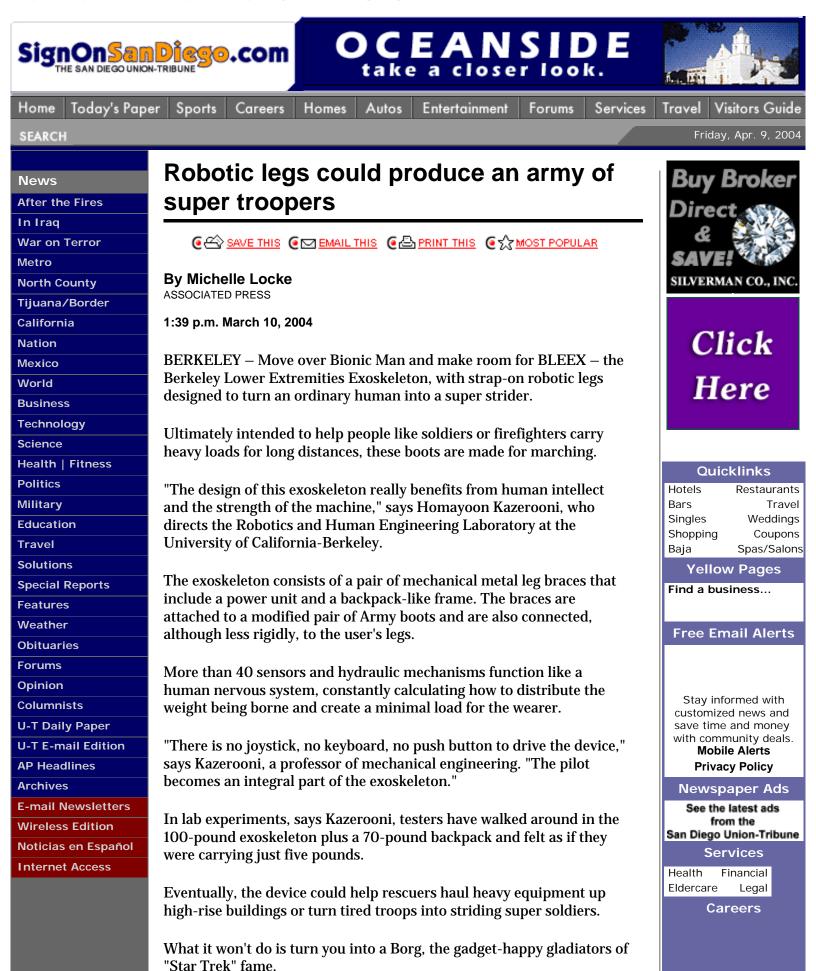
SignOnSanDiego.com > News > Technology -- Robotic legs could produce an army of super troopers





What's in it for you today?

Union-Tribune.

"The exoskeleton is not going to magically transform people into killing machines," says Kazerooni, known to his students as Professor Kaz. "They're really good, it turns out, at enabling firefighters, soldiers, post-disaster rescue crews to carry heavy loads over great distances for hours."

So, no cyborg cops. But at least you get Terminator togs.

Video of the BLEEX in action, which can be viewed at <u>www.me.</u> <u>berkeley.edu/hel/bleex.htm</u>, shows a steel-spiked symbiosis of man and machine, marching about to the techno-industrial drone of grinding motors. The next step for the BLEEX team is making the power source quieter and stronger and miniaturizing components.

BLEEX is funded by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, the Pentagon research and development arm, and was among the projects being showcased at a DARPA tech symposium this week in Anaheim.

The project is one of scores in the field of robotics, which ranges from industrial machines that assemble cars to orthotics, surgical devices that activate or supplement weakened limbs or functions.

Excitement about robotics was fanned by this week's DARPAsponsored Mojave Desert race for fully autonomous vehicles, and the field is making strides worldwide.

In Japan, a leader in robot research, Sony Corp. has developed a childshaped walking robot, known as Qrio, and Honda Motor Co. has also developed a walking, talking humanoid robot. This spring, some Japanese companies plan to start marketing a "robot suit," a motorized, battery-operated device intended to help old and infirm people move around.

The current favorite in the DARPA race came out of Carnegie Mellon University, where professor Matthew Mason is working on intelligent robots including the Mobipulator, which uses its wheels to move things as well as for locomotion.

"There's just too much to do," says Mason. "Every time that there is an advance in computing, there are just so many more things that it becomes possible to do. Robotics is really about interfacing computers to the physical world so that their sensors give them a better concept of what's going on around them – they can make interesting things happen instead of just sitting there in their little beige boxes."

Kazerooni isn't offering test drives of the exoskeleton. But if he were, Mason would be interested.

"It looks really exciting," says Mason. "I'd like to try it on myself."

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