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'Mars Face Breaks Under Questioning'

From: **UFO UpDates - Toronto** <updates@sympatico.ca>
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Mars Face Breaks Under Questioning

By Pete Ford
posted: 07:10 pm ET
13 June 2000

Opinions

Many people remain convinced that the "Face on Mars" is artificial, and that the government is concealing its true nature. Such arguments raise a number of questions that Face enthusiasts have yet to convincingly answer, writes Pete Ford.

There's been controversy about the "Face on Mars" since the Viking orbiter photographed it in 1976. The feature's resemblance to a human face is intriguing, and many people see in that resemblance not an accident or trick of light, but rather the work of intelligent extraterrestrials.

After nearly a quarter century the debate has, if anything, intensified. Numerous books and websites claim that the Face was built by aliens, from Mars or elsewhere. The argument often extends to other features of Mars' Cydonia region, such as the "Pyramid" and the "Inca City."

Proponents of such artificiality often argue that NASA has been aware of such since 1976 but is engaged in a cover-up, since if the agency acknowledged "the truth," global panic would ensue. They also tend to complain, as in a recent letter to SPACE.com, that their arguments aren't taken seriously.

(NASA, for its part, states it has "no official opinion" on the Face, but adds: "Most planetary scientists agree that, although there is insufficient data to make a definitive analysis of the feature, it is highly unlikely to be anything other than a combination of a natural feature and unusual lighting conditions.")

The arguments for artificiality raise a number of questions:

If NASA knew, or even suspected, that the features of Cydonia were not of natural origin and had reason to hide the discovery, why did they not suppress the images in 1976?

Why would extraterrestrials sculpt a human face on the surface of Mars? If this is an indication that it is intended for human eyes, why didn't they make it large enough to be seen with an Earth-based telescope or, better still, build it on Earth's moon?

The Viking orbiter pictures were taken when the sun was very low in the martian sky. The Mars Global Surveyor spacecraft took pictures when the sun was about 25 degrees above the horizon, and these show no resemblance to a face. If somebody wanted to create such a feature and make it large enough to be seen from space, why would they carve it in such a way that it is only visible when the sun is low in the sky?

If NASA were to state publicly that the Cydonia features were artificial, would people really panic? A few years ago a hole in the ozone layer was discovered and later was reported to be growing. Further reports indicated the hole may already be causing increased incidence of skin cancer. Here was a real danger with immediate consequences. Did anyone try to suppress the information? Did anyone panic?

Why Would Extraterrestrials Sculpt A Human Face On The Surface Of Mars?

Another example: every few weeks we get more news about the possibility of life on Jupiter's moon Europa. There appears to be water there, and many scientists think the chances for some kind of life are good. Both the scientific community and NASA appear excited at the possibility. Are you panicking yet?

Could NASA, or any government agency, keep information about intelligent extraterrestrial life a secret for 24 years? I don't believe they could keep something like this quiet for 24 hours. Consider how readily information on some government policy or scandal leaks out, often to the embarrassment of officials.

Given the lack of hard evidence for artificiality in Cydonia, why are there so many books and articles claiming otherwise? A simple explanation is plausible: The authors are trading on public ignorance and gullibility to swell their own bank balances. They build on ignorance to create a market for more books.

I hope and believe a piloted mission to Mars will be undertaken within the next few years. I hope whoever goes can spare the time and resources to visit Cydonia. Even this won't end the controversy; those that stand to lose the most -- the authors of all those books -- will simply write up more books about cover-ups.

The most effective way to resolve the Cydonia controversy is to improve the standard of scientific education for the general public, and to promote critical thinking as a central part of that education. Perhaps then the focus will shift to more pressing issues -- such as global warming exacerbated by deforestation. Think of all the trees that got pulped to make books about the Face on Mars.

Pete Ford is lead programmer analyst for a company in Dallas, Texas where he lives with his artist wife and two boys. He is currently writing a science-fiction novel, as well as articles for science magazines.

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