

One of Defence Viewpoints' biggest stories of 2008 focussed upon how the rather odd-looking camel spider had become a key source of entertainment for US troops in Iraq. Since the occupation the internet has become home to a number of videos posted by troops pitting the beast against fellow creepy-crawlies. Such videos have also been accompanied by tales of the camel spider's strength, speed and stomach-churning eating habits. Yet whilst the camel spider's legendary status can be easily debunked, the world's militaries have throughout history encountered monsters that defy rational explanation. Indeed such encounters have been less about entertainment and more about utter terror and confusion.

In the 1990s a Russian caravanning publication recounted the story of a five-metre long monster living in Lake Brosno in the Andreapol District of the Tver Region. Affectionately known as the Brosnya the beast is alleged to be a relative of our own Loch Ness Monster. Despite enjoying something of a revival in the 1990s the Brosnya is alleged to have lived in Lake Brosno for centuries. Arguably the Brosnya's finest hour came in the eighth century. As the Tartar-Mongol armies marched upon the city of the Novgorod Lake Brosno was used as a source of replenishment. However the Brosnya devoured the invading hordes' horses as they drank from the lake. Terrified by the experience, the Tartar-Mongol armies abandoned their attack on Novgorod and headed for home.

http://english.pravda.ru/science/19/94/377/11844_monster.html

Southern Russia is also home to the Almasty. Believed to be a cousin of the Yeti the Almasty is a bulky, hair covered animal that is also said to roam the Caucasus and Pamir Mountains of Central Asia. In 1941, shortly after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, one of these creatures was allegedly captured by a detachment of the Red Army. Whilst it remains uncertain as to whether the beast was ever subject to interrogation, the detachment led by a Lieutenant-Colonel Vargen Karapetyan allegedly shot the poor Almasty. It would seem that in the early days of the German occupation Nazi spies and collaborators took many different forms.

http://www.mania.com/lair-beasts-monster-mountains_article_111257.html

Despite some comparatively nasty encounters with the military the Almasty has nevertheless maintained a keen interest in the Russian army. In 1992 Radio Moscow reported that two abominable snowmen had broken into barracks in the town of Kargopol, northern Russia. Eyewitnesses reportedly saw two hairy creatures measuring some seven metres in height loitering within the barracks. Whilst it is not clear why the Almasty was so keen to enter the military installation it was nevertheless kind enough to leave tufts of its hair on the perimeter fence.

<http://www.bigfootencounters.com/articles/russian.htm>

Although Russia may appear to be a hotbed for encounters with the unexplained, America's military also has first-hand experience of hairy creatures. In 1993, for example, Todd Neiss of

the 1249th Combat Engineers, Oregon National Guard, was on manoeuvres in the remote north-western region of the state. Whilst placing charges next to anti-tank mines, Neiss heard a shrill screaming noise from the west end of the mine field. Upon looking up to better locate the source of the noise Neiss became convinced that he was not victim to a colleague's practical joke. Indeed this was further confounded at the end of the exercises. Whilst departing from the manoeuvres Neiss noticed from the back of his jeep three mysterious figures observing his convoy from a nearby blast site. Neiss described the figures as jet-black bipedal creatures measuring between seven and nine feet in height.

><http://www.cryptomundo.com/bigfoot-report/neiss/>

As these figures also possessed arms that hung well below their knees Neiss was convinced that he had encountered America's legendary Bigfoot. Yet keen to avoid derision from his colleagues Neiss initially determined to keep his experiences to himself. However, not long after the exercises Neiss learned that one of his colleagues had also encountered the three creatures. Furthermore over time Neiss's story was further corroborated by other National Guard troops. In most cases, the desire to avoid a sceptical response from colleagues and maintaining their position in the military underpinned their silence.

It seems quite plausible that there are very few militaries that have not had a strange encounter with something more at home in the Fortean Times than a strategic defence publication. Legend, history, the environment and even the fog of war have inevitably played a part in such encounters. Yet as the camel spiders perhaps best demonstrate, boredom is also a key source of such stories. As no one has recently captured either a Bigfoot or an Almasty, Defence Viewpoints is sadly unable to confirm what motivates these creatures seemingly healthy interest in the workings of the military!

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