

Martian Face Turns Out to be a Rocky Mesa

August 2 2010, by Miranda Marquit



1976 Viking image. Image source: NASA

(PhysOrg.com) -- In 1976, the Viking spacecraft, flying above Mars, captured an image of what appeared to be a large face on the surface of the planet. The face appeared, to many, as proof that a Martian civilization existed; beings not unlike humans must have populated Mars at one time. The famous "face on Mars" is located in the Cydonia region of Mars.

Technology has advanced a considerable amount since the original photo was taken, though. And now NASA has released a new image of the area

-- one that shows quite clearly that what looks like a face in the 1976 image is really just a rocky mesa. FOXNews.com offers this explanation for the differences in the two images:

Taken from much nearer to the planet and with a substantially higher resolution camera, the features so distinctive in the original image completely vanish in the new one. The original Viking Orbiter image had much lower spatial resolution and a different lighting geometry, factors that led to the optical illusion.



2007 HiRISE image. Image source: NASA/JPL/University of Arizona

The latest image was taken with the [High Resolution Imaging Science Experiment](#) (HiRISE) camera. The camera is located on the [Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter](#). The Orbiter is a satellite in orbit around Mars, designed to get a good look at the [Martian surface](#). The resolution offered by these images is much higher than that taken by previous

spacecraft. Images have been taken over the years, including in 1998 and 2001. The latest images were taken in 2007.

As technology has improved, though, images show the face becoming blurrier and blurrier. And now, it appears the face on Mars has disappeared altogether.

More information: "Face on Mars or Rocky Hill? New Photo Reveals Truth," FOXNews.com (July 30, 2010). Available online: www.foxnews.com/scitech/2010/0...cs-famous-face-mars/.

"Extreme Close-Up of the Face on Mars," Nancy Atkinson, Universe Today (July 28, 2010). Available online: www.universetoday.com/69766/ex...of-the-face-on-mars/

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