SLAM-ER Completes Developmental Testing

The Boeing Standoff Land Attack Missile-Expanded Response (SLAM-ER) completed its fifth and final development test flight by successfully tracking and attacking a mobile target ship. The flight took place March 19 near the San Nicolas Island off the California coastline.

"The flight proved the SLAM-ER's multi-mission capability to operate in a complex littoral (or coastal) environment," said Capt. A.J. Benn, U.S. Navy SLAM-ER Program Manager. "Our confidence in this missile is borne out by the outstanding performance we've seen during this test phase. The fleet has kept a keen eye on the SLAM-ER's progress throughout flight test, and is eager to add it to the U.S. Navy inventory."

The littorals, defined as the waterways within 100 miles of the coastline extending 50 miles inland, are among the U.S. Navy's most complex and challenging environments. Littorals are typified by areas of high-traffic commercial sealanes, shallow depths and irregular land masses. Dominance of this area allows incoming forces protected access as they seize or establish shore bases and provide command and control for immediate operations.

The SLAM-ER's range of more than 150 nautical miles and its ability to precisely attack both land and sea targets will make it a crucial weapon in establishing and maintaining dominance in the littorals.

In its previous four firings, SLAM-ER proved its versatility by successfully attacking a variety of land targets. Today's launch at Pt. Mugu, Calif., demonstrated its ability to discriminate and attack a particular moving ship in a complex littoral environment.

The SLAM-ER was launched in the Target of Opportunity Anti-Ship mode by an F/A-18, piloted by Navy LT Rich Burr, from more than 40 nautical miles. The target ship was navigating five nautical miles from San Nicholas Island. This mission highlighted two critical features of the SLAM-ER's anti-ship capabilities. First, the SLAM ER received several in-flight target position updates from the launch aircraft. This accurately compensated for the target ship's motion. Second, man-in-the-loop control allowed the pilot to identify and select the intended target ship operating in close proximity to land.

SLAM-ER's man-in-the-loop control system offers several tactically significant advantages over other types of standoff weapon guidance systems. Viewing the target in real time prior to impact allows target identification, reduces collateral damage, provides an immediate indication of mission success, and permits the pilot to select an alternate aimpoint if desired.

SLAM-ER combines man-in-the-loop control with a highly precise inertial navigation system, jam resistant GPS, and a hardened data link. In combination, these features negate the usual inherent errors associated with ship motion, target location, and GPS navigational accuracy.

The Boeing-built SLAM ER is the U.S. Navy's next-generation multi-mission cruise missile. It provides the Navy with surgical strike capability against high-value fixed land targets, ships in port, or ships at sea. The Navy plans to upgrade its entire inventory of 700 SLAMs into the SLAM ER configuration. Initial Operational Capability is planned for early 1999.

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