

What happened to the Mars One Mission?

Mars One was a small private Dutch organization that received money from investors by claiming it would use it to land the first humans on Mars and leave them there to establish a permanent human colony.[1]

From its announcement in 2011 Mars One had made headlines for its ambitious plans, but it faced criticism from experts in the aerospace industry and the scientific community. Many insiders raised doubts about the mission's technical feasibility, the lack of a realistic funding plan, and the viability of establishing a self-sustaining colony on Mars.

Additionally, there were concerns about the selection process for the astronauts and the lack of a robust training program to prepare them for the physical and psychological challenges of living on Mars. [2]

There were many people who wanted to fly to Mars without a return ticket and want to live there until they die. And there were investors who have poured millions into this daring venture called Mars One.

The hype surrounding the project was huge. Founder Bas Lansdorp advertised his visionary idea on all channels. The plan was for humans to land on Mars and set up a colony by 2027. As early as 2018, an unmanned reconnaissance mission should set out on the red planet. Unlike billionaire Elon Musk's Mars flight plans, Mars One passengers were not intended to return to Earth.

On August 31, 2013, more than 200,000 volunteers from 140 countries who wanted to say goodbye to the Earth forever were registered. By September 1 2013, 4,227 applicants had paid their registration fees.

In the following first selection process in December 2013, 1058 applicants from 107 countries remained. In the following round 2 the 'Mars 100' were selected: 50 men and 50 women from 660 medically cleared candidates remained.[3]

In fact, only around 2,000 people are said to have been seriously interested in the one-way trip, according to remaining participants. [1]

From the start, industry experts had doubts about the project, which would have cost several billion dollars. Apparently, there was a lack of money and, there have always been shifts in the project plan.

Mars One founder Lansdorp chose a complex structure for his project. On the one hand there was the Dutch foundation Mars One, which was responsible for the selection of the participants, rocket and landing unit. In addition, the legally separate Mars One Ventures AG should collect money as a marketing machine. The company would promote the spectacle of the mission to the public and issue licenses and broadcasting rights. A TV show to select candidates was planned, but failed. The foundation estimated the cost of flying the first four people to Mars at roughly \$6 billion. Experts described this magnitude as much too low. The company also left open which rocket or capsule should be used. For industry experts, this was a clear alarm signal that there were too many promises but little actual progress on the matter.

The head of the marketing company was initially the German PR consultant and entrepreneur Moritz Hunzinger. Hunzinger officially retired in mid-2017. He sees the reasons for the failure of Mars One Ventures AG in the behavior of project founder Lansdorp. "It's a fantastic idea, but he's work-shy," said Hunzinger when asked by WELT newspaper. "The 'Martians' should have been a lot more diligent. I reproached them a hundred times and explained how it could work."

There was an official announcement from Mars One Ventures in July 2018. At that time it was said that a Swiss financing company would buy the shares for up to twelve million euros. This amount should be enough to finance the next twelve months, explained project founder Lansdorp at the time. But, also the Dutch foundation has not published any official announcements for months. Hunzinger explains that "there are always fortune hunters with big money who can afford to invest in wonderful ideas". But these would have to be implemented.

Now, the company behind the spectacular project created by Dutchman Bas Lansdorp is bankrupt. The trading of the shares of Mars One Ventures AG, based in Basel, listed on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange, was suspended on 5 February 2019 for non-compliance with the FSE regulations when the number of shares was increased in 2017 to raise more money.

In February of 2019 it was reported that Mars One had declared bankruptcy in a Swiss court on 15 January 2019, and was permanently dissolved as a company. The total debt is approximately €1 million. [3]

So, "the ultimate reality TV show" as Erik Seedhouse titled in his excellent Mars One background book did not come about, but obviously, ethical reasons were not the decisive factor. [4]

Hopefully, the inglorious Mars One lesson was learned and remains a warning of how the reputation of an entire space branch could be put in jeopardy.



*Mars One Logo
Founded in 2011 [1]*



*Bas Lansdorp Founder of
Mars One [1]*



*Erik Seedhouse
Book cover [4]*

References

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mars_One

[2] chatGPT: Status of Mars One mission 2021

[3] WELT article, translated and edited by the JSOC Editor

https://www.welt.de/print/die_welt/wirtschaft/article188626623/Der-One-Way-Trip-zum-Mars-ist-abgesagt.html

[4] Erik Seedhouse: Mars One The Ultimate Reality TV Show, Springer Praxis, 2017.