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Latest Misinformation at Space.com

From: **Lan Fleming** <apollo18@swbell.net>
Date: Thu, 15 Jun 2000 12:12:38 -0600
Fwd Date: Thu, 15 Jun 2000 19:49:31 -0400
Subject: Latest Misinformation at Space.com

I have sent the following letter to Space.com:

The June 13th article, "Mars Face Breaks Under Questioning" at

http://www.space.com/opinionscolumns/opinions/ford_000613.html

was filled with factual errors and opinions disguised as fact. First, it should be pointed out that the "Inca City" formation is not in Cydonia as Mr. Ford asserts. Cydonia is at approximately 41 degrees north latitude while the "Inca City" is near Mars' south pole.

A second and more serious error was Mr. Ford's claim that the Viking images of Cydonia were taken when the sun was "very low in the Martian sky" while the MGS image was taken when the sun was about 25 degrees above the horizon." The truth is that the second Viking image of the Face was taken when the sun was at an elevation of 27 degrees -- roughly two degrees higher than its position when the MGS took the image.

Much, if not most, of the difference in the appearance of the Face between the Viking images and the MGS image is due to the difference of the sun's azimuth when the pictures were acquired, not its elevation. The two Viking images were taken when the sun was to the left and above the top of the "head" relative to the Face while the MGS image was taken when the sun was almost directly below the "chin." The illumination of the Face in the Viking images was therefore the kind of illumination under which we usually view faces while the illumination in the MGS image was more akin to someone holding a flashlight under his chin to give his face an eerie and grotesque appearance.

Third, Mr. Ford implies that MGS took more than one image of the Face by using the plural, "pictures." There was only one MGS image of the Face, taken under extremely bad lighting conditions. And that image was first released to the public by JPL in an "enhancement" that was so improper that the Face appears to be a shallow depression in the ground rather than the 400-meter high landform that it is known to be. Mr. Ford provides a link to a Goddard web site displaying this improper enhancement, but of course, he makes no reference to Dr. Mark Carlotto's web site, which does provide a series of images describing a correct enhancement process:

<http://www.psrw.com/~markc/marshome.html>

I find it very disappointing that news sources such as Space.com, when publishing articles on the Face controversy, seldom reference this information. It is even more disappointing that NASA would publish what appears to be an intentionally falsified "enhancement" of an image on what is supposed to be an

educational web site.

Mr. Ford claims that "these" MGS "pictures" showed no resemblance to a Face. Since he doesn't seem to know that there was only one MGS picture of the Face, it is difficult to tell if his opinion is based on actually looking at the sole MGS image of it (properly enhanced). But in any case that is only his opinion. As for myself, I immediately identified the Face in the raw MGS image (not the poor JUL enhancement) when I first saw it about an hour after NASA posted it on the Internet and before NASA had announced that the image had actually captured the Face - something that had by no means been certain beforehand. I was able to identify the Face only because of what I perceived as the resemblance to one of the landforms in the image to a face. Proper enhancements of the Face have since then revealed additional features resembling those of a face not visible in the old Viking images -- namely, a ridge running down the center of the landform where a nose would be expected on a face and ending with two depressions resembling nostrils, also correctly positioned for a face.

Ford concludes his article by indiscriminately attacking all Cydonia "enthusiasts" as ignorant. Given the numerous errors in his article, however, it appears he should be more concerned with his own deficit of knowledge.

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