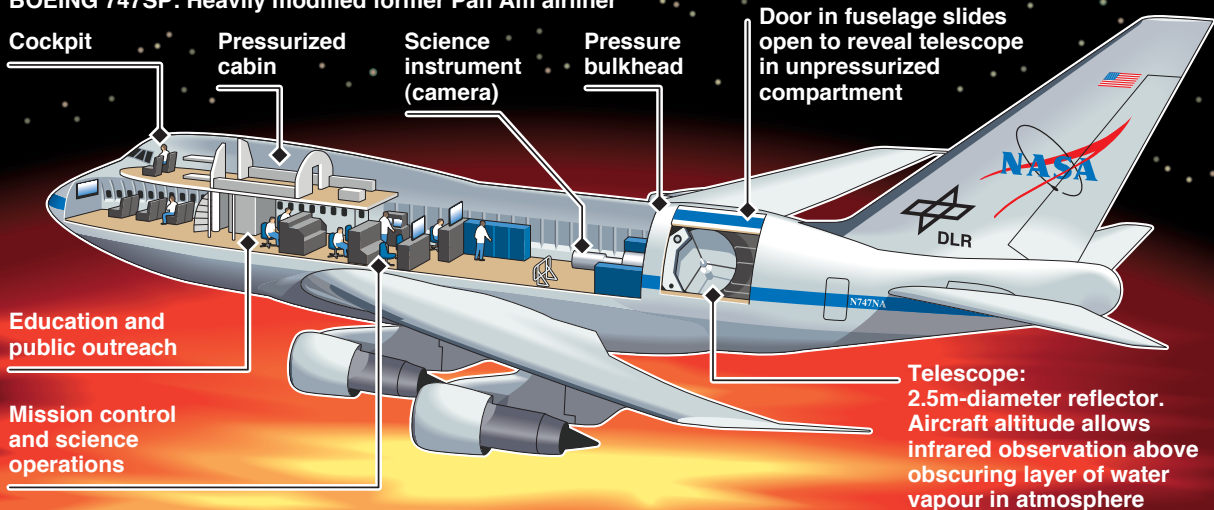


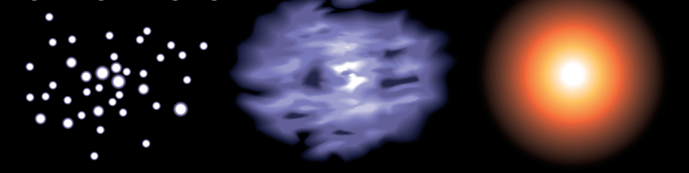
# NASA's SOFIA airborne observatory takes flight

The Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy, or SOFIA, a joint U.S.-German project featuring a 15-tonne telescope mounted on a jumbo jet, is beginning its first full cycle of science flights in an effort to help astronomers better understand how stars form and evolve

**BOEING 747SP:** Heavily modified former Pan Am airliner



## HOW A STAR IS BORN

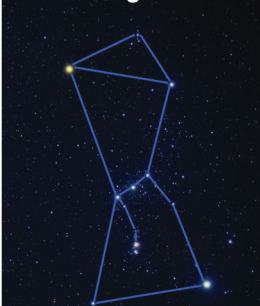


**1** Over millions of years, vast clouds of interstellar dust and gas are pulled together by force of gravity

**2** Cloud contracts under its own gravity. Centre becomes denser and hotter, forming protostar – visible in infrared

**3** When internal pressure equals gravity pushing in, hydrogen is fused into helium and star is born

## Constellation of Orion in visible light



## What SOFIA sees in infrared

