Planetary Geodesy

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Your correspondent　Prof. Dr. Jürgen Oberst
Telephone +49 30 67055-　336/401
Telefax +49 30 67055-　402
E-mail　juergen.oberst@dlr.de

2012-07-01

To whom it may concern: Evaluation

IKI (Space Research Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences)

IKI is an internationally well-known Research Institute concerned with Outer Space and Solar System sciences. It is clearly the largest such Institute in Europe. IKI is responsible for the implementation of missions in the Russian space program. At the same time, IKI is home for a large number of scientists and engineers, who are traditionally known for excellent theoretical and experimental scientific work.

While IKI was focused very much on national space projects in the past, IKI has become an important international player in recent years. IKI participates actively in NASA and ESA missions, such as Mars Express and Venus Express (with cooperation in the ExoMars mission currently being under negotiations). On the other hand, IKI is encouraging and supporting very much international participation in Russian space missions.

IKI is running international workshops and large conferences, among them the well-known Solar System Symposium, which takes place every year. Also, scientists from IKI contribute to workshops and conferences in other countries, and increasingly publish in international journals.

Judging from my work area, the current most important projects of IKI is the implementation of the Luna Glob and Luna Resource Missions. Both missions are targeted for the Lunar poles with their main goal to search for volatiles within the Lunar regolith. These missions are fully in the line of current international scientific interest and will certainly advance our understanding of the Lunar surface and space environment and will prepare the way for future human explorers. As Lunar landers require joint measurement strategies, such missions offer excellent prospects for international cooperation.

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I have met with researchers from IKI as early as in the 1980's and have visited IKI for the first time in 1992 when I was working in the team of the German HRSC (High Resolution Stereo Camera) intended to fly on the Russian Mars 94 / Mars 96 missions.

In the past two years, I have been visiting Moscow and IKI frequently because of my duties as a project leader at MIIGAiK (Moscow State University for Geodesy and Cartography). At MIIGAiK, we are training students and young scientists to process spacecraft image data for studies in planetary geodesy and cartography. Using stereo data from the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter camera, MIIGAiK is compiling accurate topographic and thematic Lunar maps. Our goal is to support the Luna Glob and Luna Resource missions by assessing science potentials and determining engineering constraints of candidate landing sites. We had several technical meetings at IKI where we had very fruitful discussions with Luna Glob scientists.   We are grateful that IKI has been very supportive to this new project at MIIGAiK.

In the past years, I was very pleased to see a growing number of students and young scientists at IKI. Indeed, I would very much like to encourage IKI to provide attractive jobs for Russia's new generation of space engineers and explorers.

Prof. Dr. Jürgen Oberst

Prof. Oberst is head of the Planetary Geodesy Department at the German Aerospace Center (DLR), Institute of Planetary Research, Professor at the Technical University Berlin, and leading scientist of a laboratory project "Planetary Geodesy, Cartography, and Future Exploration" at MIIGAiK (Moscow State University for Geodesy and Cartography) supported by a mega grant from the Government of the Russian Federation.