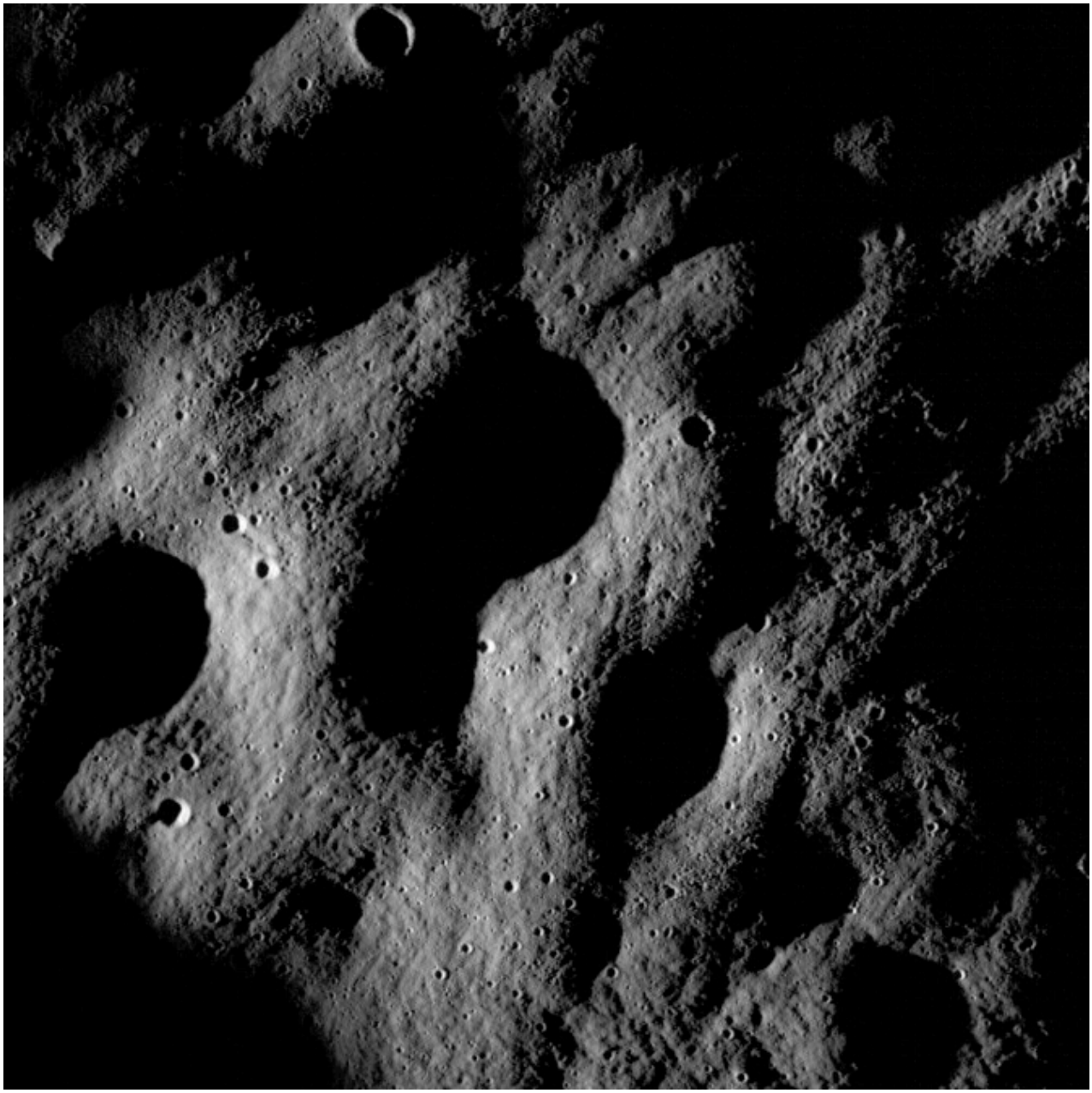
Wired Science
News for Your Neurons

Lunar Probe Sends First High-Res Images

By Betsy Mason ✉ July 2, 2009 | 2:22 pm | Categories: Space



NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter sent its first images back to Earth after activating its cameras June 30.

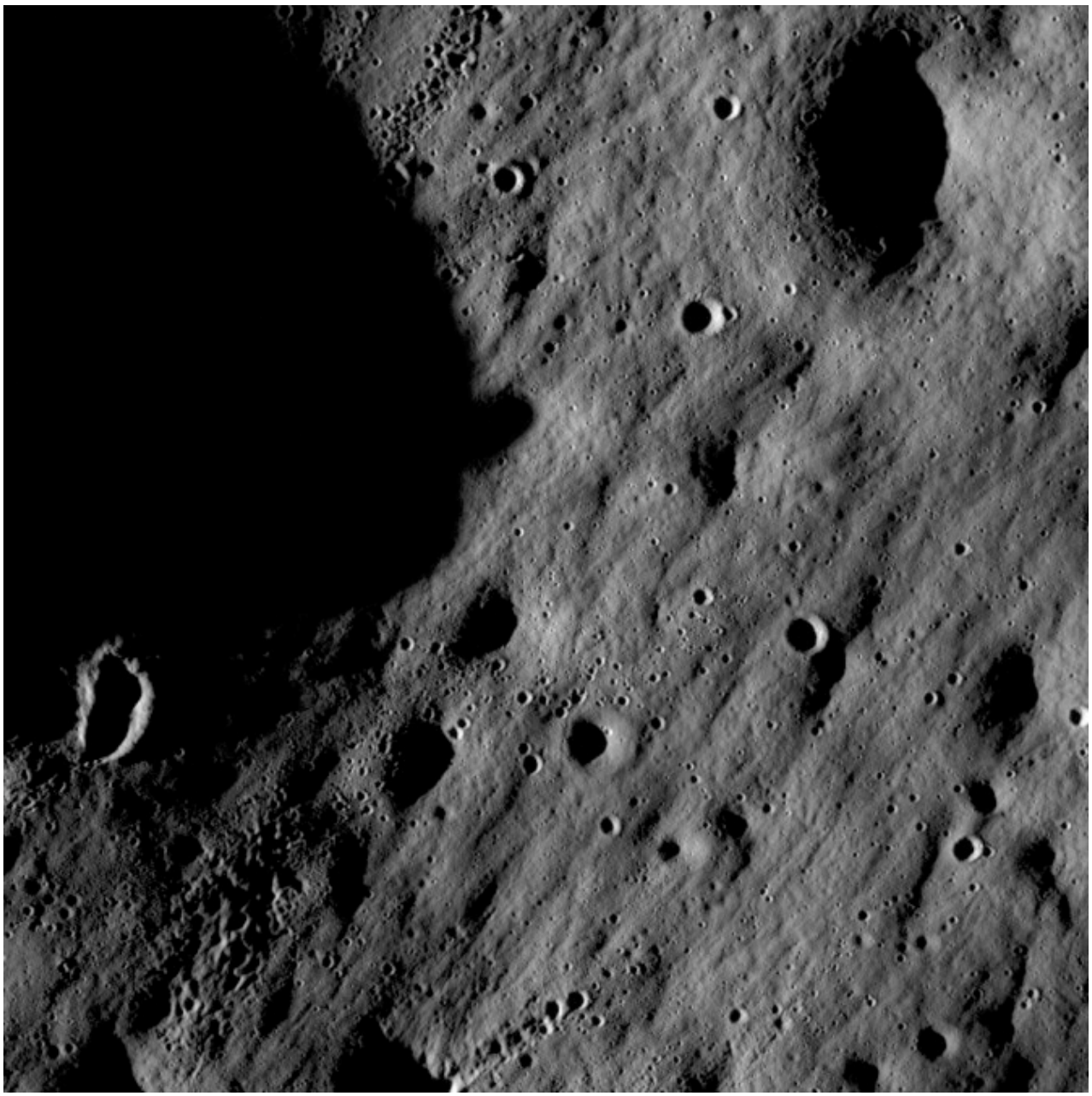
The LRO has both a low-resolution wide-angle camera and a high-resolution camera. These shots were taken at the boundary between night and day, capturing shadows that exaggerate the terrain. Though the surface appears very rough, it is actually similar to the highland area where Apollo 16 landed and explored with a rover.

One of the goals of the LRO mission is to scout potential landing sites for future missions. It will also look for resources and characterize the lunar environment. The orbiter has six other aptly named instruments:

- The Lunar Exploration Neutron Detector will look for hydrogen that indicates water ice.
- The Cosmic Ray Telescope for the Effects of Radiation will do as its name suggests.
- The Miniature Radio Frequency will look for subsurface ice and map craters.
- The Diviner Lunar Radiometer Experiment will map surface temperature.
- The Lyman Alpha Mapping Project will use starlight to hunt for surface ice and take pictures of the dark recesses of craters.

“Accomplishing these significant milestones moves us closer to our goals of preparing for safe human return to the moon, mapping the moon in unprecedented detail, and searching for resources,” said LRO Project Scientist Richard Vondrak in a press release.

The LRO will get as close as 19 miles above the surface, but will spend most of its mission 31 miles up. These pictures were taken to calibrate the cameras.



Images: NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center/Arizona State University

Tags: Add new tag, moon, NASA
Post Comment | Permalink

Comments (0)