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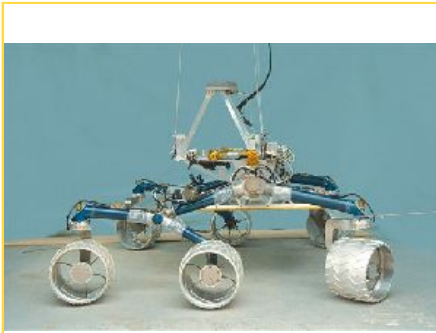
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# Thinking 'Bots May Probe Planets for Us

Posted Jul 6, 08 6:10 PM CDT in Science & Health, Technology



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This undated image released by NASA shows a model of the next-generation Mars rover. Rovers may eventually be able to "think" for themselves. (AP Photo)

(Newser) – WALL-E they aren't, but future space robots may decide how and where we explore other planets, Space.com reports. Using what expert Wolfgang Fink calls "tier-scalable reconnaissance," orbiting spacecrafts could choose where to deploy airships that drop rovers on planet surfaces. NASA and Europe may test the software on a planned 2017 mission to Titan and Europa.

At issue is signals from Earth, which can take an hour to reach Saturn or Jupiter, and leave robots unable to react to surprises like landslides or geysers. The ideal gizmo will hunt for anomalies and send data back to Earth, Fink said, but won't get in trouble like inquisitive WALL-E: "Curiosity in itself is not present in any of our machine systems."

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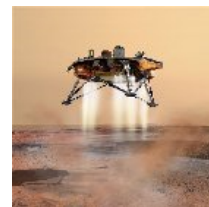
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Jun 5, 07 8:51 AM CDT



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