

# Mars500 crew to land on Mars today



Sergei Karpukhin/Reuters

**Scott Maniquet** February 8, 2011 – 2:58 pm

Lost in the turmoil of world politics and the Super Bowl halftime show is some truly startling and historic news: For the first time humans have reached orbit around Mars and are expected to land on its surface today.

At least, that would be the news if it wasn't just a simulation.

You may remember last June, six men — three Russians and one from China, France and Italy — were locked away in an experiment to recreate the conditions of travel to earth's closest planetary neighbour. More to the point, can astronauts live together in a small space for over a year without killing each other?

The experiment is being run by the [European Space Agency](#) and the Russian Institute for Biomedical Problems.

With books, video games and a guitar to keep them occupied, the Mars500 crew will hopefully have enough distractions to keep them from getting on each other's nerves.

"It is not like Big Brother. We do not have surveillance, video cameras everywhere. We hope there will be no fights or scandals," project manager Jennifer Ngo-Anh [told AFP in June](#).

Last Wednesday, after 244 days, the Mars500 crew reached the red planet. Right on schedule too, as luck would have it!

[Mars Daily](#) brings us up to date:

The crew opened the hatch between the mothership and the mockup of a lander that, according to script, was launched separately to Mars.

In the coming days, the cargo inside the 'lander' will be transferred into the habitat and the lander will be prepared for 'undocking' and 'landing'.

The crew will then divide: Russian Alexandr Smoleevskiy, Italian Diego Urbina and Chinese Wang Yue will enter the lander, while the rest of the crew, Romain Charles from France and Sukhrob Kamolov and Alexey Sitev from Russia 'remain in orbit'.

The hatch between the interplanetary spacecraft and lander will be closed on 8 February. The lander will undock and 'touch down' on Mars on 12 February.

The crew are scheduled to engage in three walks on the simulated Mars surface, starting on February 18.

After the excitement of actually doing something, if all goes well, the simunauts will start their long, boring journey home on March 1.

Sometime in early November we will find out if they managed to stay sane.