

Russian space station simulate Martian landing

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A simulation of a mission to Mars has taken place, with two men in spacesuits walking across a pit of sand at a space institute in Moscow.

The pair were volunteers who have spent the last eight months locked away with four other men in windowless steel tubes which were built to represent a spacecraft. The project, called Mars500 is attempting to reveal how the mind and body might cope with a long-duration spaceflight.

Alexander Smoleevskiy from Russia and Diego Urbina from [Italy](#) planted their respective flags on the make believe planet. The volunteers took part in a series of virtual experiments which lasted one hour and 12 minutes and used the assistance of a robot rover. Mission Control Moscow, the organisation which usually manages events in the International Space Station (ISS), oversaw the simulated walk.

The deputy head of the Russian Federal Space Agency, Vitaly Davydov, said that progress had been made. He said after watching video footage of the two men that systems appeared to have been functioning normally. The venture is being managed by the Institute of Biomedical Problems (IMBP) and the pair were said to have 'landed' on the Martian planet last Saturday. The reality was that they had been moved to another compartment set up by the institute.