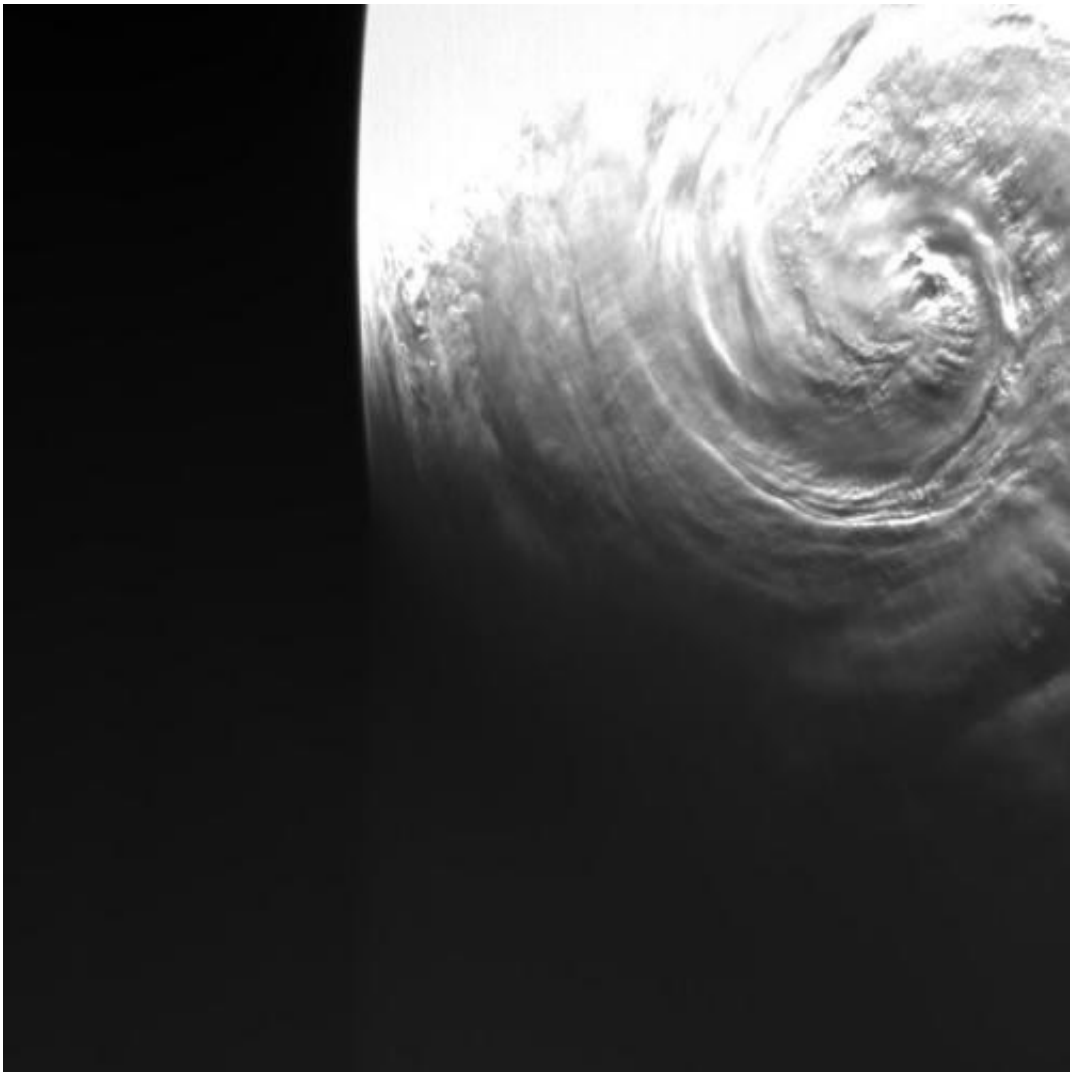
Proba-2 eye-to-eye with Typhoon Soulik

July 18 2013



The swirling eye of Typhoon Soulik as it approached Taiwan last Friday

is caught by a tiny espresso cup-sized camera on one of ESA's smallest satellites, Proba-2.

The following day Typhoon Soulik brought torrential rainfall and winds exceeding 120 km/h to Taiwan and China, triggering mass evacuations.

Less than a cubic metre in size, Proba-2 focuses on observing solar activity and space weather. But it also keeps a small eye on its homeworld.

Among the 17 experimental technologies hosted on Proba-2 is the compact Exploration Camera, X-Cam. Housed on the underside of the satellite, the monochrome X-Cam observes in the visible and infrared with a 100° field of view.

X-Cam comes with embedded intelligence to let it judge the best automatic exposures for optimised image quality.

Similar compact imagers could in future keep watch on satellite surfaces to look out for damage or environmental effects.

Swiss manufacturer Micro-Cameras & Space Exploration Swiss manufacturer Micro-Cameras & Space Exploration is due to fly cameras on ESA's Sentinel-1 Earth Observation mission – launching this year – as well as the ExoMars and BepiColombo science missions later this decade.

And in 2014 the company's miniature imager on Rosetta's lander should provide us with our closest view yet of a comet's surface.

This X-Cam image of Typhoon Soulik was acquired on 12 July at 10:14 GMT.

Provided by European Space Agency