

Nelson said that when he flew aboard NASA's Space Shuttle Columbia in 1986, he witnessed the destruction of the rainforest by the different colors he could see from his spacecraft window.

I'm Bryan Lynn.

Reuters and NASA reported on this story. Bryan Lynn adapted the reports for VOA Learning English.

Words in This Story

canopy – *n.* a cover or kind of roof used for protection or decoration

ultimate – *adj.* better, worse or greater than all similar things

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