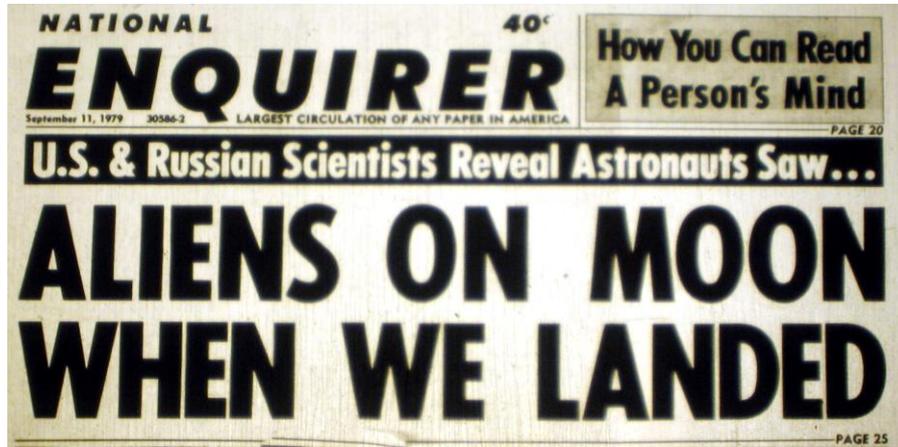


Misbegotten Myth – The origin of the 'aliens on the moon' story



JAMES OBERG // April 15, 2015

"Above Top Secret" by Timothy Good --

According to hitherto unconfirmed reports, both Neil Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin saw UFOs shortly after that historic landing on the Moon in Apollo 11 on 21 July 1969. I remember hearing one of the astronauts refer to a "light" in or on a crater during the television transmission, followed by a request from mission control for further information. Nothing more was heard.





[Sep 9, 1979 London 'Sunday Mirror']

National Bulletin tabloid [September 29, 1969] "Phony Transmission Failure Hides Apollo 11 Discovery. . . . Moon is a U.F.O. Base!" by Sam Pepper

Armstrong: *"I'm telling you, there are other spacecraft out there. They're lined up in ranks on the far side of the crater edge...."*

Charles Berlitz, *THE ROSWELL INCIDENT*, 1980: "Prior to the first moon landing two UFOs and a long cylinder hovered overhead. When Apollo 11 landed inside a moon crater two unidentified spacecrafts appeared on the crater rim and then took off again. Aldrin photographed them."

Dr. Ken Johnston, "Alien Bases on the Moon" [Science Channel, 2014] *"There have been a lot of rumors about what actually took place during the lunar mission. while Neil and Buzz were on the lunar surface. ...Neil ...says , 'They're here, they're parked around the rim of the crater and they're watching us.'"*

Historical Question

Five possibilities present themselves

1. The story is entirely and intentionally fictitious, like so many others
2. The story is based on somebody's innocent delusion or 'false memory'
3. The story is a misinterpretation, wild exaggeration and embellishment of an actual crew comment
4. The story is a result of an astronaut's misunderstanding of something actually witnessed
5. The story is essentially accurate

Actual transcript during Apollo-11 moon walk



Mission Elapsed Time [hours:minutes:seconds]

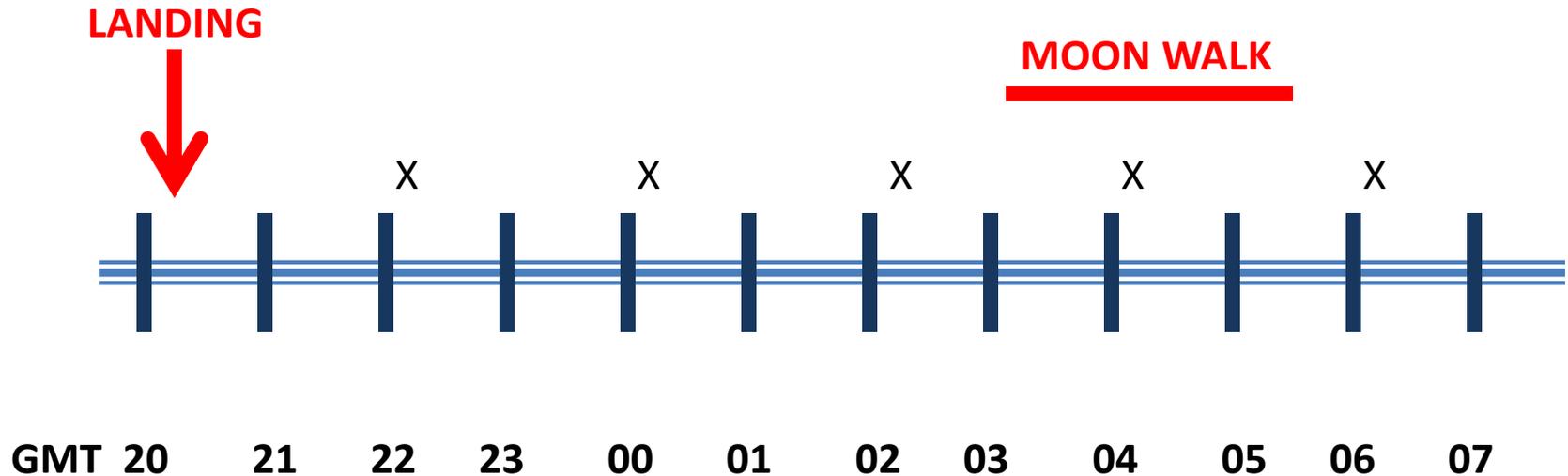
- 110:37:09 “I did see a suspiciously-small white object
- 110:37:25 “Go ahead with the coordinates on the small white object.”
- 110:37:28 “It's right on the southwest rim of a crater. I think they would know it if they were in such a location. It looks like their LM would be pitched up quite a degree. It's on the southwest wall of a smallish crater.”

Sparked by a misunderstood remark?

- After the first human landing on the moon [1969 July 20 20:18 gmt] the third crewman repeatedly attempted to spot the exact landing site.
- Every two-hour orbit, Mike Collins searched a different sector in the general area of the expected landing point. The first pass was at 22:11 and the final attempt eight hours later.
- He discussed each search with Mission Control.
- During the two-hour first human walk on the moon [starting at July 21 02:56 gmt], there just happened to be another of these periodic search discussions, shortly after 04:09 gmt
- Radio voice quality made recognizing who was speaking virtually impossible.
- Comments by Collins about his on-going attempts to observe the LM on the surface, if mistakenly thought to be from one of the men on the surface, could well have sounded weird enough to be misconstrued and misremembered. This is my favored hypothesis.

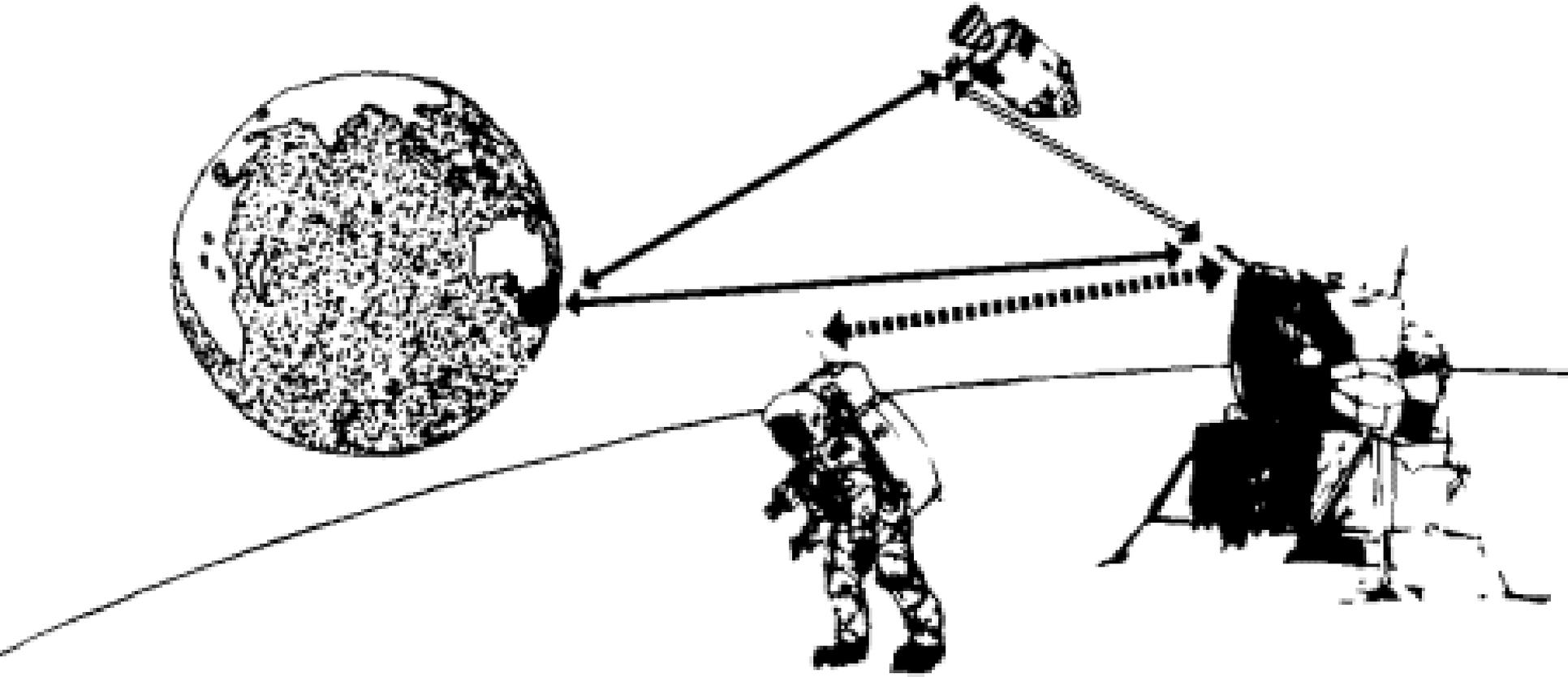
Apollo-11 Lunar Surface Timeline

“small white object” remark 



“X” denotes CSM overflights and LM search passes
To convert to Mission Elapsed Time [MET] subtract
launch date 1969 July 16, 13:32:00 gmt

Three-sided conversation

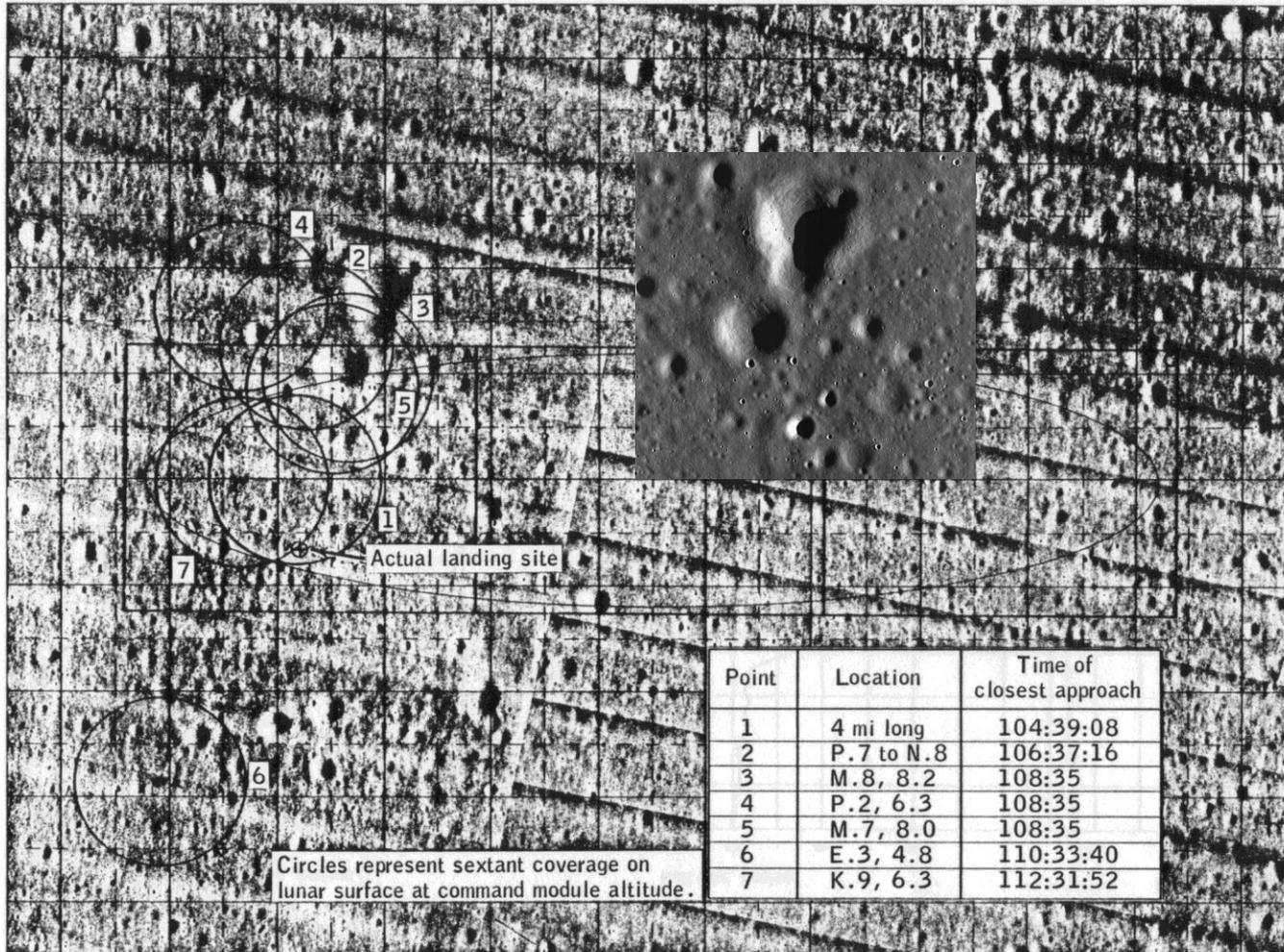


During the moon walk by Armstrong and Aldrin, there was also a conversation going on with Collins, and these two independent conversations were interleaved on the same voice channel.

Collins's search map

NASA-S-69-3723

1:100,000



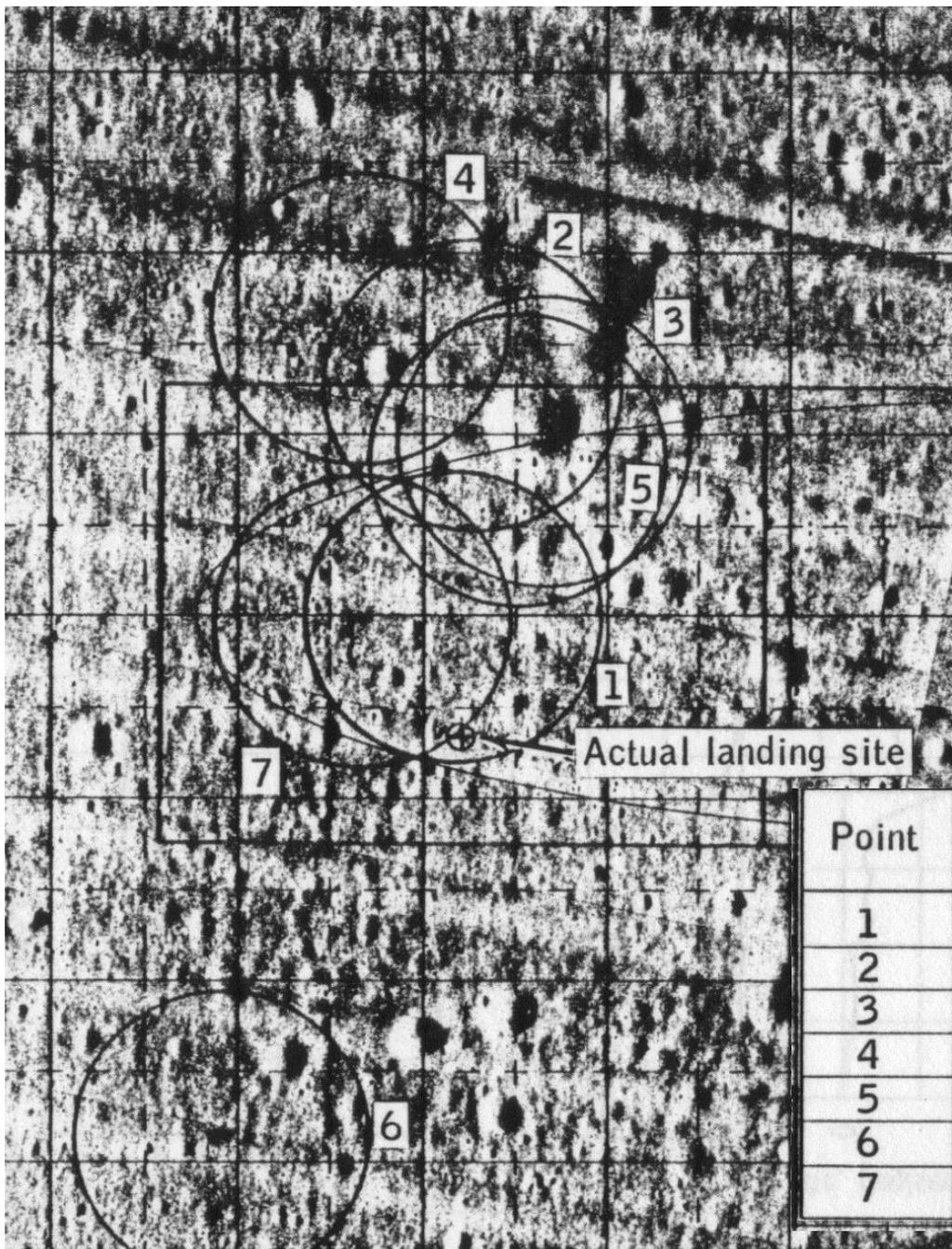
This map, designated LAM-2, was in the Command Module, and is here updated to include the specific sectors Collins was directed to search each pass.

For comparison of detail quality, the inset has the same surface features as imaged by the LRO satellite four decades later, at similar sun angle

Figure 5-14.- Command module sighting history during lunar stay.

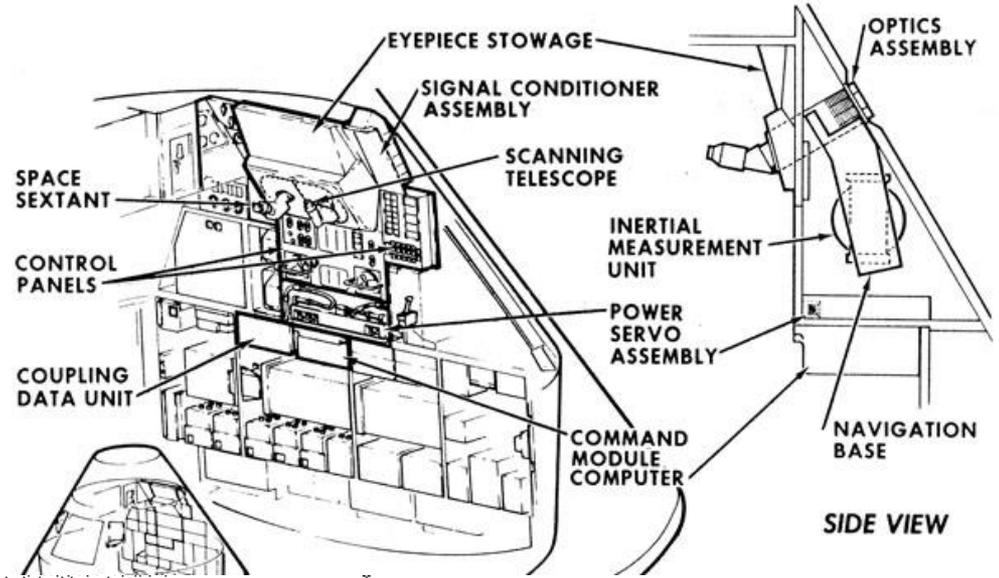
Searching for the Lunar Module on the surface

Every overhead pass after landing, Collins used autopilot 'landmark tracking' to aim sextant telescope at one selected circle on the surface



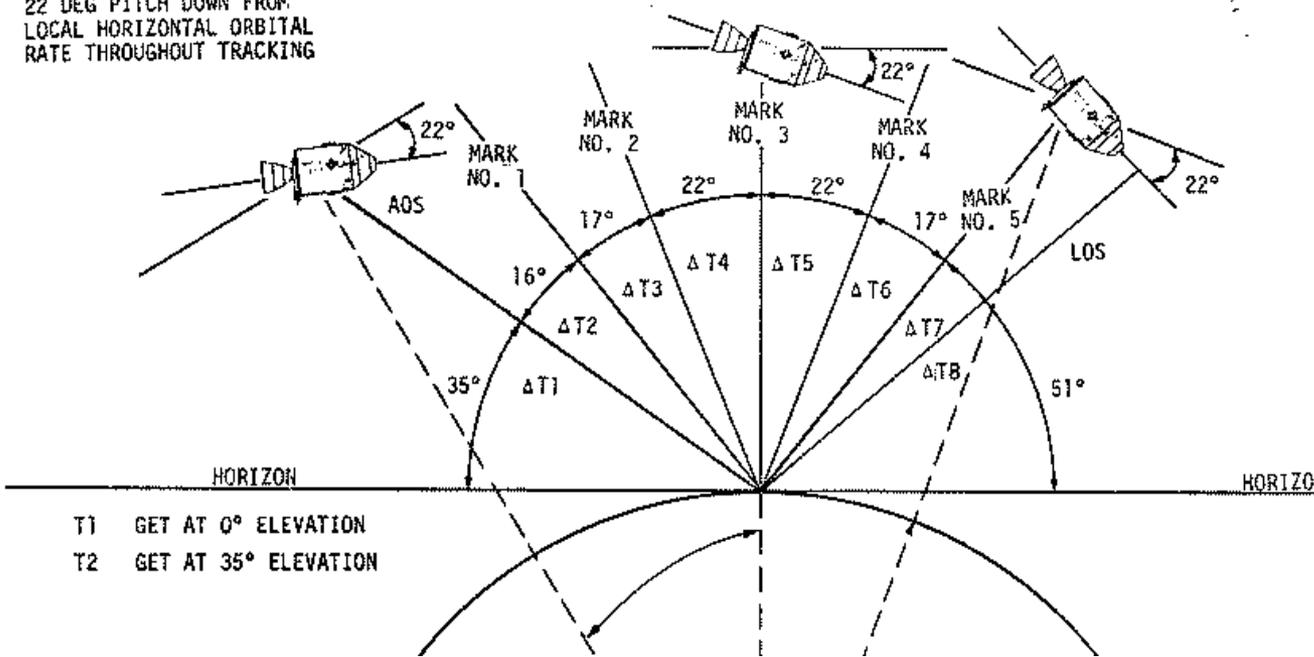
Point	Location	Time of closest approach
1	4 mi long	104:39:08
2	P.7 to N.8	106:37:16
3	M.8, 8.2	108:35
4	P.2, 6.3	108:35
5	M.7, 8.0	108:35
6	E.3, 4.8	110:33:40
7	K.9, 6.3	112:31:52

Apollo CSM Landmark Tracking



CSM TYPICAL LANDMARK TRACKING PROFILE

22 DEG PITCH DOWN FROM
LOCAL HORIZONTAL ORBITAL
RATE THROUGHOUT TRACKING

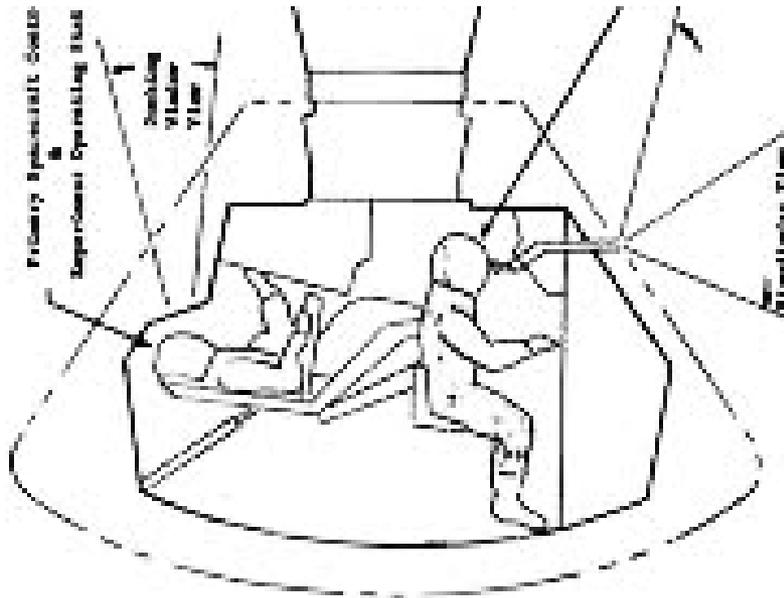


T1 GET AT 0° ELEVATION
T2 GET AT 35° ELEVATION

Collins was in the 'navigation bay' viewing a sector of the surface as the autopilot pitched the spacecraft to keep line-of-sight pointed at surface.

<https://www.hq.nasa.gov/alsj/a11/a11fp70a.gif>

Viewing through CM Sextant



Posture of navigation bay operator [Command Module Pilot] after crew seats were stowed away [16-mm cine still from Apollo-8 mission].

Collins describes the search

Apollo-11 Crew Technical Debriefing

p. 11-2

https://www.hq.nasa.gov/alsj/a11/A11TechCrewDebrfV2_1.pdf

- 11.0 CSM CIRCUMLUNAR OPERATIONS / 11.2 NAVIGATION
- The problem was I didn't know where the LM was , and the ground didn't either . There is too much real estate down there within the intended landing zone to scan on one, two, three, or four passes.
- On each pass, I could do a decent job of scanning one or two grid squares on the expanded map. That map is the 1:100 000 map called LAM 2. The ground was giving me coordinates in the grid square coordinate system that were as much as 10 squares apart. This told me they didn't really have much of a handle at all on where the LM had landed.
- As I say, it was just too large an area for me to visually scan. I used AUTO optics each time I looked at the area they suggested.
- I never did see the LM.

Results of 4th pass [ALSJ]

110:36:58 Collins: Houston, Columbia.

110:37:01 McCandless: Columbia, this is Houston. Go ahead. Over.

110:37:09 Collins: Roger. No marks on the LM that time. I did see a suspiciously-small white object whose coordinates are...

110:37:25 McCandless: Go ahead with the coordinates on the small white object.

110:37:28 Collins: Easy (ALSJ: an alternative to the more commonly used Echo) 0.3, 7.6, but I (garbled) and it's right on the southwest rim of a crater. I think they would know it if they were in such a location. It looks like their LM would be pitched up quite a degree. It's on the southwest wall of a smallish crater.

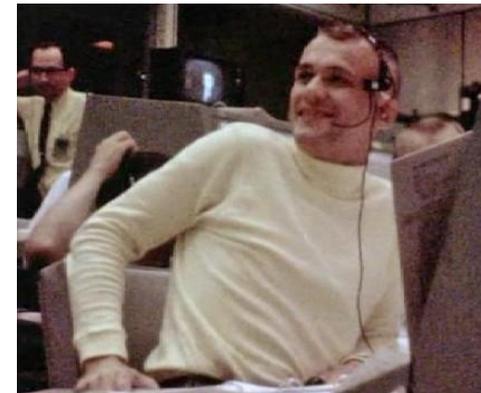
Apollo Lunar Surface Journal: <https://www.hq.nasa.gov/alsj/a11/a11LastBest.jpg>

The LM is actually at Juliett 0.65/7.52 . Mike is describing a spot about 4.4 kilometers too far south. He circled the crater at E.3/7.6 and also one at E.8/7.7 on the flown copy of LAM-2. To the left of the crater at E.3/7.6, he wrote 'SW Rim'.

Ref: <https://www.hq.nasa.gov/alsj/a11/images11.html#flownLAM2>



LEFT – Collins [suited during solo phase for safety] in Command Module [training photo]
RIGHT – McCandless at CAPCOM console in Mission Control



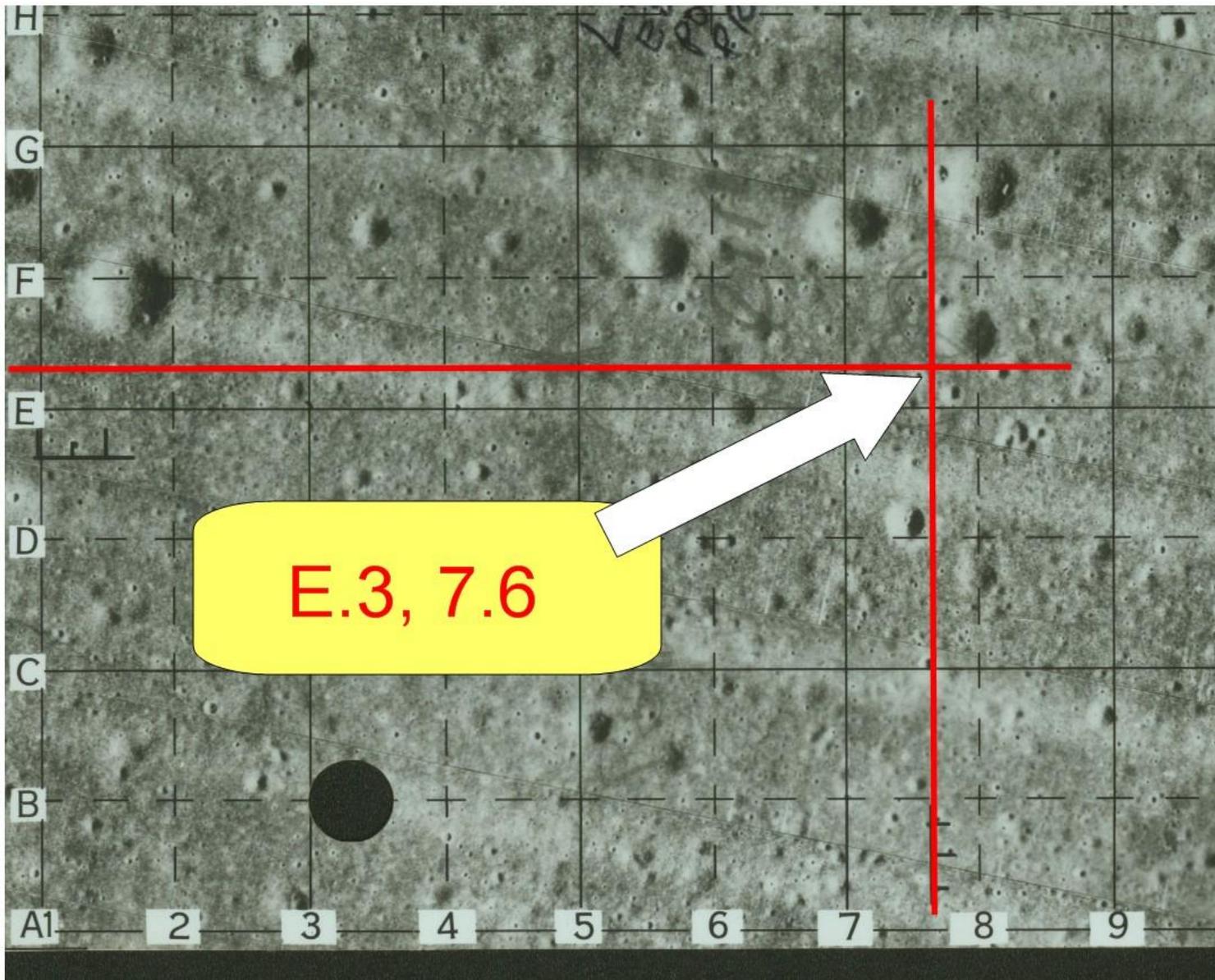


Collins's suspicious “white spot”

Debriefing: “On each pass, I could do a decent job of scanning one or two grid squares on the expanded map.”

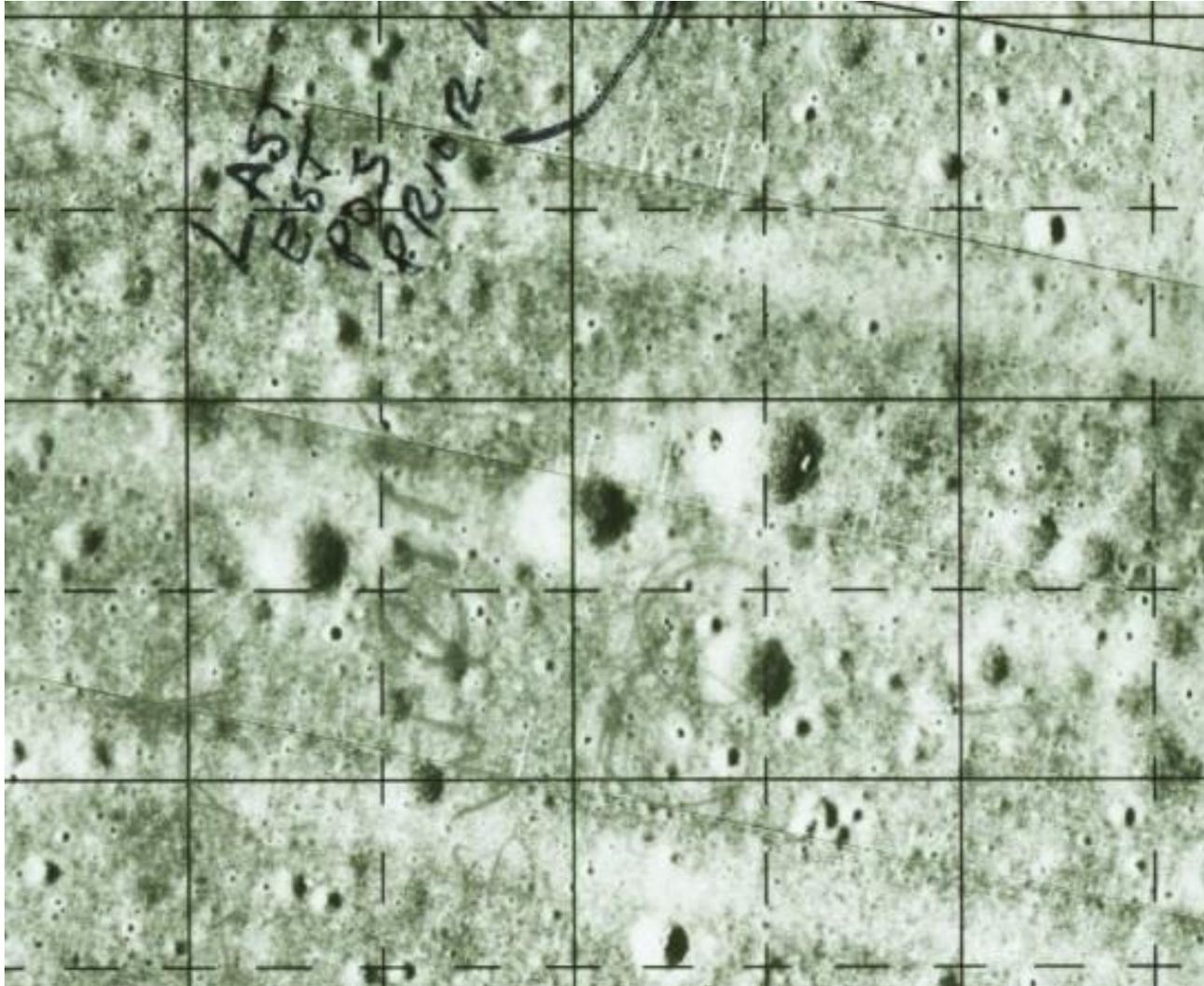
When logged on his onboard charts, the white object was slightly outside central search area for that pass

Exact coordinates



Collins's map with scribbled annotations

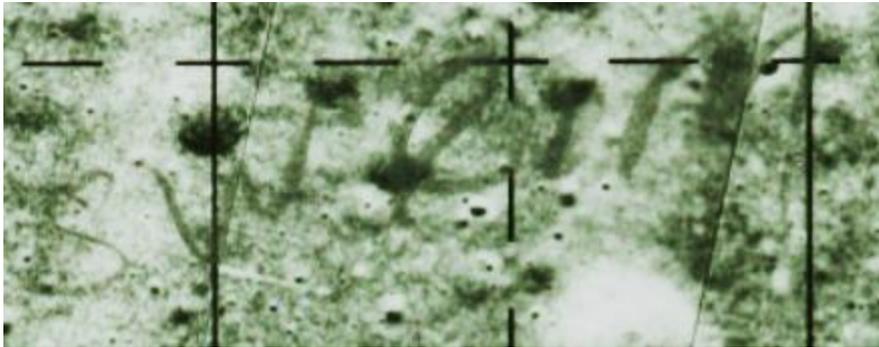
https://www.hq.nasa.gov/alsj/a11/LAM2_CMP-flown.jpg



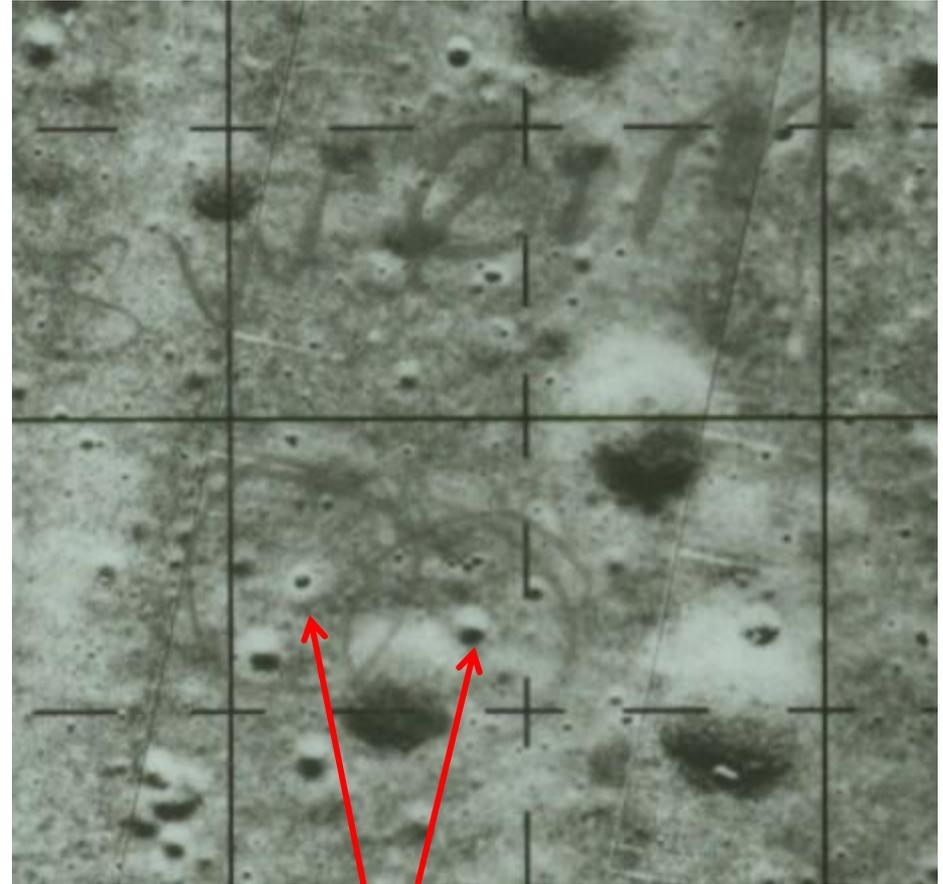
Detail of map LAM-2

Collins annotated his map

SW RIM



For easier reading,
map inscription is
rotated quarter turn.
“SW” is 10:30 o’clock.



Two craters circled

Deciphering Collins's Map Notes

<https://www.hq.nasa.gov/alsj/a11/images11.html#flownLAM2>

Beginning at the upper left, there is a penciled ellipse labeled 'Auto Optics' and including craters at N.7/7.2 and M.0/6.7 that Mike mentions at [106:43:08](#). Owen Garriott gave Mike settings for Auto Optics operation of the sextant at [105:19:59](#);

and, at [106:11:49](#), about 35 minutes before Mike's next pass over the landing site, Bruce McCandless told him "We'd like you to let the Auto optics take care of the tracking and devote your energies to trying to pick out the LM (visually) on the lunar surface."

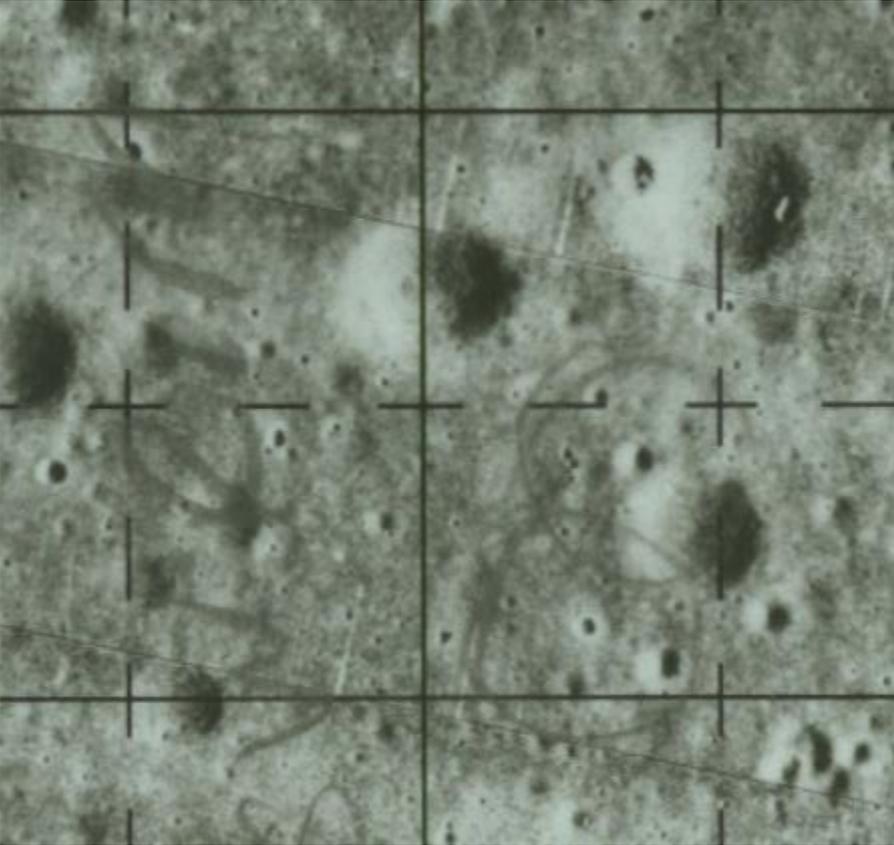
Farther down the map, Mike circled craters at E.3/7.6 and E.8/7.7 and to the left of the E.3/7.6 crater wrote 'SW Rim'.

These two craters are in the area he examined during the pass over the landing site at 110:33:40 using the sextant in automatic mode and a set of coordinates Bruce McCandless gave him at [110:18:39](#).

Mike reported the negative results at [110:36:58](#) **but mentioned a "suspiciously-small, white object" on the southwest rim of the E.3/7.6 crater.**

Source: Apollo Lunar Surface Journal

Resolution of 1969 Map vs LRO imagery

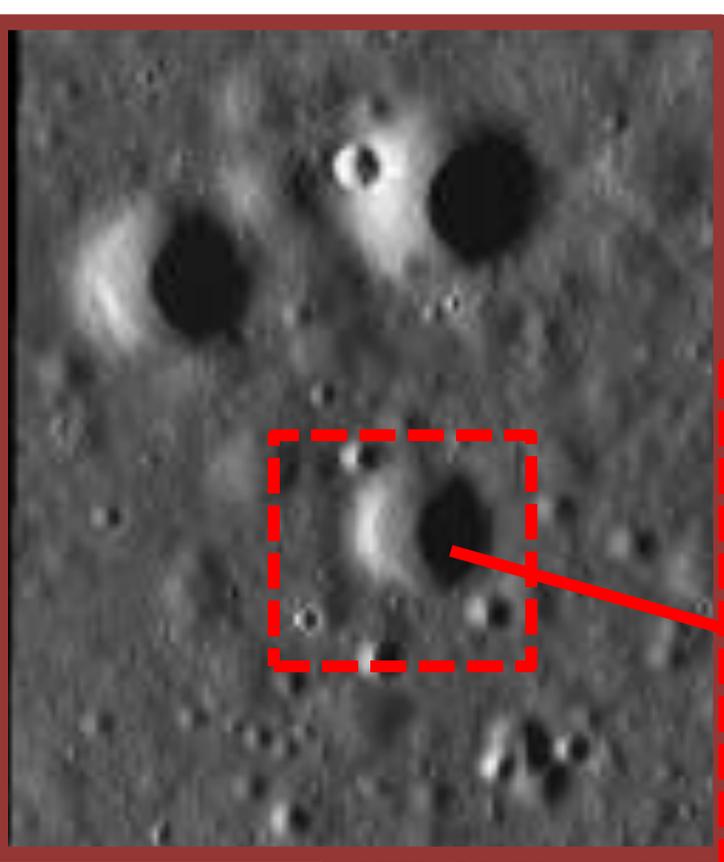


Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter [LRO]

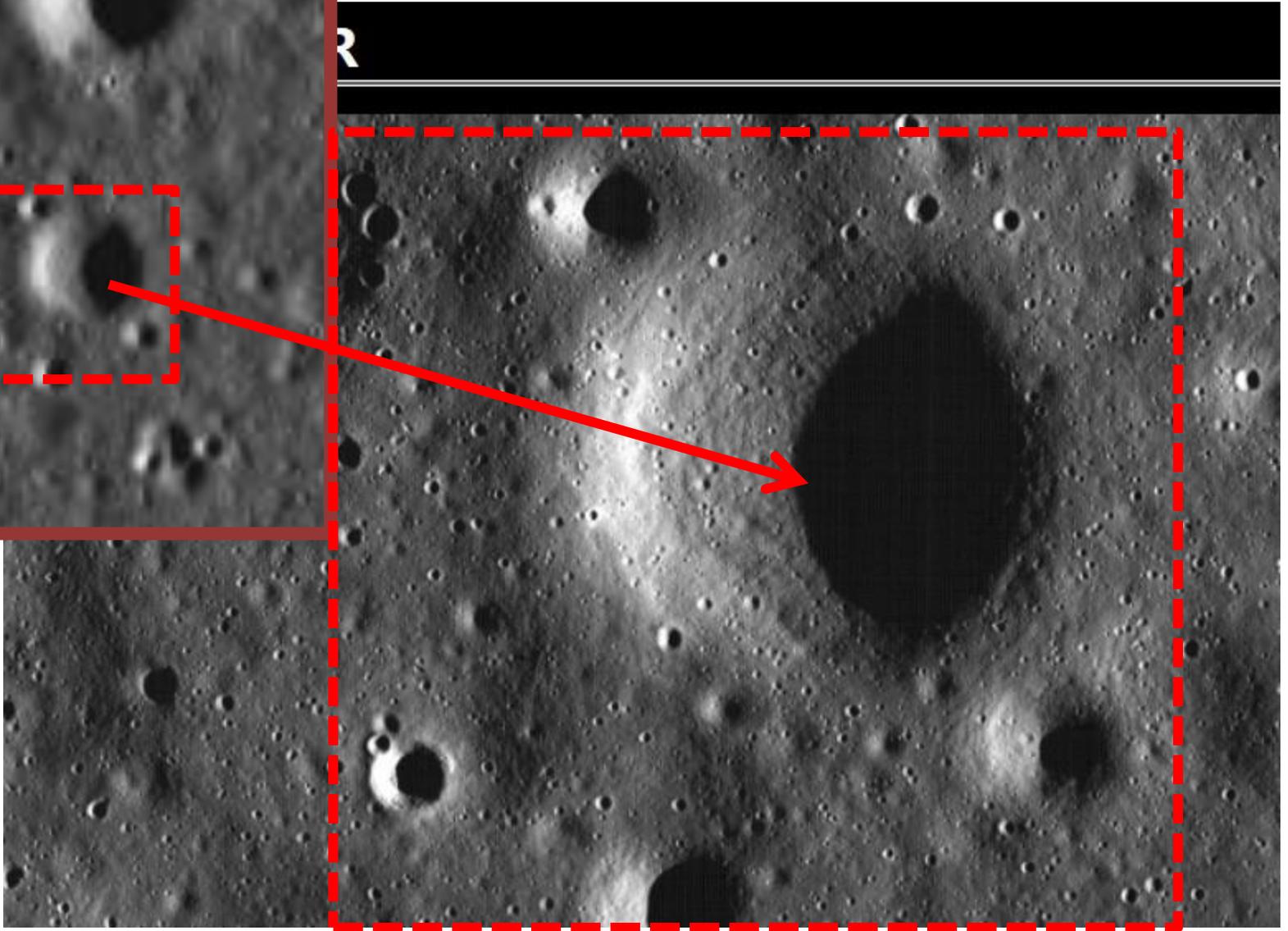


- Launched by NASA in 2009
- Controlled from Greenbelt, MD
- The Camera (LROC) retrieves high resolution black and white images of the lunar surface, capturing images of the lunar poles with resolutions down to 1m, and imaging the lunar surface in color and ultraviolet.
- Operational circular polar orbit, 50 km (about 30 mi) above the moon's surface.

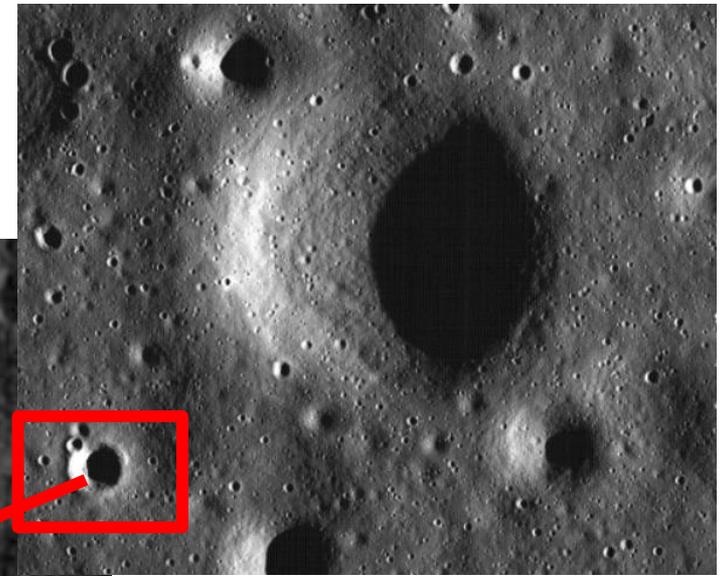
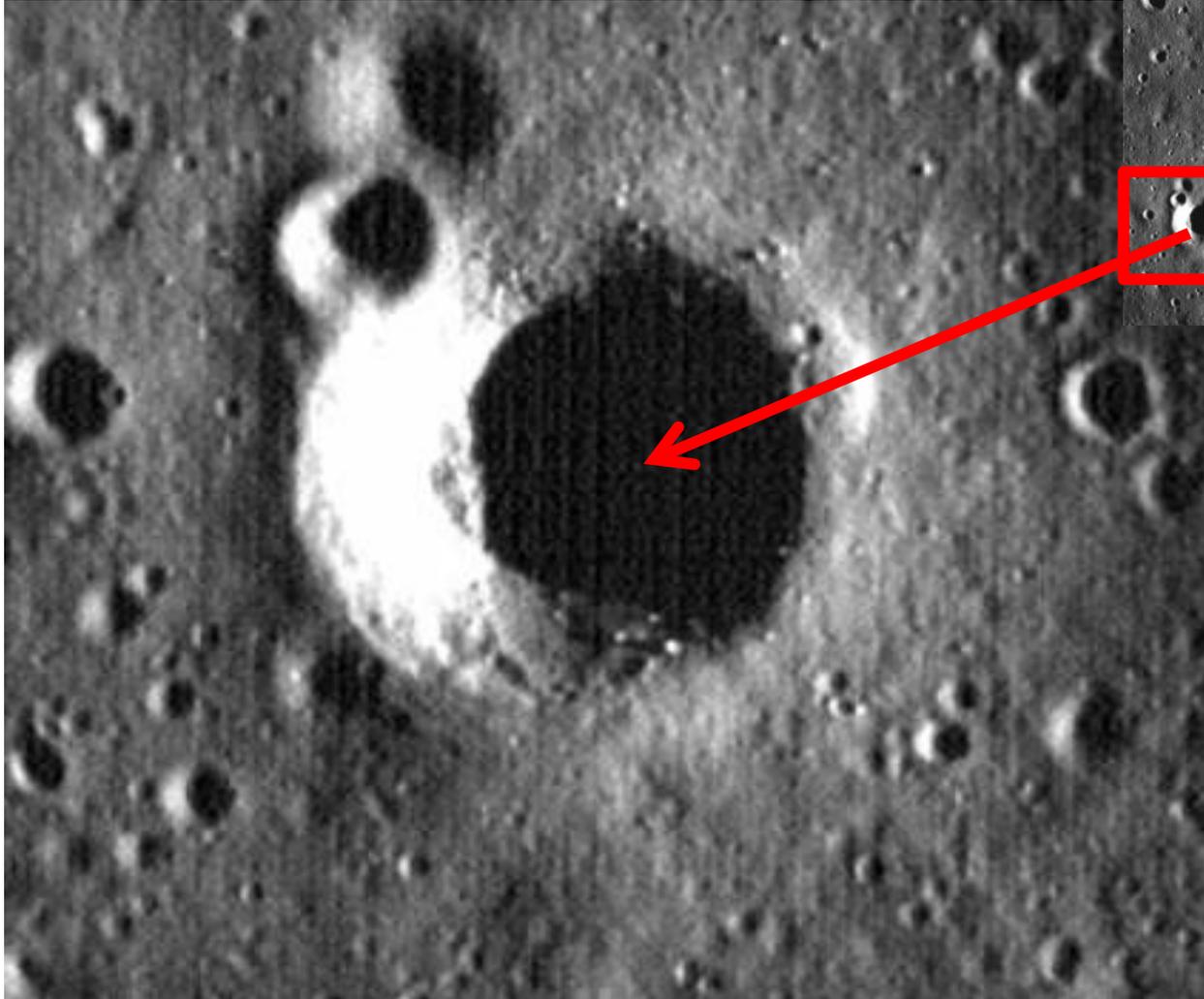
Zoom into circled craters



Enlarge-
ment of
Collins's
craters



Further zoom



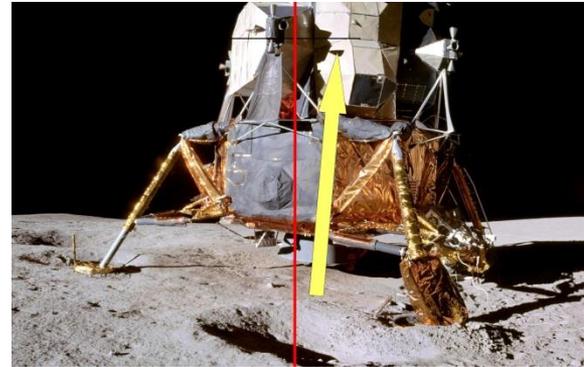
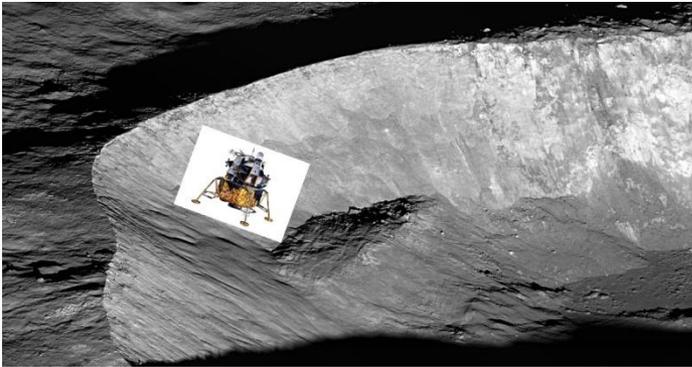
Zoom shows the fresh football-stadium-sized crater that Mike Collins observed from 60 miles overhead as a suspiciously bright white spot while visually searching for the landed Lunar Module. Even with sextant optics he did not resolve shape. But LRO image can do so.

Collins comment

“I think they would know it if they were in such a location. It looks like their LM would be pitched up quite a degree.”

So Collins is trying to spot the LM from sixty miles overhead, but he cannot; instead he sees one white object (a rock?) on the sloping rim of a crater.

He doubts it is the LM because if it were, the LM would be highly tilted and the astronauts there would have noticed the tilt.



But they hadn't reported any post-landing tilt.

He concludes the 'object' is not the LM.

“Improvements” to original story

- “Object” became “objects”
- Comments attributed to Armstrong
- Other weird photos from mission added in [pre-descent LM window reflections]
- “Secret channel” invoked to explain absence in transcripts of fictionalized comments
- Anonymous “amateur radio listeners” cited as unverifiable sources

Summary

- Interleaving of two parallel conversations from the moon – one from the two men walking the surface and the other for the third man trying to spot the landing site – could have puzzled listeners who could not distinguish individual astronaut voices on radio.
- Description of white object[s] on a crater rim and issue of ‘knowing they were there’ lent itself to imaginative misinterpretation
- Subsequent wild stories and accusations sprang from garbled memories of actual transmission as well as outright fabrications
- No serious attempts were made to verify this sensational interpretation
- Better photos showed ‘white object’ was bright crater