U.S. Navy Conducts Live Warhead Firing of Boeing SLAM ER

The U.S. Navy recently launched a Boeing Standoff Land Attack Missile Expanded Response (SLAM ER) against the decommissioned cruiser USS Dale CG-19 at an offshore test range near Puerto Rico. The mission was designed to validate missile guidance and warhead effectiveness against a surface target under operational conditions.

"We chose the SLAM ER because of the missile's ability to precisely hit a pre-determined spot on the ship," said Capt. A.J. Benn, U.S. Navy SLAM ER program manager.

The SLAM ER was successfully launched from a U.S. Navy F/A-18 Hornet that was located more than 40 nautical miles away. The missile received several in-flight target position updates en route to the USS Dale. In-flight target position updates, which are unique to the SLAM ER weapon system, are designed to update the missile's flight path with current target coordinates enabling the SLAM ER to engage moving targets.

During the last moments of flight, the SLAM ER transmitted infrared imagery of the USS Dale to the pilot, who then identified the USS Dale and commanded missile lock-on from a safe standoff range.

The SLAM ER uses a 500 pound derivative of the Tomahawk Block III warhead developed by the Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division, China Lake, Calif. The missile's titanium WDU-40/B warhead is shaped specifically to increase penetration and becomes reactive during detonation, substantially increasing the blast and incendiary effects. SLAM ER's warhead exceeded expectations.

SLAM ER's anti-ship performance is critical to achieving dominant control in the littorals. The littoral, defined as the waterways 100 miles off the coastline and 50 miles inland, is one of the U.S. Navy's most complex and challenging environments in which to operate effectively. Future joint military operations are based on the U.S. Navy's fundamental and dominant control of the littorals, which are typified by areas of heavily trafficked commercial sea-lanes, shallow depths and irregular landmasses such as inlets, rivers, islands and harbors. Dominance of this area is essential to providing protected access to the theater for arriving forces, seizing or establishing shore bases and providing command and control for immediate operations.

SLAM ER, the U.S. Navy's premier multi-mission standoff weapon, achieved an early operational capability in the summer of 1999 and is deployed on several aircraft carriers.

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For further information:
Patricia Frost
(314) 234-6996