Joint Observation of the Galactic Center with MAGIC and CTA-LST-1

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MAGIC is a system of two Imaging Atmospheric Cherenkov Telescopes (IACTs), designed to detect very-high-energy gamma rays, and is operating in stereoscopic mode since 2009 at the Observatorio del Roque de Los Muchachos in La Palma, Spain. In 2018, the prototype IACT of the Large-Sized Telescope (LST-1) for the Cherenkov Telescope Array, a next-generation ground-based gamma-ray observatory, was inaugurated at the same site, at a distance of approximately 100 meters from the MAGIC telescopes. Using joint observations between MAGIC and LST-1, we developed a dedicated analysis pipeline and established the threefold telescope system via software, achieving the highest sensitivity in the northern hemisphere. Based on this enhanced performance, MAGIC and LST-1 have been jointly and regularly observing the Galactic Center, a region of paramount importance and complexity for IACTs. In particular, the gamma-ray emission from the dynamical center of the Milky Way is under debate. Although previous measurements suggested that a supermassive black hole Sagittarius A* plays a primary role, its radiation mechanism remains unclear, mainly due to limited angular resolution and sensitivity. The enhanced sensitivity in our novel approach is thus expected to provide new insights into the question. We here present the current status of the data analysis for the Galactic Center joint MAGIC and LST-1 observations.
1. Introduction

The central part of the Milky Way Galaxy is one of the most studied regions in the sky. Along the Galactic plane, sub-PeV diffuse gamma-ray emission has been detected by the Tibet Air Shower Array [1] and, more recently, neutrino emission has been identified by the IceCube Neutrino Observatory [2]. Both detections are consistent with a scenario of the presence of the "PeVatron" in our Galaxy. With very-high-energy (VHE) gamma-ray observations of diffuse ridge emission spanning about 200 pc in the Galactic Center region, H.E.S.S. argued that the supermassive black hole Sagittarius A* (Sgr A*) supplied PeV Galactic cosmic rays in the past [3].

The Galactic Center has been also observed by MAGIC, a system of two Imaging Atmospheric Cherenkov Telescopes (IACTs) designed to detect VHE gamma rays and operating in stereoscopic mode since 2009 at the Observatorio del Roque de Los Muchachos in La Palma, Spain. The system attains the integral sensitivity of $(0.66 \pm 0.03)^\%$ of the Crab Nebula flux above 220 GeV in 50 hours for the standard zenith angle [4].

The previous MAGIC study using 100 hours of data on the Galactic Center reported a $2\sigma$-level hint of the existence of a spectral cut-off of the diffuse emission at 20 TeV [5]. This result may challenge the idea of PeV hadron acceleration of Sgr A*. To address this potential contradiction in the TeV regime, deeper observations of the Galactic Center leading to better statistics especially above 10 TeV are necessary.

Besides, the Galactic Center has the highest local density of the Weakly Interacting Massive Particles (WIMPs), and thus should be one of the brightest sources of dark matter. Although, likewise H.E.S.S., the spectral line search based on the 223 hours of MAGIC data imposed, on super-symmetric wino, a stringent constraint or even its rejection in an optimistic scenario, a model rejection in the entire accessible energy range has neither been achieved nor a definite discovery [6–8]. Further enhancement in sensitivity or a wider energy coverage is required to probe the uncharted parameter space.

In 2018, the prototype IACT of the Large-Sized Telescope (LST-1) for the Cherenkov Telescope Array (CTA), a next-generation ground-based gamma-ray observatory, was inaugurated at the same site, at a distance of approximately 100 meters from the MAGIC telescopes. Using joint observations between MAGIC and LST-1, we developed a dedicated analysis pipeline and established the threefold telescope system via software, achieving the highest sensitivity in the northern hemisphere.

Aiming at further advancement, not only by collecting data but also by better observation, data of the Galactic Center are jointly under accumulation and analysis. This contribution presents results of the joint analysis using the currently available Galactic Center data.

2. Method

The joint analysis requires quality data both for MAGIC and LST-1, while enabling to check ambient conditions from both perspectives. Following the standard procedure [9, 10], the data quality is verified mainly by ensuring the atmospheric transmission, the night-sky background, and the shower image quality. After the data selections, the dataset in this analysis amounts to about 8-hour livetime. All the data were taken at the so-called wobble mode with the offset angle of 0.5 deg in 2021. As shown in Fig.1, the MAGIC and LST-1 observation of the Galactic Center is
carried out at the large zenith angle: $Z_d \gtrsim 57 \text{ deg}$, which increases the gamma-ray collection area (proportional to the gamma-ray rate) by one order of magnitude, as compared with the standard low zenith angles ($Z_d \lesssim 30 \text{ deg}$) [11, 12].

Employing our newly developed software magicctapipe\(^1\) (v0.2.0), the data are processed from the telescope-wise data into the Data Level 3 (DL3): a list of gamma-ray-like candidates after the reconstruction of the energy, the arrival direction and the particle type, following the standard analysis procedure [13]. In this study, signals are counted within 0.1 deg around Sgr A*, instead of a dynamic arrival-direction cut, in order to avoid a contamination of other gamma-ray signals in the signal or background control regions. Finally, the gamma-ray flux is estimated from the DL3 files through a standard point-source spectral analysis in gammapy [14].

3. Results

Fig. 2 compares the detection significance between MAGIC-only stereo analysis and the joint MAGIC and LST-1 analysis, demonstrating that the joint analysis yields a clearer detection. This rapid significance evolution, aided by the larger collection area of the large zenith angle, will play a key role in observing a short time variability of gamma-ray emission. In particular, although it has not been discovered yet, Sgr A* might be a time variable on a minute or hour scale [15]. The joint analysis will thus serve an important function of verifying this prediction.

Fig. 3 (the so-called theta-square plot) illustrates the radial profile of the gamma-ray-like events. The angle $\theta$ is measured between an arrival direction and the centers of the ON and OFF regions: The ON center is at Sgr A* and the three OFF centers are perpendicularly situated with the pointing positions as the center. The peak at $\theta = 0 \text{ deg}$ clearly shows signals from the position at Sgr A*. Within 0.02 deg$^2$ from the source, the significance against the null hypothesis is 20$\sigma$: the detection is clearly shown. Notably, the baseline of this plot contains not only the irreducible hadronic background, but potentially also the diffuse gamma-ray emission or the gamma rays from

\(^1\)https://github.com/cta-observatory/magic-cta-pipe/tree/v0.2.0
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Figure 2: Time evolution of (a) counts and (b) significance for the MAGIC+LST joint analysis and the MAGIC-alone analysis. The cut conditions are met in the two analyses; the dynamic gammaness cut at a 90% gamma-ray efficiency is applied, and events within 0.1 deg around Sgr A* are extracted. Although a common list of runs is used between the two, the MAGIC-alone livetime is longer than the joint one, as the two operations are not completely in coincidence.

sources near or in the OFF regions. This contamination effect induces a background overestimation, and is more emergent especially for the situation of low background (that is, a small background uncertainty). An alternative analysis, including more sophisticated spatial models, is required to alleviate the contamination.

From the signals in Fig.3 obtained by subtracting the OFF counts from the ON counts within 0.1 deg around the source, the spectral energy distribution (SED) of Sgr A* are reconstructed. In this study, the power law spectral model with an exponential cut-off is used to describe the SED: \( \frac{dN}{dE} = N_0 \left( \frac{E}{E_{\text{ref}}} \right)^{-\alpha} \times \exp(-E/E_{\text{cut}}) \), where \( E_{\text{ref}} = 1 \text{TeV} \). The best-fit values are given by \( N_0 = (4.83 \pm 0.65) \times 10^{-13} \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1} \text{TeV}^{-1} \), \( \alpha = 2.19 \pm 0.13 \), \( E_{\text{cut}} = 18.1^{+35.4}_{-7.2} \text{TeV} \), where all the errors do not include a systematic uncertainty but only show the statistical one.

4. Conclusion and Outlook

The joint analysis between MAGIC and LST-1 being established, data of the Galactic Center is jointly accumulated and analyzed. This study provides the first results by the joint analysis using the Galactic Center data of about 8 hours taken in 2021. Fig.2 confirms that the joint analysis technique brings the fast significance evolution to the gamma-ray observation. On top of this enhanced performance, the squared-theta plot in Fig.3 clearly exhibits an excess at Sgr A*, providing 20\( \sigma \) of significance within a radius of 0.02 deg around the source. The reconstructed SED is consistent with results from the current telescopes, though a relatively wide energy binning has to be used due to the currently limited statistics. These results illustrate the successful analysis even between different-performance telescopes.

This study will be improved by adopting all available data including archival MAGIC data and LST-1 data taken in a monoscopic mode. As with MAGIC, the LST-1 single view of the Galactic Center already functions in shape [16]. In addition, underpinned by the swift evolution of the significance as shown in Fig.2 and the one-order-of-magnitude enhancement of the collection area by the large zenith angle observation, the joint analysis is suitable to probe a time variability on
Figure 3: Distribution of the squared distance between the arrival directions and the region center. The OFF centers are given by rotating the ON (source) position with respect to the pointing positions in the camera coordinates. The detection significance of 20σ is yielded within a circle of 0.02 deg² radius (black dashed line) around Sgr A*.

a scale of a few tens of minutes in the TeV energy range. This capability is almost not feasible at the standard low zenith angle because of the limited collection area; however it may be crucial to investigate phenomena in the vicinity of the central supermassive black hole. Detailed results through the new analysis here presented with the comprehensive data set will be reported elsewhere.

CTA Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge financial support from the following agencies and organizations:

State Committee of Science of Armenia, Armenia; The Australian Research Council, Astronomy Australia Ltd, The University of Adelaide, Australian National University, Monash University, The University of New South Wales, The University of Sydney, Western Sydney University, Australia; Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, and Innsbruck University, Austria; Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq), Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (FAPERJ), Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP), Fundação de Apoio à Ciência, Tecnologia e Inovação do Paraná - Fundação Araucária, Ministry of Science, Technology, Innovations and Communications (MCTIC), Brasil; Ministry of Education and Science, National RI Roadmap Project DO1-153/28.08.2018, Bulgaria; The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada and the Canadian Space Agency, Canada; CONICYT-Chile grants CATA AFB 170002, ANID PIA/APOYO AFB 180002, ACT 1406, FONDECYT-Chile grants, 1161463, 1170171, 1190886, 1171421, 1170345, 1201582, Gemini-ANID 32180007, Chile, W.M. gratefully acknowledges support by the ANID BASAL projects ACE210002 and FB210003, and FONDECYT 11190853; Croatian Science Foundation, Rudjer Boskovic Institute, University of Osijek, University of Rijeka, University of Split, Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing, Croatia; Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, MEYS LM2015046, LM2018105, LTT17006, EU/MEYS CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16_013/0001403, CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/18_046/016007 and CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16_019/0000754, Czech Republic; Academy of Finland (grant nr.317636 and 320045), Finland; Ministry of Higher Education and Research, CNRS-INSU and CNRS-IN2P3, CEA-Irfu, ANR, Regional Council Ile de France, Labex ENIGMASS, OCEVU, OSUG2020 and P2IO, France; The German Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF), the Max Planck Society, the German Research Foundation (DFG, with Collaborative Research Centres 876 & 1491), and the Helmholtz Association, Germany; Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Science and Technology, India; Istituto Nazionale di Astrofisica (INAF), Istituto Nazionale di Fisica Nucleare (INFN), MIUR, Istituto Nazionale di Astrofisica (INAF-OABREMA) Grant Fondazione Cariplo/Regione Lombardia ID 2014-1980/RST_ERC, Italy; ICRR, University of Tokyo, JSPS, MEXT, Japan; Netherlands Research School for Astronomy (NOVA), Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), Nether-
lands: University of Oslo, Norway; Ministry of Science and Higher Education, DIR/WK/2017/12, the National Centre for Research and Development and the National Science Centre, UMO-2016/22/M/ST9/00583, Poland; Slovenian Research Agency, grants P1-0311, P1-0385, I0-0033, J1-9146, J1-1700, N1-0111, and the Young Researcher program, Slovenia; South African Department of Science and Technology and National Research Foundation through the South African Gamma-Ray Astronomy Programme, South Africa; The Spanish groups acknowledge the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation and the Spanish Research State Agency (AEI) through the government budget lines PGE2021/28.06.000X.411.01, PGE2022/28.06.000X.411.01 and PGE2022/28.06.000X.711.04, and grants PID2022-139117NB-C44, PID2019-104114RB-C31, PID2019-107847RB-C44, PID2019-104114RB-C32, PID2019-105510GB-C31, PID2019-104114RB-C33, PID2019-107847RB-C41, PID2019-107847RB-C43, PID2019-107847RB-C42, PID2019-107988GB-C22, PID2021-124581OB-I00, PID2021-125331NB-I00; the "Centro de Excelencia Severo Ochoa" program through grants no. CEX2019-000920-S, CEX2020-001007-S, CEX2021-001131-S; the "Unidad de Excelencia María de Maeztu" program through grants no. CEX2019-000918-M, CEX2020-001058-M; the "Ramón y Cajal" program through grants RYC2021-032552-I, RYC2021-032991-I, RYC2020-028639-I and RYC-2017-22665; the "Juan de la Cierva-Incorporación" program through grants no. IJC2018-037195-I, IJC2019-040315-I. They also acknowledge the "Atracción de Talento" program of Comunidad de Madrid through grant no. 2019-T2/iic-12900; the project "Tecnologías avanzadas para la exploración del universo y sus componentes" (PR47/21 TAU), funded by Comunidad de Madrid, by the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan from the Spanish State, and by NextGenerationEU from the European Union through the Recovery and Resilience Facility; the La Caixa Banking Foundation, grant no. LCF/BQ/PI21/11830030; the "Programa Operativo" FEDER 2014-2020, Consejería de Economía y Conocimiento de la Junta de Andalucía (Ref. 1257773), PAIDI 2020 (Ref. P18-FR-1580) and Universidad de Jaén; "Programa Operativo de Crecimiento Inteligente" FEDER 2014-2020 (Ref. ESFRI-2017-IAC-12), Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación, 15% co-financed by Consejería de Economía, Industria, Comercio y Conocimiento del Gobierno de Canarias; the "CERCA" program and the grant 2021SGR00426, both funded by the Generalitat de Catalunya; and the European Union’s Horizon 2020 GA:824064 and NextGenerationEU (PRTR-C17.11); Swedish Research Council, Royal Physiographic Society of Lund, Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, The Swedish National Infrastructure for Computing (SNIC) at Lunarc (Lund), Sweden; State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) and Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), Switzerland; Durham University, Leverhulme Trust, Liverpool University, University of Leicester, University of Oxford, Royal Society, Science and Technology Facilities Council, UK; U.S. National Science Foundation, U.S. Department of Energy, Argonne National Laboratory, Barnard College, University of California, University of Chicago, Columbia University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Institute for Nuclear and Particle Astrophysics (INPAC-MRPI program), Iowa State University, the Smithsonian Institution, V.V.D. is funded by NSF grant AST-1911061, Washington University McDonnell Center for the Space Sciences, The University of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation, USA.

The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013) under grant agreements No 262053 and No 317446. This project is receiving funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programs under agreement No 676134.

LST Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge financial support from the following agencies and organisations:

Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq), Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (FAPERJ), Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP), Fundação de Apoio à Ciência, Tecnologia e Inovação do Paraná - Fundação Araucária, Ministry of Science, Technology, Innovations and Communications (MCTIC), Brazil; Ministry of Education and Science, National RI Roadmap Project Do1-153/28.08.2018, Bulgaria; Croatian Science Foundation, Rudjer Boskovic Institute, University of Osijek, University of Rijeka, Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing, Croatia; Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, MEYS LM2015046, LM2018105, LTT17006, EU/MEYS CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16_013/001403, CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.18_046/0016007 and CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16_019/0000754, Czech Republic; CNRS-IN2P3, the French Programme d’investissements d’avenir and the Enigmass Labex, this work has been done thanks to the facilities offered by the Univ. Savoie Mont Blanc - CNRS/IN2P3 MUST computing center, France; Max Planck Society, German Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (Verbundforschung / ErUM), Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (SFFs 876 and 1491), Germany; Istituto Nazionale di Astrofisica (INAF), Istituto Nazionale di Fisica Nucleare (INFN), Italian Ministry for University and Research (MIUR); ICRR, University of Tokyo, JSPS, MEXT, Japan; JST SPRING - JP-MISP2108; Narodowe Centrum Nauki, grant number 2019/34/E/ST9/00224, Poland; The Spanish groups acknowledge the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation and the Spanish Research State Agency (AEI) through the government.
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budget lines PGE2021/28.06.000X-411.01, PGE2022/28.06.000X-411.01 and PGE2022/28.06.000X-711.04, and grants PID2022-139117NB-C44, PID2019-104114RB-C31, PID2019-107847RB-C44, PID2019-104114RB-C32, PID2019-105510GB-C31, PID2019-104114RB-C33, PID2019-107847RB-C41, PID2019-107847RB-C43, PID2019-107847RB-C42, PID2019-107988GB-C22, PID2021-124581OB-I00, PID2021-125331NB-I00; the “Centro de Excelencia Severo Ochoa” program through grants no. CEX2019-000920-S, CEX2020-001007-S, CEX2021-001131-S; the “Unidad de Excelencia María de Maeztu” program through grants no. CEX2019-000918-M, CEX2020-001058-M; the “Ramón y Cajal” program through grants RYC2021-032552-I, RYC2021-032991-I, RYC2020-028639-I and RYC-2017-22665; the “Juan de la Cierva-Incorporación” program through grants no. IJC2018-037195-I, IJC2019-040315-I. They also acknowledge the “Atracción de Talento” program of Comunidad de Madrid through grant no. 2019-T2/TIC-12900; the project “Tecnologías avanzadas para la exploración del universo y sus componentes” (PR47/21 TAU), funded by Comunidad de Madrid, by the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan from the Spanish State, and by NextGenerationEU from the European Union through the Recovery and Resilience Facility; the La Caixa Banking Foundation, grant no. LCF/BQ/PI21/11830030; the “Programa Operativo” FEDER 2014-2020, Consejería de Economía y Conocimiento de la Junta de Andalucía (Ref. 1257737), PAIDI 2020 (Ref. P18-FR-1580) and Universidad de Jaén; “Programa Operativo de Crecimiento Inteligente” FEDER 2014-2020 (Ref. ESFRI-2017-IAC-12), Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación, 15% co-financed by Consejería de Economía, Industria, Comercio y Conocimiento del Gobierno de Canarias; the “CERCA” program and the grant 2021SGR00426, both funded by the Generalitat de Catalunya; and the European Union’s “Horizon 2020” GA:824064 and NextGenerationEU (PRTR-C17.11). State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), Switzerland; The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013) under grant agreements No 262053 and No 317446; This project is receiving funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programmes under agreement No 676134; ESCAPE - The European Science Cluster of Astronomy & Particle Physics ESFRI Research Infrastructures has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement no. 824064.

MAGIC Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias for the excellent working conditions at the Observatorio del Roque de los Muchachos in La Palma. The financial support of the German BMBF, MPG and HGF; the Italian INFN and INAF; the Swiss National Fund SNF; the ERDF under the Spanish Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación (MICINN) (PID2019-104114RB-C31, PID2019-104114RB-C32, PID2019-107847RB-C41, PID2019-107847RB-C42, PID2019-107988GB-C22); the Indian Department of Atomic Energy; the Japanese ICRR, the University of Tokyo, JSPS, and MEXT; the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science, National RI Roadmap Project DO1-400/18.12.2020 and the Academy of Finland grant nr. 320045 is gratefully acknowledged. This work was also supported by the Spanish Centro de Excelencia “Severo Ochoa” (SEV-2016-0588, SEV-2017-0709, CEX2019-000920-S), the Unidad de Excelencia "María de Maeztu" (CEX2019-000918-M, MDM-2015-0509-18-2) and by the CERCA program of the Generalitat de Catalunya; by the Croatian Science Foundation (HrZZ) Project IP-2016-05-9782 and the University of Rijeka Project 13.12.1.3.02; by the DFG Collaborative Research Centers SFB823/C4 and SFB876/C3; the Polish National Research Centre grant UMO-2016/22/M/ST9/00382; and by the Brazilian MCTIC, CNPq and FAPERJ.

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