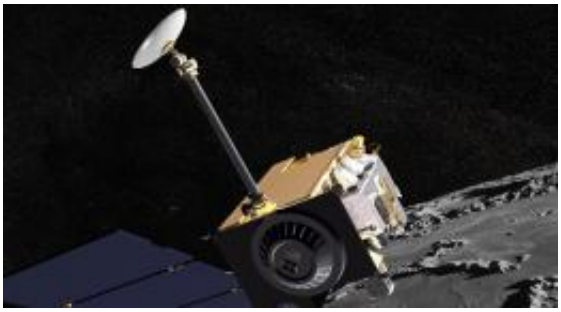
Lunar Orbit is Divine for NASA Instrument

June 24 2009



Artist's concept of Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter. Image credit: NASA

Diviner, an instrument that will make the first maps of the temperature on the surface of the lunar polar regions, entered the moon's orbit this morning (June 23) aboard NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter.

The instrument, a nine-channel radiometer built and project-managed by JPL, will measure very cold temperatures, and, for the first time, characterize the entire thermal environment of the moon. Diviner will also produce a map showing the composition of the moon, and a map showing how rocky the moon is.

In addition to creating a comprehensive atlas of the moon's features with detailed information about surface and subsurface temperatures, Diviner will identify cold traps and potential ice deposits, as well as landing hazards such as rough terrain or rocks to be avoided by future manned missions to the moon.

JPL designed, built and manages the Diviner instrument for NASA's Exploration Science Mission Directorate, Washington. UCLA is home institution of Diviner's principal investigator, David Paige. NASA's Goddard Spaceflight Center, Greenbelt, Md., manages the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter. It is a NASA mission with international participation from the Institute for Space Research in Moscow.

Provided by JPL/NASA (news : web)