

Mail Online

First Moon images sent back by Nasa orbiter show incredible details just 10ft across

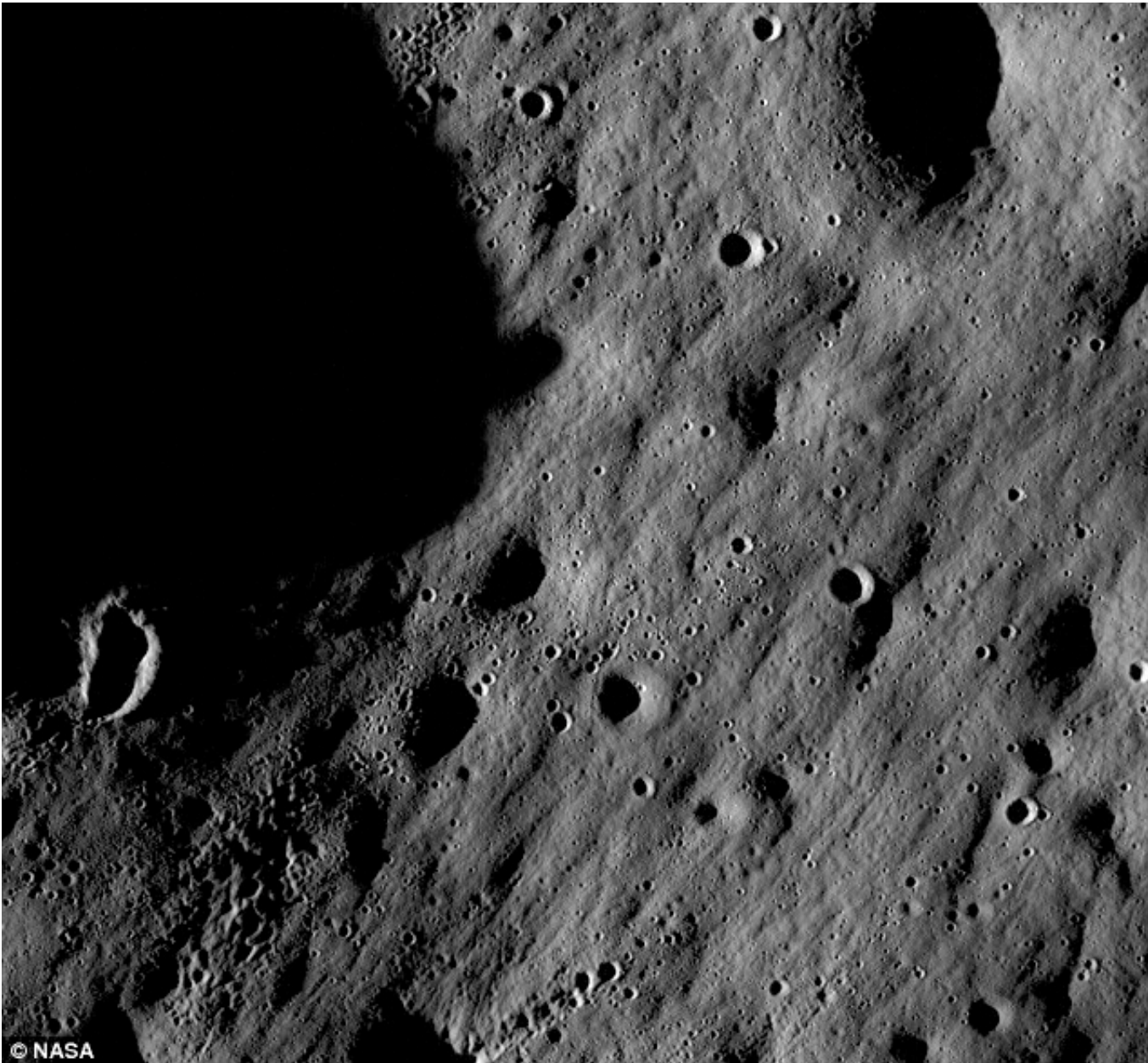
By [Claire Bates](#)

Last updated at 12:18 AM on 06th July 2009

Nasa's lunar orbiter has sent back stunningly detailed images of the Moon's surface, which show features as small as 10ft across.

They are the first pictures taken by the cameras on board the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) since it was activated on June 30.

The two starkly beautiful images are from a region in the lunar highlands south of Mare Nubium, or Sea of Clouds.



A crater chain on the Moon is visible at the bottom of this image, which faces lunar north. These chains are thought to be made by the impact of a body that was broken up by tidal forces



The 'Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter' (LRO) is orbiting 30miles above the moon

Each one shows a region that is 0.87 miles wide and show small secondary craters including several crater chains. Older craters have softened edges while younger craters are more defined.

There are also linear features that look like scratch marks on the surface which would have been created by rocks thrown up from a nearby impact.

Although the surface appears dramatic and daunting in these early engineering test images, they are deceptive as LROC Principal Investigator Mark Robinson explained.

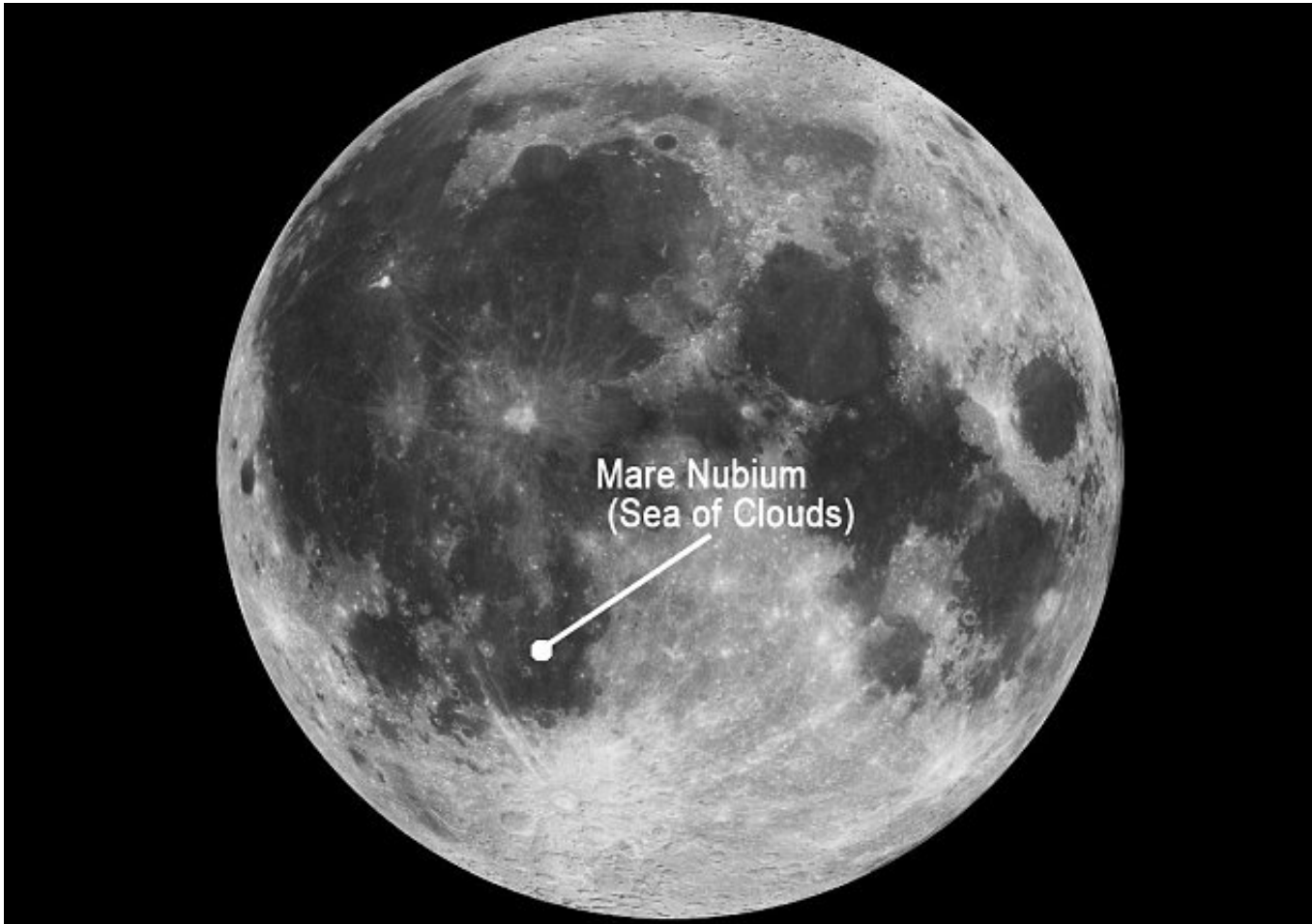
'Our first images were taken along the Moon's terminator - the dividing line between day and night - making us initially unsure of how they would turn out,' he said.

'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.'

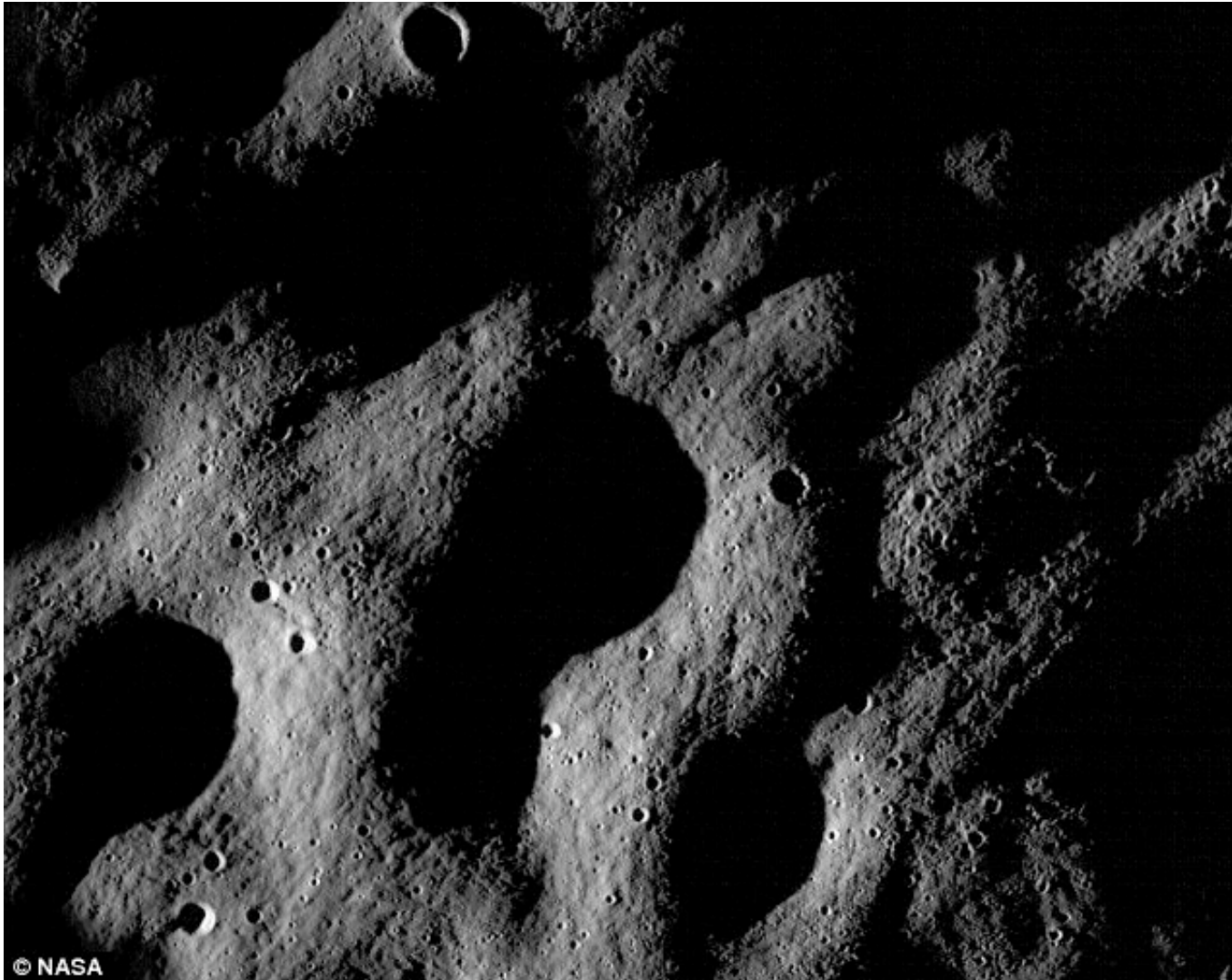
He added: 'While these are magnificent in their own right, the main message is that LROC is nearly ready to begin its mission.'

The two cameras on the orbiter will soon begin a year-long mapping mission of Earth's nearest celestial neighbour. It is Nasa's first Moon mission since the Apollo landings nearly 40 years ago.

Each image will be transmitted the 1/4million miles back to Earth and gradually build up a picture of the surface.



The images were taken just south of Mare Nubium



The orbiter camera was able to take pictures of features just 10ft across

The crucial data is being gathered to help astronauts prepare for exploring the Moon and eventually leave the Earth-Moon system for voyages to Mars and beyond.

It will help prevent the scene Apollo 11 astronauts faced in 1969, when the computer's auto targeting directed Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin into a boulder field during landing.

The orbiter will also examine the Moon's craters and provide an understanding of the effects of lunar radiation on people.

It was launched in June alongside a probe called the Lunar Crater Observation and Sensing Satellite (LCROSS).



These images show the regions where the detailed pictures were taken. The one on the left refers to the top image in the article

The first part of the probe is designed to hit the Moon near the South Pole and make a crater around a third the size of a football pitch. The second part will fly through the dust and ice raised by the impact and study them before landing several miles away.

The moon is also under close scrutiny from other nations. [India's](#) Chandrayaan 1 orbiter, launched in October last year, continues to orbit the Moon. Just last month a Japanese probe finished its own mapping mission by crashing into the surface, sending back footage of its final moments.

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How can you see the flag???the story said you can see features ten feet across....the flag wasnt that big...and if they did manage to image any of the left over equipment all the zoomers who claim the moon landings were a hoax would just claim the new images were hoax's.....BELIEVE....lol

- Ed, Dunblane....Scotland, 06/7/2009 23:12

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19 comments (at the time of writing) and the majority ask about pictures of Apollo missions. Why don't NASA deal with this once and for all, or can't they?

- Brian Johnson, Brighton, 06/7/2009 17:13

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Wow-to those asking for pics of the lander-note that the resolution is only 10 feet...objects smaller than that won't show up.

Maybe the next mapping satellite will have that level of detail (or perhaps this satellite will, after they upgrade it).

- bob, USA, 06/7/2009 16:13

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Do you think that google will make street maps of the moon?? lol

- James, England, 06/7/2009 13:23

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Good. Soon it will image the descent stage of the lunar landers and prove the conspiracy nuts are... nuts

- Al, Southampton, uk, 05/7/2009 23:22

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Does this now mean that we should now be able to settle the did/didnt they go to the moon argument?

- Phil, Norfolk, 05/7/2009 17:57

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