

USS Carney's Success Showed Value of Aegis, SM-2, VLS, Alert Crew



By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The event of the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer (DDG) USS Carney (DDG 64) in intercepting and destroying on Oct. 19 four land-attack cruise missiles and several drones launched by Houthi forces over the Red Sea in Yemen was not routine, but it was a demonstration of naval operations and technology at its finest.

The Houthi missiles apparently were headed in the direction of Israel which had been engaged in combat with Hamas terrorists since Oct. 7. The Iran-backed Houthis have a history of using drones and missiles against Saudi petroleum infrastructure and U.S. Navy and other ships in the Arabian Sea.

The USS Carney, based in Naval Station Mayport, Florida, is one of the U.S. Navy's older destroyers, the 14th ship of its class, commissioned in 1996. It has since been equipped with ballistic-missile defense systems. At the time of the intercepts the ship was deployed to the Red Sea in support of operations of U.S. Central Command.

The Carney is equipped with the Aegis Combat System, a sophisticated digital, networked command-and-control system that links together the sensors and weapon systems of the ship. Its main sensor is the SPY-1 air search radar that enables the ship to detect, identify, track, and engage aerial targets and pass track data to other units. The Aegis system, which entered service in the 1980s, has been continuously upgraded to keep ahead of evolving threats.

The RIM-66 Standard SM-2 missile fired by the Carney entered service in 1979. It traces its developmental history from to the Terrier, Tartar, and Standard SM-1 family of surface-to-air missiles. The SM-2 already was combat proven in Operation Praying Mantis in the Persian Gulf in 1988, when an Iranian missile craft was damaged by one. More recently, in October 2016, the Arleigh Burke-class DDG USS Mason came under attack on three occasions by Houthi anti-ship missiles off the coast of Yemen. Of the seven missiles fired at the Mason, SM-2 missiles took down at least five of the missiles. The Houthi missiles scored no hits.

The Mason's action also was the first air defense conducted by the Mk41 vertical launch system (VLS). The rapid-fire capability of a bank of Mk41 cells enables a DDG to take on multiple incoming missiles much more capably than with a single- or twin-arm launcher of previous years. The Carney's VLS system enabled similar success last week.

Equipped with well-designed, proven technology from the U.S. defense industry, the Carney was able to perform its mission successfully. Weapon systems with developmental troubles

usually dominate the press coverage. Carney was a showcase of systems that worked.

Last but not least, the Carney's crew was alert and ready when the test came. Bravo Zulu to the Carney and the American bluejacket.