

US admiral praises laser and electromagnetic guns on costs

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In this photo released by the Australian National University, U.S. Navy Adm. Jonathan Greenert speaks during a lecture at the ANU in Canberra, Australia Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2015. Greenert, who as chief of Naval Operations sets the navy's future strategy, said Tuesday lasers that shoot down drones with precision and electromagnetic cannons that fire more than 100 miles are part of the future of naval warfare, promising to be cheaper to use than conventional weapons. (AP Photo/The Australian National University, Kate Hulm)

Lasers that shoot down drones with precision and electromagnetic cannons that fire more than 100 miles are part of the future of naval warfare, promising to be cheaper to use than conventional weapons, a U.S. admiral said on Tuesday.

Adm. Jonathan Greenert, who as Chief of Naval Operations sets the navy's future strategy, said during a lecture at the Australian National University that the experimental guns were an important departure from gunpowder and inexpensive to fire.

The laser gun, known as a Laser Weapon System, or LaWS, is being tested aboard a warship in the Persian Gulf, he said.

"It's working pretty well," Greenert said. "Lasers, I think, are a thing of the future."

The laser gun cost less than \$1 to fire for 10 seconds—long enough to burn out the engine of a slowing moving 50-meter (164-foot) vessel, Greenert said. That compared with a projectile from a warship's conventional cannon that can cost \$20,000, he said.

The Electromagnetic Railgun uses magnetic fields created by electrical currents to launch projectiles more than 115 miles, the Office of Naval Research said.

Greenert said the Railgun's range was about the same as a cruise missile that cost around \$1 million. The Railgun's projectile cost only \$25,000, he said.

The Railgun is scheduled for sea testing next year, the Office of Naval Research said.

The laser gun was first deployed and operated aboard USS Ponce, a

floating assault base in the Persian Gulf, in September and November last year, the office said.

The gun is operated by a video game-like controller and could be used against small attack boats and drones, the office said.

Laser weapon technology is being pursued by several countries. Chinese state media reported in November that Chinese engineers had successfully tested a [laser weapon](#) that can shoot down low-flying, slow-moving drones.

The Low Altitude Sentinel system can detect a small aircraft within a 2-kilometer (1.2-mile) radius and shoot it down within five seconds, the report said.

The system could be installed in vehicles and help guard against flying objects during major events in urban areas, the China's Xinhua News Agency said.

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