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Robert D. Watt

December 1969

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SEARCH FOR MAGNETIC MONOPOLES IN THE
LUNAR SAMPLES OF APOLLO 11*

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December 1969

Abstract

An electromagnetic search for magnetic monopoles of the minimum size predicted by Dirac, or of any larger magnitude, has been performed on 8.37 kilograms of lunar surface material returned by the Apollo 11 crew. No monopole was found. This experiment sets new limits on the production cross section for monopoles, and on their occurrence in cosmic radiation.

For several years now, the hunt has been on for particles that would interact with the magnetic field, just as electric charges interact with the electric field, acting as a source for the field and being accelerated by it. These particles, called monopoles, would be stable. They would have a magnetic charge measured by an integer ν , using the Dirac charge $\approx 3 \times 10^{-8}$ emu as a unit (1). Their existence would give credence to the only known explanation for the extraordinarily accurate

phenomenon of charge quantization (2). According to a recent theory (3) they would be the most fundamental particles, the building blocks of the universe. However, no such particle or combination with a net nonzero magnetic charge has ever been found (4-6).

In view of the negative results of these experiments (4-6), the lunar surface is considered to be the most likely hiding place for monopoles, whether they belonged to the primary cosmic rays or were produced in the collision of a high energy cosmic-ray particle with a nucleon of the lunar surface. In either case the lunar material would slow the monopole down and trap it. The reasoning that favors the lunar sample involves its great age, 3 to 4 x 10⁹ years, and the small depth to which the surface has been churned during that long period of time. These two factors give the lunar surface the longest known exposure to cosmic rays. Furthermore, the absence of both an atmosphere and a magnetic field on the moon allows the fate of a monopole after it has been slowed down to be assessed with more certainty than it could be on the earth.

Our detection technique relies on the electromotive force induced in a coil by a moving monopole. As in Ref. (7), the sample was transported along a continuous path threading the windings of a coil. In this experiment the coil was made of superconducting material and was short-circuited by a superconducting switch. A small current was stored in the superconducting loop before a sample was run. If a sample containing a monopole had been run, the induced electromotive force would have modified this current. After each sample had been circulated 400 times, the superconducting switch was opened and a signal proportional to the

current in the loop was transferred electrically out of the cryostat, amplified, and finally recorded on an oscilloscope. A real magnetic charge would have been detected as a difference between the signal obtained when the switch was opened and the one normally observed when the opening of the switch interrupted the "standard current" that had been introduced as an overall check on the apparatus. A zero magnetic charge therefore corresponded to a nonzero standard signal. This technique assured us that the equipment was working at all times.

An overall calibration was obtained from a long solenoid in which a known change of current simulated the "missing term" in Maxwell's equations--the one describing the contribution of a "magnetic current density." Statistical study of our signals shows that the measurement of the magnetic charge was affected by a 1-standard-deviation error of about 1/8 of a Dirac unit, when a ride of 400 passes was given to the sample. Therefore, the smallest monopole compatible with Dirac theory was expected to produce an 8-standard-deviation signal. There are reasons to believe the smallest actual charge would have twice the Dirac value (8), and this would correspond to twice as big a signal.

The lunar surface material analyzed in this experiment consisted of 28 individual samples. One sample was composed of three rocks (NASA numbers 10022-1, 10023-1, and 10024-3) weighing all together 213 g. The remaining 27 samples were all fines from the bulk sample (NASA number 10002). The individual samples of fines ranged in weight from 261 to 356 g, and weighed all together 8.13 kg.

The measured magnetic charge of each sample was consistent with zero and statistically incompatible with the hypothesis that the absolute

value of the magnetic charge was as large as or larger than a single Dirac unit of magnetic charge. We can therefore set upper limits on the number of monopoles present in the primary cosmic rays and on the number of monopoles produced by high energy cosmic-ray particles interacting with nucleons of the lunar surface material. We quote our results at the 95% confidence level, including a correction of 10% to the monopole density to take into account the possibility that any individual sample may have contained paired monopoles of opposite charge.

The actual values of both upper limits depend upon unknown properties of the hypothetical magnetic monopole--namely, its charge, its mass, and all the parameters that determine its range inside the lunar material before it comes to rest. Therefore we express our results as a function of n , a parameter which relates the approximate range R , in g/cm^2 , to the kinetic energy E , in GeV, by $R = 0.1 E/n^2$. For low velocities, when the monopole loses energy by ionization only, n in the this formula is a magnetic charge ν measured in Dirac units. At higher velocities, the effective value of n is expected to increase with E due to bremsstrahlung.

The values of both upper limits depend also upon the assumption we make regarding the depth D to which the lunar surface has been churned. We have represented our results in Figs. 1 and 2 for an assumed exposure time of 3×10^9 years and for two mixing depths, (a) 5 cm (solid curve), which represents effectively no mixing depth, and (b) 100 cm (dashed curve).

On Fig. 1, we plot our upper limit for the flux of monopoles per cm^2 -sec-steradian in the cosmic rays. The curves are displayed as a

function of the kinetic energy of the monopole with n and D (defined above) as parameters. The curves A and B represent upper limits known from the most extensive previous searches for monopoles in cosmic rays. Curve A results from examination of deep ocean deposits (5), and B results from an analysis of tracks in obsidian and mica (6). The results of the most extensive search carried out in the earth's atmosphere are given by curve C (9).

The production of monopoles by proton-nucleon interactions depends upon the monopole pair-production cross section, σ . On Fig. 2 we have plotted the upper limit for σ , as it results from our experiment, as a function of the monopole mass for different values of D and n . The flux of primary cosmic rays above the energy E in GeV was assumed to be $1.4 \times E^{-1.67} \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{ sec}^{-1} \text{ sr}^{-1}$ (4).

The incident proton was assumed to lose 40% of its energy at each proton-nucleon interaction (9). The monopole pair-production cross section was assumed to be constant above the threshold energy for monopole pair production. Curves A and C represent the limits for σ as known from Refs. (5) and (9) respectively. Curve D comes from a search for monopoles in a meteorite (10) as interpreted in Ref. (4). Curve E corresponds to the most extensive accelerator study to date (11).

The search for monopoles in the lunar sample of Apollo 11 resulted in the finding that there was neither an unpaired north nor south monopole in any of the 28 samples studied. This result sets upper limits on the presence of monopoles both in the primary cosmic rays and in the proton-nucleon interactions, without any assumption concerning the

the migration of the monopoles through matter under the influence of the magnetic field. If the lunar mixing depth is less than 10 meters over a period of 3×10^9 years, our upper limits are lower than any previous values except in high ranges of mass and energy, as shown on Figs. 1 and 2.

Footnotes and References

*Work done under NASA Contract NAS 9-8806.

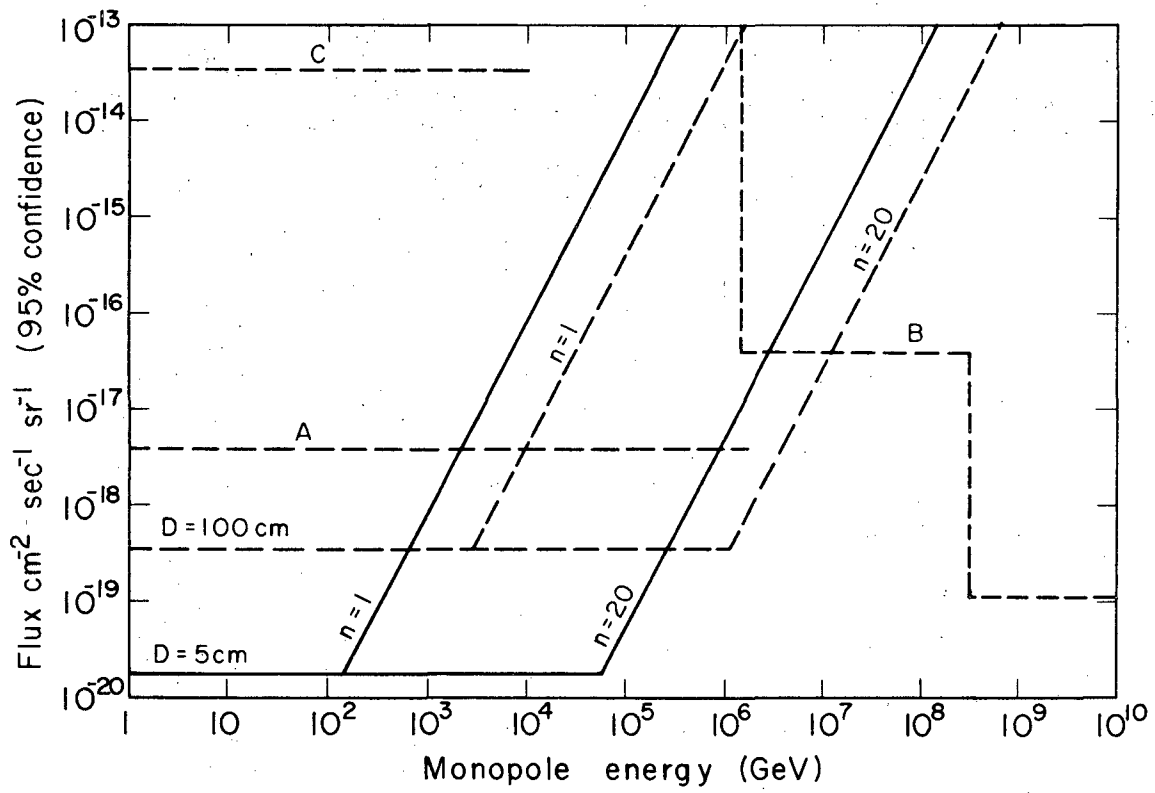
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Figure Captions

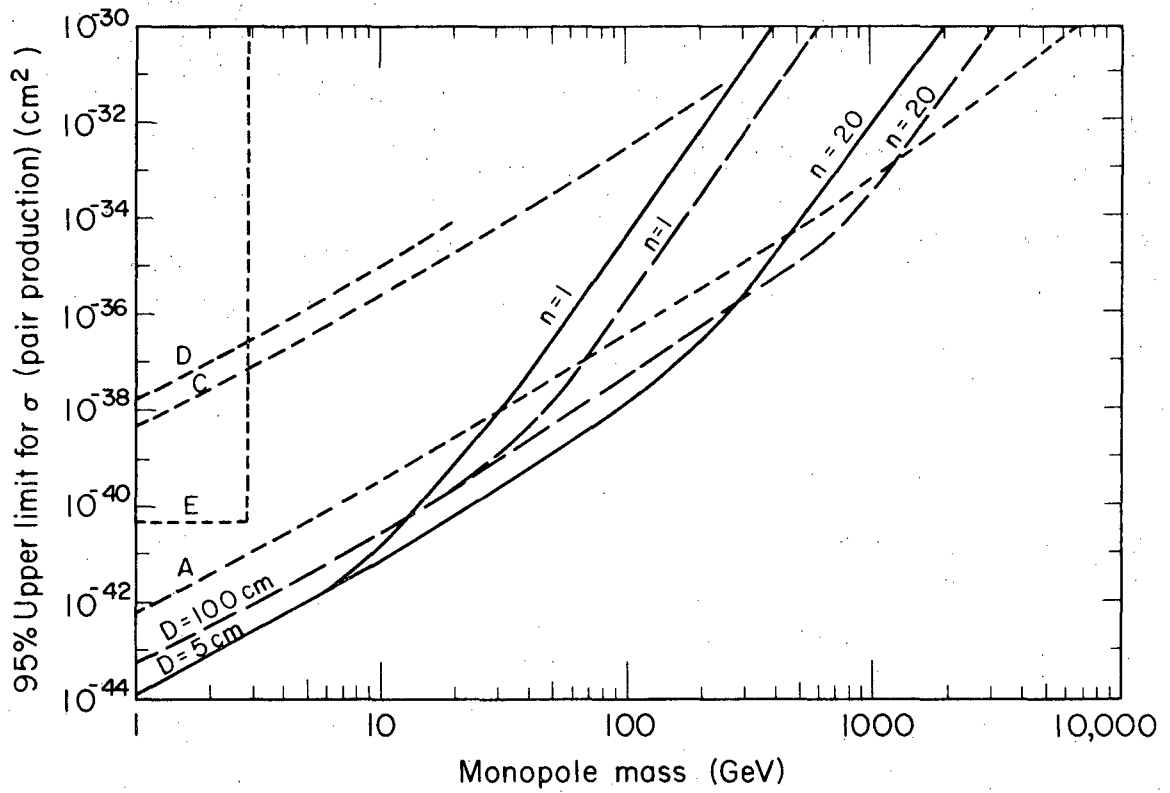
Figure 1 95% confidence level upper limit on the flux of monopoles as a function of monopole energy. The solid and dashed curves for $D=5$ and 100 cm are from this work. The parameters n and D are defined in the text. A is from reference (5); B from reference (6); C from reference (9)

Figure 2 95% confidence level upper limit on the monopole pair production cross section in proton-nucleon collisions. The solid and dashed curve for $D=5$ and 100 cm are from this work. The parameters n and D are defined in the text. A is from reference (5); C from reference (9); D from reference (10); E from reference (11).



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Fig. 1



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Fig. 2

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