COMPLEX FEATURES ON EUROPA'S SURFACE REVEALED BY JUNO'S STELLAR REFERENCE

UNIT. Heidi N. Becker¹, Meghan M. Florence¹, Jonathan I. Lunine², Paul M. Schenk³, Candice J. Hansen⁴, Martin J. Brennan¹, S.J. Bolton⁵, and James W. Alexander¹

¹Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology (4800 Oak Grove Drive, Pasadena CA, 91109 USA; heidi.n.becker@jpl.nasa.gov), ²Cornell University, Dept. of Astronomy (Ithaca, NY, USA), ³Lunar and Planetary Institute, USRA (Houston, TX, USA), ⁴Planetary Science Institute (Tucson, AZ, USA), ⁵Southwest Research Institute (San Antonio, TX, USA).

Abstract: On 29 September 2022 NASA's Juno spacecraft performed the first close flyby of Jupiter's moon Europa since Galileo's last encounter with the icy body in 2000. Juno's low-light sensitive Stellar Reference Unit (SRU) [1, 2] was used to capture a broadband visible (450-1100 nm) image of Europa's surface at a resolution of 256-340 m/pixel (subspacecraft altitude: 412 km) while the surface was illuminated only by Jupiter-shine (incidence angle: 48-51 degrees).

This innovative use of a high-resolution star camera, designed to detect dim stars, produced the highest resolution image ever of this region. It revealed an intricate network of cross-cutting ridges and lineated bands in a $3x10^4$ km² region between $\sim 0.6^\circ$ N and $43.5-51^\circ$ W that was previously identified as "ridged plains and undifferentiated linea" based on high-sun 1 km Galileo coverage [3]. An intriguing 37 km (east-west) by 67 km (north-south) chaos feature is a newly resolved highlight of the SRU image, appearing to have undergone a unique geologic process relative to its surroundings. Low-albedo deposits, similar to features previously associated with hypothesized subsurface activity [4], are seen to flank several proximal ridges.

The SRU image allows us to fill gaps in the geologic mapping of Europa's surface in a region particularly rich with cross-cutting features, and provides a new set of visual clues to interrogate against theories of the chaos formation processes. Our presentation will discuss our ongoing study of these topics [5].



Figure 1. Juno Stellar Reference Unit (SRU) image of Europa's surface collected 29 September 2022 under illumination by Jupiter-shine.

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References:

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