

Reindeer robots: 'Twas the fright before Christmas (w/ Video)

December 24 2015, by Nancy Owano



Massachusetts-based robot makers Boston Dynamics have delivered a video as a Happy Holidays message. Tech-watching sites and their readers chimed in to express what they thought about the message.

The video shows Boston Dynamics' robots pulling a sleigh. A woman wearing a Santa suit and hat is the passenger. She waves at the camera.

"Happy Holidays from Boston Dynamics."

Consider. Animal-like legged robots that look destined for the battlefield and search-and-rescue pits pulling Santa's sleigh to deliver gifts for the world's children.

Organizations worldwide, from DARPA, the US Army, Navy and Marine Corps to Sony Corporation [turn](#) to Boston Dynamics for advice and for help creating the most advanced robots on Earth. If the video was prepared for doing something to just be named for their advanced robots, they did succeed.

"In a sinister Christmas video, prancing military [machines](#) pull a sleigh," said the subhead in *Popular Science* on Wednesday.

Boston Dynamics, the maker of military-grade robots capable of carrying cargo, balancing, running really fast, and hurling cinderblocks across the room wants to wish you a happy holidays, wrote Mary Beth Griggs in *Popular Science*.

"In this (what's the opposite of heartwarming?) holiday video we see three of Boston Dynamic's Spot [bots](#), the younger sibling to the company's BigDog, pulling a sleigh," wrote *Gizmodo*'s Andrew Liszewski.

The robots are from the company's Spot line of robots. A video released earlier this year said that "Spot is a four-legged [robot](#) designed for indoor and outdoor operation. It is electrically powered and hydraulically actuated. Spot has a sensor head that helps it navigate and negotiate rough terrain. Spot weighs about 160 lbs."

The video showed Spot climbing steps, traversing [rough terrain](#), getting kicked and yet keeping its balance on all fours.

I Programmer's headline was "Happy Holidays From Boston Dynamics - A New Branch Of The Uncanny Valley." The writer said in general that there was "something a tiny bit unnerving about [watching](#) any of these quadrupeds walking or trotting. The reason for the discomfort seems to be that they move like animals we know and yet they are clearly not animals." He presented the video card on the site "To take us right into its depths." His parting last line: "Try not to have nightmares."

Carl Engelking in *Discover* said Spot may one day serve as a [battlefield](#) scout; earlier this year the Marines tested Spot in field trials.

Back in September, *IGN* quoted DARPA roboticist Ben Swilling: "I think a robot like Spot has [tons](#) of opportunities [Marines] could use it for, like scouting or load carriage."

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