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## UFO UpDates Mailing List

### Re: NASA Images Could Solve 'Face' Mystery

From: [Stig Agermose@online.pol.dk](mailto:Stig_Agermose@online.pol.dk) (Stig Agermose)  
Date: Wed, 8 Apr 1998 22:10:21 +0200  
Fwd Date: Wed, 08 Apr 1998 18:51:40 -0400  
Subject: Re: NASA Images Could Solve 'Face' Mystery

>From the Washington Post. URL:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/national/science/daily/april98/mars07.htm>

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NASA Images Could Solve 'Face' Mystery

Mars, Then and Now

1976: A photograph shows what appears to be a face on the surface of Mars. (NASA photo via AP)  
1998: A more detailed photo of the area appears to show a mesa. (NASA photo via AP)

By Kathy Sawyer  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Tuesday, April 7, 1998; Page A1

NASA scientists yesterday wiped the "face" off Mars and with it, the belief in some quarters that it was the remnant of an ancient Martian civilization.

At least they hope they did.

More than 20 years ago, one of the U.S. Viking space probes took a photograph of what appeared to some people to be a monumental sculpture of a humanoid face, staring skyward from a hilly desert region of Mars known as Cydonia. Since then, the Martian "sphinx" has generated tabloid headlines, true believers and questions. For some, its stony stare carried intimations of intelligent beings at work on the Red Planet and led more recently to "X-Files"-style suspicions of a U.S. government conspiracy to keep this knowledge from the public.

NASA yesterday released images taken over the weekend by the Mars Global Surveyor spacecraft, which is orbiting the Red Planet on a mapping mission. The pictures show the same site in 10 times the detail and with the sun shining from the opposite direction, compared with the 1976 image.

It's a mesa, scientists have concluded, once again. And the only

sculptor at work there is nature. "There will always be a few die-hards, but I think the American people will look at this and wonder what all the fuss was about," said Surveyor chief scientist Arden L. Albee of the California Institute of Technology.

"Anyone who has flown in an airplane will recognize that this is natural," rather than an artificially constructed feature, he added. "You could see [something like it] in many places on a flight from Washington to L.A. It's not an unusual feature."

Albee said the new images, taken from 276 miles above the surface, confirm previous NASA analysis indicating that the "face" is actually a natural rock formation, an isolated mesa where ridges and gullies cast shadows. The illusion of human features was produced by the combination of light and shadow that prevailed when the original Viking picture was taken on a July day in 1976.

The first Surveyor image of the region, which NASA posted on a Web site in midafternoon (East Coast time), was a dark rectangle with a muddle of lighter shapes, including what appear to be small impact craters, at the location where the mile-wide face had appeared in the Viking image. Subsequently, NASA posted clearer versions of the image.

Groups that believe in the "Case for the Face" (the name of a recent publication that compiles 18 research papers on the issue) plan exhaustive analysis of the new images in coming days and weeks, said Stephen Bassett, of the Paradigm Research Group, a consultant for leading advocates of the theory that the face is the unnatural product of intelligent activity.

"There are many layers to this. This is going to be analyzed to death," he said. "At this point, there's nothing in that photo that leaps out at you" to either confirm or eliminate the theory that the feature is artificial. But he suggested that if someone had sculpted a face a mile across, leaving it to weather as long as 2 million years, "getting closer to it is not necessarily going to make it look more like a face."

In addition to extremely close scrutiny of the photos for such signatures of artificiality as repeating patterns not found in nature (fractal analysis), pro-face groups plan online chats and interviews with experts. The new NASA images will be a topic of discussion at gatherings such as the 10th annual Ozark UFO conference in Eureka Springs, Ark., which begins Friday.

The supposed face has attracted the attention of engineers, computer specialists and others with technical training, including some NASA contract employees.

But some of the more extreme speculation has frustrated mainstream scientists. Some face partisans have claimed to find a city to the southwest of the face, complete with temples, fortifications and monuments with an astronomical orientation.

And some have accused NASA of a vast coverup that included faking the costly August 1993 failure of the \$1 billion Mars Observer spacecraft just as it arrived at Mars, so the agency could study the face covertly. NASA scientists have consistently dismissed such a scenario as not only outrageous but unnatural, against their own self-interest and, in any case, impossible to pull off.

NASA's latest attempt to resolve the controversy goes only part of the distance for true believers.

"The real issue is, 'What's the next photo,' " Bassett said. "We're all waiting for them to take the city itself."

#### On the Web

- \*The Global Surveyor image of the controversial area (heavy traffic - connection is slow)
- \*Past NASA images of the "face"
- \*NASA's "face" fact sheet
- \*NASA press release on the mission change
- \*Home page of an author who aims to prove scientifically that the "face" is artificial

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