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USA Mathematical Talent Search

Year	Round	Problem
25	1	1

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Year	Round	Problem
25	1	2

We have our six numbers, $x, y, z, x - y, y - z, x - z$, all of which are prime. Firstly, x, y , and z must be distinct. If they are not distinct, then one of $x - y, y - z$, or $x - z$ must not be zero, which is not a positive integer. Let us then split this problem into two cases:

1. None of x, y, z are 2

If this is true, then x, y and z must be odd, as there are no even primes other than 2. However, this means that $x - y, y - z, x - z$ must be even, as they are the result of subtracting two odd numbers. Therefore, $x - y$ and $y - z$ must both be 2, since it is the only even prime. However, if

$$\begin{cases} x - y = 2 \\ y - z = 2 \end{cases}$$

Then

$$\begin{aligned} x - z &= (x - y) + (y - z) \\ &= 2 + 2 \\ &= 4 \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, $x - z$ is not prime, and therefore, if x, y and z are not 2, then at least one of $x - y, y - z$ or $x - z$ is not prime.

2. one of x, y, z is 2 We know that z must be 2, as $x - z > 0$ and $y - z > 0$, $x > z$ and $y > z$, and 2 is the smallest prime. Because we know $z = 2$, $x - 2$ and $y - 2$ must be prime. Additionally, x and y are odd, as they are distinct from z and 2 is the only even prime. Therefore, $x - y$ is even, as it is the result of subtracting two odd numbers. The only solution for $x - y$ is therefore, 2, and therefore, $x = y + 2$

Since $x = y + 2$ and $y - 2$ must be prime, $x - 4$ must be prime.

$x, x - 2$ and $x - 4$ must all be prime. But this is impossible, as $x, x - 2$ and $x - 4$ are all distinct mod 3, and therefore by pigeonhole principle, one of them is divisible by 3

Therefore, there are no triplets (x, y, z) such that $x, y, z, x - y, y - z, x - z$ are all prime.