In Japan, Rescue Robots Are Poised to Go From Lab to Quake Scene

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Japanese researchers working at Texas A&M University's Center for Robot-Assisted Search and Rescue have developed robots that will soon be put into use to help victims of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan. Tohoku University researcher Satoshi Tadokoro developed a snake-like robot that can enter small spaces and use a camera to survey them. Chiba Institute of Technology's Eiji Koyanagi has developed Quince, a small, tank-like robot that can move over debris and is equipped with sensors that can detect chemical contamination. Other robots include aerial drones that can provide live feeds of damage to tall buildings, and remotely operated underwater vehicles that can help locate submerged objects and find damaged pipes and bridges, says Texas A&M's Robin R. Murphy. Stanford University professor Clifford I. Nass and Murphy are working to make rescue robots look less creepy to improve human's interactions with them. The researchers plan to module the volume of their voices, add more light for better visibility, program them to make better eye contact with humans, and add media such as video and music.