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### Mars Global Surveyor - NASA's Promise Confirmed

From: **AFSDialog** <[AFSDialog@aol.com](mailto:AFSDialog@aol.com)>  
Date: Sat, 28 Mar 1998 15:51:51 EST  
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NASA's PROMISE CONFIRMED  
JPL Will Honor Goldin's Cydonia Policy  
by Stanley V. McDaniel

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A Call from Glenn Cunningham

This evening (March 26) I received a welcome telephone call from Glenn Cunningham of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena. Mr. Cunningham informed me that as scheduled, the Mars Global Surveyor would come out of aerobraking configuration this evening and activate science instruments about 12 hours later, on March 27. As reported in this newsletter on Feb. 25, science activity will continue through the summer. Mr. Cunningham, who heads the MGS project, stated that during April there will be three opportunities to image the area of interest at Cydonia, and that attempts to secure images will be made on each of these occasions.

This information was contained also in a press release sent out by JPL this evening and available on JPL's MGS website. The press release was picked up by AP and distributed nationally.

The Spacecraft will be Maneuvered

To optimize the chances of obtaining the desired images, Cunningham assured me that the MGS will be "rolled" or tilted by means of the onboard momentum wheels, so even if the craft does not fly directly over the area, images may still be obtained. In addition, it is expected that lighting conditions will be good on these passes. The "roll" capability of the spacecraft will not be available later on in 1999 during the mapping orbit, since then the spacecraft must be kept oriented directly downward. It was one of our strong recommendations, at our meeting with Dr. Pilcher at NASA HQ last November, that imaging of Cydonia be attempted prior to the mapping orbit in order to take advantage of this capability and also to benefit from optimal chances for imaging a larger area due to the greater distance from the planet.

A Promise to be Kept

It appears now that JPL will follow through with these steps in the spirit of Dr. Pilcher's promise. By making its intentions public, JPL has confirmed the new open policy toward public concerns as articulated by Administrator Daniel Goldin over the

past year. The meeting with Society for Planetary SETI Research (SPSR) scientists last November constituted a tentative recognition by NASA of the scientific legitimacy of the Cydonia question. In keeping with this developing recognition of legitimate scientific concern regarding the Martian anomalies, JPL also has agreed to a meeting with SPSR representatives to discuss technical questions regarding the upcoming imaging. That meeting is expected to take place at JPL on March 30.

#### The Case for the Face Goes to NASA and JPL

Preparatory to that meeting, Mr. Cunningham and Dr. Arden Albee of the MGS project were sent advance copies of the new anthology of Mars Anomaly Research, *The Case for the Face*. That new volume has also been sent to Daniel Goldin, NASA Administrator, and other NASA scientists.

Mr. Cunningham also stated that advance notice of the imaging opportunities will be posted on the internet as soon as more accurate orbital data is developed. When asked if Dr. Michael Malin, the MGS camera operator who is an outspoken opponent of Mars anomaly research, would be cooperating with the new priority given to imaging the anomalies, Mr. Cunningham assured me that he will do so.

#### What Will We Discover?

April, 1998 may be the month we will see the final solution of the Cydonia mystery -- but rather than any immediate solution, if good images are obtained we expect there will be a period of intensive study of the images by SPSR scientists (and now perhaps others in the mainstream scientific community) to analyze and evaluate the results.

SPSR imaging specialists Ananda Sirisena, Mark J. Carlotto, and Vincent DiPietro all agree that since the algorithms used to evaluate the Viking images are known to be reliable, the first images of the key Cydonia objects should look very much as we have seen them in research studies such as are presented in *Unusual Mars Surface Features* by DiPietro, Molenaar and Brandenburg, Carlotto's *The Martian Enigmas*, and SPSR's *The Case for the Face*. If this turns out to be correct, the hypothesis of possible artificiality will be strengthened and the validity of the image processing techniques used will be obvious, but new images may not yet establish certain proof of artificiality.

However, a paper, included in *The Case for the Face*, by Dr. James F. Strange, archaeologist at the University of South Florida, makes certain predictions as to what to expect if the Cydonia anomalies are in fact cultural artifacts. Should some of those predictions be borne out by new images, the likelihood of artificiality would again be strengthened. Scientists with the SPSR will be examining the released images, evaluating features that may tend to confirm or disconfirm the artificiality hypothesis. Some of the items we will be looking for are the following (as suggested by Dr. Strange).

1. In the detail of the features we may see geometry, organization of similar features (like trucks parked in a desert, which is not exactly geometric unless there is someone directing the parking), confirmation of detail on the face such as we have seen adumbrated in enhanced images, structural detail in features such as the fort, surface treatment of the faceted landforms which imply construction (like features analogous to shingles on roofs), and perhaps other culturally meaningful forms. (The face is a culturally meaningful form.) We look for repetition of detail at some standard size so far unrecognized.
2. Repetitions of the patterns we have seen, but on a smaller scale, for example small faces here and there or the features of the Tholus repeated on the mounds.
3. Other, small features also organized by the square root of two grid.
4. New features that show fractal anomaly.

#### New Images Must Be Approached With Caution

Unfortunately, we can also expect, with new images of Cydonia,

two kinds of unscientific responses. The first, of course, will come from the hidebound skeptics, who will interpret whatever they see as natural regardless of possible revealing detail. The second will likely be a welter of highly speculative "discoveries" such as those claimed at the Pathfinder site by numerous individuals who, by drawing fanciful interpretations on rock scratches, have found all kinds of machinery, gyroscopes, tanks, tractors, and even entire cities -- whose "buildings" actually are artifacts of bad processing of the JPEG images provided by JPL.

As with the Viking images, the study and interpretation of new Cydonia images should be undertaken with great care and a conservative scientific approach. It is only through persisting in doing good science on the Face and other anomalies that NASA (and Dr. Carl Sagan) finally acknowledged that the area may have some scientific priority. It is extremely important that this kind of careful scientific evaluation be continued with any new images.

It must be remembered that as a scientific question, final proof of artificiality may have to await "ground truth" -- that is, a mission carrying astronauts to Mars. But what we see in the next weeks from MGS may, with careful analysis, well be the spur that leads to that all-important mission.

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