



MEDIA RELEASE

Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Program



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Maritime Evaluation Assesses Non-Lethal Weapons

By Jennifer Bowen

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Non-lethal weapons have the potential to provide tremendous new capabilities to U.S. military forces in protection of ports and high-value assets at sea. Working to develop these capabilities, the Department of Defense's Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Program recently sponsored a Non-Lethal Maritime Operational User Evaluation at Yorktown Naval Weapons Station's Cheatham Annex in Yorktown, Virginia. The objective of the evaluation was to demonstrate the employment of non-lethal weapons and evaluate their effectiveness in a maritime environment.

The U.S. Navy hosted and organized the evaluation. Approximately 50 people attended, including senior leadership from Naval Operations and Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, as well as representatives from the U.S. Army Watercraft, the U.S. Army Combined Armed Support Command, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Marine Corps and the Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Directorate.

As part of one of its training exercises, Maritime Expeditionary Security Group 2 served as the operational users for the evaluation. Maritime Expeditionary Security Force (MESF) provides force protection for designated high-value assets on the ground and in littorals (riverways and non-oceanic waterways).

For the evaluation, operational users employed existing commercial-off-the-shelf non-lethal weapons in real-world scenarios. Expeditionary forces like MESF are preparing to incorporate these non-lethal weapons into their operations. The evaluation gave them the chance to assess the use of

these non-lethal weapons in the protection of a high-value asset with threats approaching from both land and sea.

During the evaluation, the operational users fired a variety of non-lethal munitions from 12-gauge shotguns and 40mm grenade launchers. They also employed acoustic hailing devices, joint non-lethal warning munitions and optical laser distractors over the water from the pier and from a high-value asset moored along the pier. They employed these non-lethal weapons separately and in combination during daylight, dusk and nighttime conditions.

According to Todd Getz, Non-Lethal Weapons Program Support Officer for the U.S. Navy, the evaluation helped determine how the non-lethal weapons fit into the escalation-of-force continuum and into tactics, techniques and procedures. The evaluation showed that, in a maritime environment, no one non-lethal weapon system alone provides sufficient capabilities; the operators should employ these systems in combination to meet user capability requirements.

"We have found that multiple layers of non-lethal weapons contribute to the range of options available to naval forces in responding to potential threats and determining hostile intent," said Captain Barry Coceano, Branch Head for the Navy Expeditionary Combat Branch and the U.S. Navy lead for non-lethal weapons. "With continued development of technologies, tactics, techniques and procedures, these valuable force protection assets will enhance fleet defense in depth."

The evaluation continued the advancement of non-lethal weapons by showing senior leadership how these tools provide additional escalation-of-force options and how they augment but do not replace lethal force. The evaluation will assist senior leadership in making acquisition decisions that will give military personnel more tools and options to aid in deterring and determining intent of approaching personnel, vehicles and vessels.



Maritime Expeditionary Security Group 2 employs multiple non-lethal weapons in combination during the day portion of the evaluation.

Photo by Matthew Frank, U.S. Navy Military Sealift Command



Maritime Expeditionary Security Group 2 employs an optical laser distractor to hail and warn a simulated target vessel.

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