

China's flag-bearing rover photographed on moon

December 16 2013



This image taken by the on-board camera of the "Yutu" or "Jade Rabbit" rover, and made off the screen of the Beijing Aerospace Control Center in Beijing on Sunday, Dec. 15, 2013, shows a photo of the Chang'e-3 lander during the mutual-photograph process. The rover and the lander took photos of each other Sunday night, marking the success of the Chang'e-3 lunar probe mission. (AP Photo/Xinhua, Ding Lin)

China hailed its lunar probe mission a success after the country's first

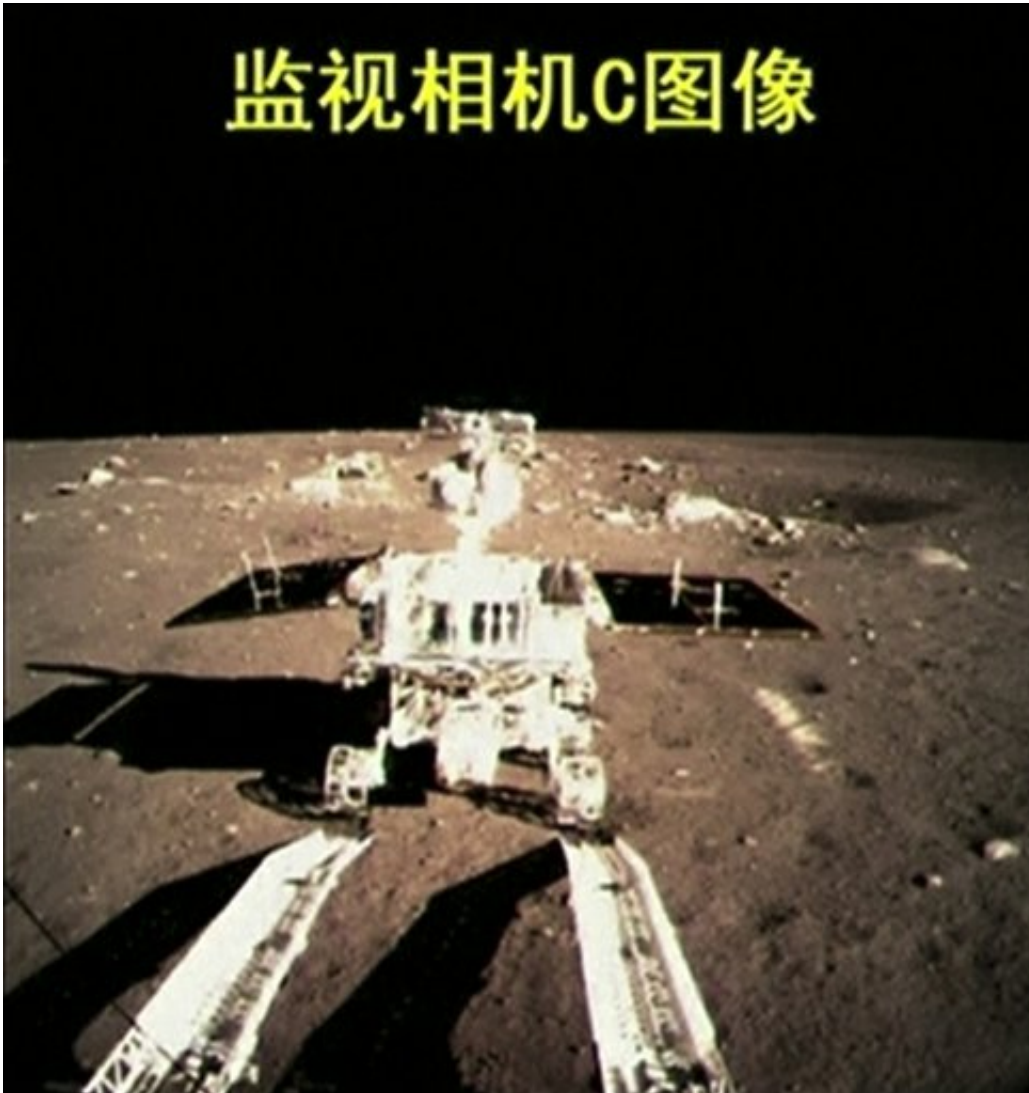
moon rover and the landing vehicle that carried it there took photos of each other on the surface, state media reported.

The six-wheeled [rover](#) moved to a spot about 9 meters (10 yards) north of the landing vehicle on Sunday night China time and the pair took photos for about a minute, the official Xinhua News Agency reported. The color images transmitted back to Earth showed the Chinese flag on the Yutu, or "Jade Rabbit" rover, named after a mythological creature.

President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang were at the Beijing Aerospace Control Center to hear lunar program chief commander Ma Xingrui declare the Chang'e 3 mission a success, Xinhua reported.

In a congratulatory message, the Communist Party's central committee, State Council or China's Cabinet, and the Central Military Commission hailed the mission as a "milestone" in the development of China's space programs, a "new glory" in Chinese explorations and the "outstanding contribution" of China in mankind's peaceful use of space, Xinhua said.

The Chang'e 3 landed on a relatively flat part of the moon known as Sinus Iridum, or the Bay of Rainbows, on Saturday evening, marking the world's first soft landing of a space probe on the moon in nearly four decades. China is the third country to do that after the former Soviet Union and United States.

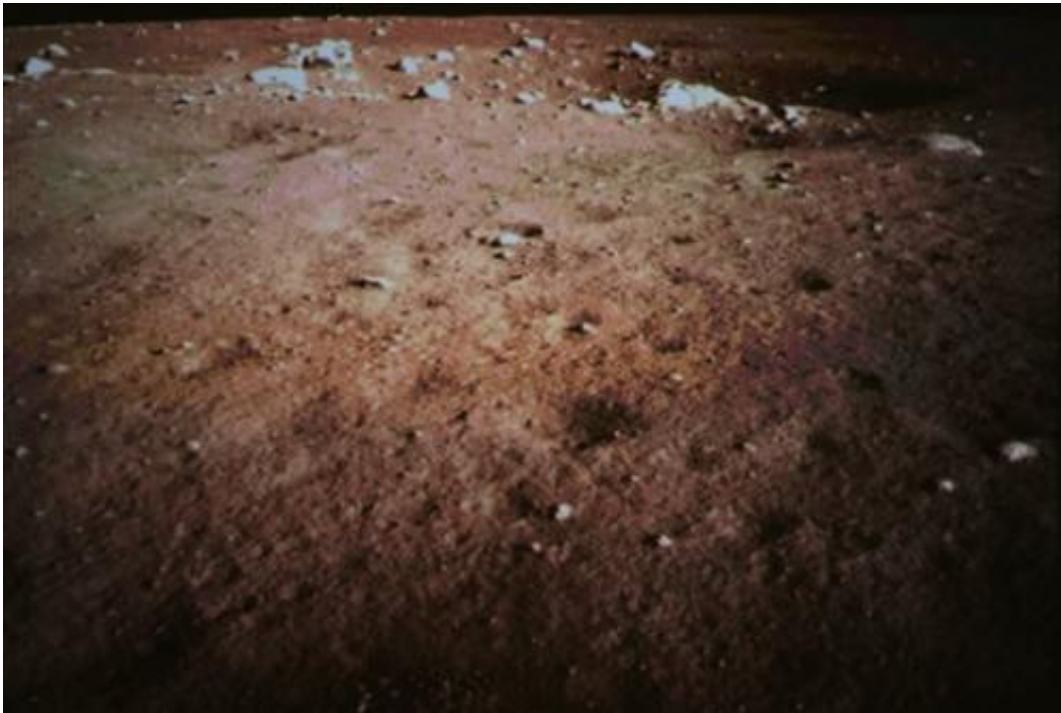


This image taken from video, shows China's first moon rover touching the lunar surface and leaving deep traces on its loose soil on Sunday, Dec. 15, 2013, several hours after the country successfully carried out the world's first soft landing of a space probe on the moon in nearly four decades. The 300-pound "Jade Rabbit" rover separated from the much larger landing vehicle early Sunday, around seven hours after the unmanned Chang'e 3 space probe touched down on a fairly flat, Earth-facing part of the moon. The writing at the top of the image reads "Surveillance camera C image." (AP Photo/CCTV VNR via AP video)

The lander and rover have now embarked on separate scientific explorations. The 140-kilogram (300-pound) rover will survey the moon's geological structure and surface and look for natural resources for three months at a speed of 200 meters (200 yards) per hour. The landing vehicle will conduct scientific examinations for one year at the landing site.

Xinhua said the two will have more chances in the coming days to take photos of each other at different angles.

The Chang'e 3 mission is named after a mythical Chinese goddess of the moon and the Yutu rover, or "Jade Rabbit" in English, is the goddess' pet.



This Saturday Dec. 14, 2013 photo released by China's Xinhua News Agency, shows a picture of the moon surface taken by the on-board camera of the lunar probe Chang'e-3 on the screen of the Beijing Aerospace Control Center in Beijing, capital of China. China on Saturday successfully carried out the world's

first soft landing of a space probe on the moon in nearly four decades, the next stage in an ambitious space program that aims to eventually put a Chinese astronaut on the moon. (AP Photo/Xinhua, Wang Jianmin)

China's military-backed space program has made methodical progress in a relatively short time, although it lags far behind the United States and Russia in technology and experience.

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