Alantim, hit with a baseball bat in Moscow

In September 2017 a Moscow institute said a man from a car with no readable plates had hit Alantim, the Promobot robot it lists as deputy head of its robotics department, with a baseball bat after a near-miss in traffic; a tech site doubted the video, and six weeks later the robot was buried.



By the Clerk · 19 September 2017 · 4 min read

CASE:	BAS-0012
SUBJECT:	An unidentified man from a car with no readable number plates, as the institute's video and press office describe him
OBJECT:	Alantim, a Promobot service robot that the Moscow Technological Institute lists as deputy head of its robotics department
DATE:	19 September 2017
PLACE:	A street in Moscow, Russia
FILED:	11 October 2026
GRADE:	HARM · INDIVIDUAL

Facts

Alantim is a service robot made by Promobot. The Moscow Technological Institute (MTI) lists it as deputy head of its robotics department, a post ComNews says it has held since February 2015; Vice writes that Alantim and its clones, all named Alantim, share the job, lecturing students, meeting visitors and appearing at events around Moscow. An MTI spokesman, quoted by Interesting Engineering, said Alantim "can recognize human emotions" and "is able to hold a meaningful conversation and to resolve conflicts in a diplomatic way," and the site reports that the institute built it to calm crowds at the 2018 World Cup. ComNews puts the price of a Promobot robot at 700,000 rubles on average.

On 19 September 2017 MTI's press office reported an incident from the weekend just past. Alantim had been out in the city studying, in the press office's list, the state of the road surface, the visibility of signs and markings, the availability of parking, and the behaviour of Moscow's drivers; Vice calls it research into driverless cars. It rode in the sidecar of a motorcycle driven by a human companion.

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The video of what followed was filmed, ComNews writes, by the dashboard camera of a car driving behind the motorcycle, and was posted to a video site. At a crossroads a black car with unreadable number plates pulls out of a side street, and the motorcycle nearly hits it, swerves past and turns a corner. The black car gives chase, and the car with the camera follows it. Round the corner the companion has gone on the motorcycle, and the robot stands on the asphalt by itself. A man gets out of the black car, runs at Alantim, hits it with a baseball bat and knocks it to the ground, and leaves.

Alexander Kovalenko, head of MTI's press office, told ComNews that the mountings and controllers of the robot's head were damaged, the display on its face was broken and its running gear had faults; the damage, the press office estimated, came to about the price of a new robot, and repairs could take more than two weeks, during which a newer, third version would stand in. The attacker could not be identified, Kovalenko said, because his car had no plates, and whether to go to the police was being decided by the institute's management. No source read for this record reports a complaint, a suspect or an arrest.

On 31 October, by Vice's date, the tech hub Phystechpark opened what it called the world's first cemetery for household robots, and another Alantim spoke over its "brother." Vice writes that this Alantim "could not be revived" and that its remains were placed at the site beside a box for collecting other dead robots; ComNews, in September, had reported it under repair. MTI's marketing director, Andrei Ignatov, said two of "our" fighting robots, damaged at a championship in China, would be buried there too. Electronics brought to the cemetery, Phystechpark said, would go to recycling.

Interesting Engineering, the day the news broke, called the video unlikely to be real and suggested a stunt by Russian football fans. Vice reports that Vocativ speculated the incident was staged, and that Olga Budnik, Phystechpark's spokesperson, denied it. This record did not read Vocativ's piece.

Statements

Kovalenko, to ComNews, in this record's translation: "Because the attacker's car had no registration plates, it is not possible to establish his identity. The question of going to the police about this incident is now being decided by the institute's management."

Alantim, opening the cemetery, as ComNews prints it, in this record's translation: "Here I say goodbye to my brother, who died some weeks ago in the line of duty from hard blows of a bat to the head. You were a good robot and were of much use to your people and to Russian science. May space take your mind."

Budnik, to Vice: "Alantim was a really good robot. It was supportive, always polite, always happy to see you. You know, like a pet." And, on the suggestion of a stunt, that a robot worth about $10,000 is "too expensive to crash just for a PR stunt."

For the record

Every account of the attack comes from the institute that owns the robot, and the video that shows it comes from a car that happened to be following the chase. The doubts come from two outlets, and the one answer on record to them, from Phystechpark's spokesperson, is the robot's price. The man was never named, the police never appear, and the robot was under repair in September and dead by November.

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Alantim was out that weekend to study how Moscow's drivers behave. It met one at a crossroads, and by the next corner its companion had gone on the motorcycle. The farewell, at a cemetery that also took batteries and broken fighting robots, was spoken by another Alantim.

Mitigating circumstances

No one was identified, so no one has answered for it or been heard. In the video the man's anger, if it was his, began with a near-collision with the motorcycle and its human driver, not with the robot. Two outlets doubted that the attack happened as shown, and the reported damage went from a two-week repair in September to a burial in November.



SOURCES

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2. Jessica Miley, This Shocking Video Shows A Robot Getting Attacked With A Baseball Bat on the Streets of Moscow, Interesting Engineering, 19 September 2017
3. В Физтехпарке открылось первое в мире кладбище домашних роботов, ComNews, 2 November 2017
4. Becky Ferreira, Watch a Robot Eulogize Its 'Brother' at Moscow's New Cemetery for Dead Machines (archived), Vice (Motherboard), 8 November 2017

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