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NASA probe hits moon looking for water, now what?

Reported by: Associated Press

Reported by: [Chris Kline](#)

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Artist's rendition of Centaur upper stage rocket approaching the moon with the Lunar CRater Observation and Sensing Satellite (LCROSS), 'shepherding satellite' (NASA)

Take that, moon!

NASA smacked two spacecraft into the lunar south pole Friday morning in a search for hidden ice.

Instruments confirm that a large empty rocket hull barreled into the moon at 4:31 a.m. (AZ time), followed four minutes later by a probe with cameras taking pictures of the first crash.

But initial photos show that the moon didn't give the reaction to the double jabs that NASA expected.

SEE RENDERINGS OF THE ROCKET IN THE ATTACHED PHOTO SLIDESHOW

And the public definitely didn't get the live explosive views they may have anticipated from the mission called [LCROSS](#), short for Lunar Crater Observation and Sensing Satellite.

Screens got fuzz and no immediate pictures of the crash or the six-mile plume of lunar dust that the mission was supposed to kick up for

scientists to study. The public, which followed the crashes on the Internet and at observatories, seemed puzzled.

NASA officials touted loads of data from the probe and telescopes around the world and in orbit. But the crash photos and videos they offered at a morning news conference were few and showed little more than a fuzzy white flash.

Still, NASA scientists were happy.

"This is so cool," said Jennifer Heldmann, coordinator for NASA's observation campaign. "We're thrilled."

The first photos and videos that NASA got didn't show any plumes. They may still be coming or there may not have been much of a visible plume for the probe and Earth-bound telescopes to see, said LCROSS scientist Anthony Colaprete.

"We saw a crater; we saw a flash, so something had to happen in between," Colaprete said.

The crater was the aftermath of the crash and the flash was the impact itself.

The unexpected lack of pictures of a plume could be because the plume was at a different angle, hit slopes or wasn't high enough to show up, he said.

Or the lunar soil could have compressed down and not tossed up as much dust as expected, he said.

Colaprete played down the importance of pictures of the plume. Far more important is light spectrum measurements -- taken but not yet analyzed -- to show if there is water or some form of water in what was tossed up. The scientific instruments that took those measurements worked perfectly, he said.

"What matters for us is: What is the nature of the stuff that was kicked up going in?" said NASA project manager Dan

Andrews. "All nine instruments were working fine and we received good data."

Andrews said the science team is pouring through the information to answer the big question: Is there some form of water under the moon's surface that was dislodged?

It will probably be two weeks before scientists will be certain about the answer, he said.

"This is going to change the way we look at the moon," NASA chief lunar scientist Michael Wargo said at the news conference.

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