

**boingboing**

By XENI JARDIN AT 7:58 AM MONDAY, JUL 11

[[Video Link](#)]

Reporting for PBS NewsHour, my friend [Miles O'Brien explores simulated missions to Mars](#)—and in particular, the [European Space Agency's Mars500](#) isolation experiment, in Russia. Five miles from Red Square, they are simulating many of the psychological aspects of a real mission to the red planet.

Three Russians, two Europeans and one Chinese, all volunteers, stepped into a windowless, hermetically sealed mock spacecraft at the Institute of Biomedical Problems on June 3 of 2010, hoping not to break the seal for 520 days. That matches the six-month flight to and from Mars, plus a month to explore the surface.



To conduct an interview with the faux cosmonauts, Miles had to submit video questions and wait the actual amount of time it would take for real space-travelers to transmit video back, based on the parameters of this sim. The participants take the sim very seriously, and wouldn't break it even to do this rare interview.

Others interviewed for the piece include aerospace engineer Robert Zubrin, founder of the [Mars Society](#), an advocacy group that stages mock missions to the red planet on Devon Island in the Canadian Arctic and in the Utah desert.

[Mock Mission to Mars Tests Psychological Rigors of Long-](#)



*[Image above, courtesy ESA: sim participants perform an extravehicular maneuver.]*

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