



'Mars500' astronauts 'mentally drained after 15 months isolation'

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The 'Mars500' astronauts, participating in a simulated mission to the red planet, has just 60 days left to return to Earth, but has already reached their mental limits.

Since June 2010, the crew of three Russians, one Italian, a Chinese national and a Frenchman have been living together in a mock spacecraft, trying to simulate 520 days in space.

Project manager Yevgeni Dyomin told the Interfax news agency that the men are "mentally drained" after their experience in a container in Moscow.

Dyomin, however, said the men are determined to push through until the project ends in November.

"The impatience is huge. The men want to finally see their families and the sun again," The Sydney Morning Herald quoted Peter Graef, from DLR, the German space agency that is assisting with the project, as saying.

The "spaceship" is similar to the reality TV show 'Big Brother'. The men's activities are documented round the clock by cameras to see whether they manage to complete the 105 research assignments they have been given.

"Most experiments have been completed and the level of work has dipped off, which means the stay in a bare environment is getting even more monotonous," said Mr Graef.

Experts say they are doing what they can to keep moods up. They also added that no actual trip to Mars is in the planning.

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