



LRO transmits first lunar images

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The U.S. space agency says its Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter has used its two cameras to transmit its first images since reaching lunar orbit June 23.

NASA said the LRO's initial images were of a region a few miles east of Hell E crater in the lunar highlands south of Mare Nubium. As the moon rotates beneath the spacecraft, it will gradually build a photographic map of the lunar surface.

"Our first images were taken along the moon's terminator -- the dividing line between day and night -- making us initially unsure of how they would turn out," said LROC Principal Investigator Mark Robinson of Arizona State University in Tempe. "Because of the deep shadowing, subtle topography is exaggerated, suggesting a craggy and inhospitable surface. In reality, the area is similar to the region where the Apollo 16 astronauts safely explored in 1972."

LRO is designed to identify safe landing sites for future explorers, locate potential resources, describe the moon's radiation environment and demonstrate new technologies, subsurface ice and create detailed images of permanently shaded craters.

After the spacecraft and instruments have completed their initial calibrations, the spacecraft will be directed into its primary mission orbit in August, a nearly circular orbit about 31 miles above the moon's surface.

More information about LRO's cameras and the images are available at <http://lroc.sese.asu.edu>.

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