



White Sands Testing New Laser Devices

By: Drew Hamilton

WHITE SANDS MISSILE RANGE, N.M. - A new series of laser aiming and illumination devices are now being tested at White Sands Missile Range.

The compact lightweight devices are designed to be carried on a Soldier's weapon and provide multipurpose functionality. The new sight systems could be used to illuminate areas either to highlight them for tactical purposes, or to just enhance the capabilities of night-vision devices.

"You know the phrase 'we own the night,' well that starts here," said Mike Williams, an engineering technician with the Unmanned Vehicle/Soldier Branch of the Material Test Directorate's Future Force Division.

The multipurpose nature of these new devices can give Soldiers maximum utility, test officers said, while keeping things simple so that the Soldier can focus on completing the mission.

"You want to be able to attach one thing and go and not worry about changing things in and out," said Paul Brown, a test officer with the Unmanned Vehicle/Soldier Branch.

Tests like those being conducted on the laser aiming and illumination devices are run on many devices to evaluate their abilities and ensure that the designs meet the standards set by the Army and the manufacturers. Since the team is expected to provide accurate and useable data on the devices tested, Brown said every team member is required to be an expert in their field.



Test Officer Paul Brown adjusts a thermal weapon sight on White Sands Missile Range's Small Arms Range Feb. 7. The structure he is firing from is more than 100 degrees inside and the small space requires that he wear an oxygen mask because of the carbon dioxide being put off by the weapon. (photo by Drew Hamilton)

By working closely with the various test groups, such as those from environmental effects, electromagnetic effects, and the Survivability/Vulnerability Analysis Directorate on White Sands, the Unmanned Vehicle/Soldier Branch can find out what kind of conditions and situations a device can operate in.

"There are a lot of different organizations that take part in this and I want them to get credit. They do it, and we coordinate the test with them," Brown said. The data they collect can then be used to improve features or fix problems on a device. "The better (the manufacturer) understands what caused a failure, the more they can do to correct it," Brown said.

(Drew Hamilton writes for the Missile Ranger newspaper at White Sands.)

Source: <http://www.army.mil/-news/2008/03/11/7874-white-sands-testing-new-laser-devices/>