

Laser used to shoot down planes

Laser beams have been used for the first time in naval warfare to shoot down aircraft, it can be disclosed.

By [Thomas Harding](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/thomas-harding/) (http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/thomas-harding/), Defence Correspondent

Published: 3:58PM BST 19 Jul 2010

[Link to this video](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newsvideo/7898722/Drone-shot-down-by-laser-beam.html) (http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newsvideo/7898722/Drone-shot-down-by-laser-beam.html)

The weapon, mounted on a warship's missile, shot down four unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) in secret testing carried out off the California coast, *The Daily Telegraph* has learnt.

In a joint enterprise between US Navy and Raytheon Missile Systems the technology has now got to the stage where lasers will be deployed on warships as part of their short-range defence.

Related Articles

British spy drone sets new record (/news/newstoppers/politics/defence/7894868/British-spy-drone-sets-new-flying-record.html)

Boeing unveils Phantom Eye hydrogen-powered spy plane (/news/newstoppers/howaboutthat/7894000/Boeing-unveils-Phantom-Eye-hydrogen-powered-spy-plane.html)

Soldiers in Afghanistan issued heat-ray gun (/news/newstoppers/howaboutthat/7894040/Soldiers-in-Afghanistan-issued-heat-ray-gun.html)

Military spy drones not licensed for training in Britain (/news/newstoppers/politics/defence/6055742/Military-spy-drones-not-licensed-for-training-in-Britain.html)

Police launch 'Flying Saucer' CCTV camera (/news/uknews/6035077/Police-launch-Flying-Saucer-CCTV-camera.html)

Remote-controlled planes could spy on British homes (/news/newstoppers/howaboutthat/4790389/Remote-controlled-planes-could-spy-on-British-homes.html)

For the first time a 'solid state' 32 mega watt laser beam of directed energy has been fired from a warship to a distance of more than two miles burning into a drone travelling at about 300mph.

The laser is mounted on a Phalanx close in weapons system that has a radar detection system. The targeting system was used in **Iraq** (http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/), to train fire from a Gatling onto rockets and mortars raining down on British bases.

Raytheon developed the system after buying six off-the-shelf commercial lasers from the car industry and joining them to make a single, powerful beam guided by the Phalanx's radars. Unlike other tests which have been conducted on aircraft it uses a solid state laser rather

than a chemical generated beam.

Mike Booen, vice president of Directed Energy Weapons at Raytheon, said the tests off San Nicolas Island were “a great day for the laser”.

“This is more real than Star Wars,” he said, speaking at the Farnborough Air Show. “Our lasers destroyed the UAVs lighting them on fire.

“This is the first successful shoot down over water. We are now on the path to deliver the first battlefield lasers integrated into real weapons systems.

With drones being used more frequently to spy on or attack fleets in future warfare it is necessary to make defences against them.

The laser system, which is mostly situated under the deck, fires an invisible beam that is only seen when it strikes an intruder. The system is also being developed to tackle small boats and potentially anti-ship missiles and will be ready for full military development by 2016.

“This will proceed to production because it is solving real problem,” Mr Booen said.

Raytheon have steadily been developing laser technology for several years developing a land system that can shoot down mortar rounds.

© Copyright of Telegraph Media Group Limited 2010