

May 28, 2015

Media, Public Invited to Meet and Greet sMars Crew “Returning to Earth”



On June 13th, at 11:00am, six simulated Mars Explorers and their “seventh crewmember” Fitness Celebrity Tony Horton (P90X fitness program) will celebrate the completion of an 8-month research mission by taking a plunge from an Army Chinook helicopter. Falling from the sky at 100 MPH over the Kona side of the Big Island, the crew and Mr. Horton will be guided safely to Earth’s surface with the tandem support of the US Army Golden Knights Parachute Team.

Come watch this exciting re-entry at Old Airport Recreation Area’s soccer fields in Kona. The jumps will begin at 11am, and after landing, there will be opportunity to meet and greet with the crew and the Golden Knights until 3pm.

The Golden Knights have graciously arranged this tandem sky-diving as a simulated re-entry back to Earth’s atmosphere. The crewmembers are returning to “Earth” after living in total isolation for eight months in a Mars-like habitat located on the desolate slopes of Mauna Loa.



The Hawaii Space Exploration Analog and Simulation (HI-SEAS), led by researchers at the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa, includes six crew members, selected from a competitive pool of 700 applicants, who gave up their normal lives to serve as simulated astronauts for eight months. This research is gaining insights into psychological, social, and biological challenges of isolation and confinement.

Inside the habitat, the P90X fitness program motivated the crew's daily commitment to exercise and also became an important aspect of their social interactions. Upon hearing about the impact of his program on the crew, Mr. Horton himself was inspired by their commitment, and decided to join the crew for their "Returning to Earth" celebration.



Like its predecessor – a four-month mission conducted in early 2014 – the data from this 8-month HI-SEAS mission is anticipated to expose many unexpected realities that future Mars explorers will endure once an astronaut crew becomes situated on the planet surface in a small space for a prolonged period of time. NASA estimates that the trip to Mars for a human crew will be eight months each way, not including time spent exploring the surface of Mars.

Once on the ground, University of Hawaii Principal Investigator, Dr. Kim Binsted will introduce the crew and give a brief overview of some of the mission's accomplishments. Members of the HI-SEAS crew will be available for media interviews and conversations with the general public about their unique experiences. Dr. Binsted and the crew will also make an appearance at the Waikaloa Golf Club from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. on June 13th.

For more information about the HI-SEAS project, visit: <http://hi-seas.org/>

For information about NASA's Human Mars Exploration plan:
<https://www.nasa.gov/content/nasas-journey-to-mars>

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