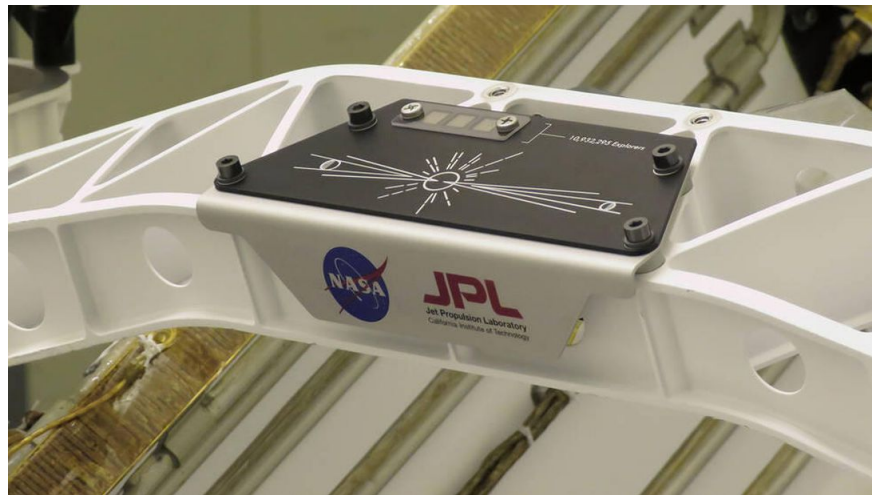


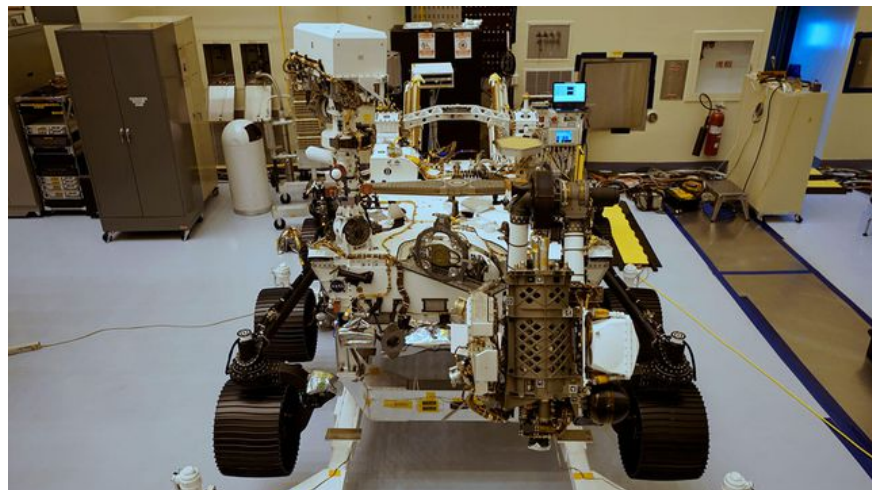
NASA installs the names of 10.9 million space fans on the Mars Perseverance rover

If you signed up for NASA's Send Your Name to Mars campaign, then you're now on board.

NASA's Perseverance rover won't be traveling to Mars alone. Nearly 11 million names are going along for the ride.



NASA said Thursday that it's placed 10,932,295 names on the rover, which is still scheduled to launch in July. The names are etched on tiny silicon chips. They sit on an aluminum plate with a protective barrier to help them endure the dusty conditions on Mars.



The names came through the space agency's Send Your Name to Mars program, a public outreach effort that invited space fans to sign up to have their names become part of the voyage. The plate on the rover calls them "explorers."

The chips sit just above an illustration of the Earth, sun and Mars. "While commemorating the rover that connects the two worlds, the simple illustration also pays tribute to the elegant line art of the plaques aboard the Pioneer spacecraft and golden records carried by Voyagers 1 and 2," NASA said in a statement.

The rover's chips are also etched with the short essays written by 155 student finalists for the Name the Rover contest. The winning entry transformed the machine from the Mars 2020 rover to the Perseverance rover.

While the spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, has slowed work on some space missions, the Perseverance rover is on track for its scheduled launch. If it leaves this planet on time, it will reach Mars in February 2021, and 10.9 million people will celebrate the arrival of their names on the red planet.

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