SuitSat Experiment Ended Successfully

March 8 2006

ISS astronaut Mike Finke spacewalks in a Russian Orlan spacesuit in 2004. SuitSat will have no one inside.

The SuitSat-1 experiment, called RadioSkaf - or Radio Sputnik in Russian - has been completed successfully by the International Space Station crew, Sergei Samburov, the project's deputy director, told the Russian Interfax-AVN news agency Sunday. "The last transmission from the RadioSkaf artificial satellite was received on February 18," Samburov said.

"The spacesuit, outfitted with a radio transmitter, broadcast nearly 3,500 messages to the Earth over two weeks."

On Feb. 3, Russian cosmonaut Valery Tokarev and U.S. astronaut Bill McArthur jettisoned an obsolete Russian Orlan M spacesuit, which was

empty except for electronic equipment. The suit contained a radio transmitter that broadcast recorded messages.

The transmission, at 145.900 MHz FM, in the VHF or two-meter band of amateur radio, attracted attention from students and ham radio operators all over the world. The transmissions included suit data, mission time, suit temperature and battery voltage.

Soon after its launch by hand from the station, however, NASA reported that the transmitter had gone dead, but the spacesuit's weak signal was picked up by ham radio operators and the experiment continued as scheduled.

SuitSat-1 was sponsored by Amateur Radio on the International Space Station, an international ham radio working group. The suit's orbit is expected to continue to deteriorate, and it will re-enter Earth's atmosphere and disintegrate within a few days.

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Citation: SuitSat Experiment Ended Successfully (2006, March 8) retrieved 26 June 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2006-03-suitsat-successfully.html