

SOLID TERRAIN MODELING PRODUCES NEW VIRUNGA MOUNTAINS MODEL FOR NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S EXPLORERS HALL

Space Shuttle Mission Data Results in Vast Improvement Over Existing Model

FILLMORE, CA – November 20, 2002 – Solid Terrain Modeling (STM), manufacturer of the world's most accurate 3-D solid terrain models, has completed a new model of the Virunga Mountains straddling the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda for National Geographic's Explorers Hall museum in Washington, D.C. This model will replace the one that has been on display for almost a year. New data sets allowed the creation of a more accurate and visually appealing model.

Lawrence Faulkner, STM's president, said, "We were able to create a far better model of this wonderful 'Gorillas in the Mist' nature preserve, because better elevation and image data are now available."

NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) supplied the enhanced data sets for the 8-foot by 8-foot model. JPL was able to construct a cloud-free view of this tropical area by piecing together a recently acquired Landsat satellite scene with a scene from the Landsat data archive. The elevation data is from the Shuttle Radar Topography Mission (SRTM), which was designed to produce the first detailed near-global elevation model. The SRTM data was acquired in February 2000 during a flight of the Space Shuttle Endeavour, sponsored by NASA and NIMA.

"The U.S. Geological Survey EROS Data Center made key contributions in providing Landsat imagery. This colorful model shows prominent volcanoes and lava flows in the East African Rift System," said Lisa Ritter, Remote Sensing Specialist, National Geographic Maps.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo section also includes Goma, a city of 500,000. Last January, a major lava flow ran through Goma, killing more than 100 people and destroying 12,000 homes. The active volcanoes threaten not only Goma, but also Gisenyi in Rwanda, agricultural regions, and the protected areas of the national parks, including the wildlife habitat of the mountain gorilla.

ABOUT STM MODELS

Lawrence Faulkner and Mark Fisher spent 10 years developing a revolutionary, patent-pending technology to produce the world's most accurate, full-color, 3-D solid models of geographic terrain. In August 2000, they founded Solid Terrain Modeling Inc. (STM) to bring their spectacular models to the marketplace.

STM models provide a level of comprehension not found in any other mapping technology. People can gather around an STM model and view it from any angle. They can discuss it, touch it, and point to specific features on it. As they do, everyone in the group "gets" it -- the scale, distances, terrain, coloration, points of view, sight lines and more.

To produce a model, STM uses digital elevation and imagery data for the selected geographic area. The digital elevation data controls STM's highly calibrated cutting machine as it carves the model into high-density plastic foam. Then, STM's printing machine applies the image data directly onto the model's surface. (Other images, such

as maps, photos, graphics, and text can also be printed on a model.) The result is an exact replica of the geographic area -- in breathtaking detail, and in brilliant color.

STM models can be any size -- and can range in subject from the topography of a single hillside to the geography of an entire country, continent or ocean. They are extraordinarily useful for any application that requires an understanding of geographic terrain. And, because both cutting and printing are computer-controlled, a 4-foot by 8-foot model can be completed and shipped in three days.

Seventeen STM models are now on display at the National Geographic Society's Explorers Hall museum in Washington, DC. Currently, STM models are used by law firms; emergency response groups (fire, police, search and rescue); land management offices (construction, civil engineering, real estate, recreation); developers; transportation agencies; utilities (oil, gas, hydro); architects; museums; military, federal, state and municipal agencies; the U.S. Department of Defense and others. However, potential uses are limited only by the imagination.

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ABOUT EXPLORERS HALL

Explorers Hall is located on the first floor of the National Geographic Society's headquarters at 17th and M Streets, N.W. It is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. and Sundays from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. It is closed December 25. Admission is free. For information on the exhibits, the public should call (202) 857-7588. For information on the exhibits, the public should call (202) 857-7588 or visit www.nationalgeographic.com (or use AOL Keyword: NatGeo).

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