SLAM ER Continues Successful Flight Test Program

The Standoff Land Attack Missile Expanded Response (SLAM-ER) scored a devastating hit during its second developmental test flight Oct. 16 at the Naval Air Warfare Center, Pt. Mugu, Calif.

An F/A-18 Hornet, piloted by Lt. Cmdr. Wade Knudson of the Naval Test Squadron, launched the SLAM ER from low altitude, over 60 nautical miles from the target and then navigated to a control point more than 80 nautical miles away. Upon reaching the target area, SLAM ER's seeker and data link began operation and relayed the target scene to the pilot. While standing off at long range, Lt. Cmdr. Knudson identified the target, selected the aimpoint on the target, and commanded the missile to precisely impact the aimpoint.

The aimpoint for this test was a small section of a larger structure duplicating the critical area of a high-value target. Once a critical area is destroyed, the entire target is quickly and efficiently rendered inoperative.

"SLAM ER's accuracy and lethality were readily apparent during this test. The missile performed as anticipated," said Capt. Rob Freedman, program manager for cruise missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles. "The development of SLAM ER and the success we have seen in the program has been the result of a team effort between the U.S. Navy and The Boeing Company. This team has been a true recipe for success."

Direct hits such as this result from the highly successful implementation of the man-in-the-loop (MITL) control system. MITL allows the pilot in the control aircraft to precisely update the point of impact during the missile's final moments of flight. A data link located in the missile is used to transmit an image of the target to the pilot. Once the target has been identified, the pilot moves the aiming cursor over the desired impact point on the target image in the cockpit. This selected impact point is transmitted back to the missile and used to update the missile's guidance system.

SLAM ER successfully completed its first test flight on March 18, 1997. The next test is scheduled before the end of the year.

The SLAM ER program was given the go-ahead for low-rate initial production April 10, 1997.

SLAM ER is the U.S. Navy's next generation multi-mission cruise missile capable of attacking both land and ship targets from ranges in excess of 150 nautical miles.

The U.S. Navy plans to retrofit its entire inventory of 700 Standoff Land Attack Missiles into the SLAM ER+ configuration. SLAM ER+ will include the additional capability of automatic target acquisition, which will make target update by the pilot optional.

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