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Watch A US Navy Ship Use A Laser Weapon To Shoot Down A Drone [VIDEO]

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By [ALBERTO RIVA](#) | April 08 2013 3:46 PM

Keywords

The U.S. Navy is going to put a laser weapon on one of its ships for the first time ever.

Navy leaders announced on Monday at the [Sea-Air-Space exposition](#) in National Harbor, Maryland, a plan to deploy a solid-state laser aboard a ship in fiscal year 2014. The announcement to deploy the laser onboard the USS Ponce comes on the same day the Navy published a video on YouTube showing one of its ships using the laser weapon to shoot down a drone.

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The Navy said the Laser Weapon System (LaWS) was temporarily installed aboard the guided-missile destroyer USS Dewey.

The LaWS is a technology demonstrator built by the Naval Sea Systems Command from commercial fiber solid state lasers, utilizing combination methods developed at the Naval Research Laboratory.

According to the Navy's explanation, the laser is aimed using data from the shipborne radar that directs the MK 15 Phalanx Close-In Weapon system. The Phalanx usually uses a 20mm gun to shoot down incoming missiles.



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The New York Times [reported](#) that the Ponce will be deployed in 2014 to the Persian Gulf off Iran -- a nation which happens to operate several drones of the kind shot down by the laser weapon in the Navy video. The Navy said the laser "provides (...) a method for sailors to easily defeat small boat threats and aerial targets without using bullets." The "small boat threat" may be a reference to the naval component of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, which has many fast, small speedboats whose maneuverability and reduced size could be an asset against well-armed, but large and less nimble, American ships.

Another advantage of the laser weapon is that it costs far less per shot than missile systems. "Our conservative data tells us a shot of directed energy costs under \$1," Chief of Naval Research Rear Adm. Matthew Klunder said. "Compare that to the hundreds of thousands of dollars it costs to fire a missile, and you can begin to see the merits of this capability."

The weapon is untested in battle and remains for now the stuff of science fiction, but the Navy is optimistic. "The future is here," said Peter A. Morrision, program officer for ONR's Solid-State Laser Technology Maturation Program. "The solid-state laser is a big step forward to revolutionizing modern warfare with directed energy, just as gunpowder did in the era of knives and swords."

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