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## Surviving 17 Months In Isolation: Mars500 crew tells of their life in 'Mars'

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Can you endure 17 months in isolation? The six-man crew of the Mars500 mission passed the tough challenge of being 'away' for that long, and with flying colors.

The Associated Press reported that during their first news conference after the completion of the experiment simulating a mission to Mars, the crew of three Russians, a Frenchman, an Italian-Colombian and a Chinese appeared "energetic and joyful."

According to the members of the team, they coped with the fatigue and stress of isolation by keeping busy with their work. And they spend extra time doing exercises, reading books, trying to learn foreign languages.

The researchers admitted that with the long confinement comes the stress as the team members grew tired of each other's company. To cool down tension, the all-male crew of a mock spaceship played video action games, particularly Counter Strike.

The crew members also watched movies and celebrated holidays together.

To imitate actual conditions their communication with their families and space officials via the Internet was sometimes delayed and intentionally disrupted due to 'space travel.' Water is rationed so they showered only once every 10 days, while the food was similar to that on the International Space Station.

Each member was paid 3 million roubles (\$98,300), according to Mars500 project director Boris Morukov.

The \$15 million Mars500 experiment aimed to find out if one can stay healthy and sane while spending 520 days rocketing to the Red Planet and back in a small rocket.

And with the experiment the answer is a yes, according to the researchers.

"This mission was a success and so we can go forward and now plan to go to Mars and move confidently," said Frenchman Romain Charles.

Because of huge costs and massive technological challenges, a real flight to Mars is not feasible in the near future.

NASA is aiming to bring man to a nearby asteroid around 2025 and then on to Mars in the 2030s.