Office of Naval Research
Corporate Strategic Communications Office
Contact: Colin Babb
703-696-4036 or colin_babb@onr.navy.mil
Main office: 703-696-2009 or onrpao@onr.navy.mil
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News Release

U.S. Navy Demonstrates World's Most Powerful Electromagnetic Railgun at 10 MJ

NSWC Dahlgren, VA - The Navy's Office of Naval Research successfully conducted a record-setting firing of an electromagnetic railgun at Naval Surface Warfare Center, Dahlgren, VA. An invited audience, including the Chief of Naval Operations, ADM Gary Roughead, witnessed this revolutionary technology in action.

ADM Roughead noted, "We should never lose sight of always looking for the next big thing, always looking to make our capability better, more effective than what anyone else can put on the battlefield."

He went on to emphasize, "I never ever want to see a Sailor or Marine in a fair fight. I always want them to have the advantage."

ONR's EMRG Program is part of the Department of the Navy's Science and Technology investments, focused on developing new technologies to support Navy and Marine Corps war fighting needs.

ONR has facilitated a key partnership between leading scientists and engineers from Boeing, Charles Stark Draper Lab, Inc., General Atomics, Department of Energy (Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory), U.S. Naval Academy, Naval Postgraduate School, Naval Sea Systems Command (PMS 500), Naval Surface Warfare Center – Carderock and Dahlgren Divisions, the U.S. Army and United Kingdom. "We are seeing the culmination of years of research coming together to bring focus to exciting new technology," said Chief of Naval Research, Rear Admiral Bill Landay. "Here at ONR we are striving to move S&T from vision to results."

The technology uses high power electromagnetic energy instead of explosive chemical propellants (energetics) to propel a projectile farther and faster than any preceding gun. At full capability, the rail gun will be able to fire a projectile more than 200 nautical miles at a muzzle velocity of mach seven and impacting its target at mach five. In contrast, the current Navy gun, MK 45 five-inch gun, has a range of nearly 20 miles. The high velocity projectile will destroy its targets due to its kinetic energy rather than with conventional explosives.

The safety aspect of the rail gun is one of its greatest potential advantages, according to Dr. Elizabeth D'Andrea, ONR's Electromagnetic Railgun Program Manager. Safety on board ship is increased because no explosives are required to fire the projectile and no explosive rounds are stored in the ship's magazine.

Science and technology challenges met by ONR in the development of the rail gun include development of the launcher, pulse power generation and the guided projectile design. The program's goal is to demonstrate a full capability, integrated railgun prototype by 2016-2018.

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