

# NWC Rocketeer

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## Sidewinder AIM-9M missile successfully destroys airborne target in night testing



**NIGHT MISSION**—Lt. Col. Mark Mitchell of VX-5 checks out instruments in co-pilot's front seat of the AH1W "Cobra" helicopter. Seated behind him is pilot Maj. Bobby Rowland who fired a Sidewinder AIM-9M in the successful low-level air-to-air night mission on NWC's ranges. Photo by PH2 Gaston

Combining air-to-air combat tactics with a heat seeking missile and a unique airborne target, Air Test and Evaluation Squadron Five (VX-5) and NWC personnel took a step toward demonstrating the feasibility of low-level night combat during a test last month.

Heading up the NWC team was project manager, Steve Mendenhall of the Air Projects Office. As the coordinator between the two commands, Mendenhall assessed the needs of VX-5 in meetings with operational test directors and translated those needs into NWC range support. He oversaw range scheduling and developed an instrumentation plan for tracking and recording the tests.

Maj. Rowland credited Mendenhall with a great deal of the project's success. "He brought range support expertise into the planning meetings, presenting new and different approaches to test development," Rowland explained. "Through this entire series of AIM-9M shots, Steve demonstrated efficiency, attention to detail and great enthusiasm for our work as well as his own."

Mendenhall coordinated the efforts of Sam Ford and his crew from the Air Operations Branch. This demonstration was the

successful culmination of a series of eleven AIM-9M firings and a close working relationship between VX-5 and NWC's Range Department.

For the first time in the history of night flight, a Sidewinder AIM-9M missile successfully acquired and destroyed an airborne target. VX-5's Maj. Bobby Rowland, USMC, piloted the AH1W attack helicopter, or 'Cobra' which carried the heat-seeking missile. After making several practice runs over the dark ranges guided only by night vision goggles, Rowland 'locked onto' the target with the missile's infra-red seeker and fired.

Lt. Col. Mark Mitchell, USMC, assisted in the firing. Sitting in the co-pilot's front seat in the Cobra, Mitchell witnessed the bright flash of the missile as it was fired from a station a few feet to his right. It quickly became a weaving spot of light as it sped down range to a direct impact on the target.

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## R&D aids Center in nearing energy independence goal

Most China Lakers won't identify the Public Works Department as a research and development organization at the Naval Weapons Center. Yet within the Energy Programs Office, research and development is a vital part of the mission.

Garyl Smith, who also heads the new PW Research and Development Division, and L.E. (Lee) Humble, joined by Dr. Rick Roberts, are in fact doing R&D work on renewable energy programs for NWC.

They are among the leaders of NWC's efforts to become energy self-sufficient by the end of this century.

Smith has been closely associated with energy programs at China Lake for the past 15 years. Today he not only oversees the Energy Program Office at NWC, but chairs the Department of Defense Photovoltaics Review Committee. Humble notes Smith has a national reputation in the field of renewable energy and in the photovoltaic technology in particular.

Humble, a Center employee for more than 20 years, has been in the energy field for only seven years, but notes he finds the field very challenging. "When I do something good I feel like maybe I've helped all of civilization a little," he said.

The two veteran NWC employees note the Center's goal of energy independence by the end of the century is being pushed on multiple fronts. An aggressive energy conservation program, good enough to win two consecutive Department of Energy awards, and Coso Geothermal development are at the forefront of this effort. Less noticed has been the drive to find new, more efficient and cheaper sources of energy to meet needs in remote areas of NWC and other Navy installations.

Smith said there is a reasonable possibility a lower grade geothermal resource can be developed closer to the main base as a substitute for (Continued on Page 6)



**SOLAR PANELS**—Lee Humble of the Public Works Department shows different kinds of photovoltaic solar panels he will be testing as part of research on renewable energy resources at China Lake.

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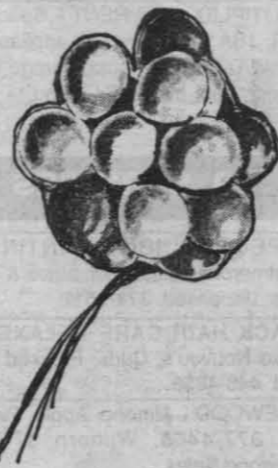


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