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Autonomous Robot Trial by Total is World's First

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Some recent articles were highlighting some exciting new developments related to an autonomous robot being developed for use in oil & gas market. This revolutionary project which will see the world's first autonomous robot working on an oil rig has been unveiled. Total is developing the scheme alongside the [Oil and Gas Technology Centre](#) (OGTC). The robot will eventually be trialed on Total's Shetland Gas Plant and Alwyn platform, 270 miles north-east of Aberdeen. The trial will be carried out within 18 months. OGTC says the initiative could start a "revolution in robotics".

Autonomous robot can ensure safety and handle mundane tasks

It is being developed with Austria's Taurob and Darmstadt Technical University, which won Total's Autonomous Robots for Gas and Oil Sites (Argos) challenge last year. They developed a robot that is ATEX-certified (certified to work in gas environments without risk of ignition) and could perform routine tasks in a simulated oil and gas environment. OGTC says the machine can perform visual inspections and read dials, level gauges and valve positions. It can also negotiate narrow pathways and stairs, measure temperature and gas concentration, and detect and navigate around obstacles and humans. Total executives indicated their belief that robots have the potential to play an important role on offshore platforms by improving safety, reducing costs and even prolonging the life of North Sea operations by undertaking repeatable tasks that people are forced to do or those that may be done in a dangerous situation.

Autonomous robot impact could be profound

OGTC's Rebecca Allison said: "We are delighted to be involved in this world-first project that is at the cutting edge of robotics for the oil and gas industry. "A robot working alongside humans on a North Sea platform isn't a distant aspiration, it could be a reality in the next 18 months. Robotics has the potential to transform the offshore oil and gas industry. We have countless repetitive, dirty and potentially dangerous tasks carried out every day. Integrating robots for these tasks will help upskill our workforce and improve the quality of the jobs. "



Photo: OGTC Robotics

The project will develop a further two versions of the successful ARGOS robot that are more robust and reliable, have improved functionality and can be operated by workers offshore without the requirement for onsite robotics experts.

ARC believes that technologies such as robotics can help operators, independent E&P firms, and other industry stakeholders navigate the challenge of dealing with the "Great Crew Change" (further exacerbated by layoffs during downturn) which has winnowed the ranks of experienced personnel and increasing need to seek out oil in remote locations with extreme conditions for which humans are not well suited to operate.

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