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Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter

Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) is a measurement-driven lunar orbiter mission. It is the first planned mission from NASA's Robotic Lunar Exploration Program as part of NASA's New Vision for Space Exploration. It may be launched in 2008 by a Delta 2 Rocket from Kennedy Space Center in Florida, USA.

Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter might orbit the moon for at least one year.

The aim of the mission is to:

1. Identify potential lunar resources.
2. Gather detailed maps of the lunar surface.
2. Data on the moon's radiation levels.
3. Study the moon's polar regions for resources that could be used in future manned missions or robotic sample return missions.
4. To provide measurements in order to characterize future robotic explorers, human lunar landing sites and to derive measurements that can be used directly in support of future Lunar Human Exploration Systems.

The NASA Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland is designing the spacecraft bus, while the instrument payload will be provided by private industry. An Announcement of Opportunity for the payload was announced June 18 2004 and a final design is expected to be decided in November 2004.

The instrument suite of LRO is not yet decided.

The Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter Mission is being developed by NASA in response to NASA's New Vision for Space Exploration which President Bush's announced in January 14, 2004. President Bush established the goal of sending robotic missions to the moon in preparation for future space exploration by 2008. Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter is the first lunar mission planned to achieve this goal and will be the first in a wave of robotic probes that will pave the way for future human to return to the moon.

Did you know?

The most recent maps of the moon were created by the Lunar Prospector and Clementine missions.

Related Book:

New Moon Rising: The Making of the Bush Space Vision by Frank, Jr. Sietzen, Keith L. Cowing
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