

Newsworthy Trends

Futuristic Weapons Take The Spotlight

(NAPSA)—With the forever-changing landscape of military combat and weapons, the outlook for warfare dominated by large-scale war machines seems like an inevitability rather than a possibility. Taking a glimpse into the future, a new video game puts players in control of bipedal walking tanks called Wander Panzers (WAPs), also known as “wanzers,” in the midst of a military operation to quell an impending war. This is a familiar type of combat machine that has been featured in many forms of entertainment, ranging from anime to film to video games, and is beginning to emerge in the real world.

When the first tanks clanked and rumbled onto the battlefield almost a century ago, they were slow and cumbersome machines. However, they had unmatched mobility, crossing trenches and other obstacles with ease on their caterpillar tracks. Tracked vehicles have dominated warfare ever since but even they have limitations. Legs are far more agile than tracks or wheels and foot soldiers operate in mountainous terrain and jungles that are impassable to vehicles. The military has long been interested in vehicles that can match the mobility of a human, but it's a formidable challenge.

The first attempt at humanoid vehicles began in 1962, when General Electric carried out work for the U.S. Army on a Pedipulator, a humanoid vehicle with 12-foot legs. Today, advanced technology has made walking machines a reality. Boston Dynamics' BigDog is a quadruped robot designed to carry supplies for foot soldiers. Thanks to advanced sensors and



Futuristic armor and war machines make one new combat video game even more exciting.

control systems, it can cope with ice and steep slopes, quickly recover its balance after slipping, canter and jump obstacles.

The U.S. Army is also testing exoskeleton technology known as the Human Universal Load Carrier (HULC) made by Lockheed Martin, which uses a pair of robot legs that let the wearer easily carry a 200-pound load uphill. The XOS, by Raytheon's Sarcos lab, is a complete exoskeleton with powered arms and legs. Modern electronics make it highly responsive and the wearer can jog up a slope, kick a football or use a punching bag.

This technology is intended for transporting cargo and might be considered too vulnerable for combat due to the high profile of walking machines. However, they can duck down or even lie flat to take cover. And the comparatively narrow profile and unpredictable movements of bipedal machines will make them a difficult target.

A soldier wearing XOS could carry heavier weapons and better armor than when unassisted. If the Legged Squad Support System were converted into an assault machine rather than lurking behind the troops, it could be armored and armed with a formidable array of weapons.

Much like modern-day soldiers, players of *FRONT MISSION EVOLVED* by video game developers Square Enix and Double Helix Games will need to customize their wanzers to adapt to their surrounding environment and enemy, including camouflage and optimizing mobility for different terrain. Specialized leg parts and upgrades in weaponry help ensure supremacy as players fight high-intensity battles through metropolises such as a futuristic New York City. In addition to the single-player campaign, players can pit their wanzers against opponents from around the world, proving the superiority of their war machines in four different multiplayer modes. The game embeds players in heart-pounding, large-scale action unlike anything they have ever seen before.

The game is rated T (Teen) and available for PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 and Windows PC. For more information, visit www.frontmissionevolved.com.

