In a last-minute decision, White House decides not to terminate NASA employees

So what changed?

It was not immediately clear why. A NASA spokesperson in Washington, DC, offered no comment on the updated guidance. Two sources indicated that it was plausible that private astronaut Jared Isaacman, whom President Trump has nominated to lead the space agency, asked for the cuts to be put on hold.

Although this could not be confirmed, it seems reasonable that Isaacman would want to retain some control over where cuts at the agency are made. Firing all probationary employees—which is the most expedient way to reduce the size of government—is a blunt instrument. It whacks new hires that the agency may have recruited for key positions, as well as high performers who earned promotions.

The reprieve in these terminations does not necessarily signal that NASA will escape significant budget or employment cuts in the coming months.

The administration could still seek to terminate probationary employees. In addition, Ars reported earlier that directors at the agency's field centers have been told to prepare options for a "significant" reduction in force in the coming months. The scope of these cuts has not been defined, and it's likely they would need to be negotiated with Congress.

https://arstechnica.com/space/2025/02/nasa-receives-11th-hour-reprieve-from-probationary-employee-cuts/