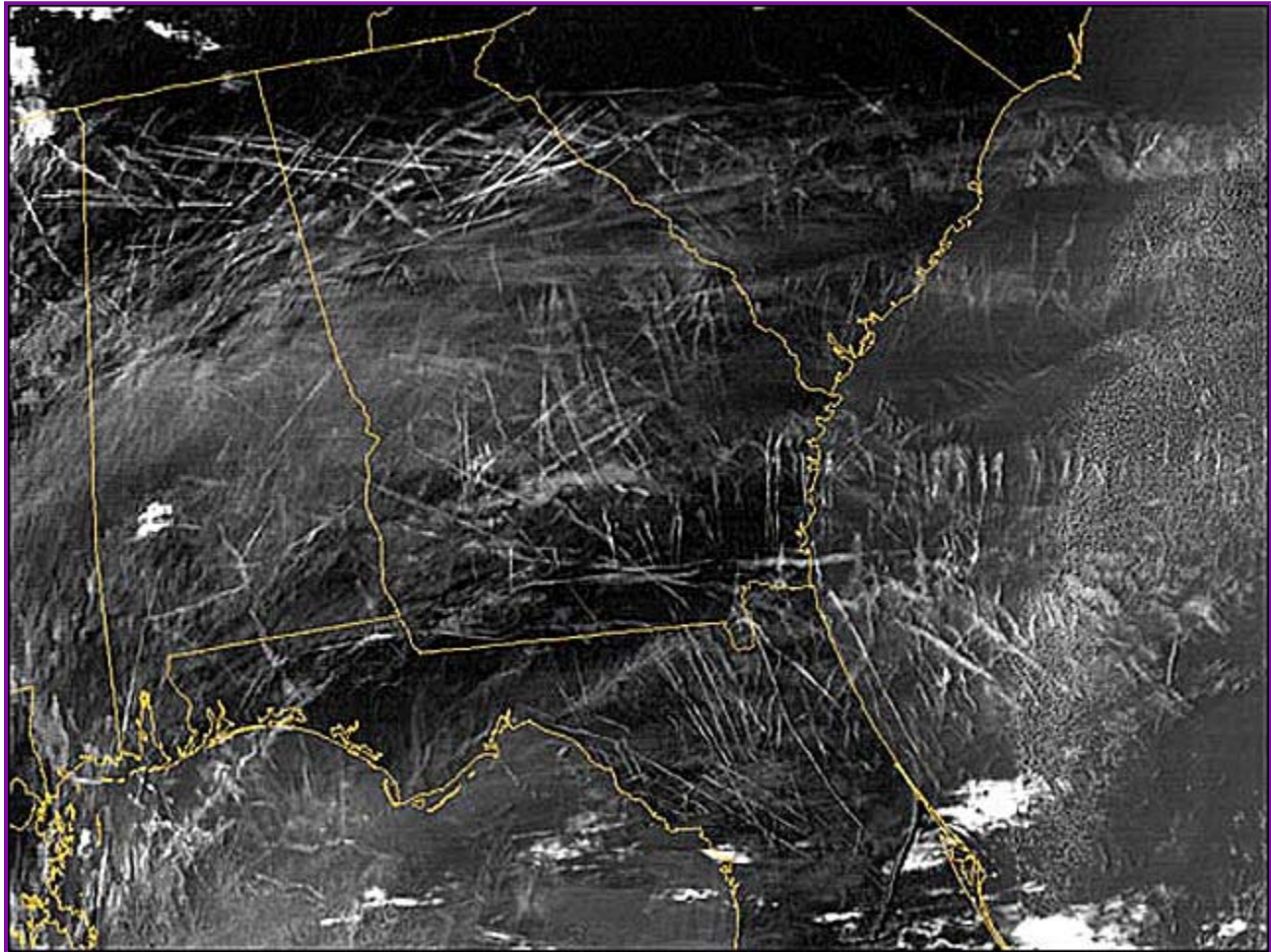


# Astronomy Picture of the Day

[Discover the cosmos!](#) Each day a different image or photograph of our fascinating universe is featured, along with a brief explanation written by a professional astronomer.

2004 October 13



**Contrail Clutter over Georgia**  
Credit: [MODIS](#), [Terra Satellite](#), [NASA](#)

**Explanation:** Artificial clouds made by humans may become so common they change the Earth's climate. The long thin cloud streaks that dominate the [above satellite photograph](#) of [Georgia](#) are [contrails](#), [cirrus clouds](#) created by airplanes. The exhaust of an airplane engine can create a [contrail](#) by saturating the surrounding air with extra moisture. The wings of a plane can similarly [create contrails](#) by dropping the temperature and causing small ice-crystals to form. Contrails have become more than an oddity - they may be [significantly increasing the cloudiness](#) of Earth, reflecting sunlight back into space by day, and [heat radiation](#) back to [Earth even at night](#). The effect on climate is a topic of much [research](#). You can [help NASA](#) measure the actual abundance of contrails by participating in a [contrail](#) counting exercise that runs over the next two days.

**Tomorrow's picture:** [galactic fossil found](#)

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**Authors & editors:** [Robert Nemiroff \(MTU\)](#) & [Jerry Bonnell \(USRA\)](#)

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