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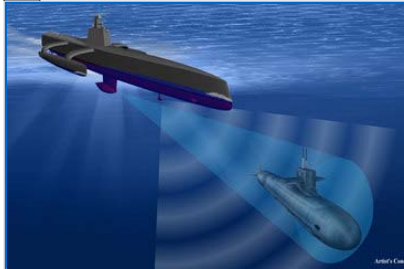
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## Watch a Futuristic Robot Ship Track Enemy Submarines

Jeremy Hsu, TechNewsDaily Senior Writer  
January 16 2013 08:00 AM ET



The ACTUV robot ship is designed to track enemy submarines for up to 90 days at sea.

CREDIT: DARPA

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A U.S. robot ship resembling a "Star Wars" spacecraft skimming the waves could hunt for enemy submarines within a few years.

The unarmed robot ship, called Anti-Submarine Warfare Continuous Trail Unmanned Vessel (ACTUV), aims to track submarines using laser detectors, radar and sonar. Such steady sea surveillance could protect the U.S. Navy's prize [aircraft carriers](#) and other large warships against underwater threats — one of many ways robots can watch the backs of humans on future battlefields.

ACTUV's design has a "trimaran" shape with gull-like "wings" touching the water on either side of the ship's main body, so that it could appear to almost fly over the ocean surface at high speeds. A video released in December 2012 envisions how the robot ship could handle its future tracking missions.




A human pilot could operate the ship remotely until it gets out of harbor, but ACTUV's own robotic brains would take over from there as it patrolled and tracked down submarines.

[Video: [Military's Future Robot Ship Hunts Submarines](#)]

Sea deployments would ideally last from 60 to 90 days without any humans or maintenance. ACTUV could supposedly survive rough wind and waves approaching near-gale conditions of 32 to 38 mph.

The U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) awarded \$58 million to the Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) in August 2012 — [funding](#) intended for building and testing the ACTUV robot ship. DARPA wants the robot ship to begin sea trials by mid-2015.




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NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and Carnegie Mellon University both have a hand in helping create the robot's [software](#) brains. SAIC has also enlisted the help of Oregon Iron Works and Christensen Shipyards to work on ship design, construction and propulsion.

Such a robotic submarine hunter would represent one of many tireless robots working for the U.S. Navy in the near future. The Navy previously experimented with ways to launch drones from its own submarines and [test-fired missiles from robot boats](#).

U.S. Navy warships are also poised to deploy swarms of drone helicopters and warplanes from their decks. The Navy has tried out drone helicopters such as the MQ-8 Fire Scout during operations targeting smugglers and pirates from the air. More recently, the [X-47 robot warplane](#) the size of a fighter jet underwent its first sea trials aboard a U.S. aircraft carrier in late 2012.



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Defense experts have even envisioned the Navy deploying a huge submarine to act as an underwater mothership for swarms of swimming or flying robots. That scenario came up during war games held by the U.S. Department of Defense's NeXTech workshop series in August 2012.

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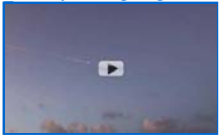
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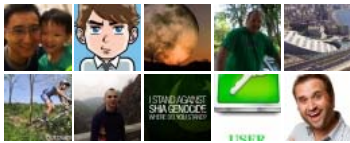
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