

# Autonomous undersea robot developed

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University of Hawaii scientists say they are close to completing the nation's first autonomous robotic vehicle for deep-ocean work.

The \$12 million battery-powered aluminum submersible is about the size of a sport utility vehicle. The robotic unit has computers and sensors that allow it to make a decision to perform a task and a 5-foot, 150-pound autonomous manipulator, or arm, the Honolulu Star-Bulletin reported Tuesday.

Song Choi, assistant dean of the university's College of Engineering, said 99 percent of the vehicle's system is autonomous. He said 1 percent is semiautonomous for safety, allowing a signal to be sent to the vehicle to stop and return.

The robotic undersea vehicle, designed to operate to a depth of about 4 miles, is about 90 percent completed. It will be able to go to a target automatically, and perform a task with no humans involved, Choi said.

"The ultimate goal is to leave it in the water, and it will come back when the batteries are down," said Choi, adding, "Safety-wise, it can't get better."

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