Robot Dogs Join US Air Force Exercise

Discussion > Advanced 8

Exercise 1 – Vocabulary

simulate	To imitate conditions that exist in real life, usually for research.
[verb]	*Ex: Scientists used the latest technology to **simulate** conditions on Mars.*

hostile	Showing or feeling opposition or aggression; belonging to the military of an enemy.
[adjective]	*Ex: The **hostile** expression on his face scared me.*

airstrip	A piece of land from which planes can take off and land.
[noun]	*Ex: There's a private **airstrip** and heliport near the resort.*

terrain	An area of land with regard to its appearance or physical features.
[noun]	*Ex: The hike passes through mountainous and rocky **terrain**.*

agile	Able to move quickly and without effort.
[adjective]	*Ex: Cats are more **agile** than dogs.*

Exercise 2 – Reading

Read the text aloud with your tutor and discuss the key points.

Robot Dogs Join US Air Force Exercise

Robot dogs have been used by the US Air Force in one of the military's biggest ever high-tech experiments.

The robots took part in a training session between September 1 and September 3 at the Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada. It was part of a larger exercise involving every branch of the US military, including the Coast Guard, across 30 locations between August 31 and September 3.

The Air Force tested the dog-like robots, called Vision 60, in an exercise that simulated landing on a potentially hostile airstrip. The robots were used to identify possible threats while human soldiers stayed close to their aircraft.

They have been created by Ghost Robotics to help with tasks including remote inspection, mapping, communications and security. They can be used on any type of terrain and carry different types of sensors and communications equipment.

"The dogs give us visuals of the area, all while keeping our defenders closer to the aircraft," said Master Sergeant Lee Boston.

They are less complex than other walking robots, which Ghost Robotics says makes them both tougher and more agile. The company calls them "unstoppable."

The dogs are a part of the US military's Advanced Battle Management System (ABMS). The system uses artificial intelligence and rapid data analysis to find and eliminate threats to the military in space and to help locate possible attacks from missiles and other weapons on land.

This isn't the first time robot dogs have been tested by the US military. In 2012 it tested the AlphaDog, developed by Boston Dynamics, which was able to carry up to 180 kilograms and walk 32 kilometers without stopping. However, it was retired at the end of 2015 because it was so loud it was feared that it would give away troop positions.

Industry experts are growing more confident that robot systems will soon be ready to work alongside humans in real operations, taking over dangerous or physically demanding tasks.

Exercise 3 – Discussion

Discuss the following questions with your tutor.

1. What are your thoughts on the robot dogs trialed by the US Air Force?

2. What role do you think robots will play in warfare in the future?

3. Do you have any concerns about the military use of robots and artificial intelligence?

4. Would you support an increase in military spending in your country? Why? Why not?

5. Have you had a chance to interact with a robot?

6. Are robots or artificial intelligence used in your line of work?

7. What industries do you think will benefit most from the use of robots and artificial intelligence?

8. Do you think you'd enjoy working in robotics? Why? Why not?