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Putin Meets Russia's New Terminator-Style Robot Warrior

By The Moscow Times

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Russia's President Vladimir Putin (C) looks at a human-like combat robot during a visit to the Central Research Institute for Precision Machine ("Tochmash") in Klimovsk, outside Moscow, Jan. 20, 2015.

With Russia's military modernization plans set to boost defense spending to a record 3.3 trillion rubles ($50 billion) this year, President Vladimir Putin got the chance to meet the army's newest recruit — a humanoid battle robot.

In a video taken by the state-owned RT news agency earlier this week, Putin witnesses Russia's combat robot, clad in a camouflage uniform, navigate an all terrain vehicle at one of the military's premier research institutes, the Central Research Institute for Precision Machine Building ("TsNIITochmash," by its Russian acronym).

The combat applications of the robot, which carries no visible weapons and can only move at a crawl, are unclear.

The other problem is that, like other robots, it's dumb. Unable to learn or make independent choices, modern robots are critically dependent on very literal human instructions. Although remote-operated drones have already become a staple of modern air forces, autonomous humanoid combat robots are a long ways off.

But while Terminator-like machines may be still relegated to the movies, Russia is still enthusiastic about the combat applications of advanced robotics.

In the near term, Russia is looking to deploy automated tanks and armored vehicles capable of choosing and attacking targets without any human assistance.

These vehicles, according to U.S. science magazine Popular Science, will not have the authority to choose and execute targets at their leisure, but will instead have human operators who give the ultimate permission to fire.

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