

Makers of infamous BigDog robot unveil human version - PETMAN (w/ video)

November 1 2011, by Bob Yirka

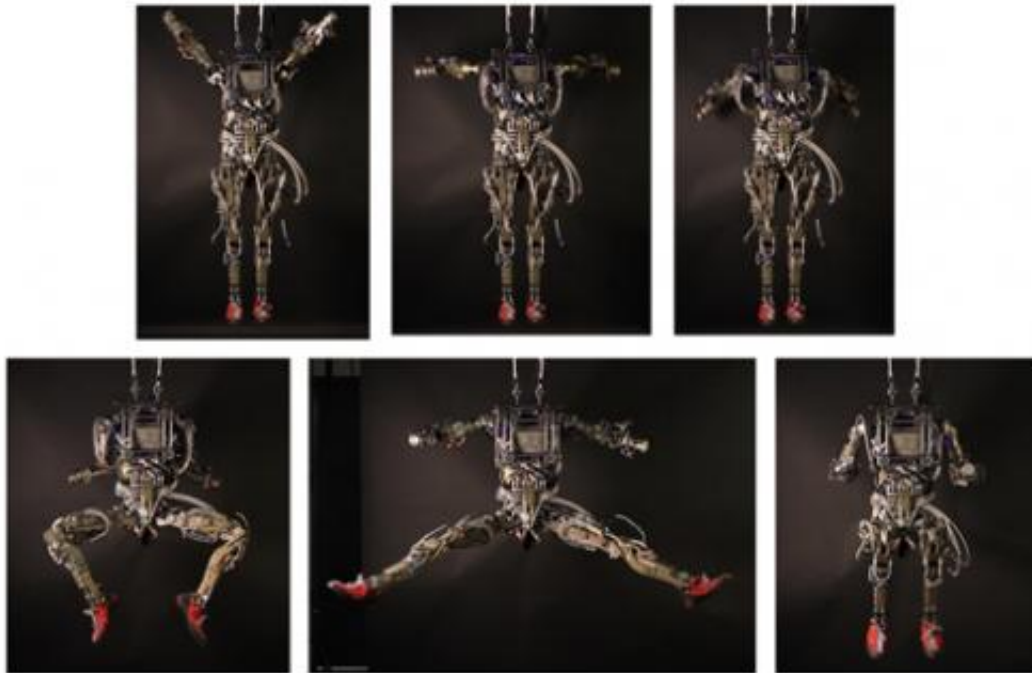


(PhysOrg.com) -- Uh oh. Boston Dynamics, makers of the BigDog robot that can haul stuff around for the military has released a video of PETMAN, a human version that looks like a combination of the Terminator and a Cylon from Battlestar Galactica. Maybe even scarier is the fact that it walks like John Wayne; just enough attitude to let you know he's not someone to be messed with.

Interestingly, the robot wasn't made to scare anyone, or even to go into battle. It was designed to mimic the way human soldiers move so as to test army clothes for use in hazardous environments, i.e. chemical warfare. In addition to moving like a human being, it also simulates breathing and sweats when made to do a lot of work, like running and doing pushups. Because of its purpose, the engineers at Boston Dynamics haven't yet completed a neck and head, which means PETMAN (Protection Ensemble Test Mannequin) has nothing on his shoulders but a blinking red light. And speaking of lights. He, or it, also has an eerie blue glow going on behind his chest plate. Not sure why, but it absolutely adds to the scariness of the big guy.

PETMAN is just under six feet tall, and weighs close to 180 pounds, which is what you get if you average the height and weight of the average human American soldier. He's also tethered, which softens the fear factor a bit, but not really all that much when it is recalled that BigDog was tethered when first seen on video too.

[Boston Dynamics](#) was founded by some really smart people from MIT, and it's funding for most of its projects such as this one (\$26.3 million) come from the U.S. Defense Department, e.g. DARPA. And while the DoD maintains that it's reason for paying for the creation of PETMAN is to test uniforms, it's hardly likely that it's interest will remain there indefinitely as it's hard to ignore the emotional reaction that most people experience upon viewing the video. Seeing it in person, weaponized, on the battlefield, likely would inspire a new level of terror in enemy combatants and could conceivably lead to changes in the ways unconventional wars are fought. Just as is happening already with drones.



Despite the video, the days of [robot](#) warriors are still a ways off, but PETMAN will have other uses likely much sooner. Spokespeople for the company say it could also be used to assist in search and rescue operations in hazardous environments such as what was encountered in the Fukushima disaster. PETMAN is scheduled to be delivered to the Army some time next year.

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More information: www.bostondynamics.com/robot_petman.html

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