

Best of Last Week – Chinese humanoid robot, Pentagon tests drone swarm and bilingualism found to save brain resources

January 16 2017, by Bob Yirka



The humanoid robot 'Jia Jia' was created by a team of engineers from the University of Science and Technology of China

(ScienceX)—It was a big week for space news, as a team with members from Calvin College, the Apache Point Observatory and the University of Wyoming predicted [an explosion that will change the night sky in 2022](#)—they believe two binary stars will collide, causing a single very

bright star to exist for a period of time. Also, a pair of researchers with New Mexico State University reported on work they had done with [simulations that suggested Planet Nine may have been a rogue](#)—if, indeed, the planet actually exists. And Eden Girma, an undergraduate at Harvard University, presented her findings at this year's American Astronomical Society meeting describing how [the Milky Way's black hole is spewing out planet-size 'spitballs.'](#) Also, a team at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center described [Hubble gazing into a black hole of puzzling lightness](#)—their calculations regarding the mass of galaxy RX J1140.1+0307 aren't adding up.

It was a good week for technology development as well, as [a Chinese humanoid robot turned on the charm in Shanghai](#). A team of engineers with the University of Science and Technology in China unveiled a robot they have called Jia Jia. They describe it has China's first human-like robot, one that is in the form of a female Chinese person. Jia Jia, they report, can hold a conversation while making lifelike facial expressions. Government officials reported that [the Pentagon had successfully tested a micro-drone swarm](#)—the swarm consisted of 103 micro-drones that were launched from fighter jets. They were not preprogrammed, but instead were taught how to collectively make decisions regarding swarming behavior. And a father-son team described how they believe their [liquid metal 3-D printing technique could revolutionize how things are made](#)—because it does not introduce weakened spots due to poor melting.

In other news, a team of physicists at the National Institute of Standards and Technology reported that they had found [a way to "squeeze light" to cool a microscopic drum below the quantum limit](#)—a feat that was thought impossible. And a team at the University of Vermont reported that they found [an association between eating hot peppers and decreased mortality](#).

And finally, if you are looking for ways to keep your brain working in top condition as you age, you may be interested in a study conducted by a team at the University of Montreal—they found that [bilingualism may preserve brain resources as you age](#)—all you have to do is start learning a new language.

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