

Image: ESA Cluster's 16-year-old webcam restarted

February 26 2016



Credit: ESA

Last week, flight controllers at ESA's operations centre in Darmstadt,

Germany, recommissioned and tested a 16-year-old webcam on one of Cluster's four satellites.

The [camera](#) is a very low-resolution device, one of which was originally mounted on each of Samba and Rumba only to provide a simple, quick visual confirmation of separation from Salsa and Tango, respectively, during their paired launches in July and August 2000.

"It turns out the operation of the camera is quite simple and very fast, and we have also devised a way to use it in the future without interfering with the prime scientific payload activities," says spacecraft operations manager Bruno Sousa.

It was the team's idea to investigate whether the camera could be restarted, which Bruno saw primarily as an opportunity for training team engineers and as a way to connect with the general public interested in [space technology](#).

"The camera had actually never been used in flight before due to a glitch during launch, but it turns out that it operates quite well after 16 years, and the team are now working to optimise exposure and post-processing settings for the recommissioned device," he adds.

The image comprises 27 frames mashed together into an animation. Earth is seen rotating about the centre of the image because Samba spins for stability. It's a #selfie because, at top left, a small bit of the satellite's second low-gain antenna can be seen.

Provided by European Space Agency

Citation: Image: ESA Cluster's 16-year-old webcam restarted (2016, February 26) retrieved 3 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-02-image-esa-cluster-year-old-webcam.html>

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