Navy Conducts Final AQM-37 Target Launch



The Navy prepares to launch the final AQM-37 targets Sept. 22 in support of the U.S. Army's Integrated Fires Mission Command operations at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico. *U.S. ARMY*

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The Navy launched the last two remaining AQM-37 targets Sept. 22 in support of the U.S. Army's Integrated Fires Mission Command operations at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, the Naval Air Systems Command said in an Oct. 25 release.

"The final launch of the AQM-37 represents the closing of a chapter for the Aerial Targets Program Office (PMA-208) and our industry partners, but also intensifies our focus and provides us the opportunity to start and sustain new chapters with more advanced technology and capabilities that closer

resemble the threats we face," said Don Blottenberger, PMA-208 program manager.

Since 1962, more than 5,000 AQM-37 targets have been delivered and launched in various training and system development operations across the globe. The system replicated both air-to-air and air-to-surface threats and was able to fly simulated ballistic-missile profiles at altitudes of up to 300,000 feet.

"The legacy of the AQM-37 and those who were involved in its development and sustainment through the decades will not be forgotten," said Blottenberger. "Its 60-year lifespan is a testament to its capability, reliability and the critical role it has played in the security and preparedness of both our own, and our international partners' armed forces."

Over six decades, the target played an instrumental role in the testing and deployment of new systems including short range air-to air missiles including the Air Intercept Missile (AIM-9) Sidewinder, ship-borne short range anti-aircraft missiles including the Sea Sparrow Missile (RIM-7) and ships equipped with missile defense (AEGIS) systems. The targets supported both domestic and international partners including NATO nations and was commonly used in conjunction with the U.S. Air Force, most often launched from the F-16 Fighting Falcon.

Just recently, the Air Force's 412th Test Wing launched seven AQM-37 targets from F-16s to support testing of E-2D Advanced Hawkeye and F-35 Lightning II capabilities at Navy Exercise Gray Flag at the Point Mugu Sea Range. The AQM-37's involvement in this exercise and countless others, enhanced capability and supported mission readiness for joint forces.

"Our supersonic technical team has done fantastic work over the last several years to get the final targets launched and put to use in a way that supports development and testing for

our military," Blottenberger said. "The team saved the Navy close to $1 million by avoiding demilitarization of the last several targets by using them for the Navy Gray Flag Exercise and other test and evaluation events."

PMA-208 provides threat representative aerial targets for fleet training and weapons systems test and evaluation.