

Crew of simulated Mars flight exhausted after 15 months in isolation

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Six men who have been isolated together since June 2010 in a simulated mission to Mars are reaching their mental limits, with only two months left to go in the experiment, researchers said Sunday.

The crew of three Russians, one Italian, a Chinese national and a Frenchman were in simulator trying to simulate 520 days in space, the length of time scientists estimate would be needed for a round trip to the [red planet](#).

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

"The impatience is huge," Peter Graef of DLR, the German space agency, told the German Press Agency dpa. "The men want to finally see their families and the sun again."

The DLR is assisting with the project.

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

The "[spaceship](#)" reminds somewhat of the reality TV show "Big Brother," with the men's activities documented round the clock by cameras to see whether they manage to complete the 105 research assignments with which they have been tasked.

Watchers are keeping an ever more close eye on the men now as they reach their exhaustion points.

"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 Graef.

Experts say they are doing what they can to keep moods up. They add that no actual trip to [Mars](#) is in the planning.

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