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## Lunar plumes and Martian dunes: the week in space

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This week, astronomers spotted a faint plume of material that was lofted above the moon by the impact of NASA's LCROSS mission

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We have a plume! NASA's LCROSS mission slammed into the moon last Friday but failed to produce an obvious plume of ejected material. Now, data from spectrometers and cameras on the spacecraft trailing behind the initial impactor has revealed a faint plume.

"There is a clear indication of a plume of vapour and fine debris," said project scientist Anthony Colaprete.

Researchers are still analysing the signal to try to determine what the plume is made of. Scientists had hoped that dust and vapour kicked up by the impact would climb high enough to catch sunlight, allowing the trailing spacecraft to hunt for traces of lunar water in the ejecta.

This image, made from three snapshots taken by the trailing spacecraft's visible camera 15 seconds after impact, shows a plume about 6 to 8 km wide. Infrared cameras on the spacecraft suggest the impact gouged out a crater 28 m across. (Image: NASA)

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