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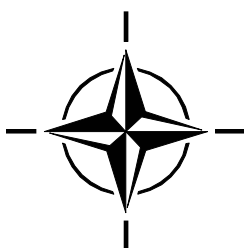
RTO AGARDograph 300
Flight Test Techniques Series – Volume 26

AG-300-V26

Airborne Laser Systems Testing and Analysis

(Essais et analyse des systèmes laser embarqués)

This AGARDograph has been sponsored by the
Systems Concepts and Integration Panel.



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RTO is the single focus in NATO for Defence Research and Technology activities. Its mission is to conduct and promote co-operative research and information exchange. The objective is to support the development and effective use of national defence research and technology and to meet the military needs of the Alliance, to maintain a technological lead, and to provide advice to NATO and national decision makers. The RTO performs its mission with the support of an extensive network of national experts. It also ensures effective co-ordination with other NATO bodies involved in R&T activities.

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- SET Sensors and Electronics Technology Panel

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AGARDograph Series 160 & 300

Soon after its founding in 1952, the Advisory Group for Aerospace Research and Development (AGARD) recognized the need for a comprehensive publication on Flight Test Techniques and the associated instrumentation. Under the direction of the Flight Test Panel (later the Flight Vehicle Integration Panel, or FVP) a Flight Test Manual was published in the years 1954 to 1956. This original manual was prepared as four volumes: 1. Performance, 2. Stability and Control, 3. Instrumentation Catalog, and 4. Instrumentation Systems.

As a result of the advances in the field of flight test instrumentation, the Flight Test Instrumentation Group was formed in 1968 to update Volumes 3 and 4 of the Flight Test Manual by publication of the Flight Test Instrumentation Series, AGARDograph 160. In its published volumes AGARDograph 160 has covered recent developments in flight test instrumentation.

In 1978, it was decided that further specialist monographs should be published covering aspects of Volumes 1 and 2 of the original Flight Test Manual, including the flight testing of aircraft systems. In March 1981, the Flight Test Techniques Group (FTTG) was established to carry out this task and to continue the task of producing volumes in the Flight Test Instrumentation Series. The monographs of this new series (with the exception of AG237 which was separately numbered) are being published as individually numbered volumes in AGARDograph 300. In 1993, the Flight Test Techniques Group was transformed into the Flight Test Editorial Committee (FTEC), thereby better reflecting its actual status within AGARD. Fortunately, the work on volumes could continue without being affected by this change.

An Annex at the end of each volume in both the AGARDograph 160 and AGARDograph 300 series lists the volumes that have been published in the Flight Test Instrumentation Series (AG 160) and the Flight Test Techniques Series (AG 300) plus the volumes that were in preparation at that time.

Airborne Laser Systems Testing and Analysis

(RTO-AG-300-V26)

Executive Summary

Recent developments in the field of electro-optics have led to innovative concepts in the mission management of current and next generation ground attack aircraft. Particularly, tactical laser systems including LIDAR, range finders (LRF) and target designators (LTD) are used today by most military forces in the world and new promising laser technologies are being explored. Most laser systems are active devices that operate in a manner very similar to microwave radars but at much higher frequency (e.g., LIDARS, LRF). Other devices (e.g., LTD, Beam-riders) are used to precisely direct laser guided weapons (LGW) against ground targets. A combination of both functions is often encountered in modern integrated airborne navigation-attack systems. Compared to similar microwave devices, the higher frequency of laser systems has the beneficial effect of smaller components and remarkable angular resolution values. On the other hand, laser systems performance are much more sensitive to the vagaries of the atmosphere and are thus generally restricted to shorter ranges in the lower atmosphere than microwave systems.

For aircraft experimental activities with laser systems, it is important to optimise test missions taking into account the tactics of employment of the systems in different operational scenarios and to verify the performance of the systems in realistic environments at the ranges. Also important for test/training purposes is the definition of laser safety criteria, since most systems currently in service operate in the near infrared with considerable risk for the naked human eye. Therefore, it is essential to define methods for predicting and evaluating the performance of laser systems operating in the infrared, with different operational and environmental conditions, taking into account laser safety issues.

The objective of this AGARDograph is to present the main results of the PILASTER (**PISQ LASer Test and Evaluation Range**) research and development program, conducted by the Italian Air Force Flight Test Centre in collaboration with the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom (Cranfield University – RMCS). Particularly, the AGARDograph describes state-of-the-art methods for evaluating the performance of laser systems operating in the infrared (including flight test, modelling and simulation), with different operational and environmental conditions. Present laser technology status and future technology trends are investigated, in order to determine the relative strengths and weaknesses of the most promising laser technologies when applied to airborne systems. Suitable mathematical models for laser beam propagation, geometric analysis, target reflectivity and detection are identified. Safety issues are deeply analysed in the light of the operational requirements for airborne systems (including guided weapons), and the technical characteristics of the PILASTER range instrumentation (designed for current and likely future laser systems test/training operations) are identified. Finally, the requirements associated with tactical and test/training mission planning are defined, together with the kernel algorithms of suitable simulation programs capable to assist aircrews and flight test engineers in the determination of optimal aircraft flight profiles for operations at the ranges.

Essais et analyse des systèmes laser embarqués (RTO-AG-300-V26)

Synthèse

Les développements récents dans le domaine de l'optronique ont conduit à des concepts innovants dans la gestion des missions des avions d'attaque au sol actuels et de prochaine génération. En particulier, les systèmes laser tactiques comprenant les télémètres LIDAR (LRF) et les systèmes de désignation d'objectifs LIDAR (LTD) sont utilisés actuellement par la plupart des forces armées dans le monde et des technologies laser nouvelles prometteuses sont à l'étude. La plupart des systèmes laser sont des dispositifs actifs qui fonctionnent d'une manière très similaire aux radars à micro-ondes mais avec une fréquence beaucoup plus élevée (par exemple, LIDARS, LRF). D'autres dispositifs (par exemple, le LTD, le guidage sur faisceau) sont utilisés pour diriger avec précision les armes à guidage laser (LGW) contre les cibles terrestres. On rencontre souvent une combinaison des deux fonctions dans les systèmes intégrés modernes d'attaque et de navigation embarqués. Comparés à des dispositifs similaires à micro-ondes, la fréquence plus élevée des systèmes laser a pour effet bénéfique de comporter des composants plus petits et des valeurs de résolution angulaires remarquables. D'autre part, les performances des systèmes laser sont bien plus sensibles aux caprices de l'atmosphère et sont, de ce fait, généralement limitées à des portées plus courtes en basse altitude que les systèmes à micro-ondes.

Pour les expériences aéronautiques avec des systèmes laser, il est important d'optimiser les missions d'essais en prenant en compte la tactique d'emploi des systèmes dans différents scénarios opérationnels et de vérifier les performances des systèmes dans des environnements réalistes sur les ranges. La définition des critères de sécurité laser est également importante pour les essais et la formation, car de nombreux systèmes en service actuellement fonctionnent dans le proche infrarouge avec des risques considérables pour la vision humaine sans protection. De ce fait, il est essentiel de définir des méthodes de prévision et d'évaluation des performances des systèmes laser fonctionnant en infrarouge, avec des conditions opérationnelles et environnementales différentes prenant en compte les questions de sécurité laser.

L'objectif de cet AGARDographe est de présenter les principaux résultats du programme de recherche et de développement du polygone d'essai et d'évaluation PILASTER (**PISQ LASer Test and Evaluation Range**) conduit par le Centre d'Essais en Vol de l'Armée de l'Air Italienne en collaboration avec la Defence Academy du Royaume-Uni (Université de Cranfield – RMCS). En particulier, l'AGARDographe décrit l'état de l'art des méthodes d'évaluation des performances des systèmes laser fonctionnant en infrarouge (comprenant les essais en vol, la modélisation et la simulation) dans différentes conditions opérationnelles et environnementales. L'état actuel de la technologie laser et les orientations technologiques futures sont étudiés afin de déterminer les forces et les faiblesses relatives des technologies laser les plus prometteuses appliquées aux systèmes embarqués. Les modèles mathématiques adaptés aux propagations à faisceau laser, l'analyse géométrique, la réflexion des cibles et la détection sont identifiés. Les questions de sécurité sont analysées en profondeur à la lumière des besoins opérationnels concernant les systèmes embarqués (dont les engins guidés), et les caractéristiques techniques de l'instrumentation du polygone PILASTER (conçu pour les opérations d'essais et de formation pour les systèmes laser actuels et vraisemblablement futurs) sont identifiées. Finalement, les besoins associés à la planification des missions d'essais et de formation sont définis avec les algorithmes fondamentaux des programmes de simulation adaptés capables d'aider les équipages et ingénieurs d'essais en vol dans la détermination des profils de vol optima des avions pour les opérations sur les champs de tir.

Acknowledgements

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Many thanks go to the technical personnel of Alenia-Aerospazio Flight Test Department, Selex Communications and LOT-Oriel Italia, for their support to the PILASTER program.

Preface

Major Roberto Sabatini is a Senior Flight Test Engineer and C4ISR Acquisition Manager in the Italian Air Force. He entered the Air Force in 1990 as an Engineering Officer (Avionics) and, after completion of the Officer's training, he was posted to the Italian Air Force Research and Flight Test Centre (Divisione Aerea Studi Ricerche e Sperimentazioni / Centro Sperimentale di Volo – Reparto Sperimentale Volo) in Pratica di Mare AFB (Rome). Major Sabatini graduated with a PhD in Electro-Optics with a Thesis on Airborne Laser Systems and Infrared Sensors (Cranfield University – UK) and a Doctor of Engineering Degree in Astronautical Engineering (Summa Cum Laude) with a Thesis on Satellite Navigation Systems (University of Rome “La Sapienza”). He also obtained an MSc in Navigation Technology (Nottingham University – UK) and a Diploma of Telecommunications Engineering with Full Grades (“Enrico Fermi” Industrial Engineering Institute of Rome). Furthermore, he received the qualifications of Aerosystems Graduate (ASG) with Distinction (Academic Lead), NATO Electronic Warfare Officer and Weapons Employment Officer (EWO/WEO) from the Royal Air Force (UK), and the license of Flight Test Engineer (Avionics) from the Italian Air Force.

During his Flight Test Engineering assignment, he served as Chief of the Electro-Optics Section, Chief of the Armament Section, and Head of the Communications, Navigation & Identification Section in the Avionics and Armament Test & Evaluation Branch of Reparto Sperimentale Volo. In 2006, Major Sabatini was appointed to the US Navy Program Executive Office for C4I and Space (PEO C4I & Space), Airborne Networking and Integration Program Office – PMW 780 (successively integrated in the US DoD Joint Program Executive Office Joint Tactical Radio System – JPEO JTRS), serving as the Italian Platform Representative at the Multifunctional Information Distribution System International Program Office (MIDS IPO) in San Diego, CA (USA). In his career, Major Roberto Sabatini was responsible for numerous development and flight test programs (Italian TORNADO Mid-Life-Update, EF-2000/TYPHOON Navigation and Landing Systems, AM-X Avionics Update, MB-3399CD Avionics Developments and Flight Testing, Development of a Laser Test Range for the Italian Air Force, FLIR/Laser Pods/Night Vision Imaging Systems Integration on various Fixed and Rotary Wing Aircraft, etc.), and is now in charge for MIDS Low Volume Terminal (LVT) Integration on Italian Military Platforms (Italian TORNADO IDS/ECR, TYPHOON, Navy and Army Platforms) and for the MIDS Joint Tactical Radio System (JTRS) developments for Italy. Furthermore, between 2006 and 2009, Major Sabatini has served as the MIDS European Logistics Manager and, since 2009, as the MIDS Software Engineering and Block Cycle Manager. In this role, Major Sabatini acts as the main point of contact for MIDS Software Operational and Technical Requirements implementation (Functional, Performance and Interoperability Requirements), Software Engineering Developments, Systems Engineering and Integration (SE&I) Support and Related Test, Evaluation and Certification Activities performed in the 5 MIDS nations (US, France, Italy, Germany and Spain) and in more than 30 MIDS third party sales nations and NATO agencies (over 70 different types of military platforms and 5500 MIDS terminals delivered worldwide).

Major Sabatini has written several peer-reviewed journal and conference papers on Aerospace Electronics and Electro-Optics systems. He is the author of NATO RTO AGARDograph volumes and books on Avionics Systems and has taught this subject on various occasions, including academic courses organized by Universities and the Italian Ministry of Defence.

Dr. Richardson is the Head of Electro-Optics Group at the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Shrivenham. He has a BSc with First Class Honours in Physics (from Imperial College – London) and is an Associate of the Royal College of Science. He also obtained an MSc with Distinction in Applied Optics (from Imperial College – London), a Diploma of Imperial College, and a PhD in Infrared Physics from Cranfield University.

He has been at the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Shrivenham since 1989, as a member of the lecturing staff. His main teaching duties are to postgraduate courses, in particular Defence Technology, Guided Weapons and Electronic Warfare MSc's. He also lectures in the United States on various EO&IR courses and seminars, and has taught EO&IR to the Australian Technical Staff Officers Course at the Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra on six occasions. He has also taught EO&IR Electronic Warfare at the Finnish School of Military Electronics in Riihimäki.

Prior to joining the Defence Academy, he spent five years at GEC-Marconi working as a Professional Engineer/Senior Engineer/Section Leader and was concerned with all aspects of research, design, simulation and fabrication of thermal imaging sighting systems.

His research work is in the fields of Infrared Signature Simulation & Modelling and EO&IR Countermeasures. He has written numerous classified and unclassified papers on these subjects, and holds a Classified Patent on a novel Infrared camouflage material. He is the editor and principal author of a book on battlefield surveillance technology and has acted as a consultant and defence analyst, on numerous occasions, to both the UK Ministry of Defence and commercial industry.

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List of Acronyms

A-BHA	ALS Beam Hazard Area
ABL	Airborne Laser
A-BZ	ALS Buffer Zone
ADU	Analog Digital Unit
A-EBZ	ALS Extended Buffer Zone
A-EVP	ALS Eye-safety Verification Program
AGT	Air Force Ground Troops
AIRF	ADU/Integrated Radiance Response Function
ALL	Airborne Laser Laboratory
ALS	Airborne Laser System
ALS-MPP	ALS Mission Planning Program
A-LTD	Airborne LTD
AMCF	Atmospheric Model Correction Function
AP	Percentage of Acquired Pulses
APD	Avalanche Photodiode
ARTIMLR	Artillery Thermal Imager Module Long-Range
ATGT	Acquisition Training Target
BER	Bit Error Rate
BIT	Built-In Test
BRC	Bomb Release Corridor
BRDF	Bidirectional Reflectance Distribution Function
BTB	Bang-to-Bang Guidance
BZE	Effective G-BZ
CAD	Computer Assisted Design
CCD	Charge Coupled Device
CCG	Computer Control Group
CD	Coherent Detection
CDF	Cumulative Frequency Distribution Functions
CDU	Cockpit Display Unit
CEP	Circular Error Probable
CITE	Cinetheodolite
CLDP	Convertible Laser Designation Pod
COIL	Chemical Oxygen Iodine Laser
COS	Cinetheodolites Operator Sight
CP	Control Panel
CPU	Central Processing Unit
CSV	Centro Sperimentale di Volo
CT	Control Technique
CW	Continuous Wave
DAS	Digital Acquisition System
DC	Direct Current
DEA	Array of Detectors
DEST	Destroyable Target
DEW	Directed Energy Weapon
DGPS	Differential Global Positioning System

DPU	Detector Processing Unit
DRS	Display and Recording Station
DUH	Detector Unit Housing
ECR	Electronic Combat and Reconnaissance
EF-BZ	G-BZ Elliptical Footprint
EGEA	Extended GEA
EHAS	Extended HAS
EMD	Engineering Manufacturing and Development
EMT	Extinction Measurement Technique
EO	Electro-Optics
EOHD	Extended Ocular Hazard Distance
EPA	Energy Pointing Accuracy
EPIM	Energy Pixel Intensity Matrix
EPU	Electronic Processing Unit
Er: fiber	Erbium Fiber (Laser)
ESLM	Elder Strong Langer Middleton (Propagation model)
EVP	Eye-safety Verification Program
FAC	Forward Air Controllers
FAR	False Alarm Rate
FASCODE	FASt atmospheric signature CODE
FCS	Fire Control System
FIR	Far Infrared
FLIR	Forward Looking Infrared
FPA	Focal Plane Array
FRCT	Fast-recoverable Target
FTA	Folding Tail Assembly
FWHM	Full Width at Half Maximum
FXDT	Fixed Target
GaAlAs	Gallium Aluminum Arsenide
GaAs	Gallium Arsenide
G-BHA	GLS Beam Hazard Area
GBU	Guided Bomb Unit
G-BZ	GLS Buffer Zone
GEA	Ground Evacuation Areas
G-EBZ	GLS Extended Buffer Zone
G-EVP	GLS Eye-safety Verification Program
GLS	Ground Laser System
GLTD	Ground Laser Target Designator
GPA	Geometric Pointing Accuracy
GPIM	Grey-scale Pixel Intensity Matrix
GPS	Global Positioning System
HAS	Hazard Air Space
HC	Heading Change
HDD	Head-Down Display
He-Ne	Helium Neon (Laser)
HITRAN	High resolution TRANsmision code
HMI	Human Machine Interface
HUD	Head-Up Display
HW	Hardware

I/O	Input/Output
I/P-I	Input Interface
ID	Incoherent Detection
IDS	Interdiction and Strike
IGB	Infrared Guided Bomb
INS	Inertial Navigation System
INST	Installation Mode (LTM)
IR	Infrared
IREF	IR Reference Target
ItAF	Italian Air Force
IVC	International Visibility Code
IWF	Impact Warning Function
LADAR	Laser Radar
LAN	Local Area Network
LATOA	Laser Activation Time Signal
LBP	Laser Beam Profiling
LCOM	Laser Communication Systems
LCS	Laser Cross-Section
LCU	LOAS Control Unit
LDI	LOAS Debugging Interface
LDP	Laser Designation Pod
LDV	Laser Doppler Velocimetry
LEM	Laser Energy Meter
LEMS	Laser Energy Measurement System
LGB	Laser Guided Bomb
LGW	Laser Guided Weapons
LIDAR	Light Detection and Ranging
LLLGB	Low Level Laser Guided Bomb
LOAS	Laser Obstacle Avoidance System
LOE	Laser Output Energy
LOS	Line Of Sight
LOWTRAN	LOW spectral resolution TRANsmission code
LPDB	Laser Propagation Data Base
LR	Lethal Range
LRF	Laser Range Finder
LSM	Laser Scatter-Meter
LSO	Laser Safety Officer
LSU	Laser Seeker Unit
LTD	Laser Target Designator
LTM	Laser Tracking and Monitoring system
LWR	Laser Warning Receiver
MC	Main Computer
MCU	Missile Control Unit
MDED	Minimum Detectable Energy Density
MDPD	Minimum Detectable Power Density
MIR	Mid Infrared
MODTRAN	MODerate spectral resolution TRANsmission code
MPA	Mission Planning and Analysis
MPE	Maximum Permissible Exposure

MRTD	Minimum Resolvable Temperature Difference
MSU	Monitoring and Control Station Unit
ND	Neutral Density
Nd:YAG	Neodymium Yttrium Aluminum Garnet (Laser)
NEP	Noise Equivalent Power
NFH	NATO Frigate Helicopter
NFOV	Narrow Field Of View
NHC	Navigator Hand Control
NIR	Near Infrared
NOHD	Nominal Ocular Hazard Distance
NVG	Night Vision Goggles
O/P-I	Output Interface
OD	Optical Density
OF	Optical Fibre
OHD	Ocular Hazard Distance
OPR	Operational Mode (LTM)
OU	Optical Unit
P/A	Pod-Aircraft
PAS	Pneumatic Actuation System
PC	Personal Computer
PCC	PISQ Control Centre
PD	Pulse Duration
PDF	Probability Density Functions
PDRR	Program Definition and Risk Reduction
PE	Pointing Error
PEP	Pyroelectric Probe
PG	Proportional Guidance
PILASTER	PISQ LASer Test and Evaluation Range
PIM	Pixel Intensity Matrix
PISQ	Poligono Interforze del Salto di Quirra
PLD	Portable Laser Designator
PPS	Precise Positioning Service
PRF	Pulse Repetition Frequency
PTD	Pulse Train Duration
PVT	Position-Velocity-Time
RAO	Reggimento Acquisizione Obiettivi
RC	Remote Control
RH	Relative Humidity
RP3	Range Performance Prediction Program
RS	Reference Station
RSS	Root Sum Squared
RSV	Reparto Sperimentale Volo
RX	Receiver
SA	Selective Availability
SDP	Spot Distortion Parameter
SHU	Sensor Head Unit
SK	Soft Key

SM	Safety Margin
SNR	Signal-to-Noise Ratio
SPA	Safe Positioning Area
SPS	Standard Positioning Service
SR	Slant-Range
SRTOA	Synchronous Signal
STANAG	NATO STANdardized AGreement
STU	Sensor Tracking and Measurement Unit
SW	Software
TAC	Area Correlation Tracking
TAS	True Air Speed
TC	Tactical Computer
TIC	Image Contrast Tracking
TLR	Target Lethal Range
TO	Trial Officer
TRF	Transfer Mode (LTM)
TSPI	Time and Space Position Information
TTH	Tactical Transport Helicopter
TTPF	Target Transfer Probability Function
TU	Traversing Unit
TV	Television
TX	Transmitter
UHF	Ultra High Frequency
UR	User Receiver
VHF	Very High Frequency
WAN	Wireless Area Network
WFOV	Wide Field Of View
WMO	World Meteorological Office
WMS	Wireless Meteorological Station
WSO	Weapon System Operator



Chapter 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Technological developments in the realm of optronics have led to innovative concepts in the mission management of current and next generation ground attack aircraft. Particularly, tactical systems including Laser Range Finders (LRFs), Laser Radars (LADARs) and Laser Target Designators (LTDs) are used today by most military forces in the world and new promising laser technologies are being explored. Most laser systems are active devices that operate in a manner very similar to microwave radars but at much higher frequencies (e.g., LADAR and LRF). Other devices (e.g., LTD and beam-rider) are used to precisely direct Laser Guided Weapons (LGWs) against ground targets. A combination of both functions is often encountered in modern integrated airborne navigation-attack systems. Compared to similar microwave devices, the higher frequency of laser systems has the beneficial effect of smaller components and remarkable angular resolution values. On the other hand, laser systems performance are much more sensitive to the vagaries of the atmosphere and are thus generally restricted to shorter ranges than microwave systems.

For the accomplishment of aircraft operational tasks with LDT/LGW systems, it is important to optimise flight profiles in both self-designation and co-operative attack missions, allowing stand-off operations and safe escape manoeuvres. This can be achieved by a careful mission planning (i.e., modelling and simulation), taking into account all elements playing a significant role. These elements obviously include weather conditions (i.e., laser beam atmospheric propagation), target characteristics (e.g., reflectance, shape, dimensions), and aircraft-target relative geometry during the attack (i.e., LTD/LGW tactics).

Similarly, for flight experimental and training activities with laser systems and LGWs it is important to take into account the tactics of employment of the systems/weapons in different operational scenarios and to verify their performances in realistic operational and environmental conditions at the ranges. Also important for test/training purposes is the definition of laser safety criteria, since most systems currently in service operate in the near infrared with considerable risk for the naked human eye.

Eye-safe technology is also being applied to airborne laser systems. Promising applications that are now receiving a growing attention include LADAR systems for obstacle warning in low-level flight missions. These systems are particularly attractive for helicopter applications. Essential steps in the development of such systems are obviously laser beam propagation analysis in various weather conditions, definition of the obstacle detection performances and implementation of suitable obstacle classification and prioritisation algorithms.

Since the beginning of the 90's, the Italian Air Force Official Flight Test Centre (RSV) has conducted various test programs with LGWs, and LTD/LRF systems for both airborne and ground applications. In some cases, the activities had to be carried out in foreign test ranges, equipped with ground instrumentation sufficient for some measurement tasks (e.g., determination of laser systems pointing accuracy), but not fulfilling the RSV test requirements. Particularly, in many cases, laser spot data gathering and post-mission data analysis were very limited, considerably reducing the scope of the experimental activities and often increasing the time and money required to complete the flight test campaigns. Furthermore, once the various laser systems were introduced into service, there was a growing need for an effective training at the ranges, with adequate real-time data acquisition and post-mission data analysis tools.

Therefore, between 1997 and 1998 the Italian Air Force set the requirements for upgrading the PISQ test/training range (Poligono Interforze del Salto di Quirra – Sardinia – Italy), adding new facilities for carrying out safe training and experimental activities with airborne and ground laser systems, together with LGW delivery tests.

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According to the initial requirements, the PILASTER (PISQ LASer Test and Evaluation Range) research and development program was divided in two different phases. The aim of the first phase of the program (1999 – 2002) was to provide an initial operational capability for carrying out, in fully safe conditions, ground tests and flight experimental activities (with related measurements and semi-automated data analysis), required for performance evaluation of military laser systems. The successive phase of the program (2003 – 2006) was aimed to implementing the PILASTER full operational capability, required for performing all laser test/training activities, including all mission planning and fully-automated post-mission data analysis tasks.

1.2 AIM OF THE AGARDOGRAPH

The objective of this AGARDograph is to identify methods for evaluating the performance of laser systems operating in the infrared (including flight test, modelling and simulation), with different operational and environmental conditions. Present laser technology status and future technology trends are investigated, in order to determine the relative strengths and weaknesses of the most promising laser technologies when applied to airborne systems. Suitable mathematical models for laser beam propagation, geometric analysis, target reflectivity and detection are identified. Safety issues are deeply analysed in the light of the operational requirements for airborne systems (including guided weapons), and the optimal design characteristics of range instrumentation for current and likely future laser systems test/training operations are identified. Finally, the requirements for tactical and test/training mission planning are defined, together with the kernel algorithms of suitable simulation programs capable to assist aircrews and flight test engineers in the determination of optimal aircraft flight profiles for operations at the ranges.

The Italian Air Force case study, linking most of the technical and operational issues discussed in this AGARDograph to the PILASTER development program, describes the research work performed for designing, developing and testing the PILASTER laser range for the Italian Air Force. This includes the design of new range instrumentation and facilities, development of innovative methods for military systems performance prediction/evaluation, determination of eye-safety requirements for employment of ground and airborne laser systems at the PILASTER range both during experimental and training activities, and extensive laboratory, ground and flight test activities performed by the Italian Air Force with state-of-the-art ground/airborne laser systems and weapons.

The following paragraph gives an outline of the format of this AGARDograph.

1.3 OUTLINE OF THE AGARDOGRAPH

The Chapter 2 of this AGARDograph describes some of the most important airborne laser systems and gives an overview of the main applications encountered in the operational field (some fundamental concepts are expanded in Annex A). Particularly, Chapter 2 reviews current laser technology status and future technology trends, with particular emphasis for systems now in service or under development in the NATO countries. These include the Italian Air Force LTD/LRF systems, various types of LGWs and LADAR systems both for helicopter and fixed-wing aircraft applications.

Chapter 3 discusses the key elements of laser systems performance analysis, with the aim of introducing the mathematical models required for operational mission planning and simulation. Particularly, suitable forms of the laser range equation are developed, for determining the performance of ground and airborne laser systems under specific conditions and with various types of targets. Furthermore, an outline is presented of the laser beam atmospheric propagation models used for PILASTER test/training operations (i.e., mission planning, safety studies and performance analysis) with ground/airborne laser systems. Finally, Chapter 3 discusses target reflection properties, and presents the operational considerations necessary for laser systems performance analysis (target/spot size, system error sources and effects,

mission geometry, etc.). A more detailed discussion about laser systems range and detection performances is presented in Annex B.

The PILASTER test/training range requirements are described in Chapter 4. Particularly, the laser range concept of operation is illustrated, and the general systems requirements set in 1998 for the PILASTER program are presented. These include requirements for both training and experimental activities, with a conceptual definition of the systems necessary both in the range operational area (targets, sensors, area-networks, etc.), and in the remote control-room.

Detailed information about the PILASTER design and technical characteristics, progressively refined during the various implementation phases of the program, are presented in Chapter 5. Particularly, the PILASTER Sensor Tracking and Measurement Unit (STU) and remote Monitoring and Control Station Unit (MSU) systems design is presented. The PILASTER STU system allows accurate measurement on the ground (i.e., targets locations) of various important laser parameters (beam pointing accuracy, energy received at the target location, spot geometry on the target, etc.). These information are recorded at the STU and passed, through the range local and wireless area networks (LAN/WAN) to the MSU placed in the remote control-room. All information required for real-time mission management (i.e., eye-safety verification and test/training operations) are then displayed and recorded, in suitable formats, at the PILASTER MSU.

The methods developed for evaluating the hazards associated with the use of ground and airborne laser systems, are presented in Chapter 6. Particularly, safety issues of state-of-the-art Nd:YAG target designators are thoroughly investigated, in order to identify operational procedures and limitations for the employment of such equipment at the PILASTER range during execution of both test and training missions. Various mathematical algorithms are presented, developed for the PILASTER simulation and mission planning tools, which allow a complete verification of laser-safety for ground and airborne laser systems.

In order to optimise the employment of the systems in service (e.g., LTDs and LGWs), as well as for developing the new PILASTER systems, and fully defining test/training operational and technical requirements, it was essential to perform a number of experiments. Some of these experiments, such as determination of LGW seeker detection thresholds, PILASTER sensors selection/calibration and measurements of target materials reflection properties, were conveniently performed in a laboratory facility. Other important measurements and tests were performed during appropriate field and flight test sessions.

Chapter 7 describes the laboratory experimental activities carried out during this research. These include:

- Determination of LGW Seekers Detection Thresholds;
- Measurements of Surface/Paints Reflection Properties (PILASTER targets);
- PILASTER Sensors Testing and Calibration;
- LOAS¹ Laser Sub-system Testing; and
- Test of Laser Protection Filters (Cinetheodolites, Ground Personnel and Aircrew).

Particularly, the specific test aims, test methods (instrumentation requirements, details of measures performed, etc.) and test results, are presented in this chapter.

¹ To improve clarity, the technical abbreviation LOAS (Laser Obstacle Avoidance System) is used in this volume, instead of LOAM (Laser Obstacle Avoidance Marconi), which is the commercial name of the product developed by the Italian company Marconi-Selenia (now Selex-Communications).

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Ground experiments performed during this research are described in Chapter 8. These include NIR laser beam atmospheric propagation measurements, LTD/LRF pointing accuracy tests, systems harmonisation and performance evaluation trials of the STU components of the PILASTER system. Furthermore, dedicated ground trials were performed on the LOAS system in order to assess its detection performance (in various weather conditions), and to verify the reliability of its obstacle classification algorithms. The various test objectives and procedures, instrumentation employed and methods of analysis are described in Chapter 8, together with results of the ground experimental activities.

Chapter 9 describes the flight test activities performed during this research and gives indications about further activities planned for the future. Flight test activities performed as part of the PILASTER development project, included the following:

- Propagation Measurements in Oblique Air-to-ground Paths;
- CLDP Pointing Accuracy Measurements (TORNADO-IDS);
- CLDP FLIR Systems Flight Testing (TORNADO-IDS);
- LOAS Preliminary Flight Trials on the NH-300 Helicopter; and
- LOAS Flight Trials on the AB-212 Helicopter.

Particularly, the PILASTER STU and MSU systems were tested during their employment in real air-to-ground missions (both with and without deliveries of guided weapons). With the PILASTER systems in their operational configuration, atmospheric extinction measurements were performed with typical air-to-ground mission geometries (i.e., oblique laser paths), and the correction factors for the ESLM sea-level atmospheric propagation models were determined in these conditions. CLDP pointing accuracy (from geometric and energy spot measurements) was also determined during the TORNADO-IDS flight test campaign and CLDP FLIR systems tests were performed with various aircraft-target geometries.

The DGPS test activities were performed with the aim of selecting a suitable Position Reference System for both experimental and training activities (i.e., real-time and post-flight mission trajectory data analysis). Furthermore, the aircraft envelope limitations associated with the use of airborne GPS systems were determined.

The LOAS flight test activities were carried out in order to verify the functionality of the system in a representative operational environment (i.e., system detection performance in various weather conditions and with various obstacle scenarios), and to assess the efficiency of the LOAS obstacle classification/prioritisation algorithms.

Chapter 10 is dedicated to the simulation tools developed during the PILASTER program for systems eye-safety and performance analysis. The mathematical models developed during the research were incorporated in the PILASTER simulation tools, allowing definition of test/training mission constraints and operational feasibility, together with post-mission data analysis. The assumptions adopted for implementation of the various algorithms in the PILASTER simulation/analysis programs are presented in this chapter, together with results of some relevant simulation tasks performed.

Finally, Chapter 11 summarises the main achievements of the PILASTER program and outlines suggestions for further work.

Chapter 2 – LASER SYSTEMS OVERVIEW

2.1 GENERAL

Since the early days of laser technology, many countries supported large laser R&D budgets which lead to a rich diversity of systems, ranging from ‘laboratory’ systems demonstrating the latest non-linear optical technology to eye-safe, low cost laser-ranging binoculars. Traditionally, military interests in laser systems have been concentrated in four general areas: Laser Rangefinders (LRFs) and Target Designators (LTDs), Laser Radars (LADARs), Laser Communication Systems (LCOMs), and Directed Energy Weapons (DEWs). The nature of the interest in laser technology is, for a considerable part, significantly dissimilar for the three military service branches, and this is mainly due to the different requirements (e.g., environmental, weight/size, performance) of systems to be used on land, at sea, and in the air. Although military lasers are significantly different from those which exist in the commercial world, commercial applications of military technologies are also being exploited.

Due to the aim of the present research, in this chapter we will review the fundamentals of the most popular of current airborne and ground tactical laser systems (i.e., LADAR/LRF and LTD), with particular emphasis for the systems currently in service or under development for the Italian Air Force. More detailed information about the relevant laser technologies, and a discussion of various airborne systems applications, is presented in Annex A.

2.2 LASER RANGEFINDERS AND TARGET DESIGNATORS

Range finding was the first military application of laser technology. Operational range finders were introduced into the armed forces as early as the mid-sixties, only five years after Theodore Maiman presented the first working laser. Since then, thousands and thousands of Laser Range Finders (LRFs) and Laser Target Designators (LTDs) have been delivered to the defence forces in many countries all over the world. Today, LRFs and LTDs are necessary parts of modern Weapon Aiming and Fire Control Systems.

The high radiance and narrow beamwidth of the laser makes it possible to determine distances with great accuracy. The accurate range and angle information provided by the LRF in modern Fire Control Systems (FCSs) is responsible for a major advance in the precision and effectiveness of weapons in battlefield conditions. Additionally, shrinking defence budgets make it more attractive for military organizations to upgrade existing systems rather than to procure new ones. Integration of a modern LRF in military platforms can provide major performance enhancement at modest cost, particularly compared to all-new systems. A variety of laser technologies have been applied to rangefinders and Neodymium-Yttrium Aluminium Garnet (Nd:YAG) LRFs, operating at a wavelength of 1064 nm and based on the principle of pulse time-of-flight measurement, are the state-of-the-art. The advent of inexpensive eye-safe systems in the military field offers both the opportunity for expanded training and new applications. LRFs operating at 1530 – 1550 nm, based on Er: fiber and Raman-shifted Nd:YAG lasers, may be used where eye-safety is fundamental. CO₂ eye-safe LRFs, operating at 10.6 μ m, have been developed in many configurations and they can play a significant part in conjunction with passive thermal imaging systems and other multi-functional system applications.

Laser Target Designators (LTDs) and Laser Guided Weapons (LGWs) were developed in order to satisfy the military requirement for weapon systems (i.e., bombs and missiles) capable of pinpoint accuracy, especially when the target is relatively small and well defended. Prior to this technology, there have only been two alternatives to deal with this kind of situation: either get close enough to the target to make certain of a hit or use some kind of blanket bombing over a fairly large area. Closing in to the target may be extremely dangerous and, if it is well defended, could lead to a high casualty rate. On the other hand,

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blanket bombing may not be effective in destroying the target or may require excessive amounts of ammunition. Furthermore, a concern particularly important in current conflict scenarios is the reduction of collateral damage. This has forced the military into the development of 'smart munitions' which easily pinpoint specific targets. The LTD is an essential element for the operation of these sophisticated weapon systems. For operation of LGWs or 'smart munitions', a coded laser beam from the LTD is directed at the target. The reflected pulses from the target are scattered in many directions. They are detected by the LGW (bomb or missile) target seeker, which is a sensor on the head of the LGW responding to the same code as in the beam. The missile/bomb, which normally is fired from a distant place (e.g., an aircraft), will thus home in on the target and destroy it.

From the description given, it appears evident that, with simple design modifications (e.g., specific laser coding), a LRF can serve admirably as a target designator and it has the added advantage of simultaneously providing slant-range to the target.

A technical introduction to LRF, LTD and LGW systems is given in Annex A. In the following paragraphs, we present an overview of the relevant technical characteristics of the systems in service with the Italian Air Force.

2.3 ITALIAN AIR FORCE LTD/LGB SYSTEMS

Since the beginning of the 90's, the Italian Air Force Flight Test Centre (RSV) has been involved in various activities related with laser guided weapons and designation systems for airborne and ground applications. Particularly, the Thomson Convertible Laser Designation Pod (CLDP) with both TV and IR capabilities have been integrated on TORNADO-IDS aircraft, together with Laser Guided Bombs (LGB) of various characteristics (PAVEWAY II and III), and a Ground Laser Target Designator (GLTD) has also been tested by RSV and introduced into service with Air Force Ground Troops (AGT) and Army Forward Air Controllers (FACs). Other activities currently ongoing, include integration of CLDP on the AM-X aircraft and of LIZARD LGB on the AM-X and TORNADO aircraft. Future activities include integration of a new generation Laser Designation Pod (LDP) on Eurofighter Typhoon, and enhanced PAVEWAY III (i.e., GPS aided laser guidance) on both TORNADO and Typhoon aircraft.

The CLDP system is designed for day/night self-designation and co-operative attacks, and can also perform accurate navigation fixes (i.e., range finding). In the TORNADO-IDS integration scheme, CLDP is a non-jettisonable store and is carried on the forward section of the aircraft left shoulder pylon.

GBU-16 (PAVEWAY II) LGB is an MK-83 1000 pounds warhead, equipped with second generation modular electronics and mechanical assemblies designed to provide the weapon with a laser bang-to-bang guidance capability, for medium and high altitude attacks.

GBU-24 (PAVEWAY III) is the third generation of laser guided munitions, composed by a 2000 lbs warhead (MK-84/BLU-109) and a proportional-guidance system. Specifically designed to enhance low altitude delivery (hence the name LLLGB – Low Level Laser Guided Bomb), the weapon characteristics also greatly simplify medium and high altitude deliveries.

LIZARD is a medium-high altitude LGB with proportional guidance and a standard MK-82 (500 lbs) warhead, recently integrated on the AM-X aircraft. The LIZARD has physical characteristics (mass distribution, mechanical interfaces, etc.) identical to the OPHER IR Guided Bomb (IGB), previously in service with the Italian Air Force (this fact greatly simplified the activities required for LIZARD-aircraft integration).



Figure 2-1: TORNADO PAVEWAY II Flight Trials.

In the following paragraphs, after a brief technical description of the CLDP and GLTD systems characteristics, relevant information is provided about LGBs currently in service with the Italian Air Force (i.e., GBU-16, GBU-24 and LIZARD).

2.3.1 CLDP Description

The Convertible laser Designation Pod (CLDP) is a system designed to provide the aircraft with day and night laser designation capability, for co-operative and self-designation attacks performed using laser-guided weapons. The pod is equipped with an internal designation laser operating at $1.064 \mu\text{m}$ (non-eyesafe region of the spectrum) and may be configured for day-time operation by using a television camera (TV) or for day/night operation by using an IR sensor (IR). The TV configuration may also provide daytime advantages in high humidity conditions. In its subsidiary role, the CLDP can also act as a sensor for navigation fixing including height fixing.

As shown in Figure 2-2, both CLDP configurations consist primarily of two sections: an interchangeable front section containing a TV sensor head or IR sensor head, and a common body containing a central section and a rear cooling unit [1].

LASER SYSTEMS OVERVIEW

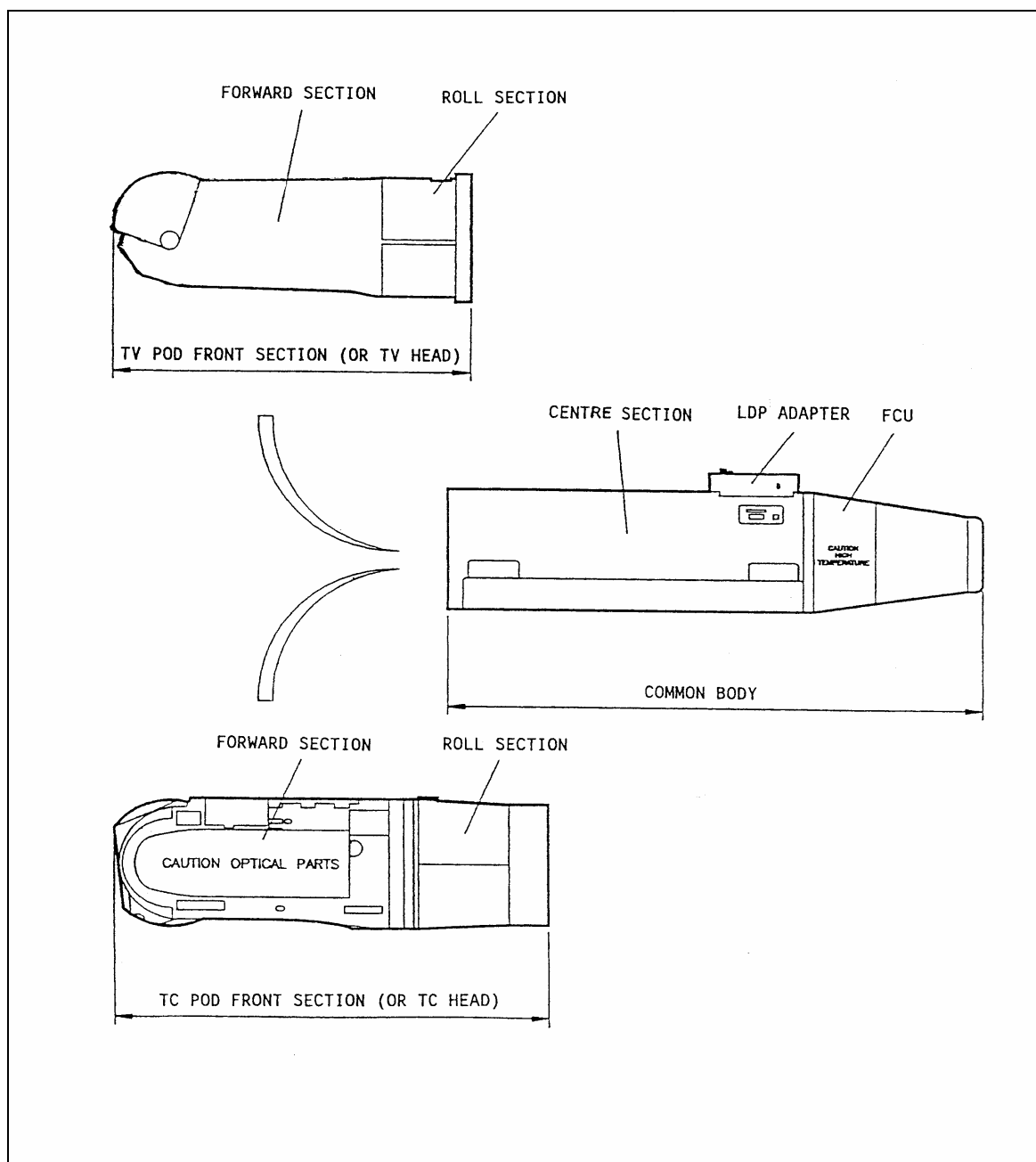


Figure 2-2: CLDP TV and IR Configurations.

In the TORNADO-IDS integration scheme [2], the CLDP is a non-jettisonable store and is carried on the forward section of the aircraft left shoulder pylon (Figure 2-3).



Figure 2-3: TORNADO-IDS CLDP Installation.

In conjunction with the Main Computer (MC), real time video with CLDP symbology is displayed on the aircraft TV/TAB navigator's displays, and the CLDP related symbology is displayed on the pilot's Head-Up Display (HUD).

An electrical adaptor installed on the back of the centre section provides the electrical interface between the CLDP and the aircraft. The adaptor interfaces with the MC via the aircraft Missile Control Unit (MCU), using a MIL-STD-1553B data bus.

TORNADO CLDP main functions are selected by the Weapon System Operator (WSO). Commands and controls are located in the TORNADO rear cockpit. Pod Line of Sight (LOS) controls are located both in front and rear cockpits (Figure 2-4). The various CLDP functions (automatic or selectable by the crew) are described in the following sub-sections.

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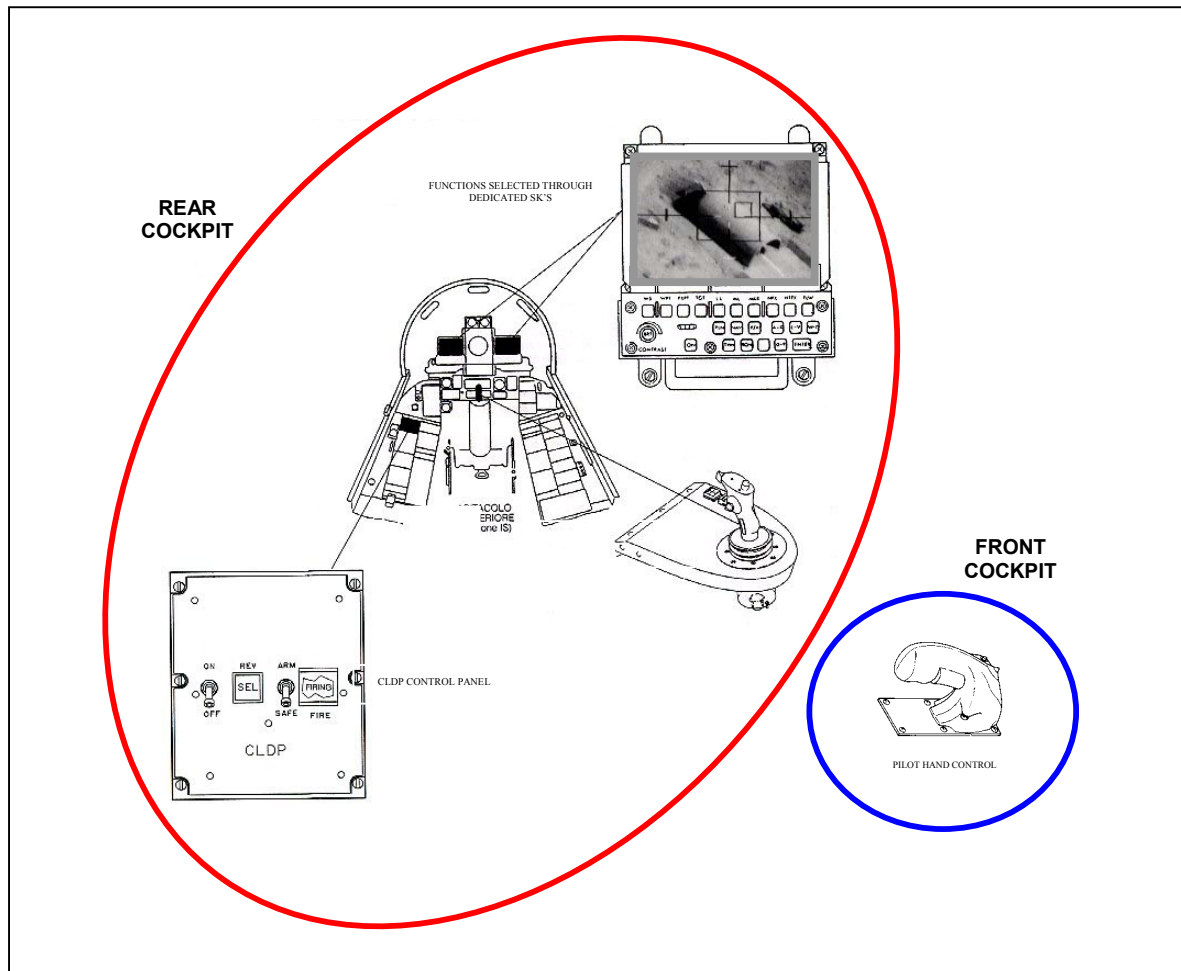


Figure 2-4: CLDP Cockpit Controls.

System Initialization: The pod is switched on via the CLDP control panel (CP) located in the rear cockpit (Figure 2-4). The system executes a start-up sequence, checking CLDP internal equipment status. At the end of sequence the pod enters the stand-by mode.

CLDP System Status Check: The system continuously checks the integrity of CLDP-aircraft communication, advising the crew of failure occurrences. If an internal equipment failure is detected by the system, a specific warning is shown on the WSO display (TV-TAB). Further advice of pod internal sub-system failure is also given to the WSO by mean of a dedicated TV-TAB CLDP format which can be recalled through a display “soft key”.

Slave Modes: The CLDP LOS pointing is controlled through direction cosines calculated in the aircraft MC. Furthermore, pointing can be adjusted manually using the Navigator or Pilot Hand Controls (NHC/PHC). The following Slave modes are available:

- **Slave-Slave:** The LOS points at the target or at a fix-point provided that the system is in Fixing or in Attack mode. In this mode the LOS pointing is fixed to the target virtual position.
- **Slave-Ground Stabilized:** LOS position can be adjusted via NHC inputs. In this mode the LOS is ground stabilized to the target position, taking into account the NHC demands.

- *Slave-Cage*: LOS points straight ahead in azimuth and 4° down in elevation.
- *Slave-Manual*: LOS direction can be controlled via NHC input. Starting in a Slave-Cage position (system in navigation mode), LOS pointing can be adjusted via NHC. In this mode LOS is not ground stabilized (no target/fix-point is recognized by the aircraft MC).

Track Modes: The pod enters in Track mode from Slave on WSO selection. With the Tracking mode selected, the pod does not consider the MC inputs in terms of LOS direction cosines but it maintains the LOS overlapped to the target by itself, using one of the two available sub-modes:

- *Tracking by Area Correlation (TAC)*: CLDP performs a digital store of the whole video image which is then superimposed onto the actual live image. The correlation between the two images generates commands to move LOS consequently. However, LOS can be manually oriented provided that NHC is selected for CLDP use.
- *Tracking by Image Contrast (TIC)*: CLDP performs a digital scan of the video image looking for an area of high contrast with the background. The CLDP will then correct LOS position over that area, focused to the video centred image. If the position is manually adjusted via NHC, then this function is disabled and the TAC mode is automatically re-selected.

Masking: CLDP LOS pointing is limited by aircraft masking effects (i.e., obscuration of the CLDP line-of-sight due to impingement of the aircraft body). The CLDP automatically prevents the laser from firing on aircraft structure and external stores. Together with aircraft profile (including stores), the masking function also takes into account the CLDP Blind Cone (CLDP rear). A pre-masking function is also available to warn the aircrew of the mask limit proximity.

Computed Rate Track (CRT): The CRT function is automatically selected whenever Tracking mode loses “good track” or at the occurrence of a mask impingement. In CRT mode the LOS is aimed to the target by CLDP computer using the aircraft velocity, attitude and slant-range to target information provided by MC.

Pod/Aircraft Harmonization (P/A): The Pod/Aircraft (P/A) Harmonization procedure must be performed every time the pod is installed on aircraft. The procedure corrects the misalignment between the CLDP and the aircraft axes. Providing that the pod is in Track mode, this function can be performed through WSO and Pilot co-operation (Pilot method) or by WSO only (Navigator method). During the P/A Harmonization procedure, the misalignment in Z and Y rotation axes (vertical and transverse axis) is calculated by the system and stored in a pod non-volatile memory as delta-piIRh and delta-yaw angles to be added to the azimuth and elevation LOS pointing.

Video/Laser Boresight (V/L): The V/L Boresight function is used to check the laser efficiency and to correct any laser/optical axis misalignment. This function is required to be executed before attack/fixing.

Reversionary: The Reversionary mode is automatically selected if the Weapon or Avionic Bus fails, the Weapon Bus is shut-down as result of MC failure or Re-cycle, or the MCU fails. When in Reversionary mode the pod is still capable of tracking and illuminating the target.

CLDP Target/Navigation Fixing: CLDP can be used as a sensor for navigation/target fixing purposes, in the following modes:

- *Plan Fixing* (no laser operation): CLDP LOS angular position and selected height sensor data are used to calculate the aircraft position with respect to target/fix-point.
- *Three Dimensional Fixing* (laser operation): Laser Range and LOS angular position are used to calculate aircraft position with respect to the target/fix-point.

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Designation Attacks: The system allows for:

- *Self Designation Attacks*, in which the aircraft acts as illuminator for the own carried LGBs. The following bombing attack profiles can be performed during self-designation attacks:
 - GBU 16: Dive, Level, Loft.
 - GBU 24: Dive, Level.
- *Co-operative Designation Attacks*, in which the aircraft acts as the illuminator for partner(s) aircraft. Co-operative profiles can be chosen between:
 - NSTR (No Steering), in which aircraft is driven direct to over-fly the target.
 - STR (Steering), in which aircraft is driven to pass tangent to the Lethal Range (LR) according to pre-planned Heading Change (HC).

The laser can be operated by a pre-planned counter (Real Time or Count Down) or manually. Co-operative attack steering laws require that the attack is initiated respecting the aircraft to target minimum distance (break-off point not yet reached) and track angle error within the operational limits, as shown in Figure 2-5.

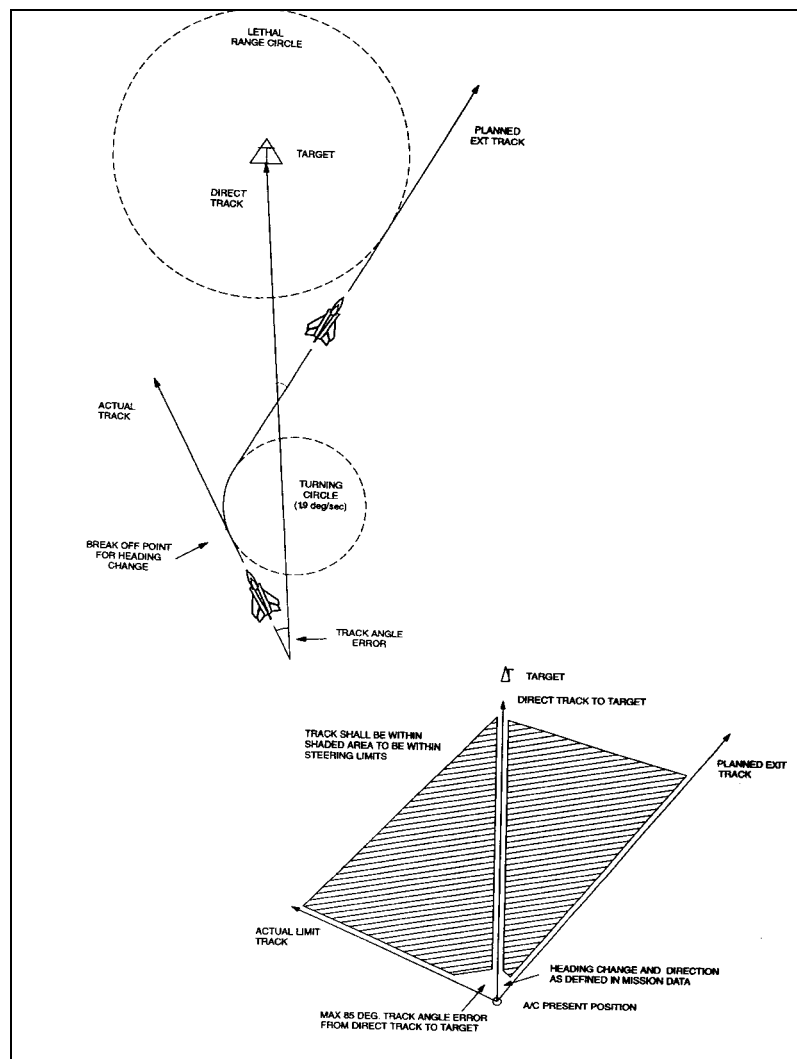


Figure 2-5: CLDP Co-operative Attack Steering Laws.

If one or both of these limits are exceeded, the aircraft will not respect proper steering and will not perform properly the expected turn or will not acquire the planned heading change.

2.3.2 ELOP-GLTD System Characteristics

The ELOP-GLTD system, in service with the Italian Air Force, is designed for day-night operations with LGWs and is equipped with a Remote Control (RC) and a Tactical Computer (TC) where the distance, azimuth, elevation and WGS-84 geodetic co-ordinates (obtained from a GPS) of the target are displayed. As shown in Figure 2-6, the ELOP-GLTD system is constituted by the following main components [3]:

- Portable Laser Designator (PLD);
- Artillery Thermal Imager Module Long-Range (ARTIMLR);
- Traversing Unit (TU);
- Tactical Computer (TC);
- Computer Heater Battery;
- Remote Control (Fire Switch);
- Tripod;
- Battery Pack;
- Communication Cable; and
- Power Cable.

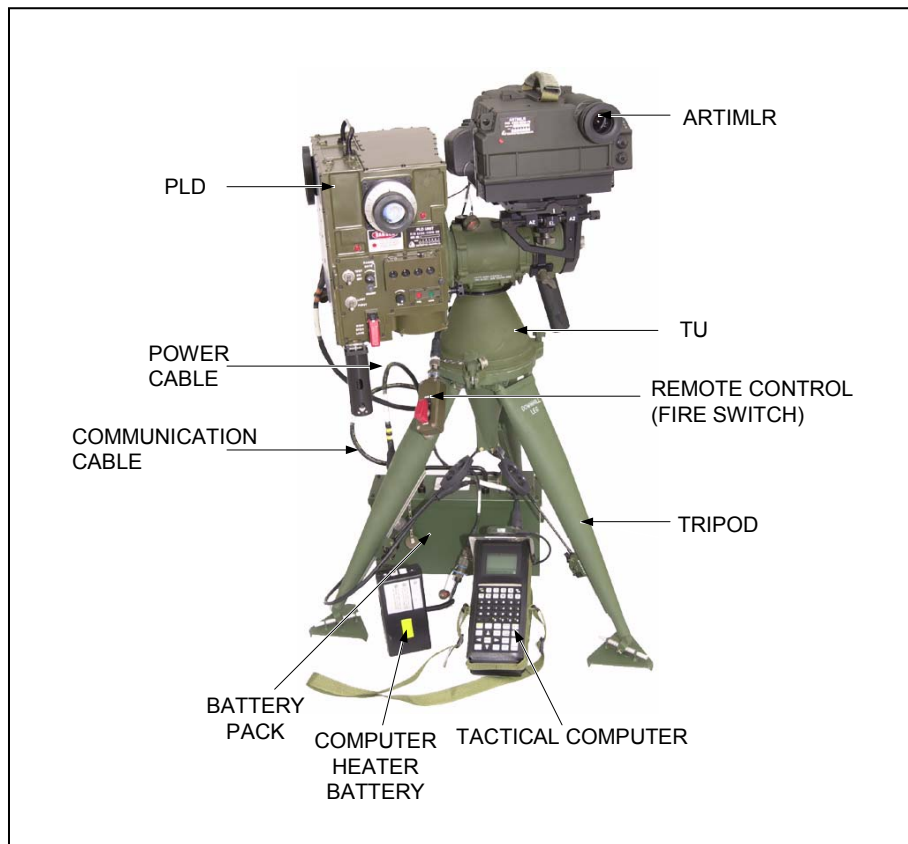


Figure 2-6: ELOP-GLTD System Composition.

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The system is based on the PLD. This unit enables viewing and acquisition of targets, designating them and measuring their range. Night vision is obtained by the ARTIMLR. The PLD and the ARTIMLR are attached to the TU, which allows the maneuvering of the system during the search for targets or their tracking, by easy change of azimuth and elevation angle. The TU is mounted on the Tripod that allows setting up and leveling of the system on practically any terrain. The handheld TC is attached to the system components. The computer enables data processing, navigation and target co-ordinates assignment (it contains a GPS receiver). The computer is connected to a heater battery for extremely low temperature operation. The PLD is powered by an external power source (battery). The ARTIMLR is powered by an attached battery pack. The handheld TC is powered by internal batteries.

The ELOP-GLTD system functions are:

- Air strike support and laser designation.
- Range finding and artillery fire control.
- Acquisition and management of targets bank.
- Northing with a manual compass.
- Positioning and navigation using the internal GPS receiver.

The ELOP-GLTD system can be carried by three soldiers and can be dismantled and reassembled easily and quickly under any field conditions. The main technical characteristics of the ELOP-GLTD system are listed below.

ELOP-GLTD System

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| • Azimuth Range | 360° |
| • Elevation Range | ±20° |
| • Tripod Weight | 2.8 kg |
| • TU Weight | 7 kg |
| • Battery Pack Weight | 6.1 kg |

PLD Designator

Transmitter

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Output Energy | 130 mJ |
| • Beam Divergence | 130 µrad (85% of output energy) |
| • Laser Beam/LOS Boresight | 80 µrad |
| • Maximum Lasing Rate | 20 PPS |
| • Coding | PRF (NATO Code) |

Range Receiver

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| • Range Discrimination | 30 m |
| • Sensitivity | 49 dB for a white diffusive target at 500 m |
| • Range Measurement | 250 to 19990 m |

Sight Performance

- Telescope Magnification $\times 13$
- Field of View 5.5°
- Eye Protection 45 dB for $1.064 \mu\text{m}$

ARTIMLR

Performance Characteristics

Table 2-1: ARTIMLR Performance Characteristics

Spectral Sensitivity	$8 \mu\text{m} - 10.5 \mu\text{m}$
Fields of View (FOV)	
- Narrow (H x V)	$2.1^\circ \times 1.3^\circ \pm 0.2^\circ$
- Wide (H x V)	$7.3^\circ \times 4.5^\circ \pm 0.5^\circ$
FOV Change	Electrically activated
Focus Change	Electrically activated
Focus Range	200 m to infinity in the NFOV 50 m to infinity in the WFOV
Reticles	Electronically generated reticle with different patterns for WFOV and NFOV as shown in Figure 2-7
Operating Time	2 hours with Standard NiMH battery (continuous operation at room ambient temperature)

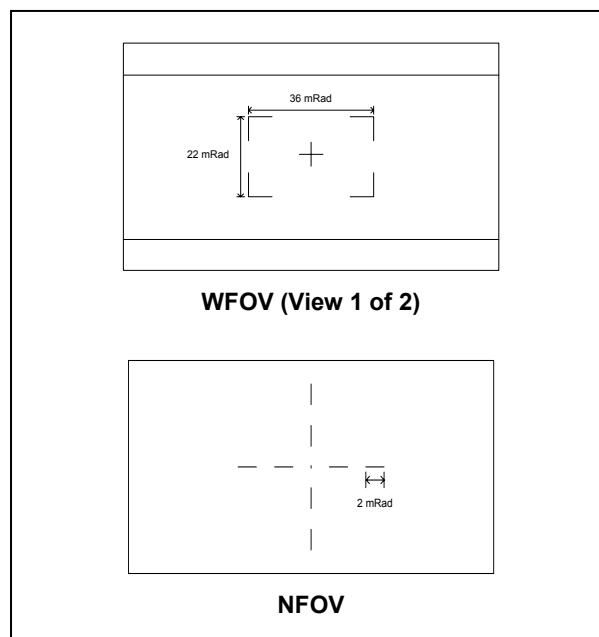


Figure 2-7: ARTIMLR Reticle Patterns – WFOV and NFOV.

LASER SYSTEMS OVERVIEW

2.3.3 GBU-16 (PAVEWAY II) Description

The GBU-16 (PAVEWAY II) laser Guided Bomb is an MK-83 1000 pound warhead, equipped with second generation modular electronics and mechanical assemblies designed to provide the weapon with the capability for laser terminal guidance [4]. Particularly, the GBU-16 consists of a forward Computer Control Group (CCG) including control canards and an aft wing assembly, attached to the MK-83 body (Figure 2-8). The Detector Unit Housing (DUH) is mounted on the front section of the CCG and is free to gimbal (move laterally) in any direction, and is aerodynamically stabilised by the ringtail molded into the rear of the detector assembly housing. To a first approximation the detector is aligned with the velocity vector of the weapon. The detector senses laser energy reflected from an illuminated target. The detector output is amplified and converted into commands that are transmitted to the forward control fins (or canards).

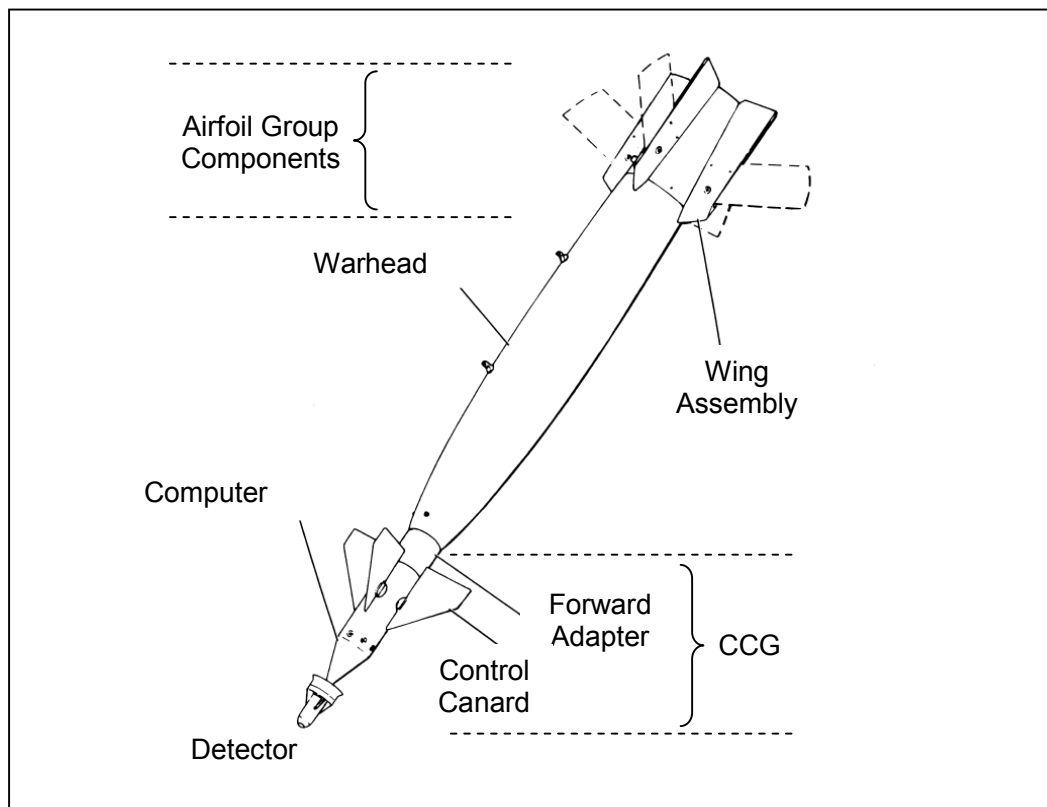


Figure 2-8: GBU-16 Configuration.

GBU-16 guidance is provided by a “Bang-Bang” control. When the computer senses a position error, the control fins are driven to the limit of their travel by high-pressure gas, regardless of the magnitude of the error. Therefore, the control fins are either at the trail position or full deflection during guidance. The GBU-16 guidance system attempts to fly a straight-line trajectory from its present location to the illuminated target. At acquisition, the computer section of the guidance unit recognises the angular difference between its flight path (velocity vector) and the LOS from its present position to the illuminated target (guidance error angle). By adjusting the GBU-16 flight path to reduce the magnitude of this error, the weapon can be guided to the illuminated target.

The GBU-16 is designed for medium and high altitude attacks, performed both in level and dive conditions. Nevertheless, theoretically the bomb may be dropped in loft conditions, although the associated release envelope is narrowed and the delivery accuracy is degraded.

2.3.4 GBU-24 (PAVEWAY III) Description

The GBU-24 (PAVEWAY III) is the third generation of laser guided munitions that were developed during the Vietnam era. Specifically, designed to enhance low altitude delivery (hence the name LLLGB – Low Level laser Guided Bomb), the weapon characteristics also greatly simplify medium and high altitude deliveries [5]. The PAVEWAY III series of weapons consist of a nose mounted guidance unit and an aft wing assembly which can be mounted on various classes of warheads (see Figure 2-9).



Figure 2-9: Paveway III Family.

The Italian Air Force selected two 2000 pound bombs, namely the MK-84 (complete assembly GBU-24(V)1/B) and BLU-109 (complete assembly BGU-24(V)2/B) high penetration warhead. As in the case of PAVEWAY II, PAVEWAY III LGB is loaded, released, or jettisoned using the same ground equipment and aircraft systems used for employing conventional, unguided warheads. Operation is independent of the aircraft except for normal suspension and release functions. No electrical interface or aircraft modification is necessary and these weapons may be carried (upon certification) by any aircraft capable of carrying the parent unguided warheads.

Differently from PAVEWAY II, the GBU-24 is a “Proportional Guidance” LGB, which continuously track the maximum of the target reflected laser energy and directs toward it by actuating its aerodynamic surfaces, giving commands proportional to the measured offset. The bomb has four different operational modes, selectable on the ground prior mission, depending on the target characteristics (i.e., hard or soft) and the desired bomb impact angle. For each mode of operation, the GBU-24 computer unit automatically selects a suitable flight profile (from a number of pre-set profile types) depending on the release conditions.

2.3.5 LIZARD LGB Description

The LIZARD Laser Guided Bomb, developed by *ELBIT Systems Ltd.* (Israel), consists of a standard MK-82 (500 lbs) warhead attached to a Proportional Guidance System (PGS) at the front end and a Folding Tail Assembly (FTA) at the rear. The LIZARD general view and its assemblies/subassemblies are shown in Figure 2-10 [6].

LASER SYSTEMS OVERVIEW

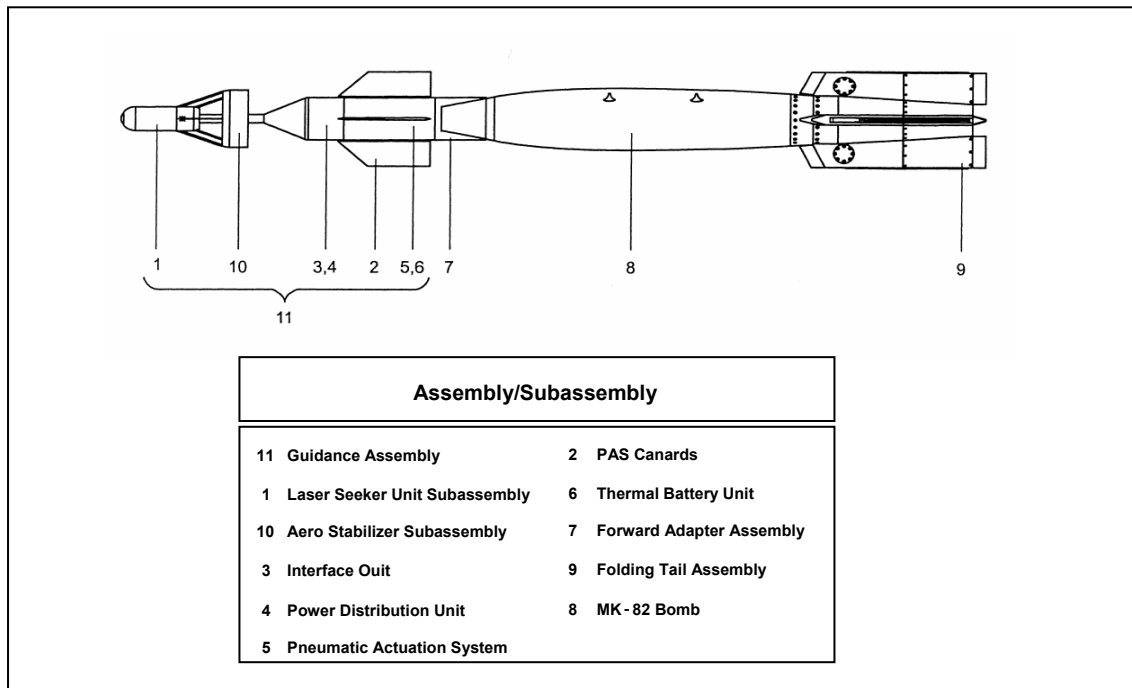


Figure 2-10: LIZARD LGB Configuration.

The PGS comprises a Laser Seeker Unit (LSU) which detects reflected laser energy (coded sequences of laser pulses) from the designated target and produces guidance commands to the Pneumatic Actuation System (PAS), according to the target position. The PAS guides the LIZARD by controlling the guidance fins to home on the target. The FTA is used to stabilize the LIZARD after launching and to provide the lift required for manoeuvrability. The system also includes provisions for a GPS add-on kit (to enhance guidance accuracy).

The LIZARD sequence of operation is shown in Figure 2-11. After launching, the LIZARD operates in two sequential trajectory phases until it hits the target: a Ballistic Phase and a Homing Phase (Terminal Guidance Phase). During the Ballistic Phase, the bomb follows in a ballistic trajectory towards the target. The start range to target at acquisition is dependent on laser light reflected from the target and transmitted through the atmosphere. At a range generally varying between 2000 and 5000 metres the LSU detects the laser spot generated by the laser designator. The first few seconds of this phase are used to stabilize all the electronics and zero aeromechanical transients in the system. Once the weapon is fully operational, it searches for the target until it is detected and the acquisition criteria is accomplished. The Ballistic Phase ends with the actual target acquisition. After target acquisition, the bomb guides itself towards the target using tracking algorithms for flight control. The bomb steers its way towards the target using the movable guidance fins deflected by the Pneumatic Actuation System (PAS), commanded by the LSU (i.e., the LSU generates steering commands proportional to the location of the target in the FOV of the seeker).

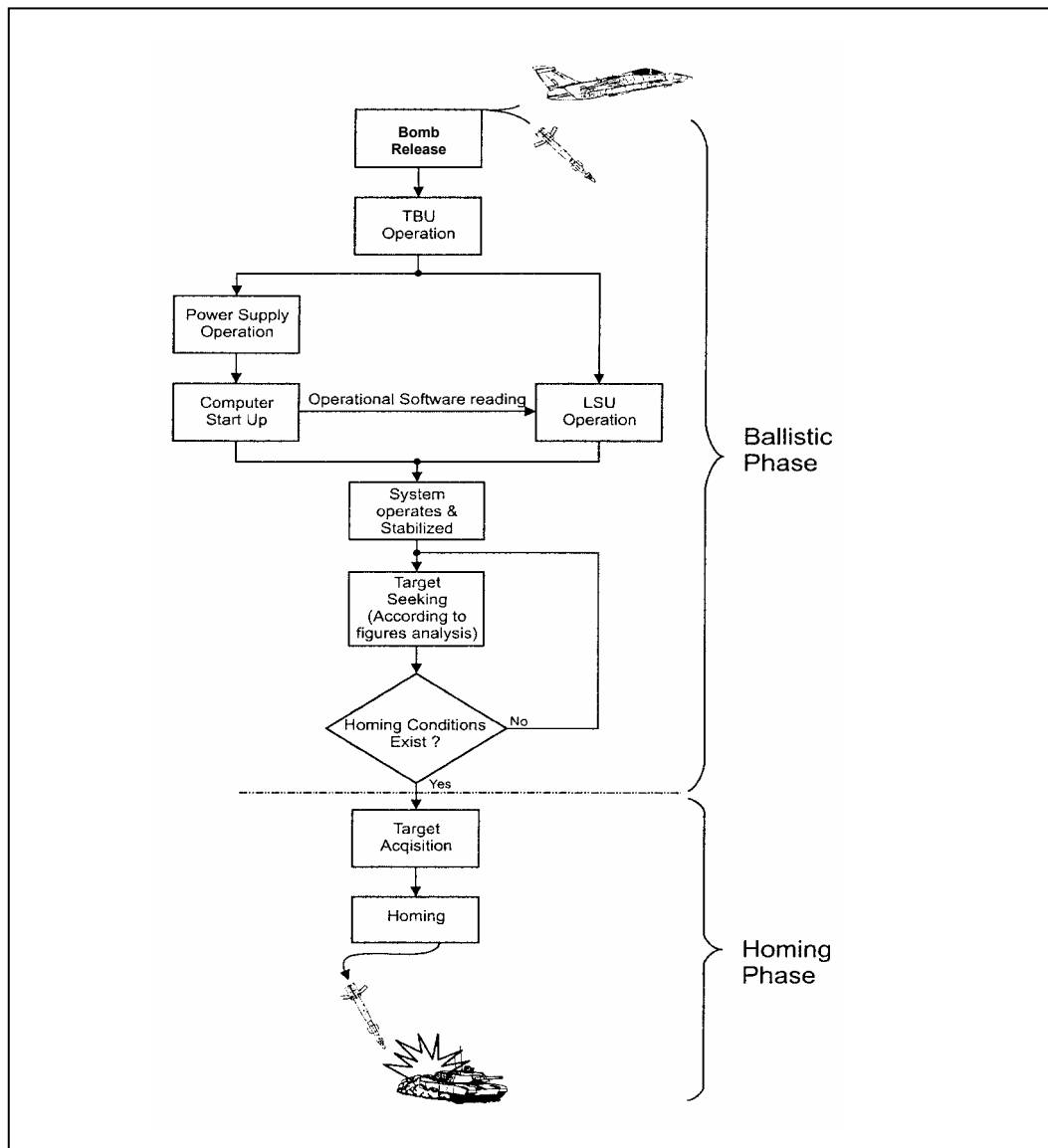


Figure 2-11: LIZARD Sequence of Operation.

During the year 2003 the LIZARD LGB was successfully tested and integrated on the AM-X ground attack aircraft in service with the Italian Air Force and further test activities were conducted in the 2004 – 2005 timeframe for integrating the LIZARD LGB on the Italian TORNADO aircraft.

2.4 LASER RADAR SYSTEMS

The term radar originated during World War II as an acronym for radio detection and ranging. At that time, it referred to the technique of monitoring reflected, radio frequency, electromagnetic radiation to locate remote objects. Since that time, the basic radar technique has been applied to progressively shorter (and in some cases, longer) wavelengths so that the term radar no longer applies only to systems that operate at radio frequencies. Laser radar is simply radar that operates at optical frequencies and uses a laser as its source of electromagnetic radiation.

LASER SYSTEMS OVERVIEW

Laser radars are commonly referred to as LADAR for laser radar or as LIDAR for light detection and ranging. Ranging is accomplished by measuring the time delay to and from the target. Angular information is obtained from the beam-pointing direction. Laser radars are capable of extremely accurate angular measurement because of the small beam diameters of lasers (on transmit) and narrow fields of view (on receive). On the negative side, the detection and tracking ranges are much shorter than microwave radar because of lower transmitter power and higher atmospheric attenuation.

LADARs usually operate at 10.6 μm wavelength in the far infrared and at 1.064 μm in the near infrared. The former use CO_2 lasers and the latter Nd:YAG crystal lasers, with typical efficiencies of 10% and 3%, respectively. Other available technologies include 1.5 μm “Eye-safe” Erbium doped fibre (Er:fibre) laser and Raman-shifted Nd:YAG lasers. Possible airborne LADAR applications include the following:

- Aircraft guidance (obstacle avoidance and terrain following);
- Tactical imaging systems (surveillance and reconnaissance); and
- Wind velocity measurement (clear air turbulence and severe storm sensors).

The various types of Laser radars and some typical airborne applications are described in Annex A. In the following paragraphs, after a brief introduction to Laser Obstacle Warning Systems (OWSs), a technical description of the Laser Obstacle Avoidance System (LOAS), developed by *Marconi-Selenia Communications S.p.A.* for the Italian Military Forces and tested by the Air Force Flight Test Centre (RSV), is presented.

2.5 LASER OBSTACLE WARNING SYSTEMS

The first laser experiment directed towards a laser obstacle detection and avoidance system started in 1965 with a Nd:YAG laser [7]. This system demonstrated the feasibility of using lasers to detect obstacles such as wires.

Semiconductor lasers, such as GaAs and GaAlAs have been experimented since 1966. These lasers radiate in the wavelength region of 0.84 to 0.9 μm . The experience gained with these experimental systems pointed out many features that were then incorporated into successive research. In the 70's and 80's, due to eye-safety and adverse weather (fog) propagation concerns, further development with Nd:YAG and the various semiconductor lasers was substantially reduced, in favour of CO_2 lasers. One of the first heterodyne detection CO_2 systems was the LOWTAS, developed by UTRC. More recent developments include CLARA, the Anglo-French compact laser radar demonstrator program [8]; HIWA, a German system built and tested by Eltro and Dornier [9]; and OASYS, developed in the U.S. by Northrop [10].

Currently, research is concentrating on 1.54 – 1.55 μm (Raman-shifted Nd:YAG and Er:fibre) solid state lasers. One 1.55 μm system is currently being developed in Italy by *Marconi-Selenia Communications S.p.A.* and tested by RSV. The equipment, here named LOAS (Laser Obstacle Avoidance System), is a “navigation aid system” for rotary wing platforms specifically designed to detect potentially dangerous obstacles placed in or nearby the flight trajectory and to warn the crew in a time suitable to implement effective avoiding manoeuvres. The first airborne prototype of the LOAS system was assembled by *Marconi* during this research. Extensive laboratory and field tests were then performed by RSV on the various LOAS system sub-units, and the overall system was also tested at the PILASTER range both on the ground and in flight (between 2001 and 2003). In the following paragraphs, a brief technical description of the LOAS system is given.

2.5.1 LOAS Development in Italy

The LOAS system is capable of detecting obstacles placed in or nearby the helicopter trajectory, classifying/prioritising the detected obstacles, and providing obstacle warnings (both aural and visual) and information

to the crew [11]. The system laser beam scans periodically the area around the flight trajectory inside a FOV of 40° in azimuth and 30° (now being extended to 40°) in elevation, and centred on the optical axis of the system (see Figure 2-12).

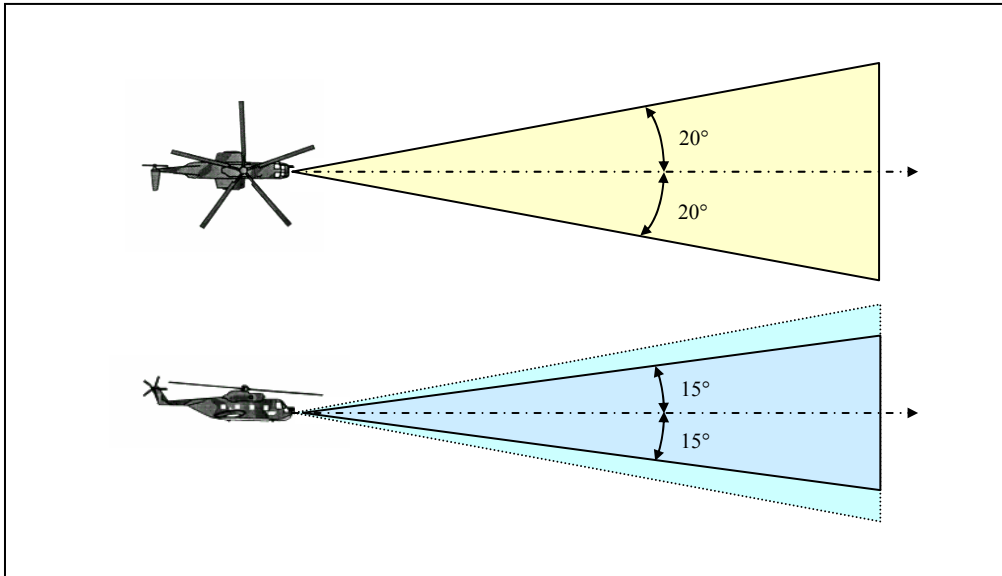


Figure 2-12: LOAS Horizontal and Vertical FOV.

Furthermore, the LOAS allows the operator to select the azimuth orientation of the FOV among three possible directions (see Figure 2-13), so that the relevant optical axis will be oriented either in the same direction of the platform “heading” (normal flight envelope), or 20° left/right with respect to the platform “heading” (to optimise coverage during turning manoeuvres at high angular speed).

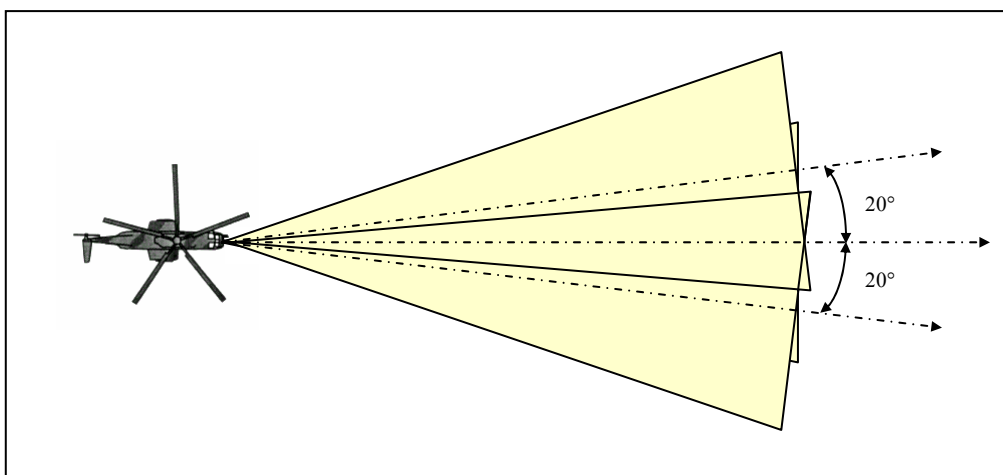


Figure 2-13: LOAS FOV Orientation.

During every scan period, the laser beam changes its orientation producing a scanned elliptical pattern across the FOV with the characteristics shown in Figure 2-14.

LASER SYSTEMS OVERVIEW

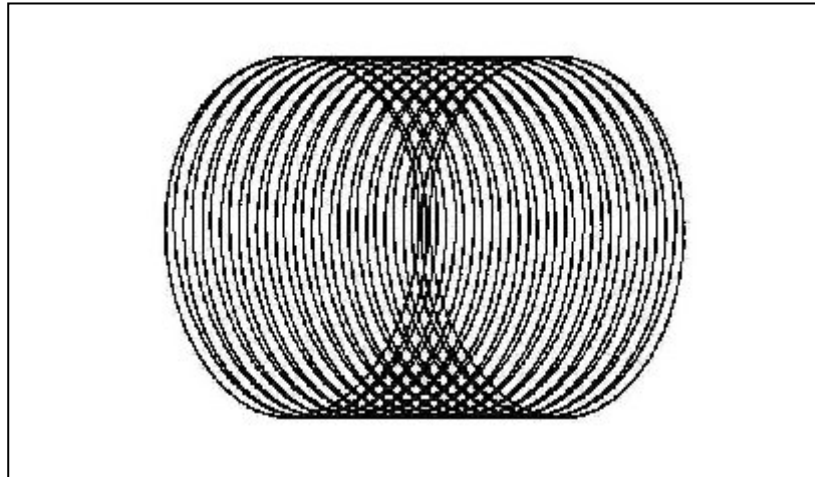


Figure 2-14: LOAS Scan Pattern.

After various experiments performed with different patterns, the scanned elliptical pattern was selected. The main advantages of the scanned elliptical pattern are:

- It is well suited to detection of the most dangerous obstacles, like wires, due to the several and equally spaced vertical lines;
- It holds an intrinsically high capability to maintain the detected obstacle shape unaffected by the helicopter motion during the frame acquisition, providing the possibility of reconstructing the obstacle shape without using navigation data; and
- It can be obtained with very reliable scanning mechanisms with reduced weight.

The LOAS system performs echo detection through an analogue process comprising an optical-electrical conversion, a signal pre-amplification and a threshold comparison. Signal pre-amplification is achieved by an automatic controlled gain amplifier to increase the system sensitivity as the elapsed time from the laser emission increases in order to adjust the sensitivity on the basis of the expected return signal power in connection with the obstacle range. Furthermore, an adjustable threshold level is also provided to take into account the background conditions. These features reduce the probability of false echo detection due to the atmospheric back-scatter near the laser beam output and optimise the system sensitivity in various operational weather conditions.

The LOAS system performs echo analysis in order to determine the presence of possible obstacles and to determine their geometrical characteristics and position. For this purpose, the LOAS operates through two sequential analysis processes: local analysis and global analysis. The “local analysis” process is performed on the single echoes in order to determine range, angular co-ordinates and characteristics of the obstacle portion generating them. The “global analysis” process manages groups of echoes, detected during a scan period, with the related information provided by the “local analysis” process, in order to perform the obstacle detection as a whole and determine the related obstacle shape and type.

The LOAS is capable of automatically classifying obstacles according to the following classes:

- **Wire:** This class groups all thin obstacles like wires and cables (e.g., telephone cables, electrical cables and cableways).
- **Tree/Pole:** This class groups vertical obstacles of large vertical and small horizontal dimensions such as, for example, trees, poles and pylons.
- **Structure:** This class groups extended obstacles such as, for example, bridges, buildings and hills.

Furthermore, the LOAS system performs automatic prioritisation of the detected obstacles according to the relevant range data and associated risk levels (taking into account the obstacle type/shape and helicopter flight dynamics), and provides the crew with timely warnings and information on the detected obstacles in order to allow the implementation of effective avoidance manoeuvres. For this purpose, the LOAS system can deliver both visual and audio warnings.

The LOAS information relative to the detected obstacles are provided on a dedicated display (NVG compatible), whose screen represents the FOV of the system. The detected obstacles can be displayed in a synthetic form through three different symbols which represent the three different classes of targets (i.e., wire, tree/pole, structure) of the detected objects. Both 3-D and 2-D representations are possible, together with an altimetric profile format. An example of a 3-D LOAS display format is shown in Figure 2-15. The LOAS 2-D and altimetric display formats are shown in Figure 2-16. The “Safe Line” in Figure 2-16 represents the line above which flying is considered safe (i.e., obstacles cleared). Furthermore, the following information can be displayed nearby the obstacle symbols:

- Obstacle range; and
- Highest priority mark, which indicates the most dangerous obstacles.

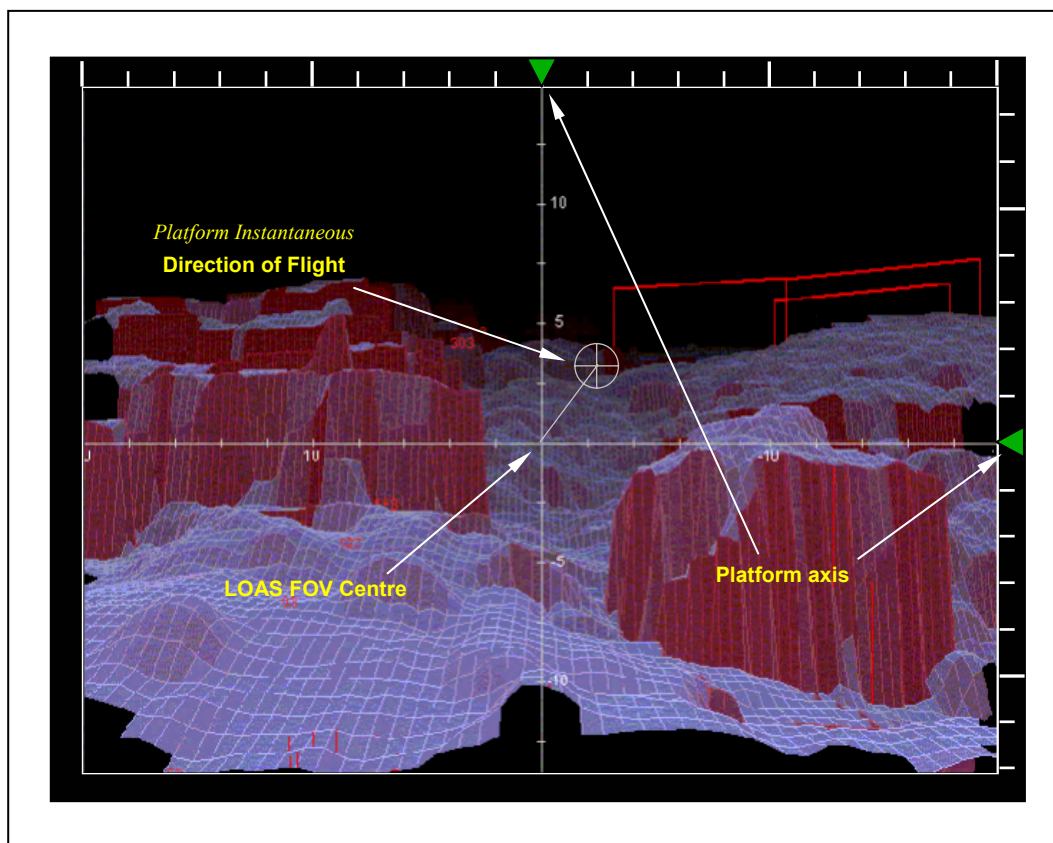


Figure 2-15: LOAS 3-D Display Format.

LASER SYSTEMS OVERVIEW

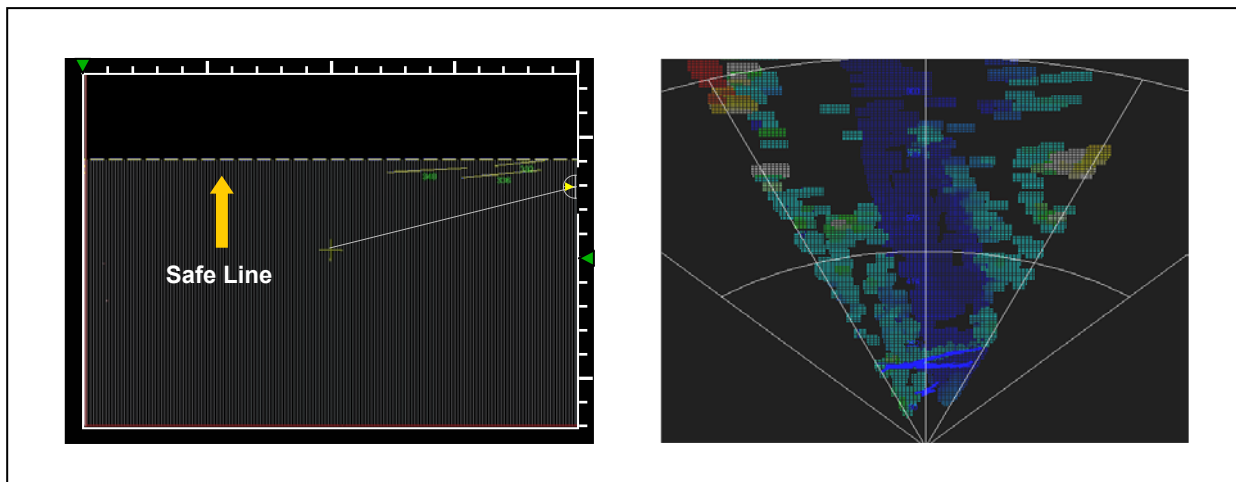


Figure 2-16: LOAS 2-D and Altimetric Display Format.

The main electronics components of the LOAS system are the following:

- Sensor Head Unit (SHU);
- Electronic-Processing Unit (EPU);
- Control Panel; and
- Display Unit.

The general architecture of the LOAS system is shown in Figure 2-17.

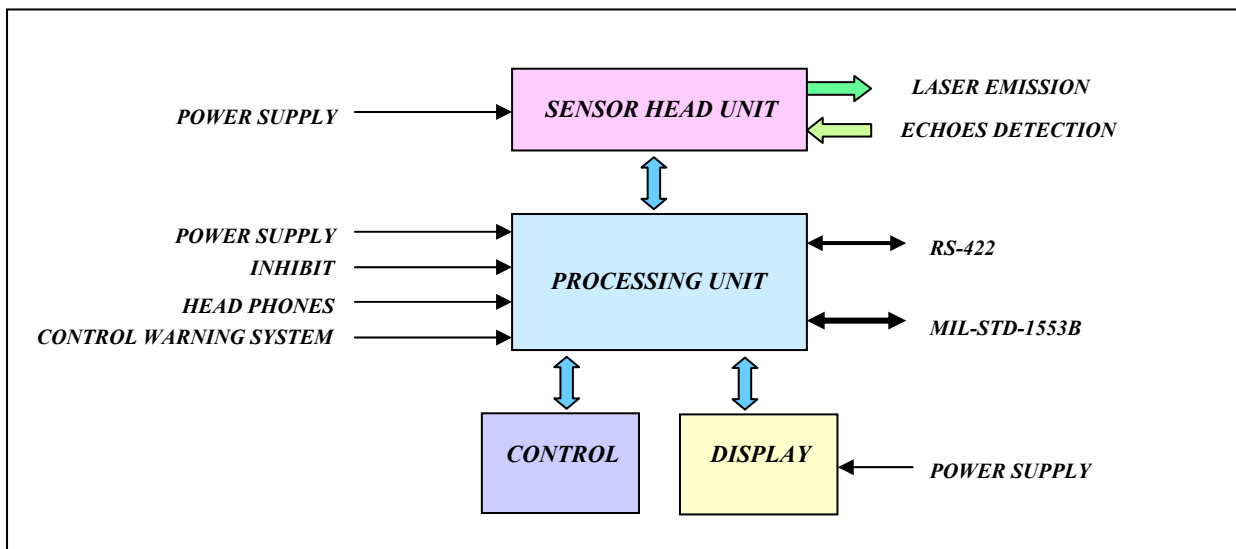


Figure 2-17: LOAS Architecture.

In the following sub-paragraphs a brief description of the LOAS SHU is given, together with an outline of the main EPU functions.

2.5.1.1 LOAS Sensor Head Unit

The LOAS SHU performs the following main functions:

- It generates a laser beam and scan the area around the flight trajectory;
- It detects return echoes;
- It analyses detected echoes in order to compute ranges, co-ordinates and local geometrical characteristics (attributes) of the obstacles they come from; and
- It provides echoes data to the LOAS EPU or to other on board systems.

As illustrated above, the SHU scans a laser beam in the area around the flight trajectory, performs echo detection through an analogue process comprising an optical-electrical conversion (by means of an avalanche photodiode – APD), a signal pre-amplification and a threshold comparison (adjustable threshold).

The SHU performs echo analysis in order to compute range, co-ordinates (azimuth, elevation with respect to the LOAS reference frame) and local geometrical characteristics (attributes) of the obstacles they come from. For this purpose:

- The echo angular co-ordinates are determined on the grounds of the scanner orientation;
- The echo range is calculated computing the “two-way” travelling time of the scan laser pulse; and
- The geometrical characteristics of the echo are determined with a local “geometrical” analysis of nearby echoes along the scanner pattern and on the ground of the “absolute” power returned.

The LOAS SHU provides the echoes ranges, co-ordinates and attributes to the LOAS EPU, or to other on board systems, via a RS-422 high speed serial data link. Furthermore the SHU has the following interfaces:

- One RS-232 serial link to the PU for controls and BIT activation;
- One RS-232 serial link for off-line test purpose;
- One discrete input signal to inhibit laser emission; and
- One discrete input signal to switch on/switch off the unit.

According the architecture scheme reported in Figure 2-18, the SHU comprises the following sub-units:

- Window Assembly;
- Scanner Assembly;
- TX/RX Optics Assembly;
- Laser Assembly;
- Detector Assembly;
- Electronic Assembly;
- Power Supply Assembly;
- Gyro Assembly; and
- Chassis.

LASER SYSTEMS OVERVIEW

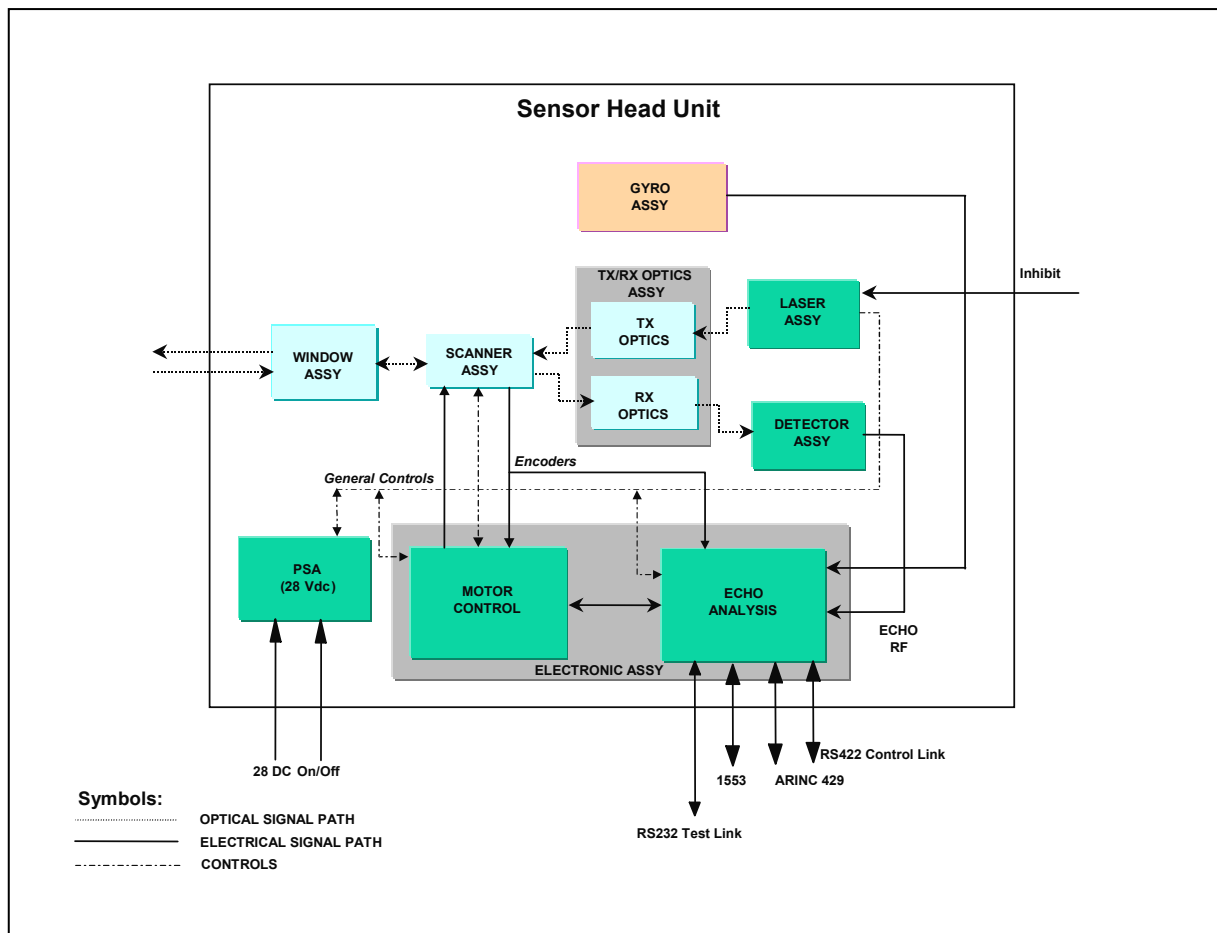


Figure 2-18: LOAS SHU Architecture.

The Window Assembly allows the transmission and the reception of the laser beam across the SHU chassis. The Window Assembly is made with a slice of synthetic fused silica of dimensions 240 × 144 mm and thickness of 10 mm.

The Scanner Assembly integrates the HW resources necessary to scan the laser beam, and the virtual input pupil of the detector, throughout the overall FOV. It also allows Line of Sight (LOS) orientation. For this purpose, the Scanner Assembly comprises:

- A swash mirror mounted on an azimuth turret;
- An electrical motor to allow the swash mirror motion; and
- An electrical motor to allow the azimuth turret motion.

The LOAS swashing mirror is shown in Figure 2-19.

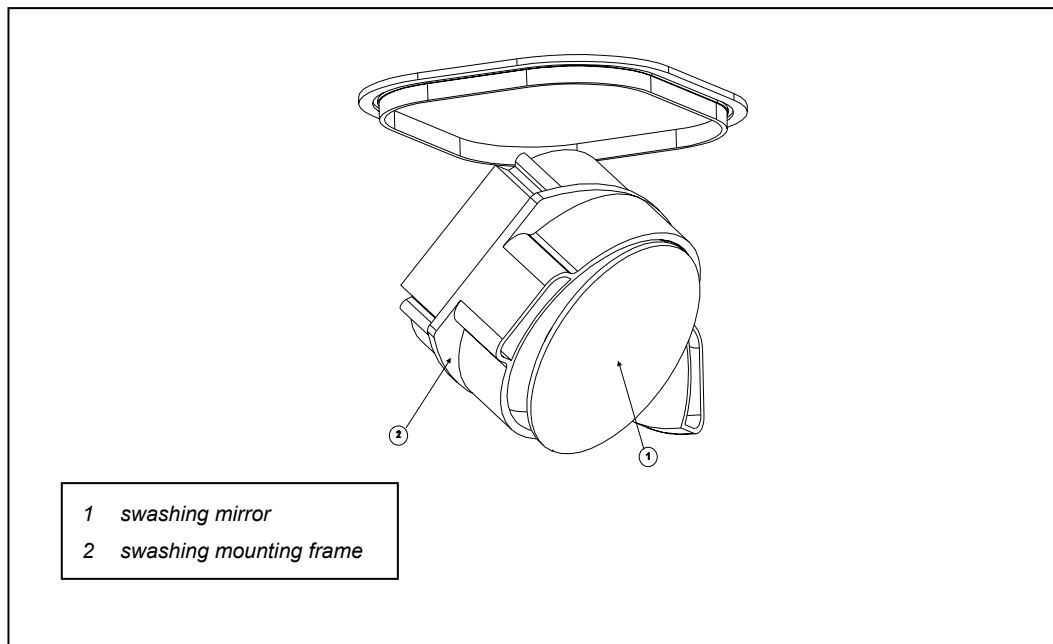


Figure 2-19: LOAS Swashing Mirror.

The swash mirror rotates at a constant speed around its axis reflecting the laser beam such that it draws an ellipse in space. The turret periodically sweeps in azimuth the FOV. The composition of these two movements allows to produce the required scanned elliptical pattern previously described. Change in LOS orientation is achieved offsetting the central position of the periodical sweep of the turret by an angular value equal to the required change.

According to the SHU architecture shown in Figure 2-18, the TX/RX Optics Assembly integrates the optical components necessary:

In Transmission:

- To collect via fibre optics the laser output power from the Laser Assembly;
- To generate the scan laser beam with the required optical divergence and dimensions; and
- To projecting the scan laser beam on the swashing mirror of the Scanner Assembly.

In Reception:

- To collect the echo return power reflected by the swashing mirror of the Scanner Assembly; and
- To focalise the collected power on the photodiode of the Detector Assembly.

For this purpose, the TX/RX Optics Assembly comprises:

In Transmission:

- A beam expander that collects the laser output power via optics fibre and expands/parallelises it; and
- A prism that allows to reflect the generated beam onto the swashing mirror with the due alignment.

For Reception:

- A telescope that collects the returned echo power and focalises it on the photodiode of the Detector Assembly.

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The LOAS TX/RX Optics Assembly and Detector Assembly are shown in Figure 2-20.

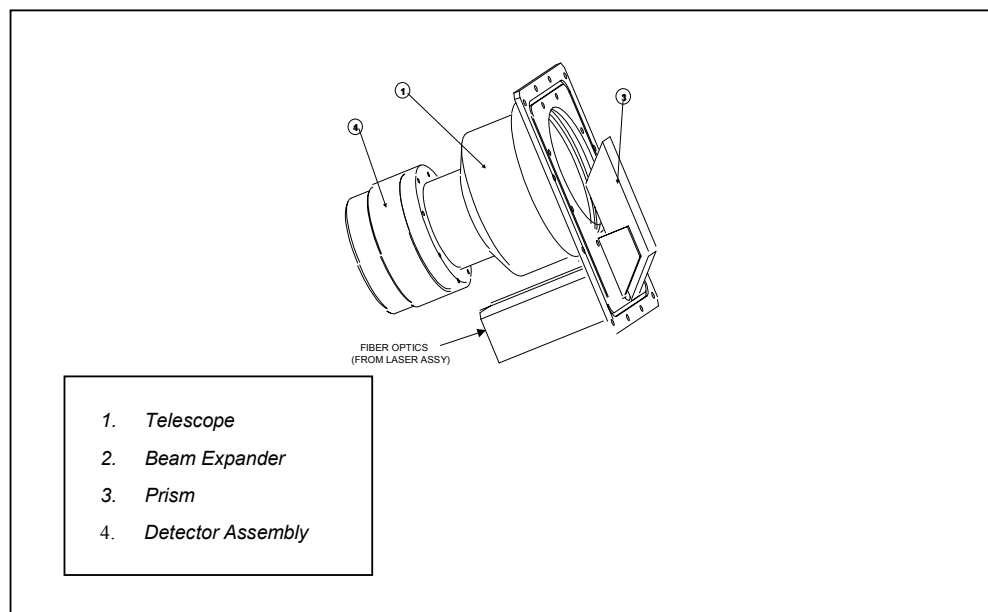


Figure 2-20: LOAS TX/RX Optics Assembly and Detector Assembly.

The Detector Assembly detects laser echoes on the grounds of the laser power received through the TX/RX Assembly. For this purpose, the Detector Assembly comprises an Avalanche Photodiode (APD) with related bias circuitry, a controlled gain amplifier and the threshold circuitry necessary for the echoes detection, all integrated in a single mechanical module directly connected to the telescope of the TX/RX Assembly.

The LOAS Electronic Assembly performs the following functions:

- Analyses detected echoes, received as a RF signal from the Detector Assembly, and sends the relevant information through the RS-422 interface;
- Controls the scanner assembly motors; and
- Handles SHU general controls and BIT operations.

All the relevant electronics to accomplish the above mentioned functions is integrated in a single analogue/digital printed circuit board.

The Laser Assembly provides the required laser power. It comprises an Er:fibre laser, the related control circuitry and power supply, all integrated in a single box. The laser power delivery to the TX/RX Optics Assembly is provided via an optical fibre connected to the beam expander.

The Power Supply Assembly fulfils the power requirements of all the SHU sub-units, except for the Laser Assembly which is straight connected to the platform mains. For this purpose, the Power Supply Assembly comprises in a single box all the circuitry necessary to interface with the platform mains and to generate output voltages as required by the SHU sub-units.

The Gyro Assembly provides, as an option, reference signals to the Electronic Assembly to uncouple echoes co-ordinates with respect to the helicopter motion if required to compensate rotation for image presentation. The Gyro Assembly is composed by 3 gyros integrated in a single mechanical module.

The Chassis is realised by a casting aluminium mechanical envelope that encloses and protect all the SHU sub-units. The Chassis is designed in such a way that all the optical sub-units are allocated in a sealed environment filled with nitrogen gas to avoid condense effect. The CAD representation of the SHU Chassis and the location of the Laser Assembly, the Detector Assembly, the TX/RX Optics Assembly, the Scanner Assembly and the Window Assembly inside the Chassis are shown in Figure 2-21.

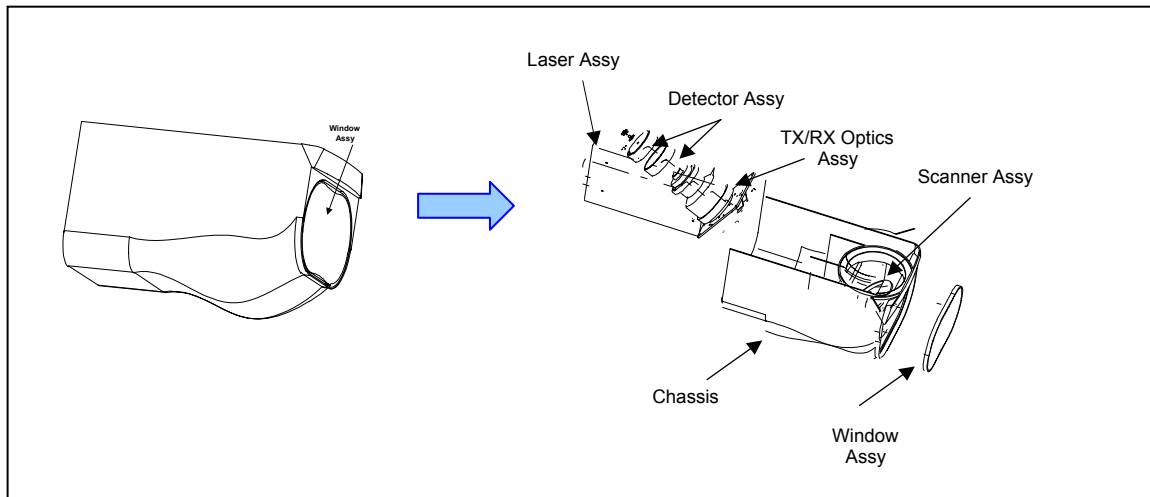


Figure 2-21: LOAS System Sub-Units Location.

Some relevant electro-optical parameters relative to the various LOAS sub-units are listed in the Table 2-2 through Table 2-4.

Table 2-2: LOAS Laser Parameters

Parameter	Description	Value
Wavelength	Laser emission wavelength	1.55 μm
Peak Power	Laser pulse power at the “Laser Assembly” output	6 kW
Pulse Duration	Laser pulse duration	2 ns
Frequency	Laser pulse repetition frequency	40 kHz

Table 2-3: LOAS Optical Parameters

Parameter	Description	Value
Divergence	Laser beam divergence at the “Window Assembly” output	1 mrad
Optical Diameter	Diameter of the virtual input pupil of the detector (i.e., the area in which the collected power from the echo is transferred to the detector)	85 mm
Window Transmission	Transmission coefficient ($P_{\text{in}}/P_{\text{out}}$) of the “Window Assembly”	0.99

LASER SYSTEMS OVERVIEW

Parameter	Description	Value
Scanner Transmission	Transmission coefficient (P_{in}/P_{out}) of the "Scanner Assembly"	0.99
TX Optics Transmission	Transmission coefficient (P_{in}/P_{out}) of the TX optical path of the "TX/RX Optics Assembly"	0.98
RX Optics Transmission	Transmission coefficient (P_{in}/P_{out}) of the RX optical path of the "TX/RX Optics Assembly"	0.63

Table 2-4: LOAS Detector Parameters

Parameter	Description	Value
Detector Noise	Equivalent optical noise power including the optical background noise and the photodiode and preamplifier electrical noise	1.2 nW
Detector Bandwidth	Electrical bandwidth of photodiode and relevant preamplifier of the "Detector Assembly"	160 MHz
Detector Field of View	Instantaneous field of view in which the laser power of a given echo is collected and transferred to the photodiode of the "Detector Assembly"	1.5 mrad
Detector Filter Bandwidth	Bandwidth of the optical filter of the detector centred at the laser emission wavelength	20 nm

The noise value stated in Table 2-4 was calculated assuming a background power of 10 Watt/m²/sr/μm. As described before, signal pre-amplification in the Detector Assembly is performed by an automatic controlled gain amplifier that increases the system sensitivity as the elapsed time from the laser emission increases, in order to adjust the sensitivity on the basis of the expected return signal power in connection with the obstacle range. Therefore, the electrical noise of the pre-amplifier is not a constant value, but it varies in time with the gain. The value stated in Table 2-4 is applicable to 40% of the scanning time (i.e., 400 ms). For the remaining 60% of the scanning time the noise is so low with respect to the expected return power that it can be considered negligible for the computation of the false alarm rate. It also has to be considered that any calculation, arising from the stated values concerning false alarm rate and detection probability, only refers to single echoes and not to the overall performance of the system in terms of obstacle detection and false alarm delivery to the crew, which are strictly dependent on the processing algorithms of the Processing Unit.

2.5.1.2 LOAS Electronic Processing Unit Functions

The LOAS EPU performs the following main functions:

- Interfaces with the SHU via serial link in order to acquire the information related to echoes co-ordinates and attributes;
- Processes the acquired information in order to detect, isolate and calculate position and characteristics of potential obstacles;
- Computes display information and symbols data;
- Provides the warning information to the Display Unit;

- Interfaces with the Control Unit in order to receive commands and controls provided by the Operator;
- Manages communication data with other on-board equipment; and
- Manages BIT procedures of the system.

The EPU is realised integrating in a standard 3/8 ATIR (short) mechanical frame all the electronic sub-assemblies necessary to implement the functions described above. Particularly, the EPU comprises the following sub-assemblies:

- **Processing Assembly:** This assembly comprises the logic circuitry necessary to control the system, to analyse the information received by the SHU and to communicate the warning information to the Display Unit.
- **Interface Assembly:** This assembly comprises the circuitry necessary for the electrical interface of the system and for data communication to external equipment.
- **Power Supply Assembly:** This assembly comprises the circuitry necessary to fulfil all the DC requirements of the EPU.

2.5.1.3 LOAS Processing Algorithms

In an obstacles detection and warning system, there is the need to provide the pilot only with the essential information. The scanner system, in fact, detects the position of every potential obstacle in the environment where the helicopter is moving. In a generic scenario, with many obstacles in the field of view of the warning system, it may be difficult to control them for the pilot. For this reason, a system able to discriminate the most dangerous obstacles and to supply the relative information to the pilot is required. To solve this problem, three algorithms have been developed for incorporation in the LOAS EPU:

- Calculation of future trajectory;
- Calculation of intersections with the obstacles; and
- Determination of alternative (optimal) trajectory.

To validate the algorithms, a simulation environment and actual flight tests were performed. The experimental results obtained allowed both verification and refinement of the processing performance. More details the ground and flight test activities performed with the LOAS system are given in the Chapters 8 and 9.

2.5.1.4 Obstacle Detection and Classification Algorithms

As described before, the LOAS anti-collision system performs obstacle detection based on the laser radar technique. Once the echoes energy has been optically collected, obstacle detection/classification is performed through an analog detection of the echoes and two successive analysis processes. The first process, named “Pre-processing”, is performed at a very high rate during the echo acquisition in order to obtain single-echo specific data and to characterize it on the basis of local range contrast analysis with respect to nearby echoes. The second process, named “Processing”, is performed at a lower rate and manages groups of pre-processed echoes in order to achieve, by a two step analysis, the final obstacle recognition and classification [12].

The LOAS incorporates two different types of processing algorithms: the first is optimised to process echoes generated by thin objects, like wires and poles, the second is optimised to process all echoes generated by extended obstacles, like houses, trees, woods and other solid objects. These algorithms identify the boundaries of the obstacles; additional geometrical criteria allow to distinguish “wire-class”,

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“tree/pole class” and “extended class” obstacles. In order to perform their tasks, the LOAS processing algorithms make use of image and data segmentation and data validation [11]. Figure 2-22 shows the three levels of processing algorithms, conceived and optimised for the scanned elliptical scanning pattern described before.

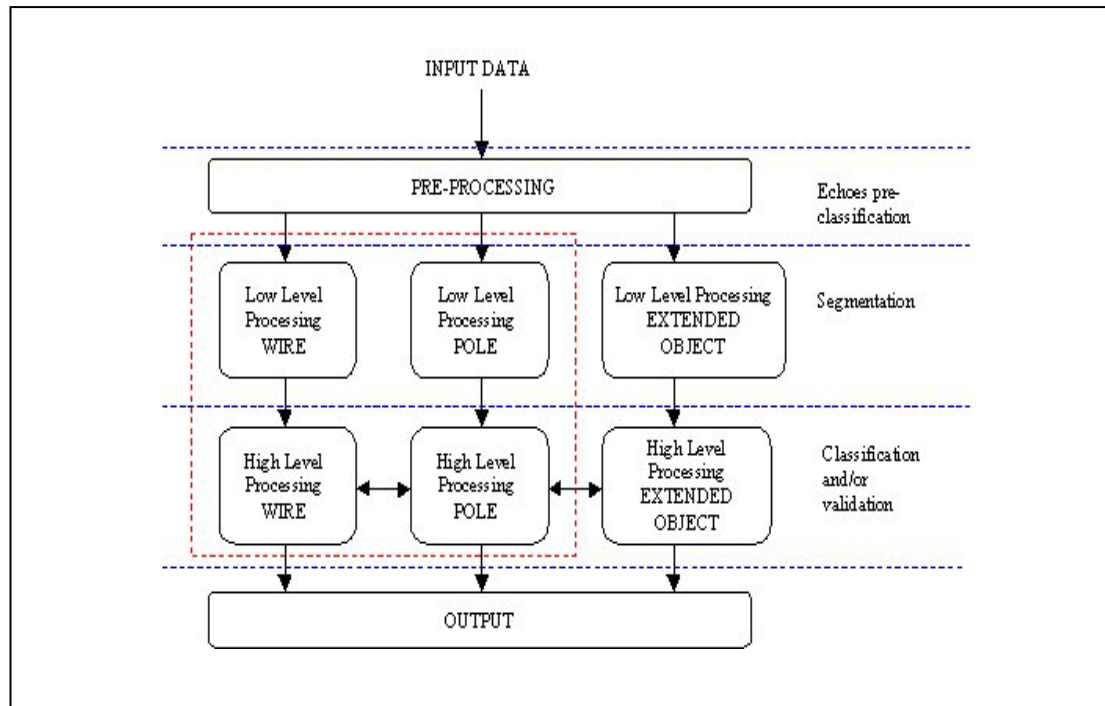


Figure 2-22: LOAS Three Levels Processing Algorithms.

The thin-object classification algorithm (for wire and tree/pole classes of objects) works on a subset of echoes of the current frame. It processes only the echoes whose attributes, defined by the pre-processing algorithms, are “weak echo” and “thin object”.

An initial geometric analysis is performed on pre-processed data to initially separate wire class obstacles and tree/pole obstacles. Image segmentation is the process of dividing the image into areas where the echoes are characterised by relatively “aligned” range data and possible thin obstacles are extracted from this subset of data. After image segmentation, the different clusters must be validated. This means that the detected echoes are processed by a statistical algorithm to determine if the obstacles are generated by real “aligned” echoes or by noising data.

Also the algorithm dedicated to classification of extended objects is divided in two different steps: echoes classification and segmentation. The echoes with pre-processing “extended object” attributes need to be processed by a dedicated selection algorithm because many of these are not generated by real extended obstacles. A well-defined number of echoes, acquired in a short time interval, have some common geometric characteristics which can be extracted. With this additional information, the data are passed to the segmentation algorithm, where the different clusters are rearranged and validated with suitable statistical algorithms [11].

The results of the developed processing algorithms were tested with experimental data, acquired with a sensor prototype, and then displayed/analysed with the LOAS Debugging Interface (LDI). With commands available in the LDI, the user could change the key parameters defining the processing algorithms, so that

their optimal values could be determined observing the experimental results. An example of the debugging interface is shown in Figure 2-23.

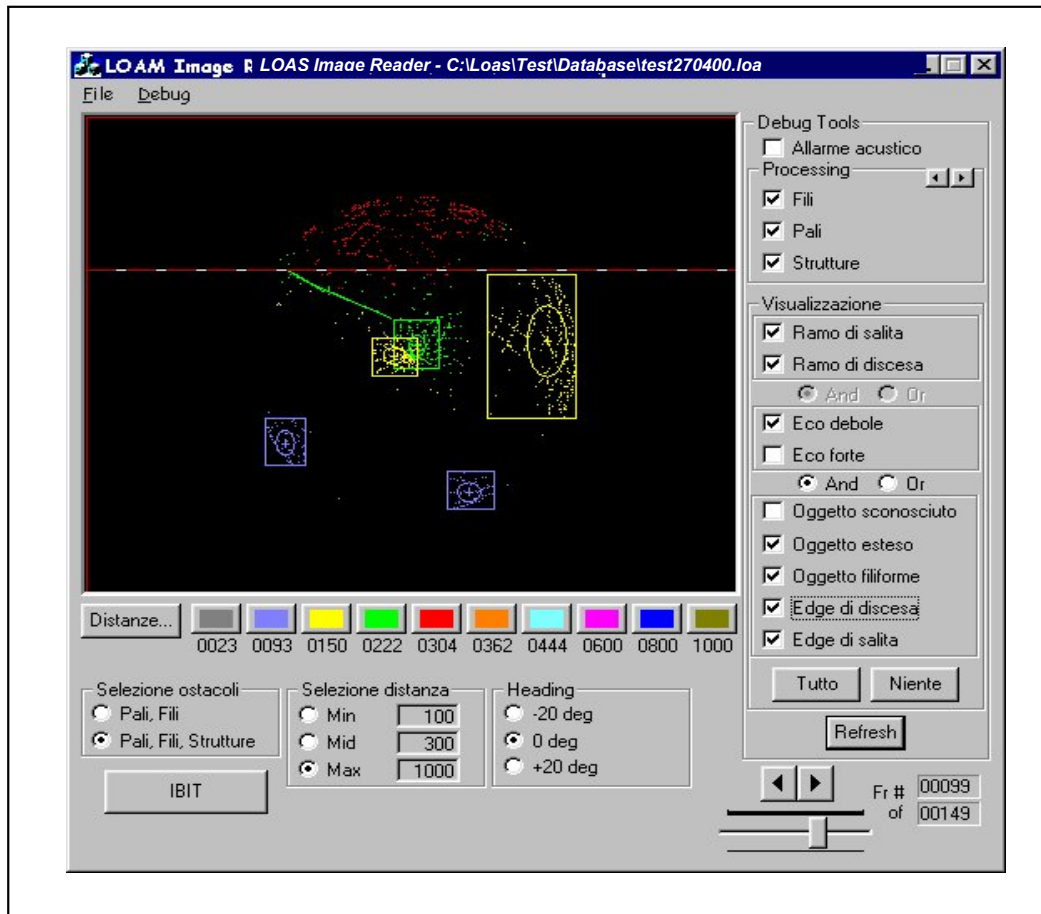


Figure 2-23: LOAS Data Analysis Debugging Interface.

Processing experimental data collected on the ground, it was initially verified that the algorithms were capable of detecting and classifying the different obstacles. Furthermore, thanks to the flight test activities performed on helicopters, the key parameters were definitively set and optimised.

2.5.1.5 Obstacle Prioritisation Algorithms

In a laser obstacle detection and warning system, there is also the problem of providing only essential information to the pilot. The LOAS system, in fact, detects the position of every potential obstacle in the environment where the helicopter is moving. In a generic scenario, with many obstacles in the field of view of the warning system, it may be difficult for the pilot to monitor all of them. For this reason, a system able to discriminate the most dangerous obstacles and to supply the relative information is required. To solve this problem, three algorithms have been implemented: calculation of future trajectory, calculation of possible intersections with obstacles, and obstacle prioritisation [11]. A three-dimensional simulation environment was required to test and refine the performance of these algorithms, with the helicopter flying in various relevant operational scenarios. This simulation environment (see Figure 2-24) allowed direct input of the relevant obstacles and helicopter flight parameters, and permitted to visualise, from different points of view, the scene scanned by the laser, the helicopter motion, and to verify the possible intersections with the obstacles [12].

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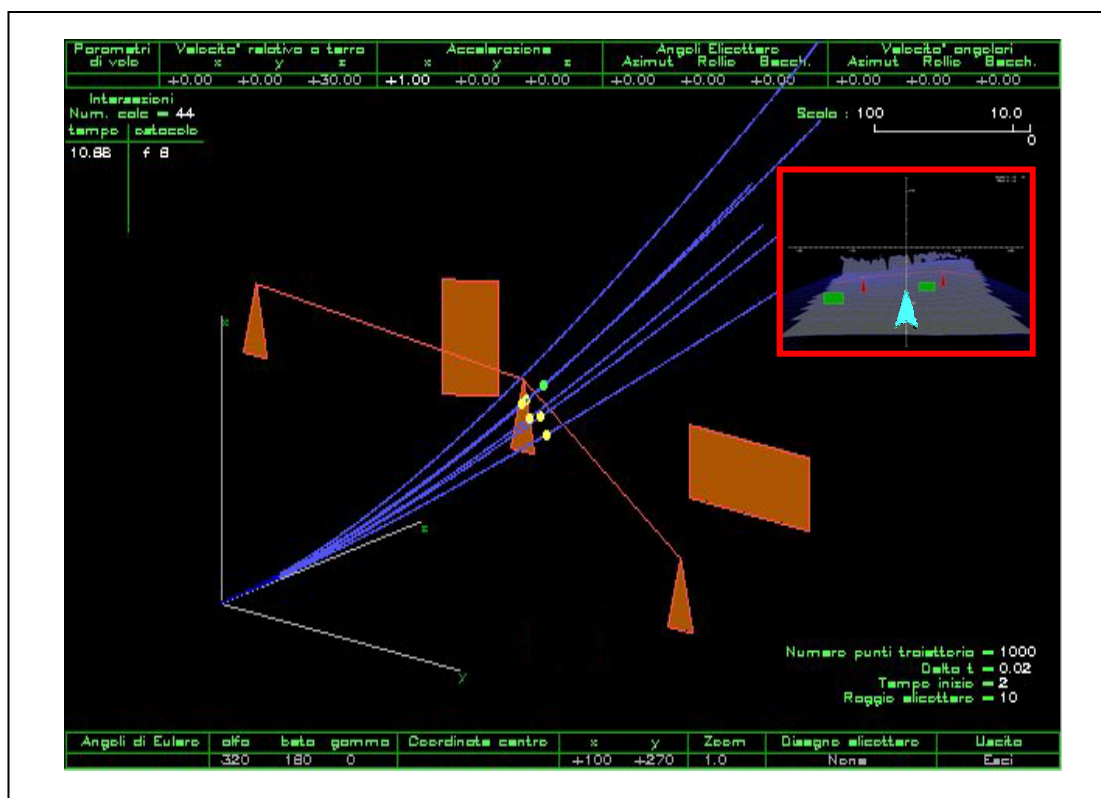


Figure 2-24: LOAS Simulation Environment.

2.5.1.6 LOAS History Function

Due to the restricted system field of view, during helicopter motion some information acquired in the previous frames may be lost successively. To keep obstacles information when they are outside the present frame, it is necessary to store the position of every object detected and then update the co-ordinates with respect to the helicopter body-fixed reference system. The LOAS History Function stores data relative to the detected obstacles for a time interval which is dependent on helicopter velocity, and deletes them when they are outside the helicopter possible trajectories (outside its flight envelope). Since the motion data supplied from the navigation system are, like every measure, affected by errors, it is necessary to evaluate how these errors affect the positions calculated for every obstacle. To do so, appropriate *Gaussian* errors are added to every data and the statistics of the resulting position errors are calculated for obstacles near and far from the aircraft. When the impact warning processing establishes that the trajectory currently flown by the aircraft has a collision risk, the algorithm searches the corrections necessary to avoid the obstacles, and provides the pilot with an indication about the alternative (optimal) direction to fly [11], [12]. The optimal trajectory is the one having the minimum correction (necessary to avoid the obstacles) and which is compatible with a safe flight path.

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Chapter 3 – LASER SYSTEMS PERFORMANCE

3.1 GENERAL

A fundamental problem in laser systems performance analysis is determination of the total optical power that is present at the receiver aperture (case of LADAR and LRF) or LGW seeker (case of LTD) and, consequently, the total optical power incident on the photosensitive element of the receiver: the detector. The laser range equation is used to determine the power received under specific conditions and against a particular target. For laser systems performance analysis specific models are also needed for atmospheric propagation, target reflection, detection performance, etc.

In general, a laser beam is attenuated as it propagates through the atmosphere. In addition, the beam is often broadened, defocused, and may even be deflected from its initial propagation direction. The attenuation and amount of beam alteration depend on the wavelength of operation, output power and characteristics of the atmosphere. When the output power is low, the effects are linear in behaviour (absorption, scattering, and atmospheric turbulence are examples of linear effects). On the other hand, when the power is sufficiently high, new effects are observed that are characterised by non-linear relationships (e.g., thermal blooming, kinetic cooling, bleaching, and atmospheric breakdown). In both cases, the atmospheric effects can be significant and severely limit the usefulness of the beam.

Another key element of laser systems performance analysis is the knowledge of target reflection properties. In general, the reflectivity of a surface can be expressed by two components: the specular component and the diffuse component. The specular component is the energy that reflects away from the surface at the opposite of the angle of incidence with the exit beam remaining narrow. The diffuse (Lambertian) component, on the other hand, is the energy reflected in all directions with a maximum along the normal to the target surface and falling off as a function of the cosine of the angle off of surface normal.

In most practical cases, target surfaces are very rough at laser wavelengths and, consequently, the diffuse scattering component frequently dominates (in some cases, however, significant specular components are observed). Furthermore, most targets exhibit a marked dependency of the overall scattering characteristics on the illumination incidence angle.

In this chapter, some theoretical background is given of laser systems performance analysis, including discussions about mission performance requirements, atmospheric propagation and target reflection properties.

3.2 LASER RANGE EQUATION

The classical forms of the laser range equation, applicable to extended, point and linear (“wire” type) targets are presented in Annex B. Furthermore, various considerations are presented relative to laser radar systems detection performances. Particularly, the signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) equations applicable to both coherent and incoherent detection laser radar system are presented, and the influence of both background and system/detector noise terms on the overall systems performance are investigated.

The range equations presented in Annex B assume that the transmitter and receiver are collocated and have the same optics diameter. In some cases (e.g., for LTD/LGW combinations), these assumptions are not valid and other forms of the range equation need to be developed.

3.2.1 Range Equation for Airborne LTD/LRF Systems

With reference to the geometry of a typical ground attack mission with laser guided weapons shown in Figure 3-1, the range performance of an LTD can be estimated using the procedure described below [2].

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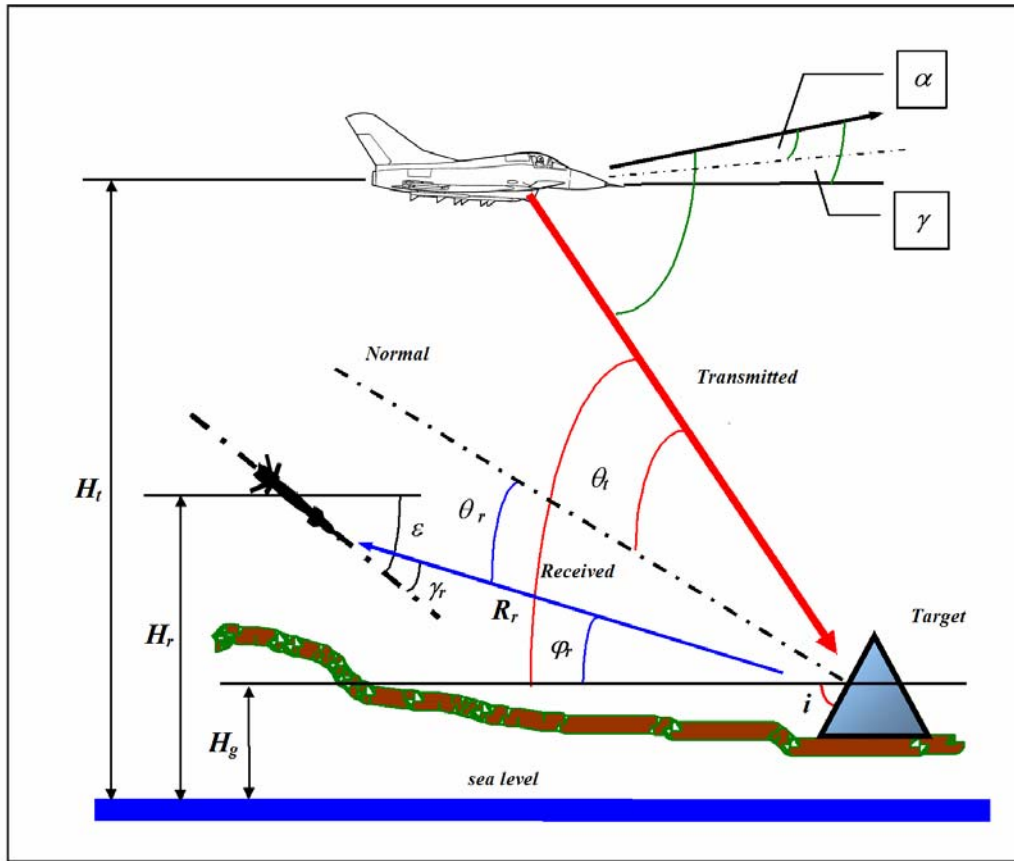


Figure 3-1: LTD/LGW Mission Geometry (Vertical Profile).

3.2.1.1 Energy Density on the Target

The laser beam area at a distance R_T is given by:

$$A_b = \frac{\pi(D_L + \alpha_T R_T)^2}{4} \quad (3.1)$$

where:

D_L = Transmitted beam diameter (m); and

α_T = Output laser beamwidth (rad).

The energy density at the target location (J/m^2) as a function of transmitted energy (U) is given by:

$$F = \frac{U}{A_b} e^{-(\sigma_w \alpha_{H_t} R_T)} \quad (3.2)$$

This energy density is measured normally to the transmitter line of sight. Using Eq. (3.1), Eq. (3.2) can be written in the form:

$$F = \frac{4U}{\pi(D_L + \alpha_T R_T)^2} e^{-(\sigma_w \alpha_{H_t} R_T)} \quad (3.3)$$

The parameters appearing in the exponential factor are defined as follows:

- σ_w = sea level atmospheric attenuation coefficient; and
- α_{Ht} = fractional decrease in σ_w for a path from altitude Ht to sea level.

3.2.1.2 Target Irradiance

The energy (G) of a laser spot that will irradiate a given target surface (A) is that portion passing through the projected area (A_N) in the plane orthogonal to the sight line. Therefore, the irradiance of the target surface can be calculated using the equation:

$$G = F \frac{A_N}{A} \quad (3.4)$$

and, using the Eq. (3.2):

$$G = \frac{UA_N}{A_b A} e^{-(\sigma_w \alpha_{HT} R_T)} \quad (3.5)$$

or:

$$G = \frac{4UA_N}{A\pi(D_L + \alpha_T R_T)^2} e^{-(\sigma_w \alpha_{HT} R_T)} \quad (3.6)$$

As $A_N = A \cos \theta_t$, we also have:

$$G = \cos \theta_t \frac{4U}{\pi(D_L + \alpha_T R_T)^2} e^{-(\sigma_w \alpha_{HT} R_T)} \quad (3.7)$$

where θ_t is the incidence angle to the target surface as measured from the sight line to the target normal.

3.2.1.3 Target Brightness

The brightness of the irradiated target is determined by the irradiance level and by the reflectance characteristics of the target surface.

The laser energy reaching the target is partially absorbed and partially reflected, either specularly and diffusely. The probabilities of each of these occurrences are called the coefficients of absorption, specular reflection, and diffuse reflection, and must satisfy: $C_a + C_s + C_d = 1$. More details about target reflection properties are given in successive sections of this chapter. Assuming now that the target is a perfectly diffuse reflector, with a *Lambertian* radiation pattern, the brightness (B) is given by:

$$B = \frac{\rho_T G}{\pi} \quad (3.8)$$

where ρ_T is the target reflectivity.

3.2.1.4 Energy at the Receiver

The energy (E_R) collected by a receiving aperture observing this target is obtained from the expression:

$$E_R = \frac{BA_R A_M}{R_R^2} e^{-(\sigma_w \beta_{HR} R_R)} \quad (3.9)$$

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where:

A_R = receiver aperture area;

A_R/R_R^2 = solid angle subtended by the receiving aperture;

A_M = projected spot area in the plane normal to the receiver sight line; and

β_{HR} = fractional decrease in σ_w for a path from sea level to H_R .

A_M is related to the target laser spot area by:

$$A_M = A \cos \theta_r \quad (3.10)$$

Therefore, the final expression for energy density (I) at the receiver aperture for the *Lambertian* target is, by substitution:

$$I = \frac{E_R}{A_R} \text{ (J/m}^2\text{)} \quad (3.11)$$

$$I = \frac{BA_R A_M e^{-(\sigma_w \beta_{HR} R_T)}}{R_R^2} \cdot \frac{1}{A_R} \quad (3.12)$$

$$I = \frac{G \rho_T A_M e^{-(\sigma_w \beta_{HR} R_T)}}{\pi R_R^2} \quad (3.13)$$

$$I = \frac{4U \cos \theta_t e^{-(\sigma_w \alpha_{HR} R_T)}}{\pi (D_L + \alpha_T R_T)^2} \cdot \frac{\rho_T}{\pi} \cdot \frac{A \cos \theta_r}{R_R^2} \cdot e^{-(\sigma_w \beta_{HR} R_R)} \quad (3.14)$$

$$I = \frac{4 \rho_T U A \cos \theta_t \cos \theta_r e^{-[\sigma_w (\alpha_{HR} R_T + \beta_{HR} R_R)]}}{\pi^2 (D_L + \alpha_T R_T)^2 R_R^2} \quad (3.15)$$

If the seeker of the LGW is not turned towards the target, an additional cosine factor would be introduced reducing the effective receiving aperture as a function of the angle between the line of sight and the normal to the aperture (γ_R). Therefore, in general:

$$I = \frac{4 \rho_T U A \cos \theta_t \cos \theta_r \cos \gamma_R e^{-[\sigma_w (\alpha_{HR} R_T + \beta_{HR} R_R)]}}{\pi^2 (D_L + \alpha_T R_T)^2 R_R^2} \quad (3.16)$$

If the transmitter and receiver are collocated (case of LRF), the equation can be simplified by setting:

$$\begin{aligned} H_r &= H_t & \beta_{HR} &= \beta_{HT} & \gamma_r &= 0 \\ R_r &= R_t = R_o & \theta_r &= \theta_t \end{aligned}$$

Therefore:

$$I = \frac{4 \rho_T U A \cos^2 \theta_t e^{-(2\sigma_w R_o \alpha_{HT})}}{\pi^2 (D_L + \alpha_T R_o)^2 R_o^2} \quad (3.17)$$

The term $e^{-[\sigma_w(\alpha_{HR}R_T + \beta_{HR}R_R)]}$ in Eq. (3.16) represents the two-ways atmospheric transmittance for the general case (i.e., transmitter and receiver not collocated), denoted as τ_{atm} in the rest of this volume. The term $e^{-(2\sigma_w R_o \alpha_{HT})}$ in Eq. (3.17) represents the two-ways transmittance for the case of transmitter-receiver collocation (also denoted with τ_{atm} in this volume).

The expressions derived can be used to evaluate the maximum range performance of a LRF or LTD system, by substituting the various transmitter and receiver parameters, and solving for R_t and R_r . For this purpose, the Minimum Detectable Energy Density (MDED) at the receiver aperture is substituted for energy density in the Eq. (3.16) or (3.17). From a practical point of view, the difficulties of this approach for operational-level performance analysis are represented by the calculation of τ_{atm} (a function of R_T , R_R , visibility, humidity, altitude, grazing angle, etc.), the knowledge of the target characteristics (shape, reflectivity, etc.) and, very often, the unavailability of technical data on the seeker-head detectors and active laser systems.

Since the physical characteristics of the target are often known before performing an attack and the target is generally extended at ranges of practical interest, it is generally sufficient to use the diffuse reflectivity of the surface that will be illuminated, at the wavelength considered (e.g., 1.064 μm). Moreover, since the characteristics of target designators laser signals are standardised within NATO countries by the STANAG 3733, there is no much the system designer can do in order to enhance the performance of a designating system, except than increasing the output power of the system and reducing the beam divergence. On the other hand, some laboratory experiments (see Chapter 8 of this volume) have shown that direct measurement of the seeker minimum detectable energy is possible, directly using the seeker and a relatively simple instrumentation.

In most cases, it is therefore possible to estimate the performance of a LRF/LTD system as long as the atmospheric propagation of the laser beam can be adequately modelled. This is not an easy task, especially taking into account the considerable variation that the atmospheric parameters may experience during real missions and for propagation paths that may exceed 10 – 15 km.

Additional parameters to be considered are the transmitting and receiving optics losses and the limited integration time of the detection circuits. When the target is an extended horizontal surface, for example, the laser can illuminate target areas whose slant-range varies significantly. This is especially true when the laser is operating from low altitudes (i.e., low grazing angles). The result is to cause target reflections from a given pulse transmission to be received during a relatively long time interval compared to the transmitted pulsewidth. Receiver sensitivity, in terms of the capability of detecting a given reflected energy, is degraded when the received pulse duration is longer than the receiver integration time. In fact, when the detector is a peak reading threshold detector, only the energy received during an integration period contributes effectively in achieving detection. Although the integration output does continue to rise as long as energy is being received, the rate of rise is so slight that precise timing of the threshold crossing becomes impossible in the presence of receiver and background noise. Accordingly, the energy received after expiration of the integration time is useless in determining target range or performing other timing functions. The end effect is reduced receiver sensitivity.

3.3 LASER BEAM ATMOSPHERIC PROPAGATION

Many studies have been undertaken for characterising and modelling linear and non-linear atmospheric propagation effects on laser beams. In the following paragraphs, only a brief introduction to the fundamentals of laser beam propagation is presented, with emphasis on those phenomena affecting the peak irradiance at the target. Furthermore, an outline is presented of the empiric models currently used by the Italian Air Force for PILASTER test/training operations (i.e., mission planning, safety studies and performance analysis) with ground/airborne laser systems.

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3.3.1 Atmospheric Transmittance

Attenuation of laser radiation in the atmosphere is described by the Beer's law:

$$\tau = \frac{I(z)}{I_0} = e^{-\gamma z} \quad (3.18)$$

where τ is the transmittance, γ is the attenuation coefficient, and z is the length of the transmission path. If the attenuation coefficient is a function of the path, then Eq. (3.18) becomes:

$$\tau = e^{-\int_0^z \gamma(z) dz} \quad (3.19)$$

The attenuation coefficient is determined by four individual processes: molecular absorption, molecular scattering, aerosol absorption, and aerosol scattering. The atmospheric attenuation coefficient is:

$$\gamma = \alpha_m + \beta_m + \alpha_a + \beta_a \quad (3.20)$$

where α is the absorption coefficient, β is the scattering coefficient, and the subscripts m and a designate the molecular and aerosol processes, respectively. Each coefficient in Eq. (3.20) depends on the wavelength of the laser radiation. We find it convenient at times to discuss absorption and scattering in terms of the absorption and scattering cross sections (σ_a and σ_s , respectively) of the individual particles that are involved. Thus, we can write:

$$\alpha = \sigma_a N_a \quad (3.21)$$

and also:

$$\beta = \sigma_s N_s \quad (3.22)$$

where N_a and N_s are the concentrations of the absorbers and scatterers, respectively. In the absence of precipitation, the atmosphere contains finely dispersed solid and liquid particles (of ice, dust, aromatic and organic material) that vary in size from a cluster of a few molecules to particles of about 20 μm in radius. Particles larger than this remain airborne for a short time and are only found close to their sources. Such a colloidal system, in which a gas (in this case, air) is the continuous medium and particles of solid or liquid are dispersed, is known as an aerosol. Aerosol attenuation coefficients depend considerably on the dimensions, chemical composition, and concentration of aerosol particles. These particles are generally assumed to be homogeneous spheres that are characterized by two parameters: the radius and the index of refraction. In general, the index of refraction is complex. Therefore, we can write:

$$\tilde{n} = n - ik = n \left(1 - i \frac{k}{n} \right) = n(1 - i\kappa) \quad (3.23)$$

where n and k are the real and imaginary parts and $\kappa = k/n$ is known as the extinction coefficient. In general, both n and k are functions of the frequency of the incident radiation. The imaginary part (which arises from a finite conductivity of the particle) is a measure of the absorption. In fact, k is referred to as the absorption constant. It is related to the absorption coefficient α of Eqs. (3.20) and (3.21) by:

$$\alpha = \frac{4\pi f k}{c} \quad (3.24)$$

where c is the speed of light in a vacuum and f is the frequency of the incident radiation. For the wavelength range of greater interest in laser beam propagation (the visible region to about 15 μm) the principal

atmospheric absorbers are the molecules of water, carbon dioxide, and ozone. Attenuation occurs because these molecules selectively absorb radiation by changing vibrational and rotational energy states. The two gases present in greatest abundance in the earth's atmosphere, nitrogen (N_2) and oxygen (O_2), are homonuclear, which means that they possess no electric dipole moment and therefore do not exhibit molecular absorption bands. The atmospheric spectral transmittance $\tau(\%)$ measured over a 1820-m horizontal path at sea level is shown in Figure 3-2. The molecule responsible for each absorption band is shown in the upper part of the figure. It is evident that H_2O and CO_2 are by far the most important absorbing molecules. This is also the case for the range of altitudes extending from sea level to about 12 km. Depending on weather conditions, altitude, and geographical location, the concentration of H_2O varies between 10^{-3} and 1 percent (by volume). The concentration of CO_2 varies between 0.03 and 0.04 percent. Other absorbing molecules found in the atmosphere are methane (CH_4), with a concentration of around 1.5×10^{-4} percent; nitrous oxide (N_2O), with a concentration of around 3.5×10^{-5} percent; carbon monoxide (CO) with a typical concentration of 2×10^{-5} percent; and ozone (O_3), with a concentration as large as 10^{-3} percent at an altitude of around 30 km. The concentration of ozone near sea level is negligible. In Figure 3-2 the wavelength intervals where the transmittance is relatively high are called "atmospheric windows".

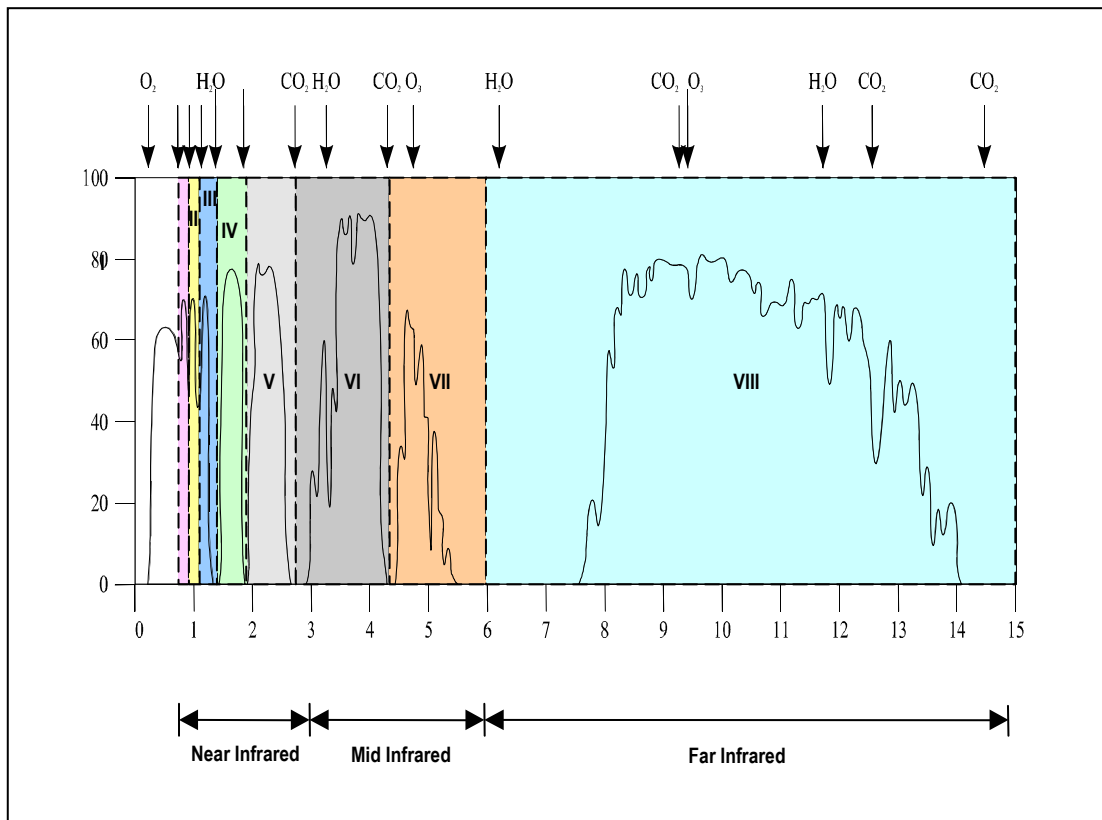


Figure 3-2: Sea-Level Transmittance Over a 1820 m Horizontal Path [3].

Obviously, for efficient energy transmission the laser wavelength should fall well within one of these windows. There are a total of eight such windows within the wavelength range extending from 0.72 to 15.0 μm . The window boundaries are listed in Table 3-1.

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Table 3-1: Wavelength Regions of Atmospheric Windows

Window Number	Window Boundaries (μm)	
I	0.72	0.94
II	0.94	1.13
III	1.13	1.38
IV	1.38	1.90
V	1.90	2.70
VI	2.70	4.30
VII	4.30	6.00
VIII	6.00	15.0

The scattering coefficient β in Eqs. (3.20) and (3.22) also depends on the frequency of the incident radiation as well as the index of refraction and radius of the scattering particle. The incident electromagnetic wave, which is assumed to be a plane wave in a given polarization state, produces forced oscillations of the bound and free charges within the sphere. These oscillating charges in turn produce secondary fields internal and external to the sphere. The resulting field at any point is the vector sum of the primary (plane wave) and secondary fields. Once the resultant field has been determined, the scattering cross section is obtained from the following relationship:

$$\sigma_s = \frac{\text{total power scattered by scatterer}}{\text{magnitude of the time - averaged incident poynting vector}} \quad (3.25)$$

In the scattering process there is no loss of energy but only a directional redistribution which may lead to a significant reduction in beam intensity for large path lengths. As is indicated in Table 3-2, the physical size of the scatterer determines the type of scattering. Thus, air molecules that are typically several angstrom units in diameter lead to *Rayleigh* scattering, whereas the aerosols scatter light in accordance with the *Mie* theory. Furthermore, when the scatterers are relatively large, such as the water droplets found in fog, clouds, rain, or snow, the scattering process is more properly described by diffraction theory.

Table 3-2: Types of Atmospheric Scattering

Type of Scattering	Size of Scatterer
<i>Rayleigh</i> Scattering	Larger than electron but smaller than λ
<i>Mie</i> Scattering	Comparable in size to λ
Non-selective Scattering	Much larger than λ

3.3.2 Computer Codes

In principle, one could determine the exact composition of the atmosphere over the path of interest and, employing the physics of molecular and aerosol extinction, compute the atmospheric extinction coefficient. Because of the wide variations in weather conditions and sparsity of data on some atmospheric constituents, it is desirable to adopt an engineering approach to atmospheric modelling. The required model should include several weather conditions and should be validated with laboratory and field data.

To deal with these complex phenomena, the Phillips Laboratory of the Geophysics Directorate at Hanscom Air Force Base (Massachusetts) has developed codes to predict transmittance/radiance effects for varying conditions. Particularly, they have created LOWTRAN (**LOW** spectral resolution **TRAN**smission code), FASCODE (**FAST** atmospheric signature **CODE**), MODTRAN (**MOD**erate spectral resolution **TRAN**smission code), and HITRAN (**HIGH** resolution **TRAN**smission code). Furthermore, in recent years, powerful tools for the assessment and exploitation of propagation conditions together with range performance models for military systems have become available.

It is impossible to present in a fully comprehensive way all available tools. Instead, some relevant information is given in Ref. [1]-[3]. In the following paragraphs, only the empirical models selected for the initial versions of the PILASTER Mission Planning and Analysis (MPA) software tools are described.

3.3.3 Elder-Strong-Langer (ESL) Model for τ_{ai}

A simple approach, yielding approximate values of the absorption coefficient, has been suggested by Elder and Strong [4] and modified by Langer [5]. Their approach is particularly useful because it provides a means of relating the atmospheric transmission of the i^{th} window to the relative humidity (i.e., a readily measurable parameter). The assumption is that variations in the transmission are caused by changes in the water content of the air. Specifically, changes in the concentration of H_2O cause changes in the absorption, and changes in the size and number of water droplets with humidity cause changes in the scattered component. This is a valid assumption since the other atmospheric constituents have a reasonably constant effect on the transmittance of a given atmospheric window.

It is customary to express the number of H_2O molecules encountered by the beam of light in terms of the number of precipitable millimetres of water in the path. Specifically, the depth of the layer of water that would be formed if all the water molecules along the propagation path were condensed in a container having the same cross-sectional area as the beam is the amount of precipitable water. A cubic meter of air having an absolute humidity of ρ grams per m^3 would yield condensed water that cover a $1 m^2$ area and have a depth of:

$$w' = 10^{-3} \rho \quad (3.26)$$

w' is the precipitable water having units of mm per meter of path length. For a path length of z meters Eq. (3.26) becomes:

$$w = 10^{-3} \rho \cdot z \quad (3.27)$$

where w is now the total precipitable water in millimetres. The value of ρ , the density of water vapour, can be found by multiplying the appropriate number in Table 3-3 by the relative humidity (RH).

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Table 3-3: Mass of Water Vapour in Saturated Air (g/m³)

Temperature										
(°C)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
-20	0.89	0.81	0.74	0.67	0.61	0.65				
-10	2.15	1.98	1.81	1.66	1.52	1.40	1.28	1.18	1.08	0.98
-0	4.84	4.47	4.13	3.81	3.52	3.24	2.99	2.75	2.54	2.34
0	4.84	5.18	5.54	5.92	6.33	6.76	7.22	7.70	8.22	8.76
10	9.33	9.94	10.57	11.25	11.96	12.71	13.50	14.34	15.22	16.17
20	17.22	18.14	19.22	20.36	21.55	22.80	24.11	25.49	27.00	28.45
30	30.04	31.70	33.45	35.28	37.19	39.19				

Similar numerical results can be obtained using the following equation [6], which is convenient for computer code implementations:

$$\rho = 1322.8 \cdot \frac{RH}{T} \exp \left[\frac{25.22 \cdot (T - 273.16)}{T} - 5.31 \cdot \ln \left(\frac{T}{273.16} \right) \right] \quad (3.28)$$

where RH is the relative humidity (as a fraction), and T is the absolute temperature (K).

Based on the work done by Elder and Strong [4], two empirical expressions, developed by Langer [5], can be used to calculate the absorptive transmittance τ_{ai} for the i^{th} window for any given value of the precipitable water content. These expressions are:

$$\tau_{ai} = e^{-A_i \sqrt{w}}, \text{ for } w < w_i \quad (3.29)$$

$$\tau_{ai} = k_i \left(\frac{w_i}{w} \right)^{\beta_i}, \text{ for } w > w_i \quad (3.30)$$

where A_i , k_i , β_i and w_i are constants whose values for each atmospheric window are listed in Table 3-4.

Table 3-4: Constants to be Used in Eqs. (3.34) and (3.35)

Constants Window	A_i	k_i	β_i	w_i
I	0.0305	0.800	0.112	54
II	0.0363	0.765	0.134	54
III	0.1303	0.830	0.093	2.0
IV	0.211	0.802	0.111	1.1
V	0.350	0.814	0.1035	0.35
VI	0.373	0.827	0.095	0.26
VII	0.598	0.784	0.122	0.165

In summary, Eqs. (3.29) and (3.30), together with Eq. (3.27) and Table 3-3 (or Eq. 3.28), provide information that can be used to obtain an estimate of the absorptive transmittance (τ_{ai}) of laser beams having wavelengths that fall within the various atmospheric windows. The results apply to horizontal paths in the atmosphere near sea level and for varying relative humidity. To obtain the total atmospheric transmittance we must multiply τ_{ai} by τ_{si} (i.e., the transmittance due to scattering only).

3.3.4 Empirical Expressions for τ_{si}

Based on rigorous mathematical approaches, the scattering properties of the atmosphere due to the aerosol particles are difficult to quantify, and it is difficult to obtain an analytic expression for the scattering coefficient that will yield accurate values over a wide variety of conditions. However, an empirical relationship that is often used to model the scattering coefficient [7] has the form:

$$\beta(\lambda) = C_1 \lambda^{-\delta} + C_2 \lambda^{-4} \quad (3.31)$$

where C_1 , C_2 , and δ are constants determined by the aerosol concentration and size distribution, and λ is the wavelength of the radiation. The second term accounts for *Rayleigh* scattering. Since for all wavelengths longer than about $0.3 \mu\text{m}$ the second term is considerably less than the first, it may be neglected. It has been found that $\delta \approx 1.3 \pm 0.3$ produces reasonable results when applied to aerosols with a range of particle sizes.

An attempt has also been made to relate δ and C_1 to the meteorological range. The apparent contrast C_z , of a source when viewed at $\lambda = 0.55 \mu\text{m}$ from a distance z is by definition:

$$C_z = \frac{R_{sz} - R_{bz}}{R_{bz}} \quad (3.32)$$

Where R_{sz} and R_{bz} are the apparent radiances of the source and its background as seen from a distance z .

For $\lambda = 0.55 \mu\text{m}$, the distance at which the ratio:

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$$V = \frac{C_z}{C_0} = \frac{\frac{R_{sz} - R_{bz}}{R_{s0} - R_{b0}}}{\frac{R_{bz}}{R_{b0}}} = 0.02 \quad (3.33)$$

is defined as the meteorological range V (or visual range). It must be observed that this quantity is different from the standard observer visibility (V_{obs}). Observer visibility is the greatest distance at which it is just possible to see and identify a target with the unaided eye. In daytime, the object used for V_{obs} measurements is dark against the horizon sky (e.g., high contrast target), while during night time the target is a moderately intense light source. The International Visibility Code (IVC) is given in Table 3-5. It is evident that, while the range of values for each category is appropriate for general purposes, it is too broad for scientific applications.

Table 3-5: International Visibility Code (IVC)

DESIGNATION	VISIBILITY
Dense Fog	0 – 50 m
Thick Fog	50 – 200 m
Moderate Fog	200 – 500 m
Light Fog	500 – 1 km
Thin Fog	1 – 2 km
Haze	2 – 4 km
Light Haze	4 – 10 km
Clear	10 – 20 km
Very Clear	20 – 50 km
Exceptionally Clear	> 50 km

Visibility is a subjective measurement estimated by a trained observer and as such can have large variability associated with the reported value. Variations are created by observers having different threshold contrasts looking at non-ideal targets. Obviously, visibility depends on the aerosol distribution and it is very sensitive to the local meteorological conditions. It is also dependent upon the view angle with respect to the sun. As the sun angle approaches the view angle, forward scattering into the line-of-sight increases and the visibility decreases. Therefore, reports from local weather stations may or may not represent the actual conditions at which the experiment is taking place. Since meteorological range is defined quantitatively using the apparent contrast of a source (or the apparent radiances of the source and its background) as seen from a certain distance, it eliminates the subjective nature of the observer and the distinction between day and night. Unfortunately, carelessness has often resulted in using the term “visibility” when meteorological range is meant. To insure that there is no confusion, “observer-visibility” (V_{obs}) will be used in this volume to indicate that it is an estimate.

If only V_{obs} is available, the meteorological range (V) can be estimated [6] from:

$$V \approx (1.3 \pm 0.3) \cdot V_{obs} \quad (3.34)$$

From Eq. (3.33), if we assume that the source radiance is much greater than the background radiance (i.e., $R_s \gg R_b$) and that the background radiance is constant (i.e., $R_{bo} = R_{bz}$), then the transmittance at $\lambda = 0.55 \mu\text{m}$ (where absorption is negligible) is given by:

$$\frac{R_{sv}}{R_{s0}} = e^{-\beta V} = 0.02 \quad (3.35)$$

Hence, we have:

$$\ln\left(\frac{R_{sv}}{R_{s0}}\right) = -\beta V = -3.91 \quad (3.36)$$

and also:

$$\beta = \frac{3.91}{V} = C_1 \lambda^{-\delta} \quad (3.37)$$

It follows from Eq. (3.36) that the constant C_1 is given by:

$$C_1 = \frac{3.91}{V} \cdot 0.55^\delta \quad (3.38)$$

With this result the transmittance at the centre of the i^{th} window is:

$$\tau_{si} = e^{-\frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55}\right)^{-\delta} \cdot z} \quad (3.39)$$

where λ_i must be expressed in microns.

If, because of haze, the meteorological range is less than 6 km, the exponent δ is related to the meteorological range by the following empirical formula:

$$\delta = 0.585\sqrt[3]{V} \quad (3.40)$$

where V is in kilometres. When $V \geq 6$ km, the exponent δ can be calculated by:

$$\delta = 0.0057 \cdot V + 1.025 \quad (3.41)$$

For exceptionally good visibility $\delta = 1.6$, and for average visibility $\delta \approx 1.3$. In summary, Eq. (3.39), together with the appropriate value for δ , permits us to compute the scattering transmittance at the centre of the i^{th} window for any propagation path, if the meteorological range V is known. It is important to note here that in general the transmittance will, of course, also be affected by atmospheric absorption, which depending on the relative humidity and temperature may be larger than τ_{si} .

3.3.5 Propagation Through Haze and Precipitation

Haze refers to the small particles suspended in the air. These particles consist of microscopic salt crystals, very fine dust, and combustion products. Their radii are less than $0.5 \mu\text{m}$. During periods of high humidity, water molecules condense onto these particles, which then increase in size. It is essential that these condensation nuclei be available before condensation can take place. Since salt is quite hygroscopic, it is by far the most important condensation nucleus. Fog occurs when the condensation nuclei grow into water droplets or ice crystals with radii exceeding $0.5 \mu\text{m}$. Clouds are formed in the same way; the only distinction between fog and clouds is that one touches the ground while the other does not. By convention fog limits the visibility to less than 1 km, whereas in a mist the visibility is greater than 1 km.

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We know that in the early stages of droplet growth the Mie attenuation factor K depends strongly on the wavelength. When the drop has reached a radius $a \approx 10 \lambda$ the value of K approaches 2, and the scattering is now independent of wavelength, i.e., it is non-selective. Since most of the fog droplets have radii ranging from 5 to 15 μm they are comparable in size to the wavelength of infrared radiation. Consequently the value of the scattering cross section is near its maximum. It follows that the transmission of fogs in either the visible or *IR* spectral region is poor for any reasonable path length. This of course also applies to clouds.

Since haze particles are usually less than 0.5 μm , we note that for laser beams in the *IR* spectral region $a/\lambda \ll 1$ and the scattering is not an important attenuation mechanism. This explains why photographs of distant objects are sometimes made with infrared-sensitive film that responds to wavelengths out to about 0.85 μm . At this wavelength the transmittance of a light haze is about twice that at 0.5 μm . Raindrops are of course many times larger than the wavelengths of laser beams. As a result there is no wavelength-dependent scattering. The scattering coefficient does, however, depend strongly on the size of the drop. Middleton [7],[8] has shown that the scattering coefficient with rain is given by:

$$\beta_{\text{rain}} = 1.25 \cdot 10^{-6} \frac{\Delta x / \Delta t}{a^3} \quad (3.42)$$

where $\Delta x / \Delta t$ is the rainfall rate in centimetres of depth per second and a is the radius of the drops in centimetres. Rainfall rates for four different rain conditions and the corresponding transmittance (due to scattering only) of a 1.8 km path are shown in Table 3-6 [9]. These data are useful for order of magnitude estimates. In order to obtain accurate estimates, the concentrations of the different types of rain drops (radius) and the associated rainfall rates should be known. In this case, the scattering coefficient can be calculated as the sum of the partial coefficients associated to the various rain drops.

Table 3-6: Transmittance of a 1.8 km Path Through Rain

Rainfall (cm/h)	Transmittance (1.8 km path)
0.25	0.88
1.25	0.74
2.5	0.65
10.0	0.38

A simpler approach, used in LOWTRAN, gives good approximations of the results obtained with Eq. (3.42) for most concentrations of different rain particles. Particularly, in LOWTRAN, the scattering coefficient with rain has been empirically related only to the rainfall rate $\Delta x / \Delta t$ (expressed in mm/hour), as follows [6]:

$$\beta_{\text{rain}} \approx 0.365 \cdot \left(\frac{\Delta x}{\Delta t} \right)^{0.63} \quad (3.43)$$

Table 3-7 provides representative rainfall rates which can be used in Eqs. (3.42) and (3.43), when no direct measurements are available, to obtain order of magnitude estimations of β_{rain} [10].

Table 3-7: Representative Rainfall Rates

<i>Rain Intensity</i>	<i>Rainfall (mm/hour)</i>
Mist	0.025
Drizzle	0.25
Light	1.0
Moderate	4.0
Heavy	16
Thundershower	40
Cloud-Burst	100

In the presence of rain, in addition to the scattering losses calculated with Eq. (3.42) or (3.43), there are, of course, losses by absorption along the path, and these must be included in the calculation of the total atmospheric transmittance with rain.

3.3.6 PILASTER Combined Model

Combining the equations presented in Sections 3.2.2, 3.2.3 and 3.2.4, the set of equations presented in Table 3-8 were obtained, for calculating the atmospheric transmittance (τ_{atm}) in the various conditions, with transmitter and receiver collocated.

Table 3-8: Transmittance Equations for Transmitter and Receiver Collocated

Case	Cond.	Equations	N°
A	$V \geq 6 \text{ km}$ $w > w_i$	$\tau_{atm} = k_i \cdot \left(\frac{w_i}{w} \right)^{\beta_i} \cdot e^{-z \cdot \frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-(0.0057 V + 1.025)}}$	(3.44)
B	$V \geq 6 \text{ km}$ $w < w_i$	$\tau_{atm} = e^{-z \cdot \left[A_i \sqrt{w} + \frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-(0.0057 V + 1.025)} \right]}$	(3.45)
C	$V < 6 \text{ km}$ $w < w_i$	$\tau_{atm} = e^{-z \cdot \left[A_i \sqrt{w} + \frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-0.585 \sqrt[3]{V}} \right]}$	(3.46)
D	$V < 6 \text{ km}$ $w > w_i$	$\tau_{atm} = k_i \cdot \left(\frac{w_i}{w} \right)^{\beta_i} \cdot e^{-z \cdot \frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-0.585 \sqrt[3]{V}}}$	(3.47)
R₁	<i>Rain</i> $w < w_i$	$\tau_{atm} = e^{-A_i \sqrt{w}} \cdot e^{-z \cdot \left[0.365 \left(\frac{\Delta x}{\Delta t} \right)^{0.63} \right]}$	(3.48)
R₂	<i>Rain</i> $w > w_i$	$\tau_{atm} = k_i \left(\frac{w_i}{w} \right)^{\beta_i} \cdot e^{-z \cdot \left[0.365 \left(\frac{\Delta x}{\Delta t} \right)^{0.63} \right]}$	(3.49)

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The cases R_1 and R_2 in Table 3-8 are independent of meteorological range (V). Straightforward numerical analysis shows that the τ_{atm} estimates obtained with rain using Eqs. (3.48) and (3.49), are always less than the corresponding transmittance estimates obtained with Eqs. (3.46) and (3.47) with dry-air conditions and $V < 6$ km, for rainfall rates $\Delta x/\Delta t \geq 1$ (i.e., from light rain to cloud-burst).

In the case of transmitter and receiver not collocated (e.g., LTD/LGW combination), the equations in Table 3-8 have to be modified, taking into account that the total laser path (z) is given by the sum of the range transmitter-target and target-receiver (see Figure 3-1). Therefore, we have:

$$z = R_t + R_r \quad (3.50)$$

Denoting with the subscripts t and r the terms relative to the transmitting and receiving paths respectively, we have that the total atmospheric transmittance (τ_{tot}) is given by:

$$\tau_{tot} = \tau_t \cdot \tau_r \quad (3.51)$$

Therefore, in order to account for all possible cases, we have to consider the 2^3 possible combinations referring to dry-air ($V \geq 6$ km \leftrightarrow $V < 6$ km, $w_t \geq w_i \leftrightarrow w_t < w_i$ and $w_r \geq w_i \leftrightarrow w_r < w_i$), and the 2^2 combinations relative to rainy conditions ($w_t \geq w_i \leftrightarrow w_t < w_i$ and $w_r \geq w_i \leftrightarrow w_r < w_i$).

It should be considered, however, that the condition $w_t < w_i$ is not likely to occur in many cases of practical interest with LTD/LGW systems. From Eq. (3.27), we obtain the maximum transmitter distance (R_{max}) from which the condition $w_t < w_i$ is verified:

$$R_{max} < \frac{w_i}{\rho} \cdot 10^3 \quad (3.52)$$

In normal dry-air conditions (e.g., $T = 24^\circ\text{C}$ and $RH = 75\%$) R_{max} equates to about 3 km. This is a distance very short in many real operational scenarios. Obviously, in rainy conditions, the range R_{max} would be even shorter. Table 3-9 and Table 3-10 show the equations developed for all dry-air and rain cases considered.

Table 3-9: ESLM-Dry Equations for Transmitter and Receiver Not Collocated

Case	Cond.	Equations		n°
E	$V \geq 6 \text{ km}$ $w_t \geq w_i$ $w_r \geq w_i$	$k_i \left(\frac{w_i}{w_t} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-\frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-(0.0057V+1.025)} R_t}$ $\cdot k_i \left(\frac{w_i}{w_r} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-\frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-(0.0057V+1.025)} R_r}$	$k_i^2 \left(\frac{w_i^2}{w_t w_r} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-\frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-(0.0057V+1.025)} (R_t + R_r)}$	(3.53)
F	$V \geq 6 \text{ km}$ $w_t \geq w_i$ $w_r < w_i$	$k_i \left(\frac{w_i}{w_t} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-\frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-(0.0057V+1.025)} R_t}$ $\cdot e^{-A_i \sqrt{w_r} - \frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-(0.0057V+1.025)} R_r}$	$k_i \left(\frac{w_i}{w_t} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-A_i \sqrt{w_r} - \frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-(0.0057V+1.025)} (R_t + R_r)}$	(3.54)
G	$V < 6 \text{ km}$ $w_t \geq w_i$ $w_r < w_i$	$k_i \left(\frac{w_i}{w_t} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-\frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-0.585 \sqrt[3]{V}} R_t}$ $\cdot e^{-A_i \sqrt{w_r} - \frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-0.585 \sqrt[3]{V}} R_r}$	$k_i \left(\frac{w_i}{w_t} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-A_i \sqrt{w_r} - \frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-0.585 \sqrt[3]{V}} (R_t + R_r)}$	(3.55)
H	$V < 6 \text{ km}$ $w_t \geq w_i$ $w_r \geq w_i$	$k_i \left(\frac{w_i}{w_t} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-\frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-0.585 \sqrt[3]{V}} R_t}$ $\cdot k_i \left(\frac{w_i}{w_r} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-\frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-0.585 \sqrt[3]{V}} R_r}$	$k_i^2 \left(\frac{w_i^2}{w_t w_r} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-\frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-0.585 \sqrt[3]{V}} (R_t + R_r)}$	(3.56)
I	$V \geq 6 \text{ km}$ $w_t < w_i$ $w_r \geq w_i$	$e^{-A_i \sqrt{w_t} - \frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-(0.0057V+1.025)} R_t}$ $\cdot k_i \left(\frac{w_i}{w_r} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-\frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-(0.0057V+1.025)} R_r}$	$k_i \left(\frac{w_i}{w_r} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-A_i \sqrt{w_t} - \frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-(0.0057V+1.025)} (R_t + R_r)}$	(3.57)
J	$V \geq 6 \text{ km}$ $w_t < w_i$ $w_r < w_i$	$e^{-A_i \sqrt{w_t} - \frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-(0.0057V+1.025)} R_t}$ $\cdot e^{-A_i \sqrt{w_r} - \frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-(0.0057V+1.025)} R_r}$	$e^{-A_i \sqrt{w_t} - A_i \sqrt{w_r} - \frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-(0.0057V+1.025)} (R_t + R_r)}$	(3.58)
K	$V < 6 \text{ km}$ $w_t < w_i$ $w_r < w_i$	$e^{-A_i \sqrt{w_t} - \frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-0.585 \sqrt[3]{V}} R_t}$ $\cdot e^{-A_i \sqrt{w_r} - \frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-0.585 \sqrt[3]{V}} R_r}$	$e^{-A_i \sqrt{w_t} - A_i \sqrt{w_r} - \frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-0.585 \sqrt[3]{V}} (R_t + R_r)}$	(3.59)
L	$V < 6 \text{ km}$ $w_t < w_i$ $w_r \geq w_i$	$e^{-A_i \sqrt{w_t} - \frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-0.585 \sqrt[3]{V}} R_t}$ $\cdot k_i \left(\frac{w_i}{w_r} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-\frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-0.585 \sqrt[3]{V}} R_r}$	$k_i \left(\frac{w_i}{w_r} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-A_i \sqrt{w_t} - \frac{3.91}{V} \left(\frac{\lambda_i}{0.55} \right)^{-0.585 \sqrt[3]{V}} (R_t + R_r)}$	(3.60)

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Table 3-10: ESLM-Rain Equations for Transmitter and Receiver Not Collocated

Case	Cond.	Equations		N°
R ₃	Rain $w_t \geq w_i$ $w_r \geq w_i$	$k_i \left(\frac{w_i}{w_t} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-0.365 \left(\frac{\Delta x}{\Delta t} \right)^{0.63} R_t} \cdot k_i \left(\frac{w_i}{w_r} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-0.365 \left(\frac{\Delta x}{\Delta t} \right)^{0.63} R_r}$	$k_i^2 \left(\frac{w_i^2}{w_t w_r} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-0.365 \left(\frac{\Delta x}{\Delta t} \right)^{0.63} (R_t + R_r)}$	(3.61)
R ₄	Rain $w_t \geq w_i$ $w_r < w_i$	$k_i \left(\frac{w_i}{w_t} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-0.365 \left(\frac{\Delta x}{\Delta t} \right)^{0.63} R_t} \cdot e^{-A_i \sqrt{w_r} - 0.365 \left(\frac{\Delta x}{\Delta t} \right)^{0.63} R_r}$	$k_i \left(\frac{w_i}{w_t} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-A_i \sqrt{w_r} - 0.365 \left(\frac{\Delta x}{\Delta t} \right)^{0.63} (R_t + R_r)}$	(3.62)
R ₅	Rain $w_t < w_i$ $w_r \geq w_i$	$e^{-A_i \sqrt{w_t} - 0.365 \left(\frac{\Delta x}{\Delta t} \right)^{0.63} R_t} \cdot k_i \left(\frac{w_i}{w_r} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-0.365 \left(\frac{\Delta x}{\Delta t} \right)^{0.63} R_r}$	$k_i \left(\frac{w_i}{w_r} \right)^{\beta_i} e^{-A_i \sqrt{w_t} - 0.365 \left(\frac{\Delta x}{\Delta t} \right)^{0.63} (R_t + R_r)}$	(3.63)
R ₆	Rain $w_t < w_i$ $w_r < w_i$	$e^{-A_i \sqrt{w_t} - 0.365 \left(\frac{\Delta x}{\Delta t} \right)^{0.63} R_t} \cdot e^{-A_i \sqrt{w_r} - 0.365 \left(\frac{\Delta x}{\Delta t} \right)^{0.63} R_r}$	$e^{-A_i (\sqrt{w_t} + \sqrt{w_r}) - 0.365 \left(\frac{\Delta x}{\Delta t} \right)^{0.63} (R_t + R_r)}$	(3.64)

The equations presented in the Table 3-8, Table 3-9 and Table 3-10 represent the combined Elder-Strong-Langer-Middleton (ESLM) model, relative to laser beam horizontal-path propagation at sea-level both in dry-air and rain conditions. The validation process of the ESLM model, before incorporation in the PILASTER MPA tools, was undertaken during this research using experimental data collected during ground trials. Furthermore, corrections to be applied with increasing altitudes and with various laser slant-path grazing angles were determined using data collected in flight tests. The results of these activities are described in the Chapters 8 and 9 of this volume.

3.3.7 Refractive Index Variations

When a laser beam passes through air, the randomly fluctuating air temperature produces small density and refractive index inhomogeneities that affect the beam in at least three different ways. Considering for example an initially well-defined phase front propagating through a region of atmospheric turbulence. Because of random fluctuations in phase velocity the initially well defined phase front will become distorted. This alters and redirects the flow of energy in the beam. As the distorted phase front progresses, random changes in beam direction (“Beam Wander”) and intensity fluctuations (“Scintillation”) occur. The beam is also found to spread in size beyond the dimensions predicted by diffraction theory.

The cause of all this, as we have stated, is atmospheric turbulence that arises when air parcels of different temperatures are mixed by wind and convection. The individual air parcels, or turbulence cells, break up into smaller cells and eventually lose their identity. In the meantime, however, the mixing produces fluctuations in the density and therefore in the refractive index of air. To describe these random processes, one must have a way of defining the fluctuations that are characteristic of turbulence. The most common approaches adopted may be found in Strohbehn [12] and Weichel [3].

3.3.8 Other Propagation Effects

The propagation of a laser beam through atmospheric turbulence is a linear phenomenon in that the air is not affected by the beam. Strictly speaking, this is only true for beams of relatively low irradiance. As the beam irradiance is increased, molecular absorption will lead to temperature gradients in the medium that in turn induce density and index-of-refraction changes. The final result is a medium whose optical properties have been altered. This phenomenon is non-linear, in that the beam irradiance distribution leads to index-of-refraction changes, which in turn alter the beam's irradiance distribution, which alters the refractive index, etc.

Non-linear propagation effects typically include: "Thermal Blooming" (whose consequence is that the divergence angle is considerably more than that due to diffraction alone), "Kinetic Cooling" (resulting in a temporary focusing effect and less than diffraction limited beam spreading), and "Bleaching" (1 – 5 μ sec duration pulses may under certain conditions saturate the absorption mechanism and thereby reduce the atmospheric transmittance). Also aerodynamic effects influence the performance of the airborne systems. These effects can be grouped in two categories:

- **Aeromechanical Effects**, arising from interactions of the external flow field with the airborne platform. This base motion, in concert with intrinsic platform sources of vibration (e.g., engines, pumps, fluid flow), defines the overall mechanical jitter environment in which the laser system must operate. Jitter can result in spurious laser beam motion on target, as well as general misalignment of optical elements.
- **Aero-Optical (AO) Effects**: These are caused by refraction index variations induced by the platform moving through the flow field. This results in reduced far-field peak intensity as well as beam spread and wander for outgoing wave fronts (for imaging systems, these several effects manifest themselves as loss of contrast and resolution).

An outline of these additional propagation effects can be found in Ref. [13].

3.4 LASER SCATTERING AND TARGET CROSS SECTION

The scattering and propagation of laser light obey the same set of laws as radio frequency waves, that is, those set forth by Maxwell's equations and the boundary conditions. However, the wavelength of laser light is so small that minute particles and even molecules represent significant scatterers. Target surfaces are generally very rough at laser wavelengths and, consequently, the random or diffuse reflection component frequently dominates. In fact, there may not be any significant specular component to the laser cross section, in many cases. Sometimes, however, significant specular reflections and retro-reflections (opposition effects) are observed from certain target surfaces. Furthermore, in general, the overall scattering pattern produced by a certain (complex) target illuminated by a laser beam shows a marked dependency on the illumination incidence angle.

When examining the diffuse reflection component, the maximum amount of reflected energy is reflected 90° (normal) to the surface - independent of the incoming beam angle of arrival, and the energy falls off as a function of the cosine of the angle off of surface normal.

A surface that is a perfect diffuser scatters incident light equally in all directions. For such an "ideal" surface, the intensity (W/m^2) of diffusely reflected light is given by:

$$I_d = I_i k_d \cos \theta \text{ with } \theta \in \left[0, \frac{\pi}{2} \right] \quad (3.65)$$

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where I_i is the intensity of the light source at the target, θ is the angle between the surface normal and a line from the surface illuminated point to the light source (considered as a point source). The constant k_d is the diffuse reflectivity, which depends on the nature of the material and the wavelength of the incident light. Eq. (3.70) may be also expressed in the vector form:

$$I_d = I_i k_d (\hat{L} \cdot \hat{N}) \quad (3.66)$$

where \hat{L} and \hat{N} are the vectors illustrated in Figure 3-3.

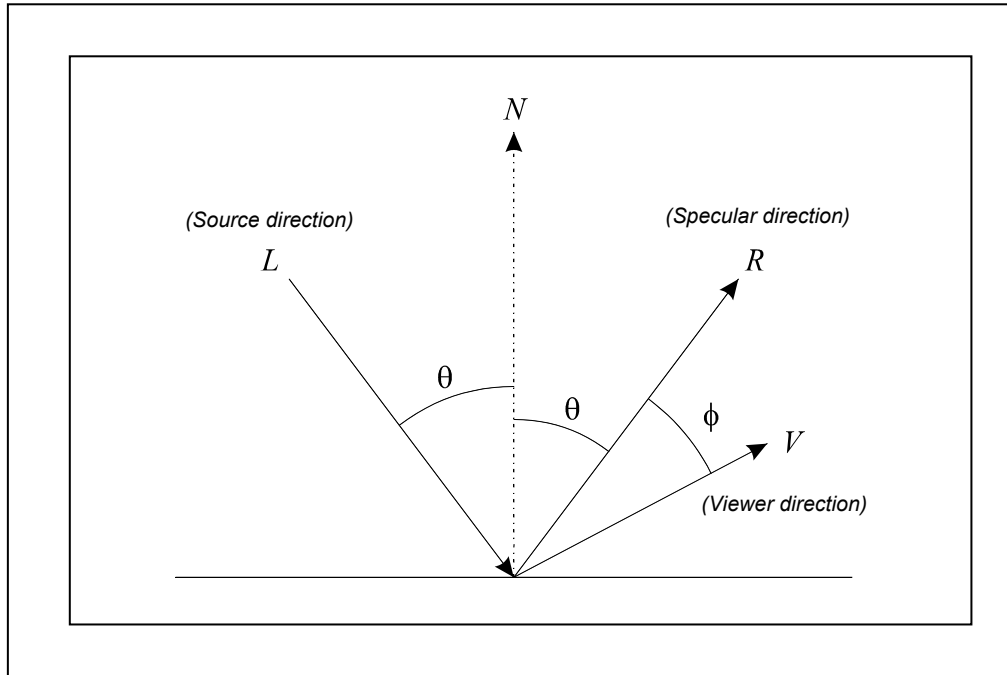


Figure 3-3: Reflection Geometry.

As described before, any reflection from a practical surface should be considered as (at least) the sum of a specular component and a diffuse component. The existence of these two component has been shown experimentally and is not a consequence of choice of a particular model. A surface attribute that is important to model is the surface roughness. A perfectly smooth surface reflects incident radiation in a single direction. A rough surface tends to scatter incident radiation in every direction, although certain directions may contain more reflected energy than others. This behaviour is obviously also dependent on the wavelength of radiation; a surface that is smooth for certain wavelengths may be rough for others. For example, oxidised or unpolished metal is smooth for radio waves ($\lambda = 10^{-2}$ m) and rough for radiation in the near-infrared (NIR) part of the spectrum. In general, metals can be prevalently diffuse or specular reflectors in the NIR depending on whether they are polished or not. So reflection is not only dependent on the material but also on its surface properties. Another factor in reflection is the grazing angle of the incident laser source. This can in fact determine the entity of the overall reflected signal and of the two reflection components.

Therefore, a “realistic” reflection model should at least represent the target surface as some combination of a perfect diffuse reflector and a perfect specular surface. One of the earlier and still quite popular models is the *Phong* model [14]. This model can be used for fitting the results of experimental bi-directional reflectivity measurements and for computer simulation programs. In the *Phong* model, the bi-directional spectral reflectivity is expressed by:

$$\rho'_\lambda = k_{diff} + k_{spec} \cos^n \phi \quad (3.67)$$

where k_{diff} is the fraction of energy diffusely reflected and k_{spec} is the fraction specularly reflected. The model can be given in terms of the unit vectors associated with the geometry of the point under consideration (Figure 3-3). Therefore, for the reflected intensity, we may write:

$$I = I_i [k_d (\cos \theta) + k_s (\cos^n \phi)] + A \quad (3.68)$$

$$I = I_i [k_d (L \cdot N) + k_s (R \cdot V)^n] + A \quad (3.69)$$

where k_s is the specular reflection coefficient (a function of the material characteristics and incidence angle), n is the index that controls the dimensions of the specular highlight, and A is an additional term accounting for reflection of sunlight at the wavelength considered (day-time operations). This can be also modelled as:

$$A = E_\lambda [k_d (\cos \theta') + k_s (\cos^n \phi')] \quad (3.70)$$

where E_λ is the solar spectral irradiance at the wavelength of the laser λ , and θ' is the angle between the solar illumination and the normal to the target reflecting surface.

Figure 3-4 shows the variation in light intensity at a point P on a surface calculated using Eq. (3.69). The intensity variation is shown as a profile (i.e., a function of the orientation of V). The intensity at P is given by the length of V from P to its intersection with the profile. The semicircular part of the profile is the contribution from the diffuse term. The specular part of the profile is shown for different values of the index n .

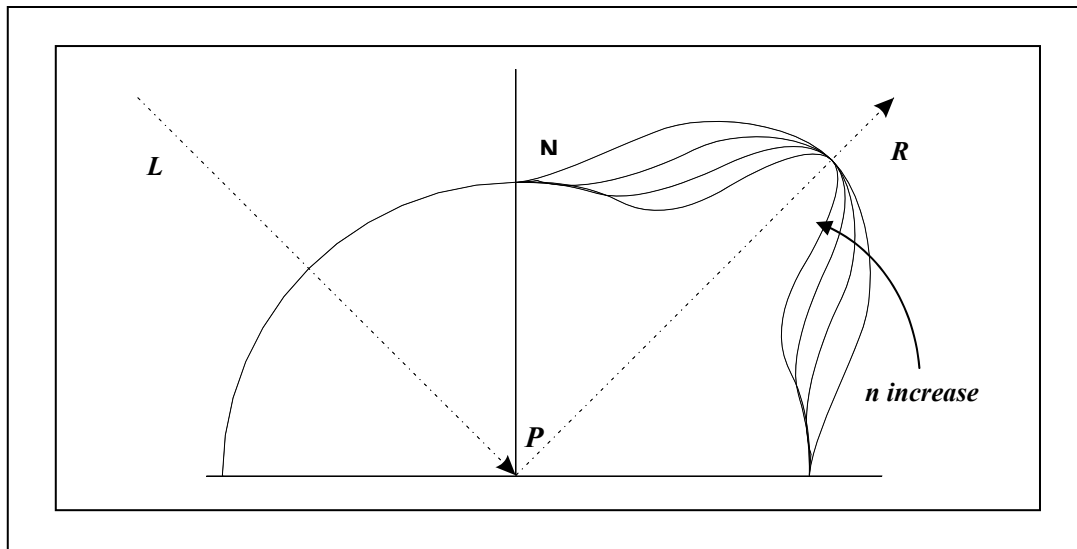


Figure 3-4: Intensity as a Function of V Orientation (with Different Values of n).

Note that, in general, the higher is the value of n , the tighter is the specular highlight. Figure 3-5 shows the resulting combinations of the two reflection components, obtained by keeping fixed the value of n (e.g., $n = 100$) and varying the angle θ .

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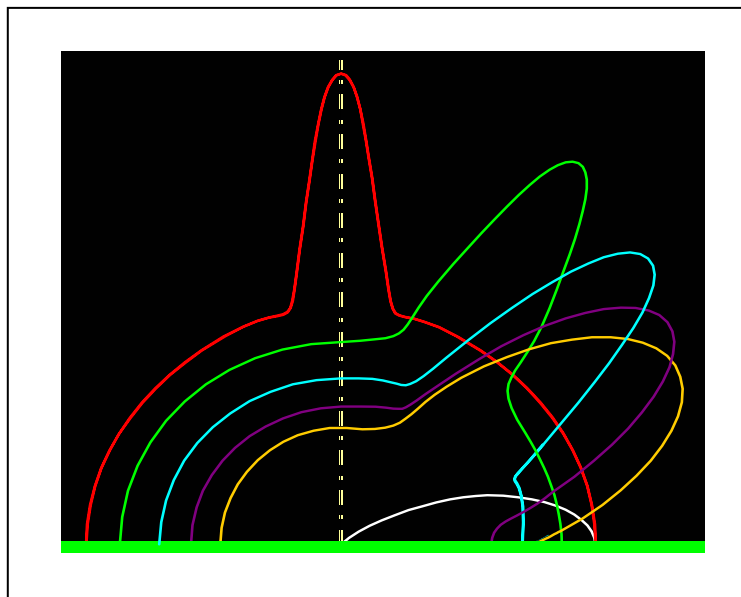


Figure 3-5: Reflection Components with Various θ Angles.

Figure 3-6 shows a typical surface which contains both specular and diffuse reflections with a 55% specular component and a 45% diffuse component ($\theta = 50^\circ$, $n = 100$).

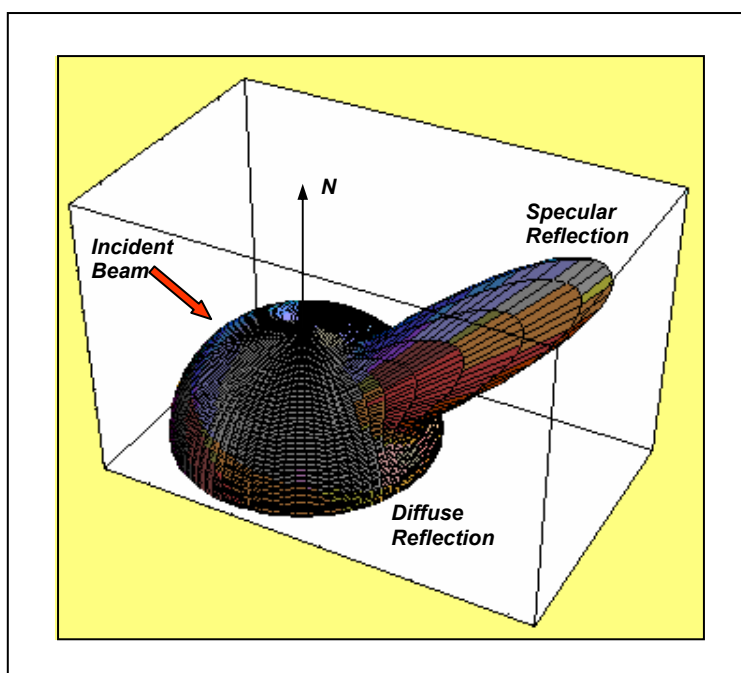


Figure 3-6: Specular and Diffuse Reflection Components.

In most practical cases with LTD/LGW systems, the diffuse component alone is assumed when describing target reflectivity, since the diffuse reflection component is what the weapon will have the highest probability of tracking during flight. Typical diffuse reflectivity values at $\lambda = 1.064 \mu\text{m}$ are listed in

Table 3-11. It is worth to notice that glass, water and highly polished surfaces are poor surfaces to designate since they reflect most of the laser energy back along one direction only (i.e., they are specular reflectors).

Table 3-11: Approximate Reflectivity at $\lambda = 1.064 \mu\text{m}$

Material	Diffuse Reflectivity
Matt Black Paint	4 – 15%
Dirty Olive Drab Paint	5 – 15%
Soil	15 – 25%
Brick	15 – 65%
Vegetation (Glossy Foliage)	30 – 70%
Asphalt	10 – 25%
Concrete	10 – 40%
IR Reflecting Paint	30 – 55%

3.5 LTD/LGW OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Global requirements for mission planning with a particular laser designation system may be initially established by examining the LTD and LGW operating slant-ranges required to successfully perform the mission (e.g., optimal delivery of a particular laser weapon). These ranges may vary from a few hundred feet for a ground designator to over 100,000 feet for operational delivery of a Paveway III LGB. Thus, mission planning with a particular LTD system must have an operational input that factors in the slant-ranges expected for various types of delivery tactics. Mission planning to determine the optimal weapon release point involves a number of factors, including the post-release designation manoeuvre to be employed, the maximum slant-range at weapon impact, the target size, laser system error budget, laser power, etc. What follows is a discussion of the primary factors necessary for determining the optimal release range.

3.5.1 Target Size

Target dimensions are a critical factor in LTD/LGW mission planning. These dimensions, along with the slant-range requirements must then be factored together with the characteristics of the designator. In addition, it must be remembered that designation tactics will generally reduce the apparent target size by varying degrees due to the oblique perspective most manoeuvres will generate.

As an example, if a weapon can achieve a 10 feet Circular Error Probability (CEP), then it is appropriate that the designator aiming capability must equal or exceed that requirement in order to meet a suitable weapon impact criteria for the weapon. As an example problem, a hardened shelter access cover, roughly 20 feet in diameter, will be used as a target. This target dimension equates to a 10 feet CEP where 50 percent of our hypothetical weapon releases should fall on the target face. Thus, one must see and identify this target from the desired vantage point and also be able to maintain the laser energy on the target from release to impact. Weapon system error sources challenge this ability to keep the spot on the target as described below.

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3.5.2 LTD Systems Error Sources and Effects

Error sources such as laser spot spillover, boresight errors, jitter, and tracking errors, cause large reductions in LGW delivery effectiveness. The following is a discussion of the most common error sources in laser designator systems and the effects of these errors on designation performance.

3.5.2.1 Laser Spot Spillover

Several characteristics of the laser beam must be tightly controlled if the beam is to be maintained on the desired target surface. First, the laser beam spot should be smaller than the target face. As the LTD produces a beam that diverges as it propagates along the path between the laser and the target, beam spillover effects often degrade weapon accuracy both when designation is performed by a ground LTD or an airborne LTD (see Figure 3-7).

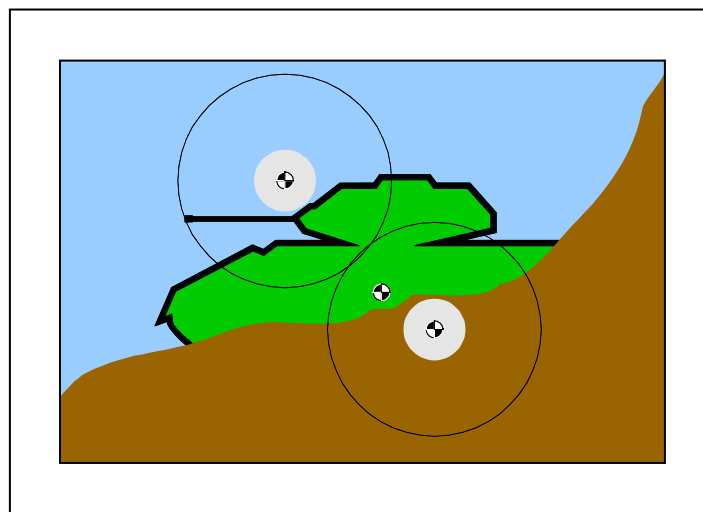


Figure 3-7: Laser Spot Spillover.

Laser beam divergence should therefore be accounted, and appropriate terminal slant-ranges and grazing angles should be chosen such that the spot elongation will not cause spillover around the target.

3.5.2.2 Laser Spot Jitter

Laser spot jitter is defined as the high frequency motion of the laser spot on a pulse-to-pulse basis, usually of low amplitude, and ostensibly due to minute flexures of the optical bench caused by aircraft vibration. These rapid angular movements of the beam degrade weapon accuracy only slightly when the laser beam is normal to the target face. However, at shallow grazing angles and large slant-ranges, jitter may cause each spot to move hundreds of feet in relation to the aim point and in relation to the previous spot location. In many cases (e.g., most self-designation LGB deliveries), this movement is near perpendicular to the weapon flight path and create false left-right commands. Therefore, as the weapon manoeuvres to intercept the moving spot, this factor may cause rapid depletion of the LGB available energy and may cause large miss distances to be generated.

3.5.2.3 Laser Boresight Error

Laser boresight error is defined as the misalignment between the location of the aiming reticle and the laser spot on the target. This error is easy to visualize as a geometric progression of the beam wandering away from the sensor sight line as the range increases. Boresight error is not only a static error source but

can be a dynamic error as well. The system optical bench may distort, changing the designator/sensor boresight relation as the system is slewed through its field of regard. In addition, manoeuvring (g forces) may cause additional shifts as the structure between the designator and sensor deflects under load. In some cases, particularly at long slant-ranges, boresight error can place the laser spot off the target, resulting in a weapon miss. If the magnitude of boresight error is known, however, the aimpoint can be shifted to compensate.

3.5.2.4 Laser Pointing Error

Laser pointing error is defined as the inability to place the laser spot at the exact desired location on the target. This is usually observed when trying to designate a small target from long ranges, where the reticle size can obscure the target. If the sensor magnification of the target is insufficient, it is difficult to know exactly where the aiming reticle is located on the target and, sometimes, it may be also difficult to know if it is on the target at all.

3.5.2.5 Tracking Error

Tracking error is a generic term that encompasses other forms of spot movement from the desired aim point. Where jitter is a random movement of the beam around a central axis, tracking error may be described as undesired movement of this central axis around or away from the aim point. This movement of the central beam axis may or may not be visible to the operator depending on the magnitude of the error and the quality of the sensor presentation to the operator. At long slant-ranges, automatic tracking systems can exhibit beam wander that overwhelms other sources of error. This wander is caused by movement of the video tracking gates on-or-about the aimpoint as the viewing aspect changes. The changing aspect or look angle produces changes in the aim point contrast with respect to its background. This, in turn, varies the location of the contrast driven tracking gate position with a consequent shift in beam position. Other causes for tracking error may include g forces (mentioned earlier), transient angle rate errors due to rapid bank angle changes, or momentary errors due to LOS masking. Motion of the laser spot during the last three seconds prior to impact may induce unnecessary corrections to the weapon flight and result in a miss.

3.5.3 Podium Effect

For an LGB to guide, the seeker must be in a position to receive the reflected laser energy. During a self-designation attack against a vertical target, there is a risk that the laser spot will move around the target face relative to the weapon LOS, as the designator aircraft flies the recovery manoeuvre, and that the weapon will not receive the reflected laser energy during the final critical moments before impact. This phenomena, known as the “podium effect”, is particularly apparent when the designator to target line is significantly different to that of the weapon’s flight path. To avoid the podium effect, the designating aircraft should maneuver such that the target face is always in front of the aircraft and that the appropriate terminal slant-range/angle occurs at weapon impact. This problem can often be eliminated by lasing on top of a horizontal target.

3.5.4 Beam Divergence and Reflected Power

Another effect of beam divergence is to reduce the maximum reflected power available to the weapon as the beam strikes the target off-axis. Figure 3-8 illustrates the laser spot shape and intensity versus various designation angles of incidence. The calculations assume a 100% diffuse surface, no atmospheric attenuation, and an illuminating beam with a *Gaussian* distribution.

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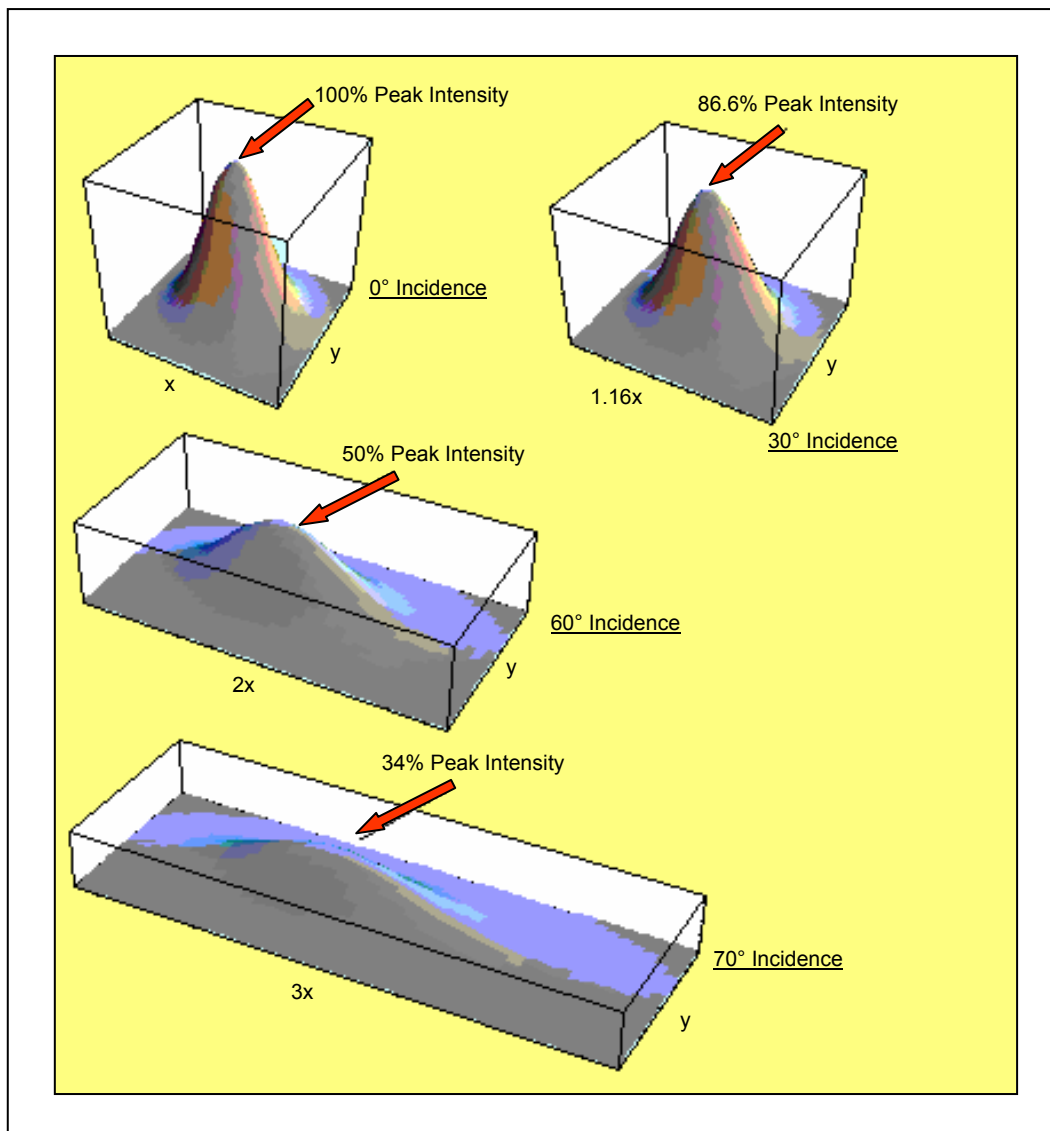


Figure 3-8: Laser Spot Intensity vs. Angle of Incidence.

3.5.5 Sensor Resolution

The size of the target must also be factored against the resolution abilities of the sensor element (FLIR and/or TV) to determine the maximum usable delivery slant-range. This will ensure that the operator will be able to resolve the target at a range that is in excess of the maximum range capability of the weapon. This excess or redundant range requirement is necessary to properly detect and then identify the target prior to weapon release. This target detection and identification requirement prior to release has become of almost paramount importance in punitive or other high visibility actions where the blind launches required by other weapon systems prevent their use.

As mentioned earlier, the maximum slant-range from which a designator is intended to be operated must be determined as part of the mission planning process as a function of target size, laser system error budget, and laser power. In addition, an attempt should be made to determine what additional range should be selected in order for the target to be properly identified prior to weapon release. This requires an estimate of the time required to first detect the target on the sensor set and then add the time required to

fully resolve the target for a positive identification. With current TV/FLIR technologies and good initial cueing, it is usually estimated that at least ten seconds are required to detect the target. Further five to ten seconds are then required to properly identify the target itself.

3.5.6 Airborne LTD/LGB Mission Geometry

Let us consider again the LTD/LGW attack geometry already described in Figure 3-1. With reference to this geometry, the maximum range performance of an LTD/LGB combination can be estimated using the Eq. (3.21), which we write again:

$$MDED = \frac{4\rho_T U A \cos\theta_i \cos\theta_r \cos\gamma_r \tau_{atm}}{\pi^2 (D_L + \alpha_T R_T)^2 R_R^2} \quad (3.71)$$

Conveniently, in Eq. (3.71), we have replaced the term $e^{-[\sigma_w(\alpha_{HR}R_T + \beta_{HR}R_R)]}$ (i.e., two-ways atmospheric transmittance) with the symbol τ_{atm} , and the returned energy density (I) with the Minimum Detectable Energy Density (MDED) of the LGB seeker-head unit.

There are three cosine factors in Eq. (3.71). They are related to the assumption of a *Lambertian* reflection (i.e., diffuse reflection of the laser signal incident on the target surface). It is important, in order to determine the performance of an LTD/LGW combination during an attack, to take into account the variations of the angles θ_i , θ_r and γ_r . On the other hand, in order to calculate the maximum range for an effective illumination in the worst geometric case, it is important to determine the maximum values assumed by these angles during the attack. Moreover, for mission planning purposes, it is useful to express the angles θ_i , θ_r and γ_r as functions of other physical or geometrical parameters that are known prior the mission (e.g., seeker FOV, target inclination). Using Eq. (3.76), the maximum theoretical value of the angle γ_r can be determined as a function of the seeker Minimum Detectable Energy Density (MDED). However, we must consider that the seeker of the LGW must always intercept a portion of the reflected signal sufficient to produce a response of the detector in order to guide the weapon against the target. In other words, the angle $\gamma_r(MDED)$ should always be greater than the FOV of the seeker (see Figure 3-9).

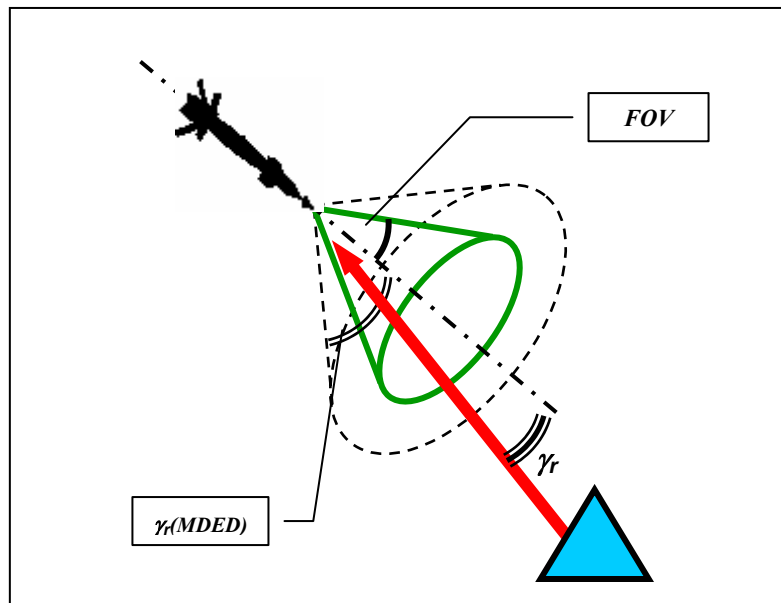


Figure 3-9: LGB-Target Geometry.

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Considering the geometry of typical ground attack missions with LGB, the angles θ_t (angle between the LOS transmitter-target and the normal to the target surface) and θ_r (angle between the LOS receiver-target and the normal to the target surface), can be expressed as function of other geometric parameters and their maximum theoretical values (corresponding to the minimum relative range performance) can be determined. With reference to Figure 3-2, the angles θ_t and θ_r can be expressed as:

$$\theta_t = i + \varphi_t - \frac{\pi}{2} \quad (3.72)$$

$$\theta_r = \frac{\pi}{2} - i - \varphi_r \quad (3.73)$$

where i is the target inclination, φ_t is the angle between the transmitted beam axis and the horizon and φ_r is the angle between the LGW-target LOS and the horizon ($\varphi_r = \varphi_t - \theta_t - \theta_r$). Knowing θ_d , α and γ , it is possible to determine the value of the angle θ_t during the attack, solving the equation:

$$\theta_t = i + \theta_d - \gamma + \alpha - \frac{\pi}{2} \quad (3.74)$$

More difficult is the determination of θ_r , since the angle φ_r can not be determined without knowing continuously the position assumed by the line of sight LGW-target (i.e., the guidance algorithms and corrected ballistics of the LGW). However, knowing the angle ε at the beginning of the designation (from the ballistics of the unguided weapon) and taking γ_r equivalent to the seeker FOV, we have that:

$$\varphi_r = \varepsilon \pm \gamma_{r(MAX)} = \varepsilon \pm FOV \quad (3.75)$$

Since it is reasonable to assume that, after the designation is initiated, the angle γ_r will be kept as low as possible by a PG-LGW, we can assume that $\varphi_r \approx \varepsilon$ in this case.

Therefore, the approximate value of the angle θ_r during an attack with PG-LGB and BTB-LGB, can be determined solving the equations:

$$\theta_r = 90^\circ - i - \varepsilon \text{ for PG-LGW} \quad (3.76)$$

$$\theta_r = 90^\circ - i - \varepsilon + FOV \text{ for BTB-LGW} \quad (3.77)$$

For the purpose of determining the maximum values that the angles θ_t and θ_r can reach during an attack, which determine the absolute minimum performance of a particular LTD/LGB combination (worst case), it is meaningful to take into account the tactics of typical self-designation attacks illustrated in Figure 3-10. Since the designation is initiated in the final portion of the bomb trajectory (i.e., with an LTD-target range typically between 1.2 and 2.0 times the release range), it is generally performed at a considerable range from the target. This means that, normally, the angles θ_t and θ_r never reach values close to 90° during an attack, even in the worst case when $i = 90^\circ$. On the other hand, in the case of horizontal target ($i = 0^\circ$), the cases where θ_t and θ_r are close to 90° are of little practical interest.

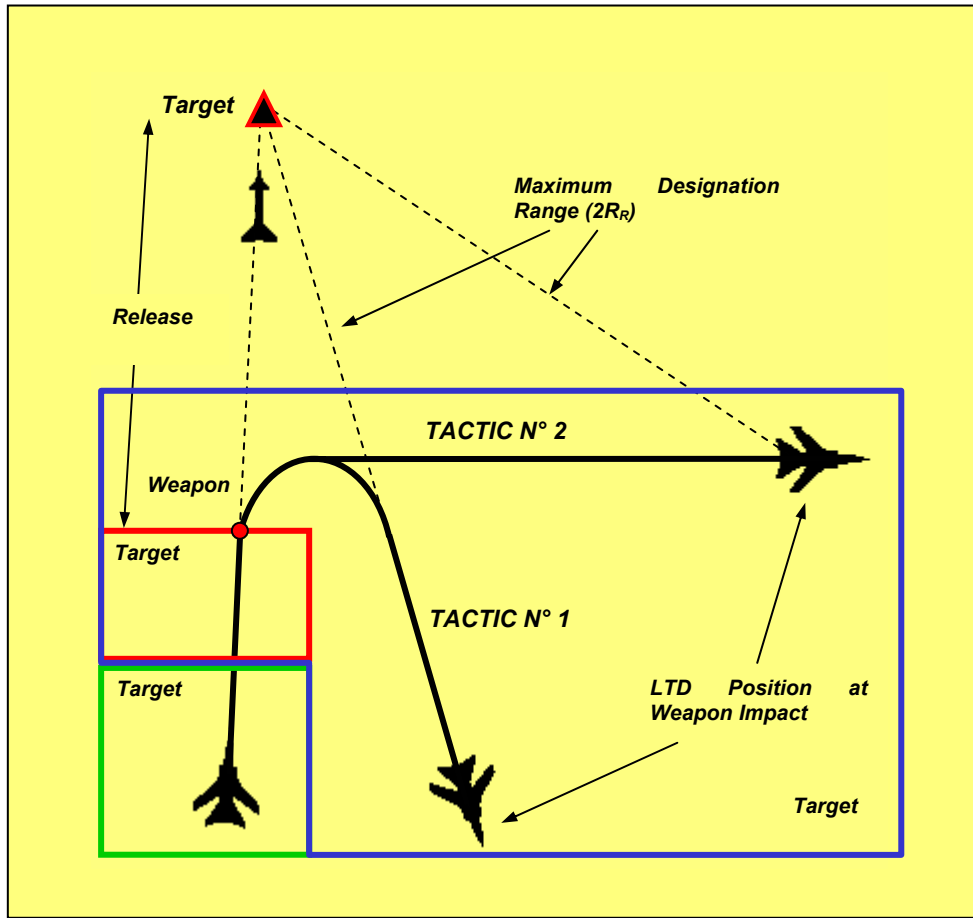


Figure 3-10: LTD/LGB Mission Horizontal Profiles (Self-Designation).

Looking at Figure 3-11, it appears evident that the angle θ_i is smaller than i when $i > 45^\circ$, while it is generally smaller than the complementary of i when $i < 45^\circ$. Similar considerations apply to θ_r . Therefore, with these assumptions, the worst case conditions for θ_i and θ_r are the following:

$$\begin{cases} \theta_{i(MAX)} = \frac{\pi}{2} - i \\ \theta_{r(MAX)} = \frac{\pi}{2} - i \end{cases} \text{ for } i < 45^\circ ; \begin{cases} \theta_{i(MAX)} = i \\ \theta_{r(MAX)} = i \end{cases} \text{ for } i \geq 45^\circ \quad (3.78)$$

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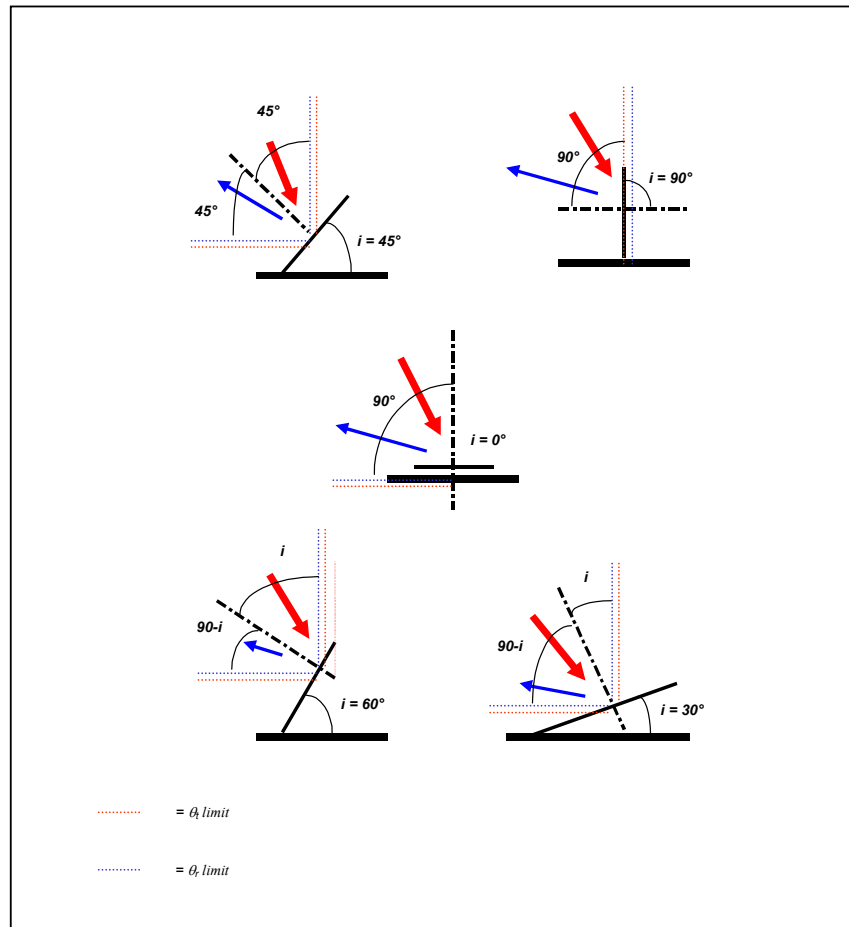


Figure 3-11: Limits of the Angles θ_r and θ .

3.5.7 LTD System Error Budget

As an example, we consider a LGB which can achieve a 10 feet Circular Error Probability (CEP). In this case, it is appropriate that the designator aiming capability must equal or exceed that requirement in order to meet a suitable weapon impact criteria. If a hardened shelter access cover, roughly 20 feet in diameter, is considered as a target in our example, this target dimension equates to a 10 feet CEP where 50 % of our hypothetical weapon releases should fall on the target face. Using Tactic 2 shown in Figure 3-10 against a vertical target, and choosing a desired release range (R_R) of 35,000 feet, it is necessary that our designator must be capable of keeping its beam on a 20 feet diameter target at a Terminal Slant-Range (TSR) of 70,000 feet. This equates to a total allowable Maximum Error Budget (EB_{max}) of 285 μ rad (20 ft / 70 Kft). We also assume that the target is designated at the corresponding terminal designation angle (Ψ) of 60° off of the line normal to the target face. This 60° offset reduces the gross error budget to approximately 143 μ rad ($EB_{max} \times \cos 60^\circ$). This means that all pointing and beam divergence error sources, when added in a worst case fashion, must fall within a cone that subtends 143 μ rad if 50% of our hypothetical weapons are to hit the 20 feet target mentioned above.

In the light of the above considerations, the maximum allowable error budget can be expressed as:

$$EB_{max} = \frac{T_s \cdot \cos \Psi}{TSR} \quad (3.79)$$

where T_S is the target size and TSR is the Terminal Slant-Range. Using Tactic 2 in Figure 3-10, the terminal slant-range can be expressed as:

$$TSR = \frac{R_R}{\cos \Psi} \quad (3.80)$$

3.5.8 Release Range

Given a fixed error budget and known designation tactic (e.g., Tactic 2), we can solve for the optimal release range:

$$R_R = \frac{T_S \cdot (\cos \Psi)^2}{EB_{max}} \quad (3.81)$$

Using for example a “worst case” error budget of 208 μ rad (given by the sum of all pointing error contributions), the optimal release range against a 20 feet target with a 60° terminal designation angle is approximately 24 Kft (i.e., not 35 Kft as originally desired). This example demonstrates that, in most cases with LGW, the engagement scenario is usually limited by designator and/or sensor capability, and not by the standoff capability of the weapon itself, particularly at extreme slant-ranges and/or low graze angles.

3.5.9 Maximum Egress Range

Due to the tracking error of the LTD system described above, a 600 kts ingress would require approximately 15 to 20 thousand feet of additional range over that of the desired release range. In other words, a 600 KTAS ingress to a 35,000 foot release point would require a detection range of over 50,000 to 55,000 feet. However, both designation and sensor capabilities should be geared toward the egress side of the picture.

During egress, the designator aircraft would desirably turn to a heading that provides maximum standoff and yet provide a flight path that will stay within designator constraints up until weapon impact. With reference to Figure 3-10 (showing two possible tactics that might be used), Tactic 1 is probably the most desirable in terms of standoff, however, it requires a designator with full hemispheric coverage below the aircraft for high altitude delivery or full coverage above the aircraft for low altitude deliveries. Tactic 2 shows a probable tactic that could be used when a rear gimbal limit has been placed on the LTD aiming system. While standoff is probably acceptable, a major constraint then becomes the look angle at a vertical target face from the LTD perspective (“Podium Effect”). As the designator proceeds outbound after weapon release, the perceived horizontal dimension of the target decreases by up to 50 percent (for an optimum attack heading). Where the attack heading is constrained and an optimum attack solution is not available, the off axis perspective may reduce one target dimension by another 20%.

Ordinarily, as in both of the above cases, the range attained during egress is normally greater than the ingress range required for detection. For present LGB weapons, the range during egress at weapon impact time typically varies from approximately 1.2 to 2.0 times the release range. This ratio shifts towards 2.0 as standoff is increased towards maximum range. For the example given earlier, the designator aircraft would be at a slant-range of between 42,000 and 70,000 feet at weapon impact.

3.5.10 Masking

Another important problem with airborne laser systems is “masking” of the equipment field of regard caused by the aircraft structure and loads (e.g., weapons, external tanks). Although masking can be reduced/eliminated by a careful aircraft/system design in the case of embedded systems, this is generally a very important constraint for operations with podded systems (e.g., the CLDP integrated on the Italian TORNADO-IDS). A useful way of characterising systems masking characteristics is the so called “Masking

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Matrix". This is a Cartesian co-ordinate system in which (most conveniently) azimuth and elevation are plotted for the equivalent FOV of the system. This is given by intersection of the system "visibility matrix" and the "aircraft matrix" (e.g., an aircraft/loads CAD model). For the airborne LTD system in service with the Italian Air Force (CLDP), the system masking is essentially given by a backward cone with an aperture of 30° and 20° , for the IR and TV front sections respectively (Figure 3-12).

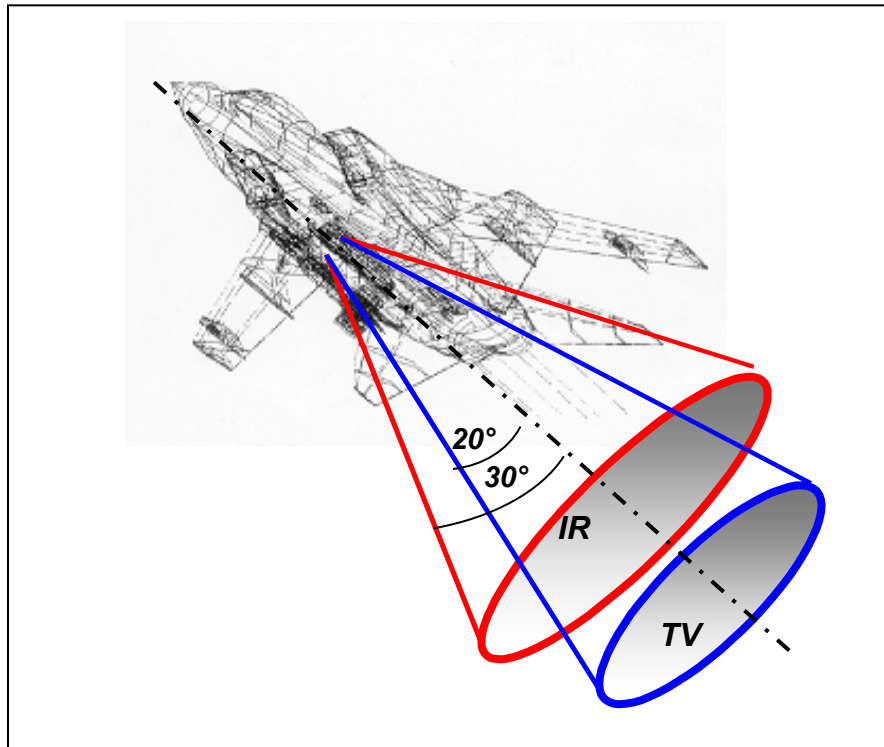


Figure 3-12: CLDP FOV Limitations (TV and IR).

During the CLDP integration on TORNADO-IDS, analysis was required in order to fully characterise the masking phenomenon and obtain the related mathematical model to be used by the aircraft MC for CLDP inhibition during impingement.

The initial TORNADO-IDS masking model (developed by ALENIA) was obtained through a computer CAD simulation, that consisted in defining the aircraft shape with different external stores configurations. As a result of the analysis/simulation, the proposed masking function logic was defined (Figure 3-13).

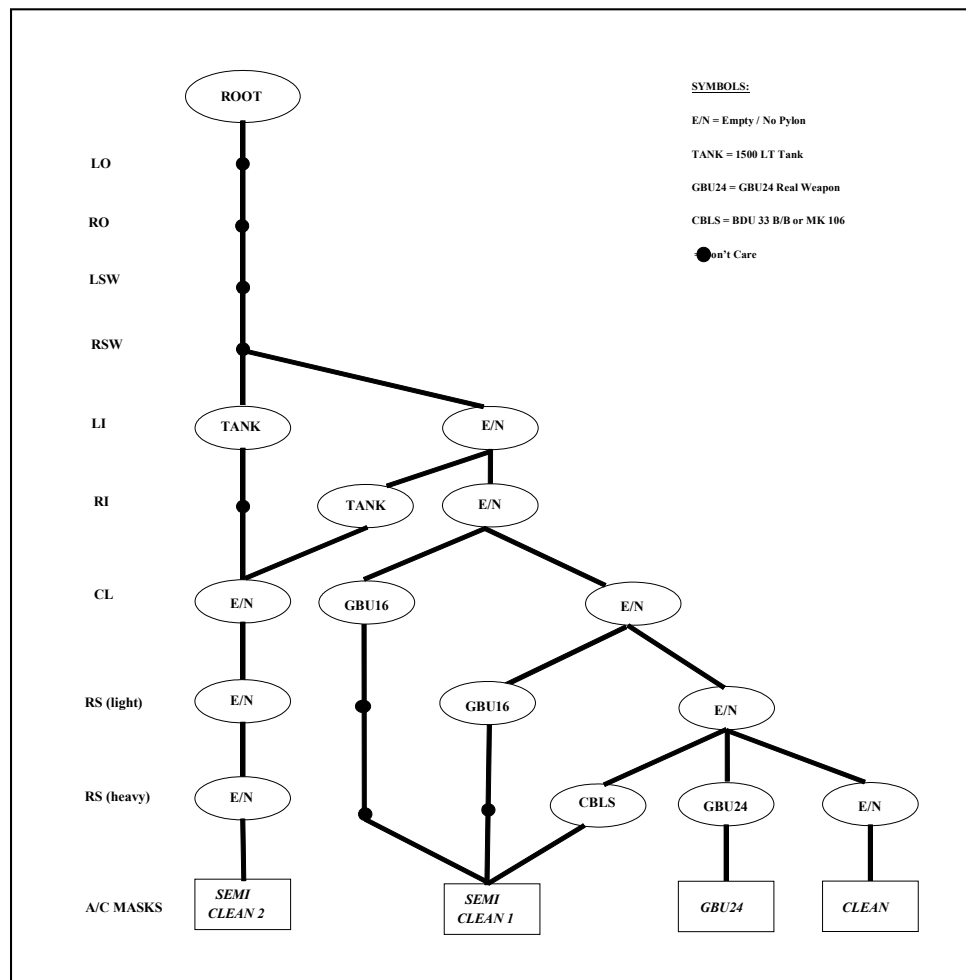


Figure 3-13: CLDP Masking Selection Logic.

Particularly, the aircraft “masking function” was conceived in order to manage the basic real GBU-16 and GBU-24 Stores Configurations (“worst case” masking profile) and their derived sub-configurations (i.e., semi-clean and clean), providing appropriate aural/visual warning to the pilot/WSO and inhibition commands to the CLDP laser in case of LOS impingement with aircraft and stores. Furthermore, a “pre-masking” function was implemented in order to provide aural/visual advice to the pilot/WSO in case of approximation to the masking conditions.

The validity of the solutions developed for masking/attack profiles and Laser illumination phase, was verified through simulation and flight tests (jointly by ALENIA and the Italian Air Force). The developed simulation tool, fitted with the suitable problem oriented routines, allowed the exploration of the system behaviour under the influence of a large number of parameters. Particularly, simulation was used to monitoring the LOS components (Azimuth and Elevation) in an Hammer/Aitoff diagram where mask and pre-mask conditions were plotted.

The trajectory of the LOS, marked in time between the bomb release and impact, gave an immediate understanding about the effect of the aircraft manoeuvre on the LOS pointing direction. By varying the aircraft manoeuvre parameters (i.e., turning direction, turning load factor, roll rate, and egress heading), the LOS trajectory gave an indication on the critical conditions that could arise with the chosen parameters.

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The basic software tool was composed by an aircraft mathematical dynamics model, based on the classical equations set, used in conjunction with a simplified aircraft data bank containing the main TORNADO-IDS characteristics. The aircraft model was provided with a simplified autopilot able to maintain flight path parameters (i.e., height, velocity and heading) aimed at performing automatic attack manoeuvres (e.g., turns, climbs, dives), used during the evaluation phase.

Furthermore, a simplified program that simulated the LGB ballistic trajectory was used. This code run as a stand alone task and was used to compute in advance range and time of flight of the bomb for the chosen release conditions. These data were then loaded into the simulator memory to command the post weapon delivery manoeuvre.

Flight test activities performed by ALENIA and the Italian Air Force Official Flight Test Centre (RSV), permitted to finally tune and validate the masking and pre-masking algorithms [15]. Particularly, tests were conducted in selected portions of the operational flight envelopes, representative of real LTD/LGB attack missions and of the boundary conditions for activation of the masking and pre-masking functions.

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Chapter 4 – PILASTER GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the requirements for upgrading the PISQ (Poligono Interforze del Salto di Quirra – Sardinia, Italy), adding new facilities for carrying out safe training and experimental activities using the ground and airborne laser systems already in service or under test with the Italian Air Force (ItAF), and installed on its tactical aircraft (TORNADO-IDS, AM-X, Eurofighter TYPHOON, etc.) and helicopters (AB-212, AB-412, NH-90, etc.). Other national or international customers will be allowed to use the new facilities on case-by-case basis and according to agreements, memorandums of understanding or international co-operation agreements in force at the time concerned. The ItAF research and development program aiming to the PISQ facilities upgrade for laser test and training activities, is herein identified as PISQ LASer Test and Tactical Evaluation Range program (PILASTER program). According to the program requirements, the PILASTER facilities have grown modularly in two different phases. The aim of the first phase of the program (1999 – 2002) was to provide an initial operational capability for carrying out, in fully safe conditions, ground tests and flight experimental activities (with related measurements and data analysis), required for performance evaluation of military laser systems. The successive phase of the program (still ongoing) is aimed to implementing the PILASTER full operational capability, required for performing all required laser test and training activities (2002 – 2004).

In this chapter, the laser range concept of operation is described and the general requirements set in 1998 for the PILASTER program are presented. More information about the PILASTER range design and technical characteristics, progressively refined during the various implementation stages of the program, are given in Chapter 5.

4.2 PILASTER CONCEPT OF OPERATION

The PILASTER concept of operation is depicted in Figure 4-1. The on-board operator of a training/experimental aircraft aims the Airborne Laser Target Designator (ALTD) system at the centre of a co-operating target. A Laser Safety Officer (LSO), located in the PISQ Control Centre (PCC) building, verifies that the laser Armament is aimed at the proper target and (for laser designators) the target lock-on status has been achieved. For this purpose, a real-time video link (video telemetry ground unit) is available between the aircraft and the PCC for safe operations. The LSO then authorises activation of the laser system. Should the video link be unavailable, as in the case of a Ground Laser Target Designator (GLTD) system operated from a ground Forward Air Controller (FAC) or a training aircraft not equipped with the video telemetry unit, the LSO may authorise the laser activation upon receiving confirmation (via voice link) that the planned target has been unambiguously recognised and aimed to by the aircraft Pilot/Weapon Systems Operator (WSO) or by the ground FAC.

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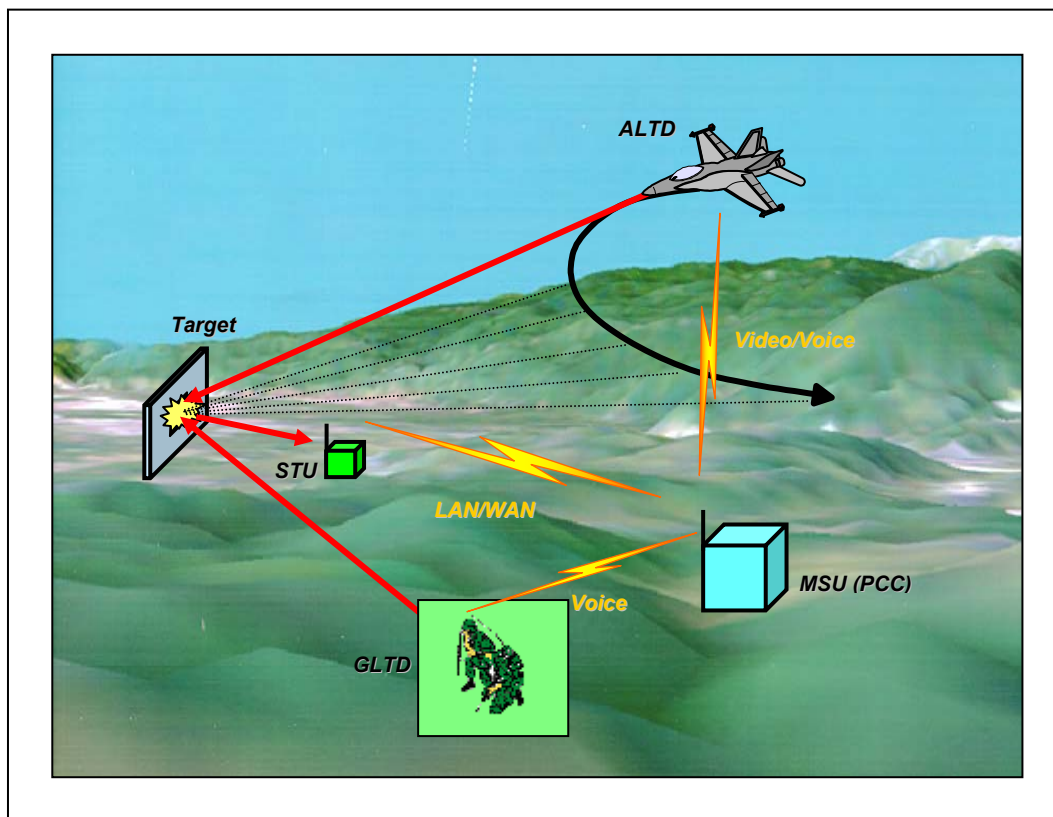


Figure 4-1: PILASTER Concept of Operation.

The Sensor Tracking and Measurement Unit (STU) detects the laser spot spatial energy distribution, calculating the spot centroid as well as its position with respect to the target centre (global pointing error). The captured laser spots, as well as the others applicable measurements, are recorded on a magnetic support.

During laser activation, the STU sends to the PILASTER Monitoring and Control Station Unit (MSU), located at the PCC, the laser spot parameters (dimension and position with respect to the target centre). These parameters are represented on the MSU display to allow the Safety Officer to supervise the operations. When the laser spot approaches the target peripheral zones and the LSO believes there is a possibility for the laser spot to fall outside the target itself, he might order the WSO/FAC to deactivate the laser (through the voice link).

4.2.1 PILASTER Training Activities

Training with both self-designation and co-operative attacks shall be possible, both by laser guided inert bomb releasing and by simulated attack. These types of missions are described in the following subparagraphs.

4.2.1.1 Training by Real LGB Releasing

In self-designation attacks, the aircraft follows the flight plans up to the optimal estimated release point, and then releases the inert Laser Guided Bomb (LGB). Then, it performs the escape manoeuvre, activating the airborne laser designator at a proper time. In co-operative attacks (two aircraft with a “spiker” and a “bomber”), the bomber releases the weapon and the spiker aircraft performs illumination as required for an effective guidance on the designated target. During this type of attack, both aircraft manoeuvre as required by the planned training tactics. In both self-designation and co-operative attacks with inert bomb

delivery, the STU starts measuring and recording the laser spot applicable parameters (e.g., spot centroid, time of laser activation, time of laser deactivation).

Measurement of the attack radial error is done by detecting the target/ground impact point of the laser-guided bomb. Consequently, one (or more) high-speed digital TV camera(s) shall be used at the STU to collect images of a relevant volume around the target. TV camera(s) frames shall be recorded as well for analysis purposes.

4.2.1.2 Training by Simulated Attack

In simulated self-designation attacks, the aircrew follows the flight plans up to the optimal estimated release point, and then simulates the release itself, manoeuvring as if it had occurred. At the required time, the pilot/WSO performs target illumination. In co-operative simulated attacks (“spiker” and “bomber” aircraft), the spiker aircraft performs illumination as required and both bomber and spiker aircraft manoeuvre following the planned training tactics. For both self-designation and co-operative attacks, the following information shall be supplied to the MSU (in the PCC).

- 1) During the entire attack, the aircraft (self-designation) or the bomber/spiker (co-operative) flight parameters up to the instant of release, from an available Data-link, the PISQ Radars/Cinetheodolites (filtered or automated) or other TSPI systems (e.g., GPS/INS or DGPS/INS).
- 2) At the instant of simulated release, with a Synchronous Signal (SRTOA), from an available Data-link or manually from a PCC operator (using the Voice-link with the aircrew).
- 3) After the simulated release, with the Laser Activation Time Signal (LATOA), marking the beginning of the laser designation, and the detected laser spot parameters until designation is completed (planned designation time). The LATOA signal will be supplied either by the available Data-link or by means of the Voice-link with the aircrew/FAC. Should the laser spot on the target be undetected by the STU sensors (when expected to be on the target), a warning signal shall be sent to the PCC, allowing the LSO to order the immediate laser deactivation (emergency procedure). In both normal and emergency procedures, the time of laser deactivation (LDTOA) shall be supplied, with similar modalities (Data-link/Voice-Link), and confirmed as well by the STU sensors.
- 4) Before mission is initiated, with the relevant atmospheric parameters in the area of operations (visibility, relative humidity, air temperature, wind speed/direction, etc.) and target parameters (reflectivity, geometry, etc.).

The MSU then calculates the optimal “Bomb Release Corridor” (BRC) taking into account the bomber flight parameters and gives an output of the computed errors in quasi-real-time (i.e., before the beginning of a new releasing exercise, within 1 minute) if Data-link is available, or in deferred time (i.e., post-mission analysis performed using the data of all releasing exercises done) if Data-link is unavailable.

The training crew(s) will be supplied, in quasi-real or deferred time (according to the previous statement), with the information listed below.

- **Self Designation Attacks**

- a) The calculated optimal time of release (and the difference with the real one), keeping fixed all flight parameters, taking into account the designation time and STU detected laser spot characteristics (on target).
- b) The calculated optimal aircraft speed (ground speed) at the simulated time of release (and the difference with the real one), keeping fixed all the other flight and designation parameters.

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- c) The calculated optimal aircraft designation time and range envelope (distances from the target outside the simulated target lethal-range but within the maximum range for an effective designation) and the differences with the real designation time and profile.
- **Co-operative Attacks (Bomber-Spiker Aircraft)**
 - a) The calculated optimal time of release (and the difference with the real one), taking into account the spiker designation time and STU detected laser spot characteristics (on target), keeping fixed all flight parameters of both spiker and bomber aircraft.
 - b) The calculated optimal bomber aircraft speed (ground speed) at the simulated time of release (and the difference with the real one), keeping fixed all the other (spiker/bomber) flight parameters and designation parameters.
 - c) The calculated optimal spiker aircraft designation time and range envelope (distances from the target outside the simulated target lethal-range but within the maximum range for an effective designation) and the differences with the real designation time and profile.
- **Co-operative Attacks (Bomber-FAC)**
 - a) The calculated optimal time of release (and the difference with the real one), taking into account the GLTD designation time and STU detected laser spot characteristics (on target), keeping fixed all bomber flight parameters.
 - b) The calculated optimal bomber aircraft speed (ground speed) at the simulated time of release (and the difference with the real one), keeping fixed all the other flight parameters and GLTD designation parameters.
 - c) The calculated optimal designation time and the difference with the real designation time, using the aircraft flight parameters during the simulated release.

4.2.2 Experimental Activities

The PILASTER shall allow measurement of the applicable laser spot parameters, such as the laser spot dimensions, energy distribution and centroid position, laser spot quality, atmospheric extinction measurements, and code-signal measurements (on target).

4.3 PILASTER COMPOSITION

Unless otherwise specified, all the components of PILASTER will comply with all applicable systems and laser safety standards approved by the ItAF [1]-[26]. The PILASTER shall be fully operational with the present generation laser systems and armaments. Furthermore, its design shall be modular and expandable in order to allow future upgrades which may become necessary for test/training operations with next generation laser systems and armaments.

According to the general description and concept of operation previously illustrated, the PILASTER will be composed by the following main systems:

- Modular Target(s) for Real Attacks (Weapon Deliveries);
- Permanent Target(s) for Simulated Attacks (No Weapon Deliveries);
- Standing/Mobile Laser Sensor and Tracking Unit(s) (STU);
- Monitoring Control and Display Station Unit (MSU);
- LAN/WAN (between MSU and STU);

- Video Link (Aircraft to MSU); and
- Voice Link (V/UHF radio communications).

Furthermore, the use of a Bi-directional Data-link (MSU-Aircraft), and Encryption/Description of the Video Link, are considered as growth options for future PILASTER upgrade programs.

4.3.1 Targets

In order to fulfil the various test/training mission requirements, the following different kinds of targets are envisaged:

- **Fast-Recoverable Target(s):** This type of target (FRCT) shall be used for the effective laser-guided inert bomb releasing, and shall have a goal Mean Time To Repair (MTTR) of 1 hour.
- **Fixed Target(s):** This type of target (FXDT) shall be used for simulated laser-guided bomb releasing.
- **Destroyable Target(s):** This target (DEST) shall simulate a tactical target, and shall be used for releasing laser-guided weapons with their normal (or reduced) warhead explosive charges.
- **IR Reference Target(s):** Using this target (IREF), the Minimum Resolvable Temperature Differences (MRTD) and Spatial Frequencies (corresponding to various 2-D discrimination levels), can be determined for the FLIR systems integrated with airborne laser systems.
- **Acquisition Training Target(s):** This kind of target (ATGT) shall simulate a tactical target for acquisition training (shelter, tank, bridge, etc.).

The FRCT and FXDT targets are considered **essential**, and will be implemented since the first phases of the PILASTER program. The DEST, IREF and ATGT targets are considered as **growth options**. Both the FRCT and FXDT will have a dimension of approximately $10 \times 10 \text{ m}^2$ in order to be extended for the majority of laser systems (ground and airborne) currently in service, at most ranges and grazing angles of practical interest. Furthermore, they will be painted with a highly diffusive paint of known reflection properties (i.e., reflectance and BRDF), in order to allow STU spot energy measurements. The DEST and ATGT targets shall have dimensions and shapes appropriate to simulate real targets and to perform real-time (in flight) and post-mission damage-assessment (DEST). The IREF target shall be a standard IR multiple bars target, whose bars shall be heated at precisely tuneable temperature differences (ΔT) with respect to the background.

4.3.2 Sensor Tracking and Measurement Unit

The STU shall be positioned nearby the targets. A hardened location (e.g., a little bunker) will be constructed nearby the FRCT and DEST targets. The STU shall be composed by the following elements:

- IR and TV Cameras;
- Detector Arrays and Processing Units (to be placed on the FXDT target only);
- Recording Systems;
- Computer System(s) with Windows NT or other operating system; and
- Data Acquisition and Processing Application Software.

The STU shall calculate the position of the laser spot energy centroid with respect to the target centre. A representation of this position within the target shall be supplied in real-time to the MSU. The STU will also determine and record the laser spot geometric dimensions on the target.

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Using the FXDT detectors array, the STU shall also provide laser energy measurements (on the target) and therefore allow, in post-processing, atmospheric extinction determination (by comparison with the known aircraft/system co-ordinates). Furthermore, the FXDT detectors will allow PRF measurements for pulsed laser systems. All these measurements will allow to verify the impact of atmospheric and operational mission parameters on systems effectiveness.

The STU shall be capable of analysing, in the first development phases, 1.064 μm wavelength lasers (NIR) and shall be extensible, in successive phases, to analyse additional laser systems, such as the Near Infrared (NIR) 1.54 – 1.55 μm eye-safe lasers, Mid-Infrared (MIR) and Far-Infrared (FIR) lasers.

4.3.3 Monitoring and Control Station Unit

The MSU shall be installed in the PCC building. The MSU receives the data from the STU and shows, on dedicated displays, the laser spot on the target and the video signal received from the aircraft (Video-link). Particularly, the MSU shall be capable of:

- Showing, simultaneously on the same display, the data output coming from at least two different STU positions;
- Providing aural/visual warnings to the LSO when the expected laser signal is not detected by the STU; and
- Showing in real-time the video signal received from the aircraft (Video-link), on a dedicated display.

The MSU shall be designed to add, in successive development phases, the possibility of automatically deactivating the on board laser armament, when critical safety conditions are detected. The MSU shall be basically composed of:

- A computer based workstation with a powerful CPU, high-speed graphic and recording capabilities (adequate RAM and internal/external mass memory devices), analogue and digital I/O and LAN/WAN interfaces;
- A Video-link ground unit;
- A Voice-link (V/UHF radio); and
- A Data-link ground unit (growth option).

4.3.4 LAN/WAN Networks

The PISQ shall be provided with local or wireless area networks (LAN/WAN) for interconnecting the STU and the MSU. The choice and combination of LAN/WAN networks shall be suitable for a correct operability of the PILASTER systems from the available STU/MSU locations.

4.3.5 Meteorological Sensors

In order to perform measurements of the relevant meteorological parameters, the PILASTER range must employ two meteorological stations, both equipped with the sensors necessary for accurate measurements, during test/training missions, of temperature (T), pressure (QHN), wind speed (W_s), relative humidity (RH), rainfall rate ($\Delta x/\Delta t$), and turbulence structure constant (C_n). Each of the two groups of sensors will be mounted on a tower with height adjustable between 0 and 8 metres. For trials/training activities with ground laser systems, the sensors towers will be placed at the target and laser system locations, and all data relative to the two locations will be gathered and recorded at the meteorological stations. During trials/training missions with airborne laser systems, only the data relative to the relevant target(s) location(s) will be recorded. All collected meteorological data will be used for post-mission analysis of laser beam atmospheric propagation performance.

4.3.6 Video Link

The PILASTER will be provided with a Real-time Video Link from the aircraft to the MSU, to allow Safety and Trial Officers (in the PCC) to monitor and control the whole laser test/training operations. Particularly, the laser system video signal (also available to the on-board operator) must be sent to the ground MSU.

Two functional blocks shall be considered: an On-board Unit, to be installed on the training/experimental aircraft, and a Ground Unit, to be installed in the PCC and interfacing with the MSU. Provision for additional encryption/decryption modules for the video signals should be also incorporated in the system.

4.3.7 Voice Link

The Voice Link between the aircraft and the MSU will be provided by installing a V/UHF radio communication system (including the relevant antenna and control panel) at the PCC. The system shall be fully compatible with radio-communication systems currently installed or expected to be installed on-board aircraft.

4.3.8 Data Link

The Data Link is only considered as an option (growth potential) for the PILASTER. If implemented, it can be used to perform the following functions:

- a) To maximise laser safety, the MSU may have the capability of controlling the laser armament's key-data signals, such as the *Laser ON*, *Track Mode*, *Lock-On* or *Track Lost* signals. For this purpose, the MSU shall be capable of integrating additional HW/SW modules for analysing in real time the 1553/1760 or other Data Bus messages exchanged between the laser system and the on-board mission computer via Data Link (LINK-16 or other).
- b) To perform a real-time attack simulation (self-designation or co-operative), the MSU shall have the capability of acquiring in real-time the significant flight parameters, by reading the applicable bus messages (MIL-STD-1553 or other avionic bus). In order to provide the crew(s) with quasi real-time feedback during simulated attacks, the relevant MSU outputs can be also sent to the aircraft.

4.4 OTHER REQUIREMENTS

A feasibility study has to be carried out in order to investigate the possibility of using the cinetheodolite (CITE) systems presently available at PISQ (non-automatic systems), by filtering the operator-telescopes from the laser radiation that might reach the eyes of the systems operators, or by using automatic systems and/or visible cameras applied at the current CITE systems oculars (to avoid any operator injury risk). Analysis will be carried out to specify the optimal solution (e.g., determination of the optical density for the protective filters, or modification of the CITE systems optics design using visible cameras).

As an alternative to the current CITE, automatic CITE systems, Differential GPS (DGPS), Analog/Digital Translators, or Integrated (D)GPS/INS systems may be used (for both aircraft and weapon tracking). The final solution shall be selected balancing cost-effectiveness and minimising the related requirements in terms of aircraft/weapon and ground installations.

4.5 GROWTH POTENTIALS

As already mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the PILASTER systems shall be designed to respond, at successive stages, to the following additional needs:

- ***Video Link Encryption*** (On-board Module) and ***Video Link Decryption*** (Ground Module).

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- **Use of a DATA LINK**, to allow the real-time availability of the status words of the laser systems. This will allow *Real-time Simulation* of bomb releasing and *Improved Laser Safety* by monitoring at the MSU the Laser Armed, Target Lock-on (active or lost) and other significant signal status, in connection with the laser spot parameters measured by the STU (and transmitted to the MSU). Particularly, using a Data-link, Automatic deactivation of the laser firing is foreseen as a feasible growth option. The MSU may in fact be capable of automatically deactivating the laser firing, according to the tracking status (active or lost) when the STU detects a possibility for the laser beam to fall outside the target. For this purpose, a Laser De-Activation (LDAC) signal may be generated. This signal, sent to the aircraft by means of the bi-directional link, will set off the Laser Arm signal by means of an encoded-remote-controlled relay circuitry.
- **Upgrades for New Laser Systems:** The STU shall have the possibility of extending the measurement capability to wavelengths other than 1.064 μm , such as the 1.54 – 1.55 μm lasers, and MIR/FIR lasers.
- **Construction of Additional Targets**, such as Destroyable Targets (DEST), IR Reference Targets (IREF) and Acquisition Training Targets (ATGT).

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PILASTER GENERAL REQUIREMENTS



Chapter 5 – PILASTER SYSTEMS DESIGN

5.1 GENERAL

An important achievement of this research was the design, and initial construction/testing of the PILASTER Sensor Tracking and Measurement Unit (STU) and Monitoring and Control Station Unit (MSU). In the following, the STU/MSU combination will be denoted PILASTER Laser Tracking and Monitoring System (LTM).

The PILASTER LTM system allows accurate measurement on the ground (i.e., target location) of various important laser parameters (beam pointing accuracy, energy received at the target location, spot geometry on the target, etc.), display at a remote location (i.e., control room) of the information required for real-time eye-safety and test/training missions management, and recording (both at the STU and MSU locations) of the relevant information.

During this research, the architecture of the LTM system was progressively refined, based on sensors/systems test results and additional monitoring station (control room) requirements. Furthermore, the PILASTER permanent and modular targets were constructed, after various design calculations and performing field tests with prototype targets and target modules (useful guidelines for the target maintenance/reconstruction during real test/training missions were also identified). This chapter presents the current status of the PILASTER development, with results of the main design activities performed.

5.2 PILASTER LTM DESIGN

As illustrated in Chapter 4, the PILASTER LTM system is composed by the Sensor Tracking and Measurement Unit (STU) located in the vicinity of the target, and the Monitoring and Control Station Unit (MSU) located in the remote control room (PCC). This architecture approach was dictated by eye-safety and operational considerations. In fact, the sensor unit must be placed in the vicinity of the illuminated target to perform its functions (i.e., within the “Buffer Zone” for non-eye safe systems), where all unprotected personnel has to be evacuated. Furthermore, in general, it should be possible to perform “laser attacks” with both “dummy” or reduced-warhead weapons (hard targets), and the real-time availability of the “spot-on-target” information at the control room enhances the Laser Safety Officer (LSO) situation awareness and, in the case of test missions, gives to the Trial Officer (TO) an immediate perception of the laser LOS stability and a way of promptly verifying the success of the various test runs being performed, therefore increasing the probability of overall test mission success.

5.2.1 PILASTER LTM Architecture and Functions

According to the operational requirements described in Chapter 4, the PILASTER LTM main functions (already implemented) are the following:

- Measuring the pointing accuracy of LTD/LRF systems, using reference ground targets;
- Measuring the temporal power distribution of the laser footprint on the target;
- Measuring the laser spot geometry on the target;
- Processing the above measurements, transmitting the results via LAN/WAN, and displaying the data in real-time at the control room; and
- Recording all measurements, together with the relative time tags, in order to allow post-mission visualisation and plotting of the data.

PILASTER SYSTEMS DESIGN

Essential to the LTM design was the definition of the size and location of the targets. The STU is a fixed or mobile unit, to be placed at a distance of 100 m from the FRCT and FXDT targets (these targets have a dimension of approximately $10 \times 10 \text{ m}^2$ in order to be extended for the majority of laser systems currently in service, at ranges and grazing angles of practical interest). The STU employ a data-link for sending in real-time all information required to the MSU. The distance and relative displacement of the STU and MSU is optimised in order to guarantee a minimum number of RF repeaters.

Once the Weapon System Operator (WSO) on board the aircraft initialises the LTD firing procedure, a portion of the designated target is illuminated (i.e., a function of the beam output diameter/divergence and aircraft-target distance). The STU tracks the laser spot on the target (NIR cameras) and records the relevant spot frames. At the same time, for each spot, the data relative to the incident laser radiance are collected, and the energy centroids of the laser spots are determined and recorded. Similarly, the spots geometric centres are determined and recorded.

The STU will also determine and record the laser spot effective dimensions on the target (allowing an estimation of the effective laser beam divergence, using the aircraft/system trajectory data), and compute various parameters for charactering the degree of distortion of the laser spot.

Using Arrays of Detectors (DEAs) installed on the FXDT target, the STU also provides laser energy measurements on the target and therefore allows, in post-processing, atmospheric extinction determination for both airborne and ground laser systems (by using the known aircraft/system positioning data). Furthermore, the FXDT detectors allow time laser signal measurements for CW and pulsed systems (pulse duration $P_D \geq 2 \text{ ns}$ and PRF = $1 \div 100 \text{ Hz}$). These features allow to verify the impact of atmospheric and geometric mission parameters on system effectiveness.

The STU is currently capable of analysing laser signals at $1.064 \text{ }\mu\text{m}$ and $1.54/1.55 \text{ }\mu\text{m}$ wavelengths and will be capable, in future upgraded versions, to analyse signals from other sources, such as the $10.6 \text{ }\mu\text{m}$ CO_2 lasers.

Real-time aircraft trajectory data are currently obtained using the tracking radars operating at the PILASTER range, and presented the PCC. More Accurate positioning data, relative to both the aircraft and the LGW, are obtained in post-processing using cinetheodolites (existing CITE with filtered optical sights and/or automatic CITE systems) and/or Differential GPS (DGPS).

5.2.1.1 PILASTER Sensor and Tracking Unit

The general architecture of the PILASTER STU is shown in Figure 5-1. The STU electro-optical sensors include an Array of Detectors (DEA) for direct energy/signal measurements on the target, two IR cameras (one for real-time spot monitoring and one for post-processing laser spot analysis) and a TV camera (for LGW impact data collection). The computer units perform the following functions:

- STU configuration control;
- Acquisition, processing and recording of the IR/TV cameras raw data (i.e., digital images); and
- Data exchange, via LAN/WAN, with the MSU.

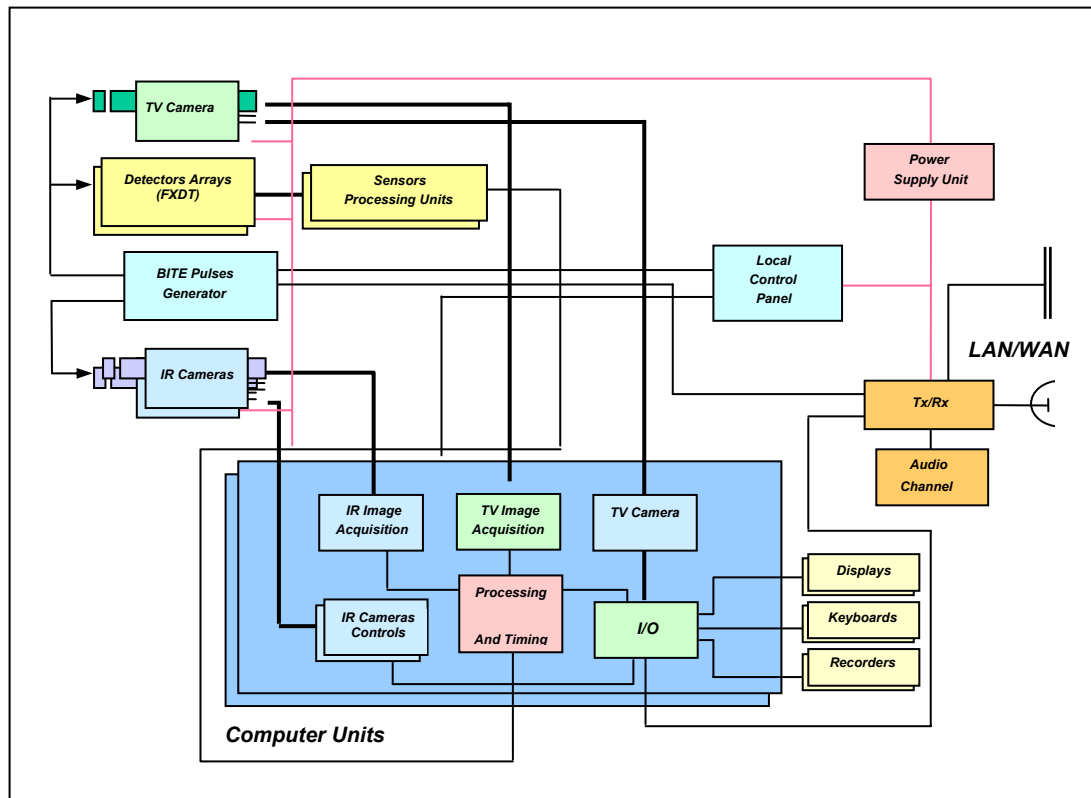


Figure 5-1: PILASTER STU Architecture.

The BITE pulse generator, commanded by the local control panel or by a remote MSU operator (via LAN/WAN) is activated in the system BITE MODE. The audio channel is available for communications with the MSU during the STU location and calibration phase.

After calibration has been performed, the STU can work as an automatic unit, executing the commands received from the MSU. For certain specific locations of the STU in the test range (6 possible and 2 existing FXDT/FRCT locations), a permanent hard-wired link (fibre-optics cables connected to the PISQ existing network) has been adopted for data exchange and communications with the MSU. The power supply unit generates all stabilised low voltages required by the other units.

In the operational mode (OPR MODE) of the LTM (see Section 5.2.2), the FXDT DEA's detect the laser spot on the target and their Processing Units (DPUs) measure the temporal and energetic characteristics of the laser signals incident to each detector. The Synchronisation Module (SYM) generates the "time label" used to synchronise the TV/IR cameras images and the DEA measurements.

The TV and IR cameras acquire the target and laser spot images, and send the video signals to their respective Frame Grabbers (FRGs). The FRGs convert the video signals into a digital format, associate to the converted signals the relative "time labels", and send the labelled digital signals to the computer processors. The computer units process the frame grabbers and DPU outputs and associates synchronised DEA measurements to each IR frame (post-processing IR camera), and a TV frame to each IR frame (real-time IR camera). The real-time IR camera and TV camera images can be viewed by an operator at the STU (e.g., during the initial installation/calibration of the STU) through a computer monitor.

During the mission, the raw data (the valid images acquired with relative time labels, the frequency data, etc.) are processed at the STU to obtain the required outputs. Both the raw and the final data are then recorded in the computers mass memories and also downloaded to external memory devices.

5.2.1.2 PILASTER Monitoring and Control Station Unit

The diagram illustrates the MSU Computer system architecture. At the center is the **MSU Computer**, which contains a **System Display** and a **Target Display**. It is connected to various external components:

- Input/Output and Navigation:** GPS Rx, Diff. Correct., FTI Receiver, and a Data Link (dashed box) are connected to the top of the MSU Computer. A V/UHF Radio is connected to the bottom right.
- Display and Control:** PILASTER Display, Target Display, Keyboard, Recorder, Printer, and Hand-controls are connected to the left side of the MSU Computer.
- Communication and Data:** RX/TX (connected to LAN/WAN), Audio Channel, Video Link, and Post-processing are connected to the right side of the MSU Computer.
- Power and Internal Components:** Low Voltage is connected to the bottom of the MSU Computer.

The system is interconnected via a network of lines, with a pink line indicating a specific data or power path.

Currently, a dedicated software tool is also being developed for automatic post-mission correlation between the aircraft cinematic data, stored by the aircraft on-board recorders or by dedicated (D)GPS data recorders, and the laser footprint data. This tool will also serve as a mission debriefing aid for training activities performed with airborne laser systems.

Currently, the following PILASTER LTM functional modes have been implemented:

- RTO-AG-300-V26**

operation has been completed and the relevant data have been inputted to the STU computer, the LTM system fully defines the target-sensors relative geometries.

- **BIT MODE**, required to check the correct functioning of the complete LTM system, including DEA and camera sensors. To obtain this, an array of LED's generates a signal with characteristics similar (i.e., energy, time and frequency) to a laser beam on the target. Using this signal, all units are activated in turn, allowing a complete system check. The BIT cycle execution time is about 60 seconds.
- After the BITE sequence has been completed successfully, the system automatically enters the **OPR MODE** (Operational Mode). In this mode, the system determines the laser footprint dimensions, the laser footprint geometric centre, the location of the beam energy centroid, the energy measured by each DEA detector, the laser PRF and P_D , the total number of pulses received, and the time labels associated with the acquired laser pulses. The instantaneous laser spot images and the geometric centre data are presented in real-time at the MSU. All other information are available in about 1 minute after each test/training mission run, and presented at the MSU operator through a dedicated software menu (the design time interval between one test/training mission run and the following is 2 minutes).
- The **TRF MODE** (Transfer Mode), is a reversionary mode for transferring the STU recorded data (relative to the last 10 test/training runs) to the MSU computer (via LAN/WAN). The compressed data relative to the 10 mission runs are transferred from the STU to the MSU in a time not exceeding 5 minutes.

5.3 PILASTER SENSORS CHARACTERISTICS

According to PILASTER general requirements presented in Chapter 4, various types of sensors were selected for the laser range. Particularly, the PILASTER STU and the FXDT target were equipped with sensors for laser spot monitoring and geometric/energy measurements. Furthermore, appropriate meteorological sensors were selected for laser beam atmospheric propagation data analysis.

Selection of the PILASTER sensors was the result of many engineering design calculations, compromise of various technical and operational requirements (use with airborne and ground laser systems, constraints imposed by the other STU hardware and software component, FXDT target design, etc.), actual laboratory and field tests, and last (but not least), cost-effectiveness considerations. In the following sections, the design characteristics of the main sensors selected for the PILASTER program are presented. More information about the STU sensors selection process is given in Chapters 7 and 8 (Laboratory and Ground Experimental Activities).

5.3.1 IR Cameras and Digital Image Acquisition Systems

The IR cameras integrated in the STU (real-time spot monitoring and post-processing spot data analysis), had to be equipped with suitable optics (barrels and filters) and digital image acquisition systems in order to match the PILASTER requirements. Particularly, according to the calculations performed, they had to be able to acquire, both in day and night conditions, laser spots with minimum dimensions of 0.1×0.1 metres and with a minimum energy density of a $10 \mu\text{Joule}/\text{m}^2$, produced by lasers beams at $\lambda = 1064 \text{ nm}$ and $\lambda = 1550 \text{ nm}$ incident on targets with 5% minimum reflectivity. Furthermore, both raw and processed data (i.e., acquired NIR camera frames and measurements/analysis results) had to be transferred to the PILASTER LAN/WAN networks for real-time and off-line reading at the MSU. Finally, a remote control system (through LAN/WAN) was required for the NIR cameras. In order to match these requirements, the following NIR cameras/optics, digital image acquisition systems and interface electronics were integrated in the PILASTER STU:

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- *Phoenix*TM NIR camera produced by *Indigo Systems Inc.*, for post-mission laser spot data analysis (i.e., determination of laser spot geometric and energetic characteristics).
- *Merlin*TM NIR camera produced by *Indigo Systems Inc.*, for real-time laser spot monitoring (i.e., laser spot position determination for real-time monitoring at the STU and/or MSU locations).
- The barrels for the *Phoenix*TM NIR and *Merlin*TM NIR cameras required to frame (entirely) a target with dimensions 10×10 metres (located on the ground), and also to frame a central portion of the same target with dimensions 4×4 metres (about 3 metres above the ground), from a distance varying between 50 metres and 250 metres.
- Narrow band filters for the *Phoenix*TM NIR and *Merlin*TM NIR cameras suitable for laser radiation at $\lambda = 1064$ nm and $\lambda = 1550$ nm.
- A Digital Acquisition System (DAS) for the *Phoenix*TM NIR camera composed by a rack with a portable PC, the hardware peripherals and the software (based on *Media Cybernetics IMAGE-PRO PLUS*TM version 4.1) necessary for digital image acquisition, determination of the geometric/energetic characteristics of the laser spots, and memorization of raw data (acquired frames) and measurements data (off-line analysis results).
- A Digital Image Acquisition Computer (DAC) for the *Merlin*TM NIR camera composed by a portable PC, the hardware peripherals and the software (based on *Media Cybernetics IMAGE-PRO PLUS*TM version 4.1) necessary for real-time digital image acquisition and memorization of data.
- A real-time remote control system (hardware and software) for the *Phoenix*TM NIR and *Merlin*TM NIR cameras, integrated with the PILASTER LAN/WAN networks.
- The interface electronics for the *Phoenix*TM NIR camera, required for processed (off-line) data transmission through the PILASTER LAN/WAN networks (and visualisation at the PCC), and for real-time remote control of the camera.
- The interface electronics for the *Merlin*TM NIR camera, required for real-time data transmission through the PILASTER LAN and WAN networks (and real-time visualisation at the PCC), and for real-time remote control of the camera.

5.3.2 STU-FXDT Sensors and Processing Units

A Laser Energy Measurement System (LEMS), constituted by various Laser Energy Meter (LEM) electronic units, equipped with $4 \div 16$ Pyroelectric Probe (PEP) sensors (FXDT-mounted), were also integrated in the PILASTER STU. The LEMS is suitable for measuring pulsed laser signals with very short pulse duration (P_D) and low peak energy (E_P), at $\lambda = 1064$ nm and $\lambda = 1550$ nm ($10 \text{ mJ/m}^2 \leq P_D \leq 10 \text{ }\mu\text{J/m}^2$, $P_D \geq 2 \text{ nsec}$, $\text{PRF} = 1 \div 400 \text{ Hz}$).

Together with the PEP sensors, eight sensors-heads connected via fiber optics cables to a modified version of the Marconi Selenia Communications S.p.A. RALM-01 Laser Warning Receiver (M-RALM-01) were installed on the FXDT target. A remote control and display unit of the M-RALM-01 system was also installed in the STU, and the system data were sent to the MSU through the LAN/WAN networks. The M-RALM-01 system was used to accurately measure the PRF of the incident laser signals, and as an additional back-up sensor for confirming the presence of laser signals on the PILASTER FXDT target, for safety purposes during both test and training missions (see Chapter 7 for more details about the LEMS/PEP and M-RALM-01 systems characteristics).

5.3.3 Meteorological Sensors

Two wireless commercial meteorological stations, equipped with all sensors required for measuring relative humidity (RH), pressure (P_a), temperature (T), differential temperatures (T_d), rainfall-rate ($\Delta x/\Delta t$), wind speed (W_s) and wind direction (W_d), were used to collect the relevant data at the FXDT target location and at the transmitter locations (for ground systems testing), necessary for propagation and performance analysis. Furthermore, two additional sensors were employed for measuring the turbulence structure constant (C_n) and turbulent heat flux (H_f) at the FXDT target and ground laser systems locations. Particularly, the following systems/sensors were employed:

- Two Wireless Meteorological Stations (WMS) constituted by a $0 \div 10$ metres tower for sensors installation (i.e., hygrometers, barometers, thermometers, thermocouples, rainfall-rate meters and anemometers) and a local display unit (maximum distance from the sensor tower: 100 metre) with standard PC interfaces.
- A portable Display and Recording Station (DRS), connected to the WMS (RS232 serial port), for real-time data display (touch-screen display with retro-illumination) and recording (data from all meteorological sensors acquired during a period of 24 hours at a sampling frequency of 1 Hz).
- Two calibrated thermometers with 0.1°C precision (T range: $-20^\circ\text{C} \div +60^\circ\text{C}$).
- Two calibrated hygrometer with a precision of 1% (RH range: $15\% \div 100\%$).
- Two barometers with 1 hPa precision, for atmospheric pressure measurement.
- Two rainfall-rate meters for measurement of relative and total $\Delta x/\Delta t$, with a precision of 0.1 mm/hr.
- Two anemometers for wind speed (precision 1 km/h), and wind direction determination (precision 2°).
- A scintillometer (composed by a laser transmitter and a remote measurement unit) for determination of the turbulence structure constant (C_n), and turbulent heat flux (H_f), with measurement baselines between 500 m and 5 km.

5.4 PILASTER TSPI SYSTEMS

During test and training activities with Airborne Laser Systems (ALS) and Laser Guided Weapons (LGW) at the PILASTER range, accurate Time and Space Position Information (TSPI) can be provided by using existing cinetheodolite systems (with filtered operator optical sights), tracking radars (or laser tracking systems), and various ground-based radio positioning systems. These systems, however, have a variety of limitations. First of all, they provide a TSPI solution based on measurements relative to large and costly fixed ground stations. Weather has an adverse effect on many of these systems, and all of them are limited to minimum altitudes or to limited portions of the PILASTER range area. The number of participants each system can support is very limited, and correlation with other systems is extremely difficult, if not impossible. These limitations greatly increase instrumentation costs and impose severe constraints on test/training scenarios. Clearly, a more cost-effective TSPI source was needed for the final PILASTER implementation.

5.4.1 DGPS Range Applications

The Global Positioning System (GPS) provides a cost-effective capability that overcomes nearly all the limitations of existing TSPI sources. GPS is a passive system using satellites which provide universal and accurate source of real-time position and timing data to correlate mission events. The coverage area is unbounded and the number of users is unlimited. The use of land-based Differential GPS (DGPS) reference stations improves accuracy to about one metre for relatively stationary platforms, and to a few metres for

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high performance tactical aircraft. Further accuracy enhancement can be obtained by using GPS carrier phase measurements, either in post-processing or in real-time. Accuracy does not degrade at low altitudes above the earth's surface, and loss of navigation solution does not occur as long as the antenna has an open view of the sky.

However, DGPS performance in terms of data continuity and accuracy during high dynamics manoeuvres, even if sufficient for many tasks, can not cover the entire flight envelope of modern high performance fighter aircraft. Moreover, the update-rate of GPS receivers is too low for many tasks. Currently, the integration of GPS with an inertial navigation system (INS) is considered to be the optimal solution to the above mentioned shortcomings. This integration, performed either in real-time or in post-processing, can provide in fact the required update rate and have a higher data continuity and integrity. The other advantages of an INS: low short term drift and low noise, are combined with the advantages of GPS: high position accuracy and no long term drift. Moreover, the combination of an INS with (D)GPS is a natural evolution of existing airborne navigation systems, the majority of which is currently based on an INS, updated by other positioning systems to compensate for the shortcomings of the inertial system.

5.4.2 PILASTER DGPS Equipment Selection

As discussed in the previous paragraph, accurate determination of aircraft TSPI is a strong requirement for both flight test and training applications with ALS/LGW. The foreseen capabilities of GPS, in terms of data accuracy, quickness of data availability and reduction of cost, moved to undertake a study aimed at defining the requirements of a DGPS based system for integration in the PILASTER range. The study was mainly addressed to GPS using C/A code, with post-flight differentiation. This was preferred to GPS using P-code due to both simplicity of use and high accuracy attainable notwithstanding its lower cost. After contacting many potential suppliers, an initial assessment of different systems was conducted in order to select the DGPS systems best matching the technical requirements. The technical specifications were submitted to a number of companies producing GPS systems. Of the 12 companies contacted, four were able to provide systems with good technical characteristics. Therefore, a comparison was necessary in order to select the system with the best performance. The results of the technical analysis are shown Table 5-1. The system proposed by ELMER (ELMER R202 P-code airborne receiver) did not satisfy the essential accuracy requirements. The system proposed by this company could only operate in P-code and therefore its quoted accuracy (16 m SEP) was better than any other stand-alone GPS system operating with the C/A code (100 m 2d-RMS), but less than the accuracy normally provided by a GPS in differential mode (1 – 5 m SEP). Moreover, the number of channels available was less than required and the overall cost of the system was very high. Also the system proposed by TECHNITRON (GPS120 airborne receiver and ASHTECH-XII ground receiver) was unsatisfactory. Particularly, the airborne system was a 5-channel receiver and the quoted accuracies were inferior to the other systems. Moreover, the RTCM-SC-104 standard protocol was not available. The system proposed by ASHTECH ITALY (ASHTECH XII for both the AR and the ground RS) satisfied the essential requirements stated in the specification document. Even if the interface available on the ASHTECH XII receiver (RS-232) was different from the one desired (RS-422), the technical problem could be easily solved. Also the system proposed by TRIMBLE ITALY (TANS airborne receiver and 4000SE ground receiver) fulfilled the essential requirements stated in the PILASTER specification documents. As a result of the technical analysis, the systems proposed by ASHTECH and TRIMBLE were selected.

Table 5-1: Technical Comparison of Four DGPS Systems for the PILASTER Range

REQUIREMENTS		WEIGHT	MARCONI-ELMER			ASHTech ITALY			TECHNITRON			TRIMBLE ITALY		
			PERFORM.	MARK	MARK x WEIGHT	PERFORM.	MARK	MARK x WEIGHT	PERFORM.	MARK	MARK x WEIGHT	PERFORM.	MARK	MARK x WEIGHT
Airborne equipment	N. of channels (6 min.)	3	5 parallel	3	9	12 parallel	5	15	5 parallel	5	9	6 parallel	5	15
	C/A code (L1)	5	C/A = P	1	5	C/A	5	25	C/A	5	25	C/A	5	25
	Aided Mode (vel. a/o alt.)	1	YES	5	5	(Alt. only)	5	5	YES (option)	5	5	YES (option)	5	5
	Acc. Pos. w/o SA (25m SEP)	1	16 m SEP	5	5	25 m SEP	5	5	25 m SEP	5	5	25 m SEP	5	5
	Acc. Pos. with SA (100m 2dRMS)	3	16 m SEP	5	15	100 m 2dRMS	5	15	100m 2dRMS	5	15	100m 2dRMS	5	15
	Acc. Vel. w/o SA (0.02 m/s RMS)	1	0.1 m/s RMS	3	3	0.1 m/s RMS	5	5	0.1 m/s RMS	5	3	0.02 m/s RMS	5	5
	Acc. Vel. with SA (0.1 m/s RMS)	3	0.1 m/s RMS	5	15	0.1 m/s RMS	5	15	0.1 m/s RMS	5	15	0.1 m/s RMS	5	15
	Standard I/O	5	OK	5	25	RS232	3	15	RS232	5	15	OK	5	25
	SUBTOTAL				89			100			92			110
Ground Station	N. of channels (9 min.)	5	5 parallel	3	15	12 parallel	5	25	12 parallel	5	25	9 parallel	5	25
	Code	5	C/A = P	1	5	C/A	5	25	C/A	5	25	C/A	5	25
	(L = L option)	5	YES	5	15	YES	5	15	YES	5	15	YES	5	15
	Recording memory	3	UN	1	3	20 h	5	15	20 h	5	15	6 h	5	15
	RCTM format	5	NO	1	5	OK	5	25	NO	1	5	OK	5	25
	SUBTOTAL				43			105			95			105
Software Accuracy	Real-time differential mode:													
	- Position (10 m SEP)	3	-	-	N/A	3 m SEP	5	15	25 m SEP	1	3	10 m SEP	5	15
	- Velocity (0.02 m/s)	3	-	-	-	0.01 m/s RMS	5	15	0.1 m/s	3	9	0.02 m/s	5	15
	Post FLT differential mode:													
	- Position (5 m SEP)	5	-	-	-	3 m SEP	5	25	10 m SEP	1	5	5 m SEP	5	25
	- Velocity (0.02 m/s)	5	-	-	-	0.01 m/s RMS	5	25	0.05 m/s RMS	3	15	0.02 m/s RMS	5	25
Tech. ass.	SUBTOTAL				N/A			80			32			80
TOTAL		64			150			310			244			320

ACC. = Accuracy, POS. = Position, VEL. = Velocity, SA = Selective Availability, W/O = Without, I/O = Input/Output, A/O = And/Or, N/A = Not Applicable, UN = Unknown.

5.5 PILASTER EXTINCTION MEASUREMENT TECHNIQUES

The standard techniques used for PILASTER laser extinction measurements (atmospheric propagation tests) are the following:

- Extinction Measurement Technique N° 1 (EMT-1), using the PILASTER non-calibrated *PhoenixTM* NIR camera and the FXDT-mounted PEP sensors measurements.
- Extinction Measurement Technique N° 2 (EMT-2), using the PILASTER calibrated *PhoenixTM* NIR camera measurements.

The rationales of the EMT-1 and EMT-2 techniques are described below. An additional technique (EMT-3), developed to perform extinction measurements when PILASTER standard techniques (EMT-1 and EMT-2) could not be implemented (e.g., laser transmitter characteristics not compatible with the standard PILASTER STU sensors response), and a Control Technique (EMT-CT) for systems field calibration and preliminary verification of the EMT-1 and EMT-2 techniques, are described in Chapter 8 (Ground Experimental Activities).

5.5.1 Description of PILASTER EMT-1

This technique is based on direct measurements of laser energy at pre-defined locations on the target (DEA detectors) and use of the *PhoenixTM* NIR camera spot frames (NIR camera non-calibrated) to reconstruct, by means of the IMAGE-PRO PLUSTM pixel intensity matrixes (associated to each frame), the overall energy intensity profile (from which atmospheric extinction is computed). The logical steps involved in this technique are shown in Figure 5-3.

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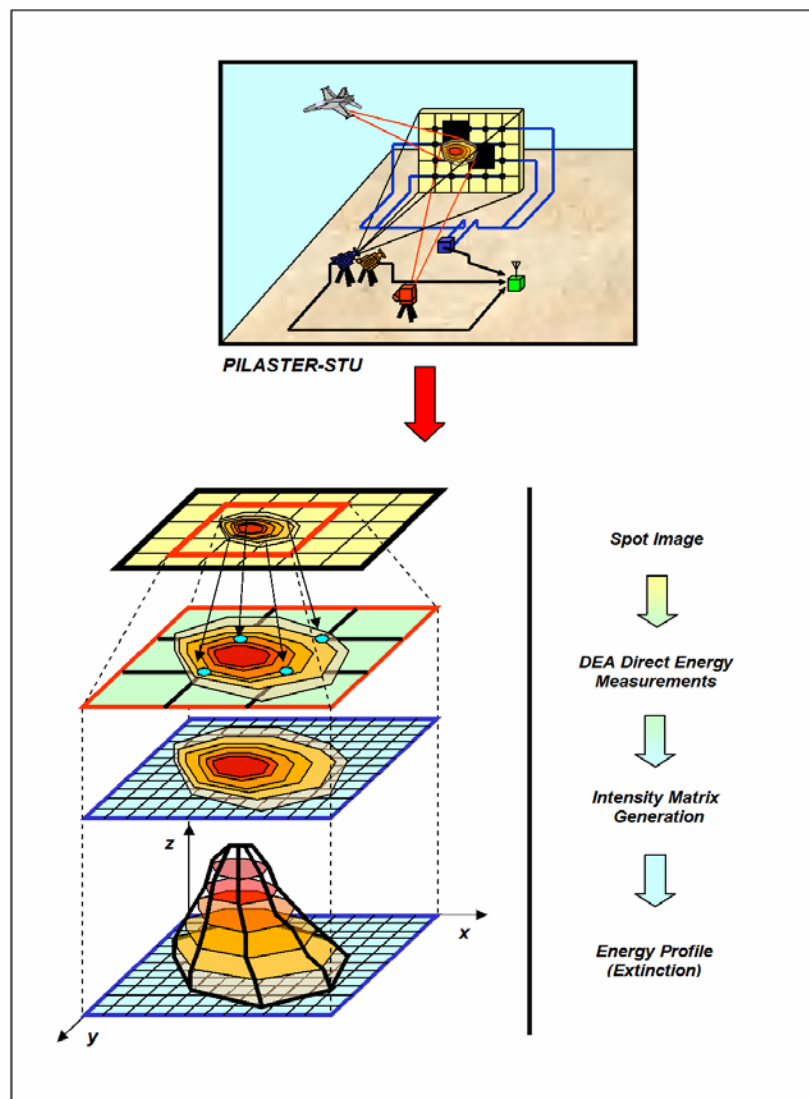


Figure 5-3: EMT-1 Laser Spot Energy Profile Reconstruction.

5.5.2 Description of PILASTER EMT-2

This technique is based on use of the calibrated *Phoenix*TM NIR camera (calibration performed in the laboratory using an Integrating Sphere, as described in Chapter 7) and successive adoption of a dedicated energy profiling function implemented with the IMAGE-PRO PLUSTM software. This function permits to obtain the overall spot energy by directly converting pixel intensity data into energy measurements. Using these measurements, atmospheric extinction is computed.

As an example, a spot measurement performed using the ELOP-PLD system ($\lambda = 1064$ nm) and EMT-2 is shown in Figure 5-4. The test was performed with a laser slant-path of 4 km, during a day with $V = 11$ km, $RH = 65\%$ and $T = 18^\circ\text{C}$. In this case, an energy (E) of 52.76 mJ was measured by the *Phoenix*TM NIR camera. Using the ESLM model presented in Chapter 3, the following propagation factors were found:

- $\tau_{si} = 0.54$ contribution due to scattering only;
- $\tau_{ai} = 0.79$ contribution due to absorption only; and
- $\tau_{atm} = 0.43$ total atmospheric transmittance.

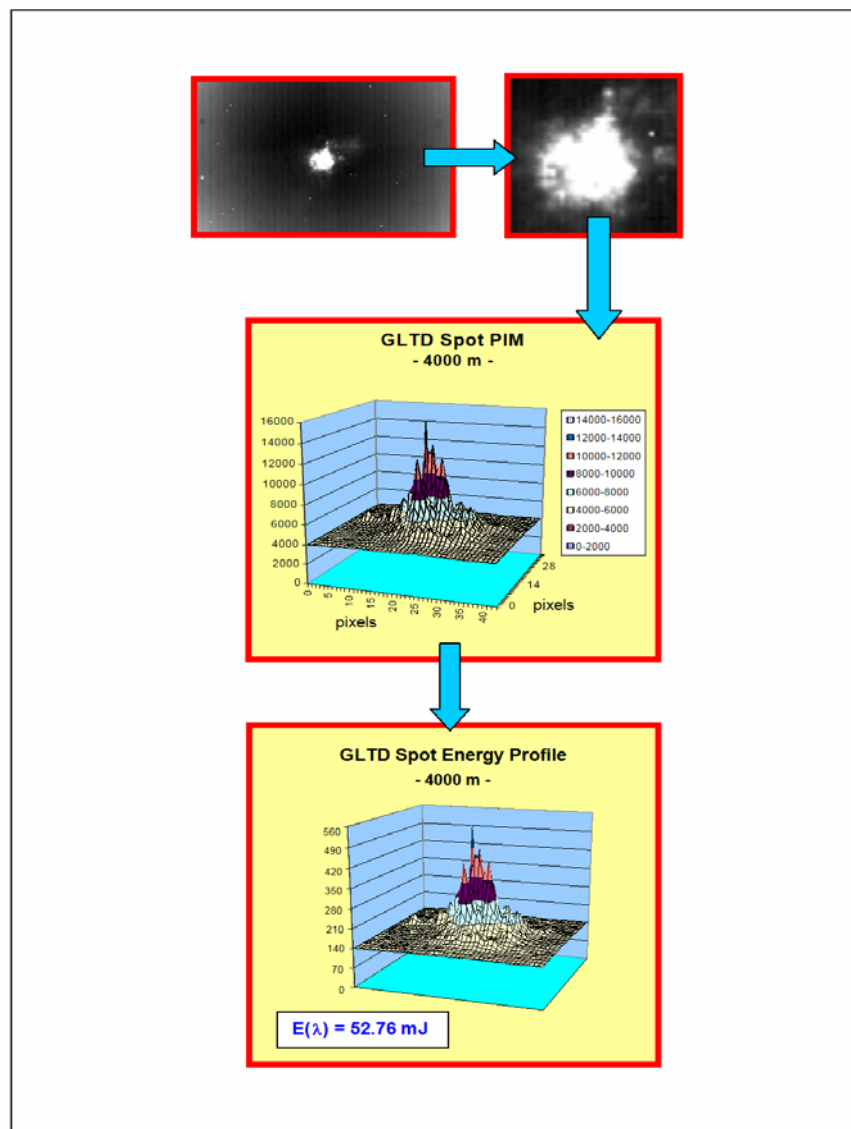


Figure 5-4: EMT-2 Laser Spot Energy Measurement.

Knowing the output energy (LOE) of the ELOP-PLD system (i.e., LOE = 130 mJ), the calculated energy incident on the target was 55.9 mJ. Therefore, in this case, the difference between the transmittance calculated with the ESLM model and the measurement performed with EMT-2 was about 5.6%.

5.6 PILASTER TARGETS

Currently, three different types of targets have been designed and constructed at the PILASTER range. Particularly, according to the definitions given in Chapter 4, the following targets are now available:

- Fast-recoverable Target (FRCT);
- Fixed Target (FXDT); and
- IR Reference Target (IREF).

In the following sections, the final design of the PILASTER FRCT, FXDT and IREF targets is presented.

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5.6.1 FRCT Target

In order to fulfil the general requirement described in Chapter 4 (i.e., large frontal area and MTTR of 1 hour), the FRCT was designed as a vertical modular target, composed by a number of light-weight wood modules (covering the frontal target area), mounted on a load bearing wood planks structure (also modular and easy to repair), installed on a permanent concrete base. The rigidity of the load bearing structure was also increased by using tension cables. The FRCT target front surface dimensions are 9.76×7.925 metres. According to the PILASTER requirements, the FRCT target front surface was painted with highly diffusive white and dark grey paints (see Chapter 8). Some phases of the PILASTER FRCT target construction are shown in Figure 5-5.



Figure 5-5: PILASTER FRCT Target Construction.

At a distance of about 250 metres from the PILASTER FRCT target, along the target normal (i.e., well outside the CEP of most current laser armaments), a hardened shelter (HSH) was constructed for installation of the STU sensors/systems.

5.6.2 FXDT Target

The PILASTER FXDT target is a concrete wall with a frontal surface of 10×10 metres. The wall is provided with a number of apertures for installing various types of target panels (painted Al alloy) on the front surface (illuminated by the laser). The apertures are accessible at various levels of the wall using permanent stairs on the back side of the target. In the vicinity of the FXDT target, there are two permanent

shelters, one for permanent installation of STU sensors/systems and one for electric power generation (EPG). The general layout and locations of the PILASTER FRCT, FXDT, HSH and permanent STU is shown in Figure 5-6.

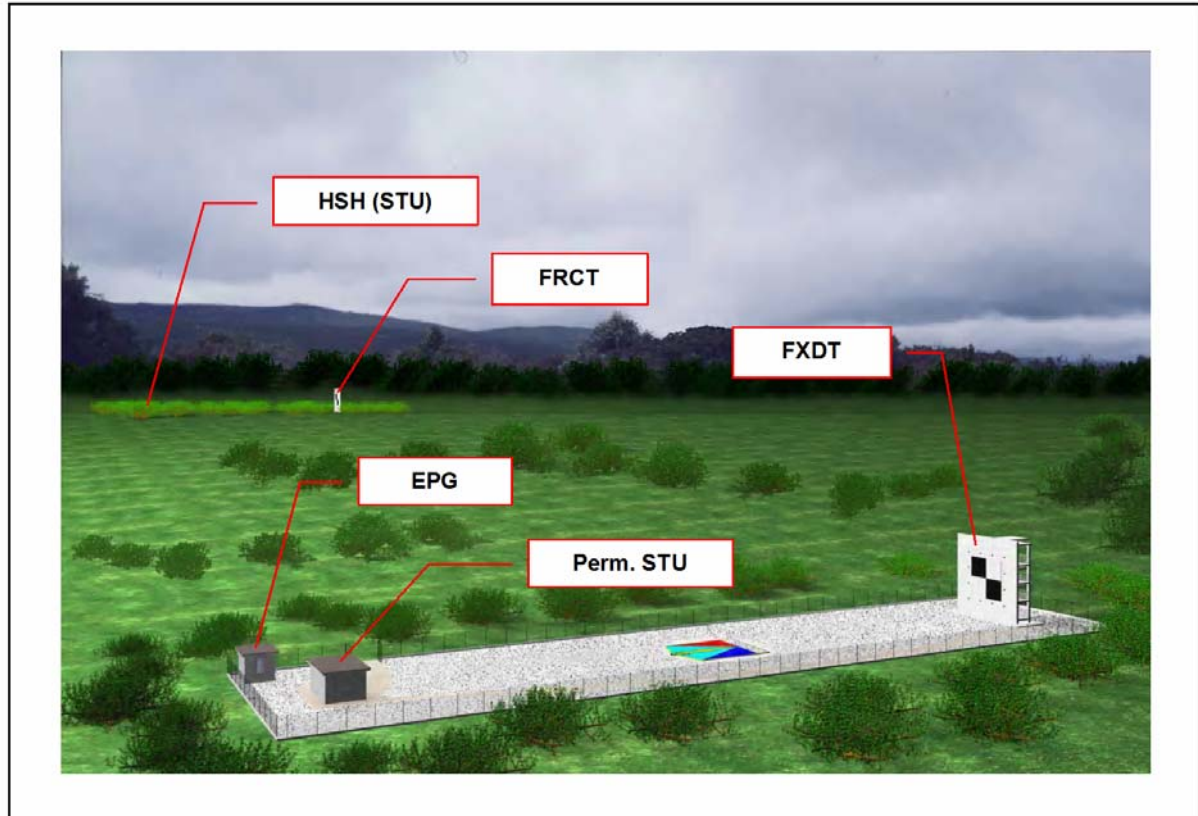


Figure 5-6: PILASTER FXDT Target Layout.

The Figure 5-7 and Figure 5-8 show the layout of the three FXDT target panels. Various apertures are present on the panels for installation of the STU target detector units (lenses and optical fibers). These apertures are occluded if not occupied by sensors during the PILASTER activities.

PILASTER SYSTEMS DESIGN

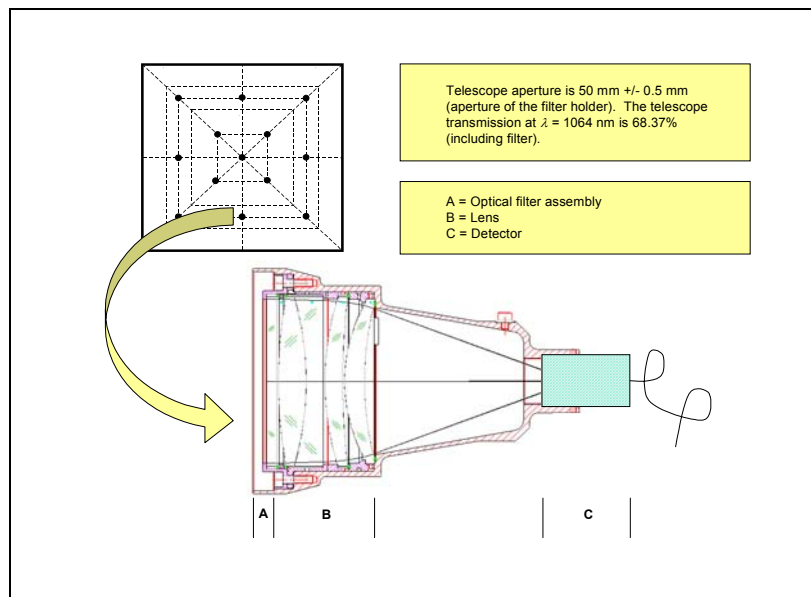
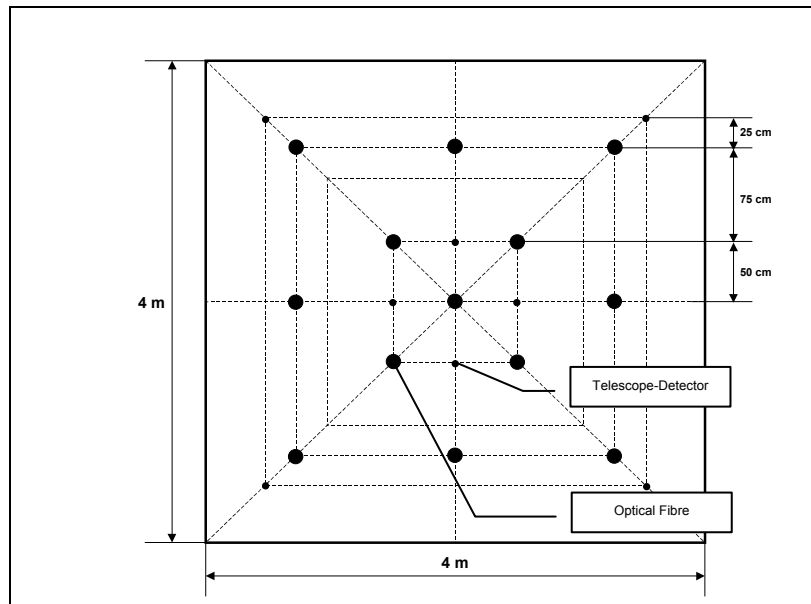


Figure 5-7: PILASTER FXDT Target Standard Panel N° 1.

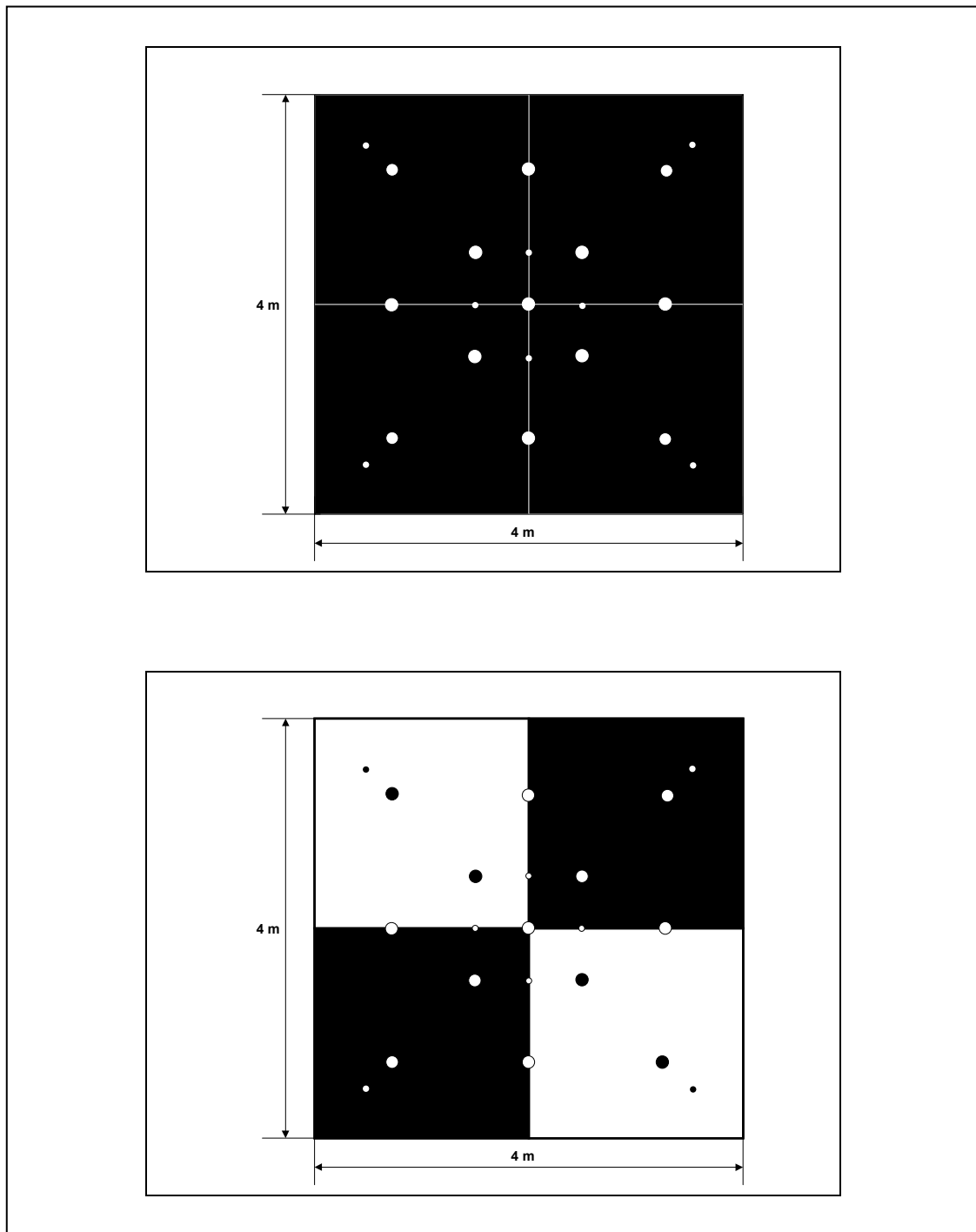


Figure 5-8: PILASTER FXDT Target Standard Panels N° 2 and N° 3.

According to the PILASTER requirements, the FXDT target panels were painted with highly diffusive paints (of known BRDF at $\lambda = 1064 \text{ nm}$ and known NIR reflectance characteristics), in order to perform STU spot energy measurements. After various laboratory experiments (see Chapter 7), the *Nextel*TM paints and coatings produced by *Mankiewicz Gebr. & Co.* (Georg Wilhelm Straße, 189 D-21107 Hamburg – Germany), were selected for the FXDT target panels. The *Nextel*TM paints used for the PILASTER FXDT target panels

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are listed in Table 5-2. Further details about the reflection properties of the *Nextel*TM paints are given in Chapter 7.

Table 5-2: NextelTM Paints Used for the PILASTER FXDT Target

<p>♦ Nextel Primer 5523 including Hardener 5524</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White 9125 • Anthracite 7525
<p>♦ Nextel Suede Coating 428-22</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White 919X • Black 9218 • Hardener 405-12
<p>♦ Nextel Thinner 8061</p>

5.6.3 IREF Target

The PILASTER IREF is a thermal target panel with eight vertical bars of equal width, four of which are heated at specified temperature differences (ΔT) with respect to the unheated bars and background. Particularly, the IREF target bars ΔT is tuneable with steps of 0.5°C (temperature controlled by thermocouples and thermography). Using the IREF target, the Minimum Resolvable Temperature Differences (MRTD) with spatial frequencies (cycle/mrad) corresponding to various 2-D discrimination levels, can be determined for the FLIR systems integrated with modern laser designation devices. Furthermore, using experimental data collected in flight, it is possible to calculate the detection, recognition and identification ranges of the FLIR systems, for targets of given aspect dimensions. The technical approach adopted at the PILASTER range for collecting and analysing flight test data using the IREF target, is described in Chapter 9.

The IREF thermal target panel front dimensions are shown in Figure 5-9. The target reflectance is about 0.1 in the NIR waveband. This is obtained by painting the panel surface with dead matt black *Trimate*TM J133 paint, coated with *Bubbleflex*TM B792 (*Playlite Ltd.*). The IREF target elevation is adjustable with mechanical devices from horizontal to vertical through 90°. The IREF target panel can be used independently, or can be installed on the PILASTER FXDT permanent structure (like the standard panels used for laser spot measurements, with an additional mechanical device for elevation control).

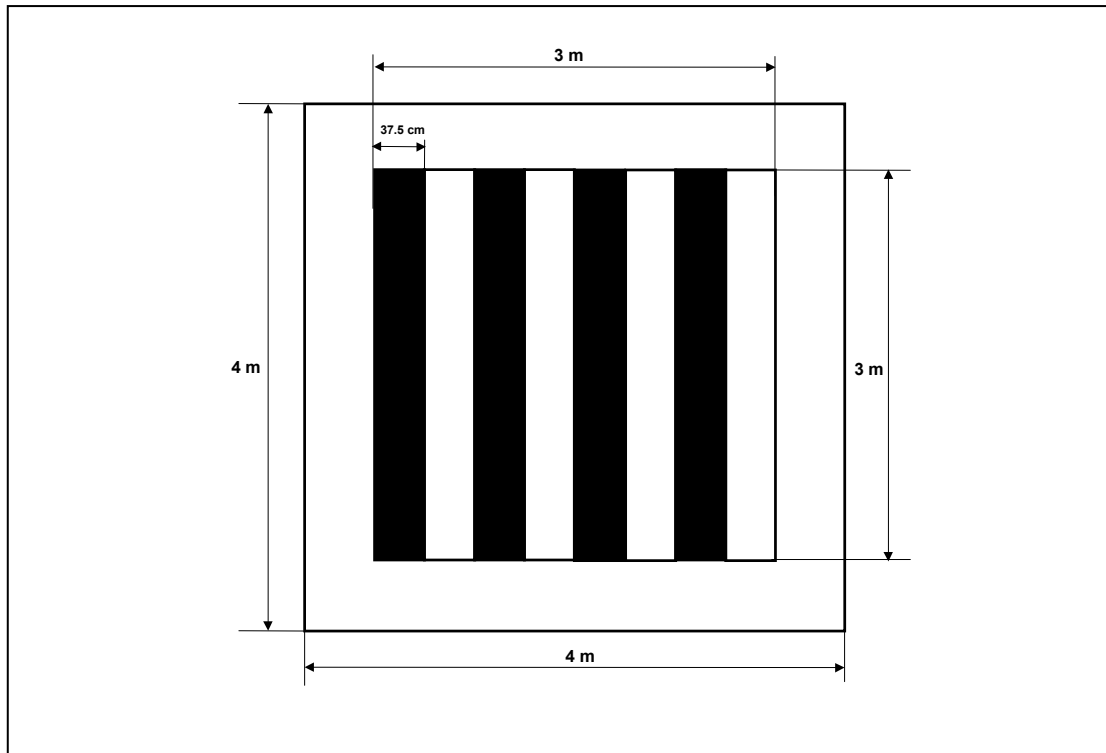


Figure 5-9: PILASTER IREF Target for FLIR Systems Testing.

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Chapter 6 – SYSTEMS EYE-SAFETY ANALYSIS

6.1 GENERAL

The methods developed for evaluating the hazards associated with the use of ground and airborne laser systems operating in the visible and near infra-red non-eye-safe portions of the spectrum is presented in this chapter. Particularly, safety issues of state-of-the-art Nd:YAG target designators (LTD) are thoroughly investigated, in order to identify operational procedures and limitations for employment of such equipment at the PILASTER range during execution of both test and training missions.

Various mathematical algorithms are presented, developed for employment in the PILASTER mission planning tools that allow a complete verification of laser-safety for ground and airborne laser systems. A description of the laser-safety simulation programs developed, together with sample simulation results are given in the Chapter 10 of this thesis.

Although the results presented were originally developed for airborne/ground pulsed laser target designators, they also apply to other non-eye-safe laser systems including pulsed range finders and beam riders operating in the visible and near-infrared portions of the electromagnetic spectrum.

6.2 LASER SAFETY STANDARDS

The methodology to be used in laser safety assessments is prescribed by various NATO and national laser safety standards [1]-[8], including the STANAG 3606, the SMD-W-001 Italian military standard, the JSP 390 British military standard, etc. However, none of these standards focuses on Airborne Laser Systems (ALSs), and only generic suggestions are given on how to apply the various proposed safety areas calculation routines to the case of highly dynamic platforms, such as airborne designation systems. Furthermore, also in the cases of Ground Laser Systems (GLSs), the deterministic approaches described in the NATO/national standards often lead to safety areas calculations exceeding the dimensions of most existing test ranges. The alternative statistic approaches proposed in the standards, on the other hand, are based on several assumptions/system models and imply a clear definition of risk levels (e.g., maximum probability of eye injury), which in various NATO countries (and in Italy as well) are not yet available. Therefore, new algorithms and procedures were developed which, respecting all necessary safety criteria, lead to practical laser safety areas for both ALS and GLS systems. These newly developed algorithms and procedures, which represented an important integration of the existing NATO/Italian standards, are being used at the PILASTER range in Sardinia, during execution of both test and training missions. Furthermore, following the results of this research, some actions are now being taken by the Italian Ministry of Defence in order to propose modifications/integrations to the existing STANAG 3606 and related national documents.

6.3 OCULAR HAZARD DISTANCE

According to NATO STANAG 3606 and the Italian SMD-W-001 military laser safety standard (developed in accordance with the STANAG 3606 and quite similar to the JSP 390 British military standard), the Ocular Hazard Distance (OHD) is required for calculating all laser hazard areas.

The factors affecting the OHD are:

- a) Design characteristics of the laser system;
- b) Atmospheric attenuation;
- c) Atmospheric scintillation;

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- d) Use of laser protective eyewear;
- e) Viewing through magnifying optics;
- f) Near-field effects; and
- g) Use of beam attenuating filters.

In this paragraph, only the most important equations necessary to calculate the OHD for pulsed ALS/GLS due to the factors a) – g) are presented. More detailed information about the various models presented here, together with additional equations accounting for different systems/scenarios may be found in the literature (see, for guidance, the *Laser Safety Standards* listed in the references).

The key system-related parameters to be taken into account for calculation of the OHD are the Maximum Permissible Exposure (MPE) and the Nominal Ocular Hazard Distance (NOHD). The MPE, generally expressed in J/cm² or J/m², is a function of the Exposure Time (T_E). For example, considering a point laser source with a wavelength of 1064 nm and a pulse length of 20 nsec, the MPE for a single pulse obtained from the JSP 390 standard, is 5×10^{-2} J/m². Knowing the MPE for a single pulse, the MPE for a train of pulses can be calculated as follows:

$$MPE_T = MPE_P \times \frac{1}{\sqrt[4]{f \times T_E}} \quad (6.1)$$

where:

- MPE_P = maximum permissible exposure (single pulse);
- MPE_T = maximum permissible exposure (train);
- f = pulse repetition frequency; and
- T_E = time of exposure.

There are various expressions used to calculate the value of the NOHD, depending on the characteristics of the laser (pulsed/CW, single-pulse/train of pulses, *Gaussian* or non-*Gaussian* beam, etc.), and the location of the observer (direct illumination or diffuse reflection). A form of the NOHD equation valid for direct vision of pulsed lasers with *Gaussian* beam distributions, is the following:

$$NOHD = \frac{\sqrt{\frac{1.27 \cdot Q \cdot \sqrt[4]{f \cdot T_E}}{MPE_P}} - a}{\Phi} \quad (6.2)$$

where:

- Q = output laser pulse peak energy; and
- a = output beam diameter.

According to the Italian Safety Standard SMD-W-001, for non-*Gaussian* beams, Q in equation (6.2) should be multiplied by a factor of 2.5. The cumulative OHD arises from the full or partial application of correction factors to the NOHD allowing for near-field effects, magnifying optics, atmospheric extinction, atmospheric scintillation, beam attenuating filters and protective laser eyewear.

If the laser radiation is viewed through magnifying optical instruments, the NOHD will increase to a distance called the Extended Ocular Hazard Distance (EOHD), which can be calculated using the following equation:

$$EOHD = NOHD \cdot \sqrt{K} \quad (6.3)$$

where K is a factor depending on the laser wavelength and the viewing conditions (refer to SMD-W-001 or JSP 390 for details about calculation of K).

Both SMD-W-001 and JSP 390 include the following equation for calculating the reduction of the hazard distance due to atmospheric attenuation:

$$OHD_{\gamma} = \frac{NOHD}{2 - e^{-0.5\gamma \cdot NOHD}} \quad (6.4)$$

where γ is the atmospheric attenuation coefficient. Both standards also refer to the following model for calculating the atmospheric extinction coefficient for laser wavelengths between 400 and 2000 nm:

$$\gamma = 10^{-3} \cdot \left(\frac{3.91}{V} \right) \cdot \left(\frac{550}{\lambda} \right)^A \quad (6.5)$$

where:

V = meteorological range (km);

λ = laser wavelength (nm); and

A = exponent varying with V and given by $0.585 \cdot V^{0.33}$.

It is evident that eq. (6.5) is one of the equations already used in the ESLM empiric model (see Chapter 3) to determine the scattering coefficient without rain. It is obvious that, using only eq. (6.5) for calculating the atmospheric extinction coefficient would lead to underestimated γ values for most weather conditions and at most wavelengths of practical interest, which is acceptable for eye-safety calculations but implies a simplifying conservative assumption (i.e., absorption is neglected).

Because the meteorological conditions can change rapidly, any allowance for atmospheric attenuation should be applied with caution. For practical reasons, it is suggested that γ is taken to be zero if a reliable estimate of V cannot be made.

Together with attenuation, when a laser beam propagates in the atmosphere (especially with slant-paths close to the ground) its radiance may be modified by focusing (scintillation) or defocusing effects caused by turbulence (see Chapter 3). In the first case (scintillation), the values of the beam irradiance may be significantly greater than the MPE, and therefore it is prudent to make some allowance for this effect. According to the SMD-W-001 safety standard, when scintillation is likely to occur at the range (e.g., due to high measured or predicted C_n values), $NOHD$ should be modified as follows:

$$OHD_s = 2.662 \cdot NOHD \quad (6.6)$$

A better approach to this problem is presented in the JSP 390 British (Military) safety standard (1998 Edition). In this document, the following analysis is presented to correct the $NOHD$ for atmospheric scintillation.

If N_l is less than the parameter N_{max} , where:

$$N_{max} = 2.2 \times 10^{-7} \frac{\lambda^{0.64}}{C_n^{1.09}} \quad (6.7)$$

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Then, to take account of scintillation, N_I is modified to obtain OHD_S using the following equation:

$$OHD_S = \left(2.66^{N_I / N_{max}}\right) N_I \quad (6.8)$$

where N_I is either the NOHD or the cumulative OHD arising from the full or partial application of factors allowing for near-field effects, magnifying optics, beam attenuating filters, atmospheric extinction and laser protective eyewear.

If $N_I \geq N_{max}$, or if it is not possible to determine C_n , then OHD_S is given by:

$$OHD_S = 2.66 N_I \quad (6.9)$$

Both the JSP 390 British safety standard and the Italian SMD-W-001 safety standard present the following equations for correcting the N_I parameter (i.e., the NOHD or the cumulative OHD calculated taking into account a part or all other correction factors) due to laser protective eyewear (OHD_{PE}), near-field effects (OHD_{NF}), and beam attenuating filters (OHD_{AF}):

$$OHD_{PE} = N_I \cdot 10^{-OD/2} \quad (6.10)$$

$$OHD_{NF} = N_I \sqrt{1 - \left(\frac{R_N}{N_I}\right)^2} \quad (6.11)$$

$$OHD_{AF} = N_I \sqrt{\tau} \quad (6.12)$$

where:

OD = eyewear optical density;

R_N = 'near-field' range of the laser; and

τ = transmittance of the beam attenuating filter at the laser wavelength.

6.4 ALS STUDY ANALYSIS

During test range and training operations with non-eye-safe airborne laser systems, it is essential to determine the hazards associated with the use of the systems, taking into account the factors directly or indirectly affecting eye-safety. These factors include the geometry of the attack (i.e., aircraft manoeuvres), the horography of the area around the target, the probabilities of inadvertent laser activation, the presence of reflecting materials in the area illuminated (or potentially illuminated) by the laser, and so on. It is therefore meaningful to take into account the mission profiles of typical self-designation attacks illustrated in Figure 6-1 (the co-operative attack geometry can be considered a sub-case of this, where laser designation is performed by a companion of the attacking aircraft).

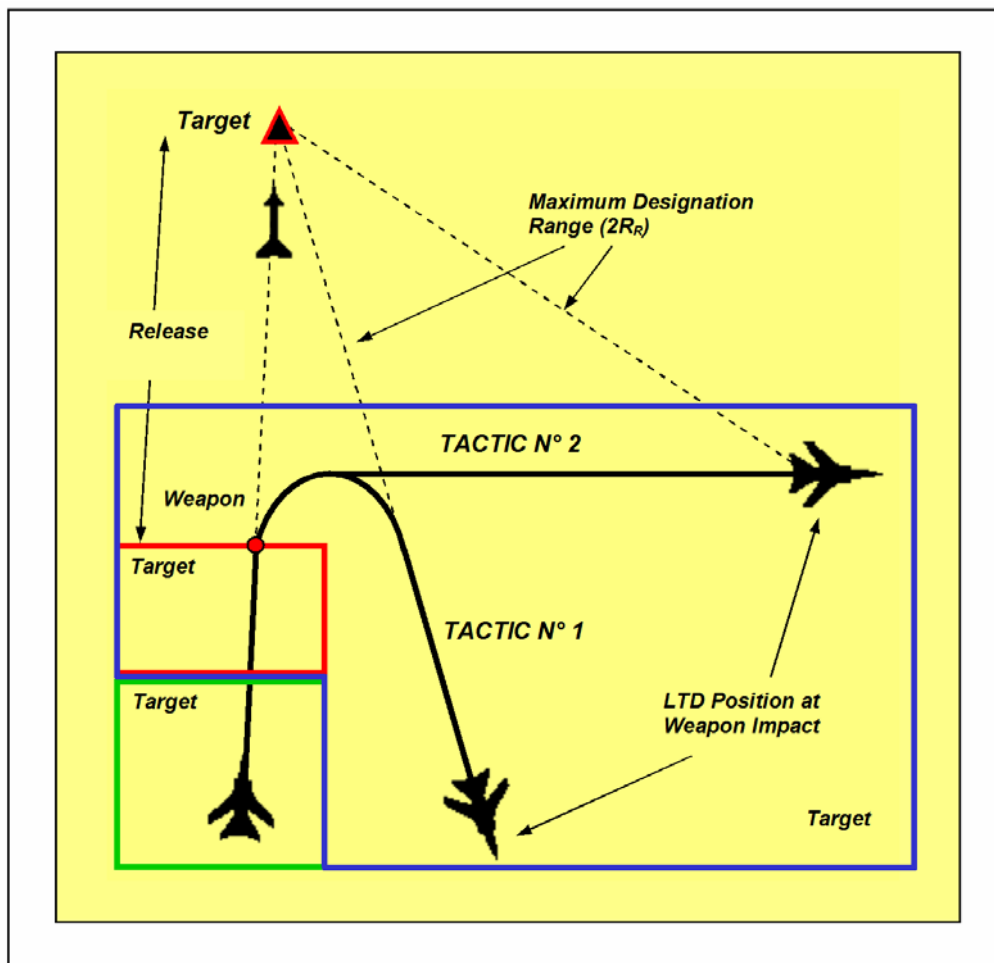


Figure 6-1: LTD/LGW Mission Profile (Self-Designation).

Designation is initiated in the final portion of the bomb trajectory, and it is generally performed at a considerable range from the target (comparable to the visual range). This means that, normally, the grazing angle to the target can be very small, and the ground area effectively illuminated by the laser during the attack can be quite large. Moreover, once designation has initiated, there is a further hazard related either with the inherent pointing accuracy of the laser designation system and the probability of inadvertent rotation of the designator line-of-sight during laser firing. Finally, we must consider that also the simple carriage of the system by the a/c may be dangerous to people on the ground if the probability of inadvertent activation is too high and the a/c is flying lower than the OHD.

6.4.1 ALS Hazard Areas

A dedicated analysis was required in order to define the models for defining and modelling the laser hazard areas associated with airborne systems. Particularly, the following areas were identified:

- **ALS Beam Hazard Area (A-BHA)**, defined as the area which may be illuminated by the laser beam in the event of inadvertent firing.
- **ALS Buffer Zone (A-BZ)**, given by the sum of the area directly illuminated by the laser beam during the firing (a function of beam output diameter and divergence) and the area around the laser beam that may be inadvertently illuminated considering the overall pointing accuracy of the LTD, the reaction time of the aircrew and the probability of failure of the system.

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- **ALS Extended Buffer Zone (A-EBZ)**, defined as the area which may be illuminated due to specular reflection within the A-BZ. The existence of an EBZ can be prevented by removing all possible reflectors laying within the BZ (e.g., residues of previous bomb drops, metal objects).

For air-to-ground LTD operations, the A-BHA is given by the intersection with the ground of a sphere with centre at the aircraft location in space and a radius equivalent to the OHD (Figure 6-2). Therefore, the radius of the A-BHA (R_{BHA}) is given by the following equation:

$$R_{BHA} = \sqrt{OHD^2 - z^2} \quad (6.13)$$

where z is the AGL aircraft altitude.

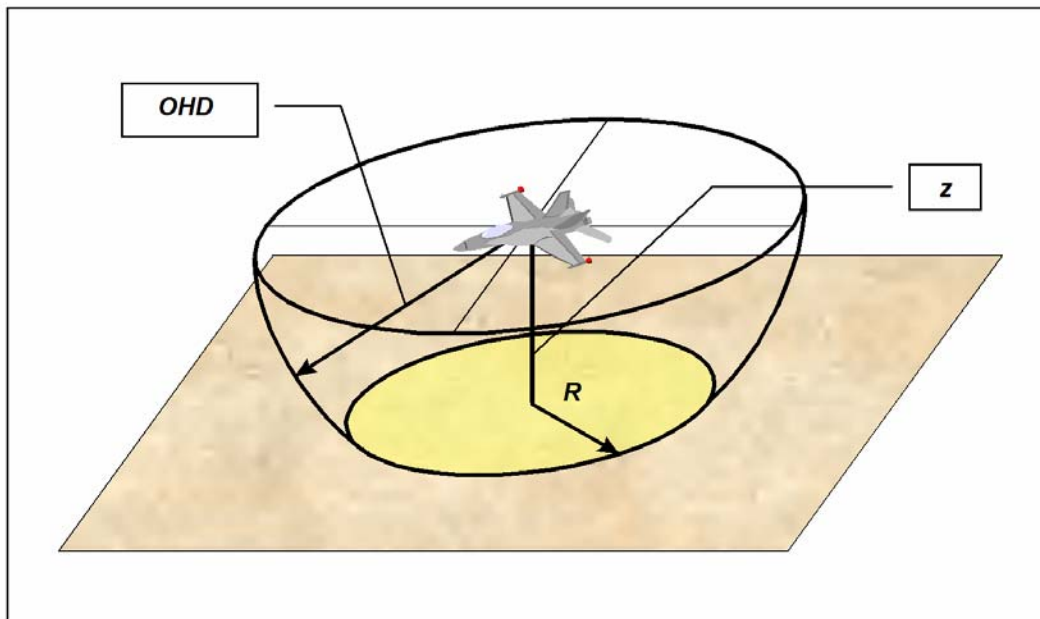


Figure 6-2: ALS Beam Hazard Area (A-BHA) Geometry.

From the definition given above, it appears evident that, in the practical case of an airborne LTD (A-LTD), the actual existence of an A-BHA is related with the following factors:

- Inadvertent activation of the laser in the various modes of the LTD; and
- Inadvertent rotation of the LOS during commanded laser activation.

Therefore, it is acceptable to calculate the A-BHA using the OHD for exposition to a single pulse (since the airborne LTD is in continuous motion, it is extremely improbable that an observer is illuminated by a train of pulses during accidental laser activation or LOS rotation). As an example, we consider the probabilities given in Table 6-1 for a typical airborne A-LTD system (entire system operational life).

Table 6-1: Hazard Probabilities in the Various A-LTD Modes

A-LTD Mode	Hazardous Event	Probability
OFF	Inadvertent Activation	0
ON	Inadvertent Activation	5E-16
SLAVE/TRACK	Inadvertent Activation	8E-9
Laser Arm	Inadvertent Activation	3E-4
Laser Fire (SLAVE/TRACK)	Inadvertent LOS Rotation	2E-6

The data in Table 6-1 must be linked to the reliability data of the aircraft avionics systems connected with the LTD. In our example, we assume that the A-LTD system is commanded by the Weapon Systems Operator (WSO) through a cockpit control panel with a SAFE and an ARM position (i.e., a stand-by mode in which the laser cavity is powered but the laser beam is not emitted), and that the laser emission (laser FIRE mode) is commanded by the WSO with a dedicated hand control (also used for manual target tracking). In this case, the probability of inadvertent laser activation ($P_{SAFE \rightarrow FIRE}$) is given by:

$$P_{SAFE \rightarrow FIRE} = P_{SAFE \rightarrow ARM} \times P_{ARM \rightarrow FIRE} \quad (6.14)$$

Assuming that the probability of inadvertent activation of the ARM mode from the SAFE condition ($P_{SAFE \rightarrow ARM}$) referred to the entire A-LTD operational life is $7E-4$, and that the probability of inadvertent activation of the FIRE mode from the ARM condition ($P_{ARM \rightarrow FIRE}$) is 1 for missions in which the WSO acts on the cockpit commands (i.e., simulated or real attack missions) and $1E-2$ in missions where the WSO does not act on the cockpit commands (e.g., ferry flights), then the overall probabilities of inadvertent laser activation (with the A-LTD in SAFE mode) are given in Table 6-2.

Table 6-2: A-LTD Risk Levels with Laser SAFE

LTD Mode	Mission	$P_{SAFE \rightarrow FIRE}$
ON/SAFE	Ferry Flight	7E-6
ON/SAFE	Test/Training	7E-4

The A-BZ is given by the sum of the area directly illuminated by the laser beam during the firing (a function of beam output diameter and divergence) and the area around the laser beam that may be inadvertently illuminated considering the overall pointing accuracy of the LTD system, the reaction time of the aircrew and the probability of failure of the system. In other terms, at any instant, the A-BZ shape can be approximated by an ellipse where the target occupies one of the foci.

With reference to Figure 6-3, the dimensions of the A-BZ can be calculated for any given location of the aircraft in space by using the following equations:

$$R_1 = \left[\frac{1}{\tan \varphi} - \frac{1}{\tan(\varphi + \delta)} \right] \cdot z \quad (6.15)$$

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$$R_2 = \frac{z \cdot \sin \delta}{\sin \varphi \cos \delta} \quad (6.16)$$

$$R_1 = \left[\frac{1}{\tan(\varphi - \delta)} - \frac{1}{\tan \varphi} \right] \cdot z \quad (6.17)$$

where:

φ = angle between LOS and horizontal in the plane containing the LOS; and

δ = pointing error plus safety margin.

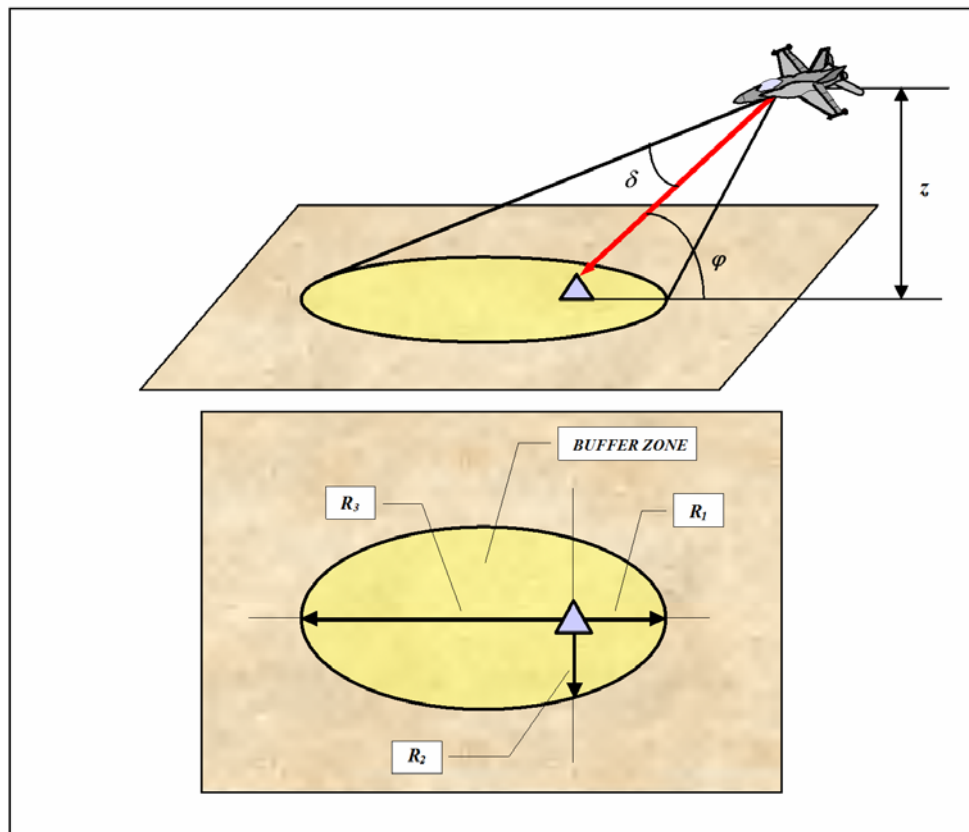


Figure 6-3: ALS Buffer Zone (A-BZ) Geometry.

The last area to be determined is the ALS Extended Buffer Zone (A-EBZ), defined as the area which may be illuminated due to specular reflection within the A-BZ. The existence of an A-EBZ can be prevented by removing all possible reflectors laying within the A-BZ (e.g., residues of previous bomb drops, metal objects). However, while evacuation of people can be performed quite easily, removal of all reflecting materials from the A-BZ can be a very demanding task for a test range and often it is impracticable. Therefore, in general, we must consider the A-EBZ as the laser hazard area to be evacuated. Determination of the A-EBZ area is not an easy task, since its dimension and shape are dependant upon the aircraft position in space and its angular velocity with respect to the reflection points located in the A-BZ (varying continuously during a mission). This is true because the hazard to the naked human eye is a function of the exposure time (T_E) and T_E to a specularly reflected laser beam varies with aircraft relative velocity. It is therefore necessary to implement a simulation tool in order to calculate the aircraft envelope limitations due to a certain pre-defined maximum evacuation area or, conversely, the dimension of the evacuation area

required with a certain pre-defined mission profile. Figure 6-4 gives an idea of the various geometric and physical parameters involved.

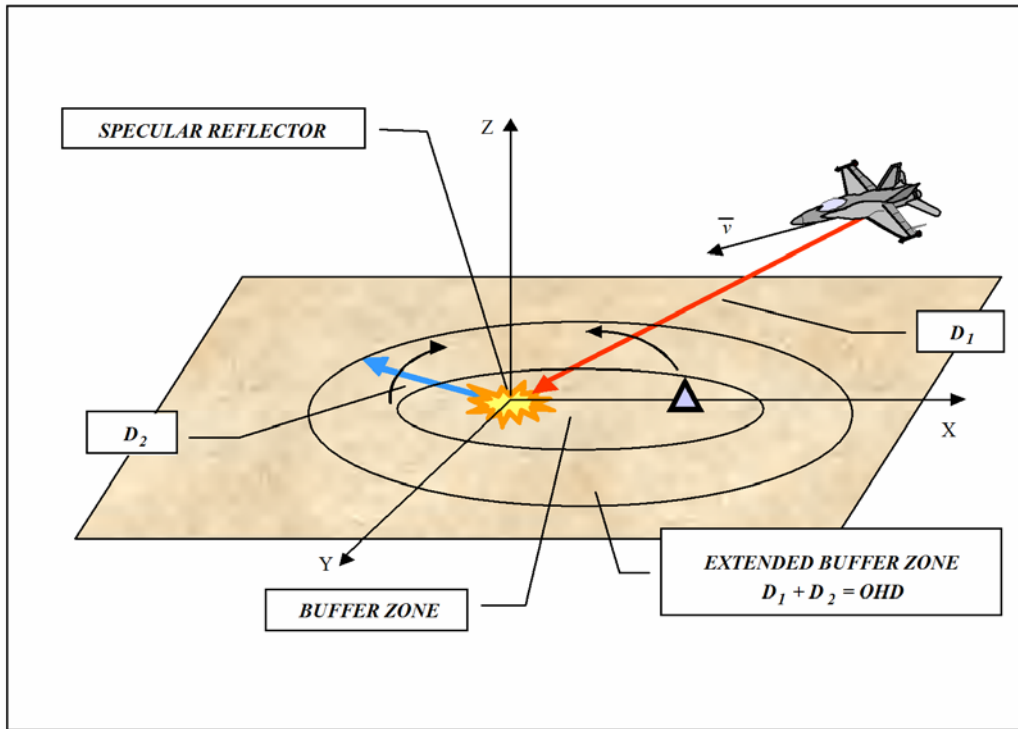


Figure 6-4: ALS Extended Buffer Zone (A-EBZ) Geometric Elements.

The algorithms needed to calculate the A-EBZ given a certain aircraft flight envelope (or the envelope restrictions to be applied for a certain pre-defined ground evacuation area), is given in the following paragraph.

6.4.2 Safety Verification Algorithm

In a Cartesian reference frame centred at the point of intersection of the LOS with the ground (point *A* in Figure 6-5), the velocity vector of the aircraft (\vec{v}) can be expressed as:

$$\vec{v} = \vec{\Omega} \times \vec{r} \quad (6.18)$$

where:

$\vec{\Omega}$ = the aircraft angular velocity vector; and

\vec{r} = aircraft position vector.

Therefore, the module of the angular velocity of the laser beam with respect to the reflection point on the ground, is given by:

$$|\vec{\Omega}| = \frac{|\vec{v}|}{|\vec{r}|} \cdot \sin \alpha \quad (6.19)$$

where α is the angle between the aircraft position and the velocity vector. This is given by:

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$$\alpha = \arccos \frac{\bar{v} \cdot \bar{r}}{|\bar{v}| \cdot |\bar{r}|} \quad (6.20)$$

Therefore, knowing the vectors \bar{v} and \bar{r} at any point in space it is possible to calculate the corresponding value of $|\bar{\Omega}|$. This value can then be compared with the minimum sweep velocity admitted for the reflected laser beam, which is a function, at any point on the ground, of beam dimension (i.e., output area and divergence) and maximum permissible exposure time $T_{E(MAX)}$.

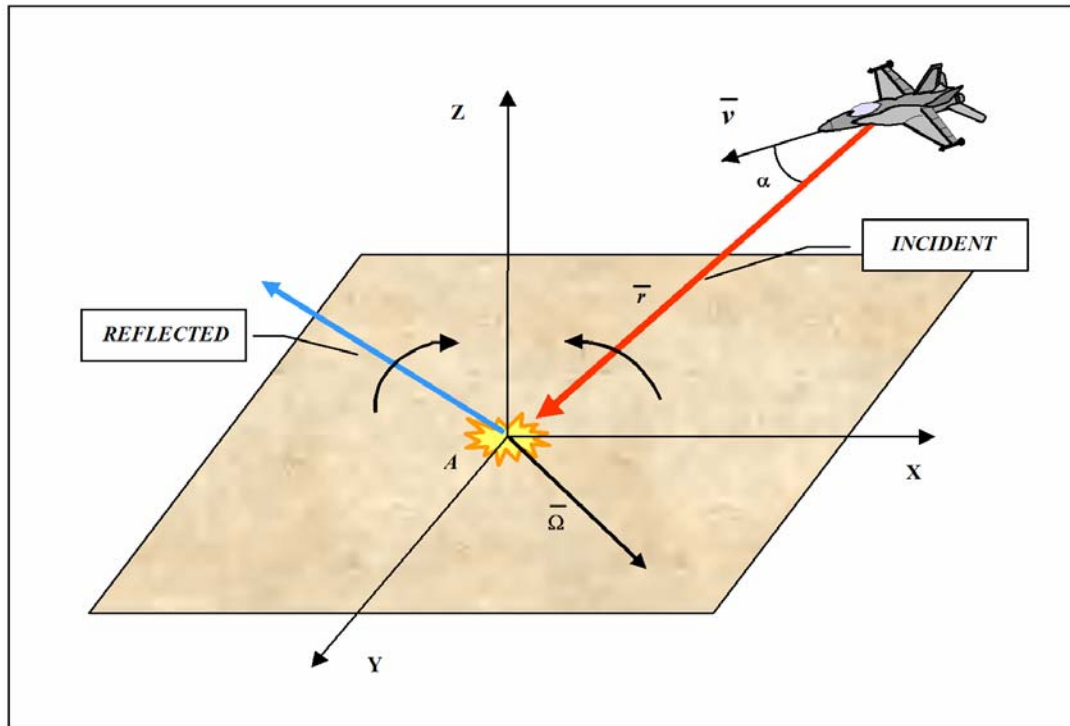


Figure 6-5: ALS Extended Buffer Zone (A-EBZ) Geometry.

In other terms, since the actual exposure time of an observer to the reflected laser radiation is a function of the angular velocity $\bar{\Omega}$, of the beam divergence and of the distance between the observer and the point A, knowing the effective time of exposure (and therefore the effective OHD), it is possible to verify the safety of a scenario, taking into account the elements listed below:

- aircraft position and velocity;
- observer position;
- reflection point;
- laser characteristics;

and comparing the effective NOHD with the sum of the distances observer-point A and point A-aircraft. The procedure described is illustrated in Figure 6-6.

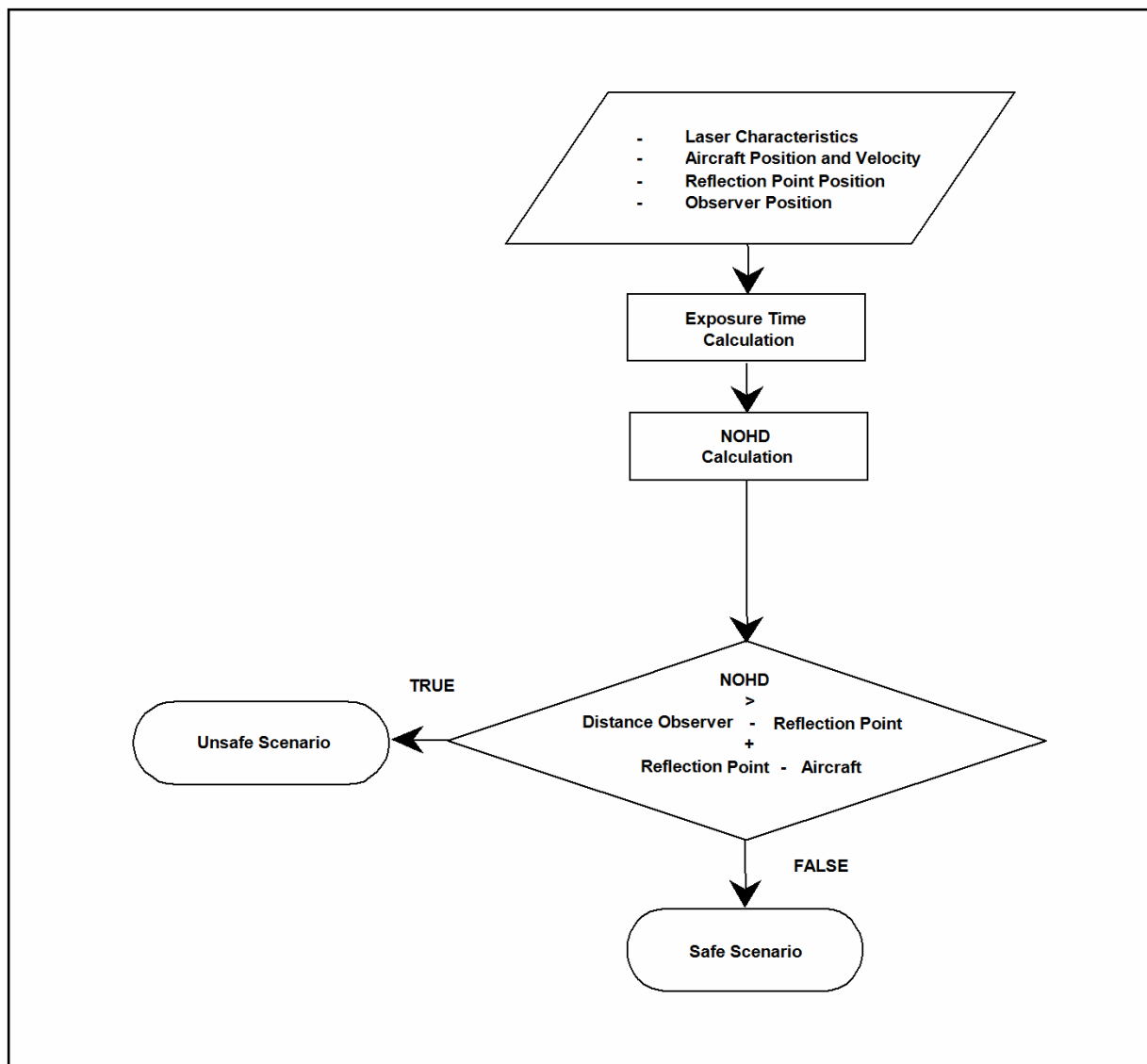


Figure 6-6: ALS Safety Verification Algorithm.

Knowing the dimensions of the BZ, it is possible to verify the observer's safety, using the procedure described in Figure 6-6 in an iterative manner for the entire BZ area. Therefore, simulation is required in order to determine the flight envelope restrictions due to eye-safety (or, conversely, the ground evacuation requirements for a given aircraft flight profile). Details about the simulation program are given in Chapter 14 of this report.

6.5 GLS SAFETY ANALYSIS

In order to allow a safe use of Ground Laser Systems (GLS) at the range, it is essential to perform dedicated safety studies with the aim of defining the operational conditions best matching both the test/training requirements and the constraints imposed by laser safety standards. One problem often encountered is due to the fact that state-of-the-art GLS are characterised by very high output energy and very low beam divergence. These parameters, associated to the operational need of executing test/training missions with both representative geometries and co-operative scenarios, determine laser hazard areas that

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in most cases are not compatible with the range size. In the following paragraphs, the general criteria for GLS laser safety are identified and various alternative methods for satisfying the SMD-W-001 Italian national safety standard are described. Furthermore, an innovative approach is proposed (not currently contemplated by the SMD-W-001 standard) allowing to perform in fully safe conditions (also with GLS systems with high output energy and low divergence), test/training operations at the PILASTER range, with scenarios representative of real operational tasks. These include Forward Air Controllers (FAC) training missions and combined employment of Ground Laser Target Designators (GLS) and Laser Guided Weapons (LGW) from tactical aircraft.

6.5.1 GLS Laser Hazard Area

As in the case of ALS, the overall Laser Hazard Area (LHA) associated to GLS such as a LRF or a LTD, is given by the sum of three different areas:

- **GLS Beam Hazard Area** (G-BHA), which exists even in the absence of commanded laser firing, and takes into account the maximum distance where the laser can be dangerous to the naked human eye (OHD), of the beam divergence and of possible events of accidental laser activation;
- **GLS Buffer Zone** (G-BZ), existing only in the event of laser firing, which accounts for the system pointing errors and for possible uncontrolled movements of the system Line of Sight (LOS) during laser firing; and
- **GLS Extended Buffer Zone** (G-EBZ), which is due to possible reflections of the laser beam within the buffer zone.

6.5.2 GLS Beam Hazard Area

In general, the G-BHA is a spherical sector with the system pointing direction as the geometrical axis, the laser beam divergence as the sector semi-aperture and a radius given by the sum of the OHD and a distance b calculated taking into account the laser beam output diameter a (see Figure 6-7).

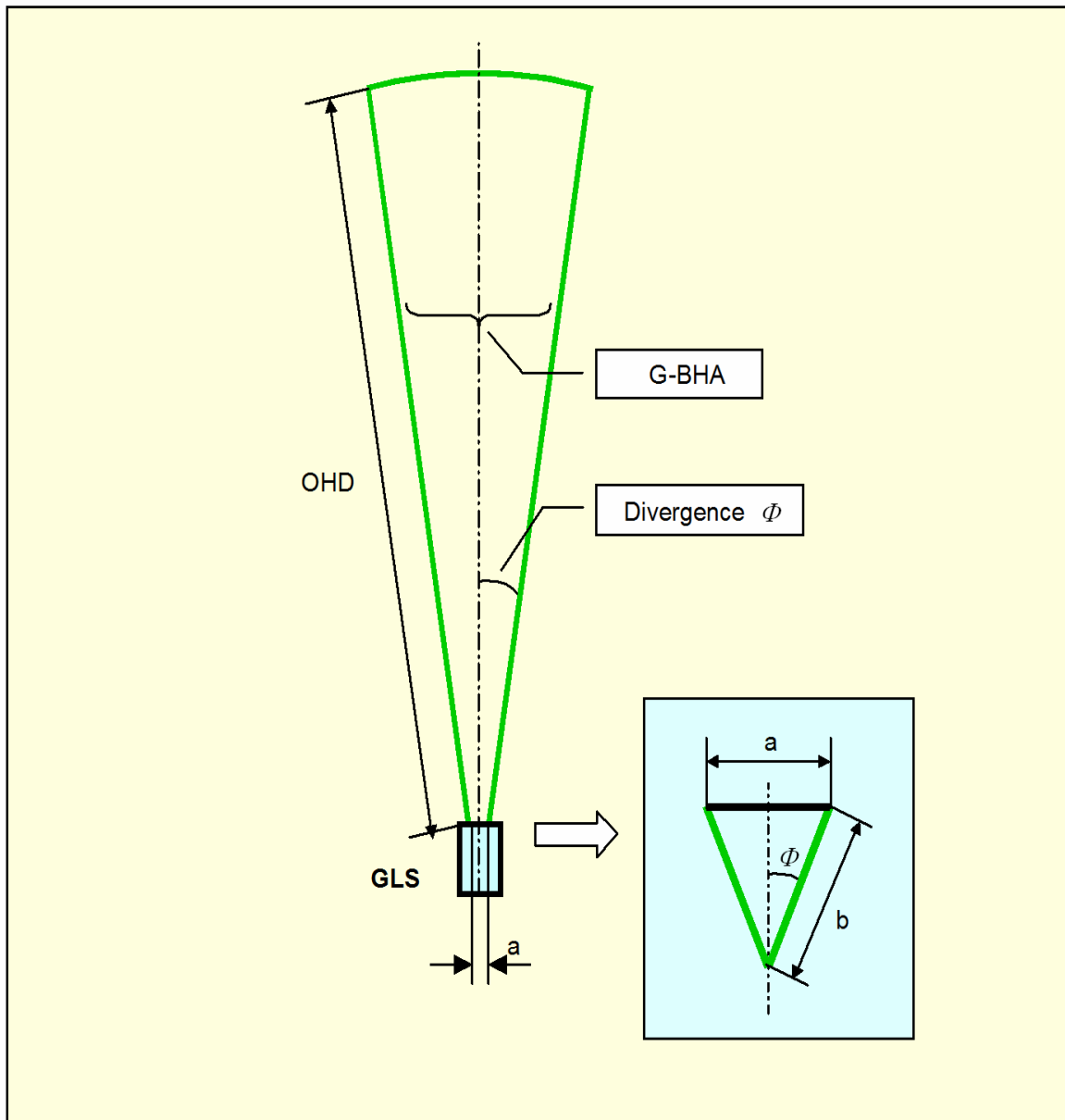


Figure 6-7: GLS Beam Hazard Area (G-BHA) Geometry.

6.5.3 GLS Buffer Zone

The G-BZ is the area which may be directly illuminated by the laser beam when the system is aimed at the target, taking into account the total GLS pointing error budget and possible events of uncontrolled LOS movements during a commanded laser activation. Therefore, also the G-BZ can be represented by a spherical sector with the system pointing direction as the geometrical axis, and with an aperture (α) given by the sum of the beam divergence (Φ), the GLS Pointing Error (PE) and the Safety Margin (SM) defined by the applicable laser safety standard (e.g., SMD-W-001); and whose radius is given by the sum of the GLS OHD and the distance c calculated taking into account the output diameter of the laser beam (a), as shown in Figure 6-8.

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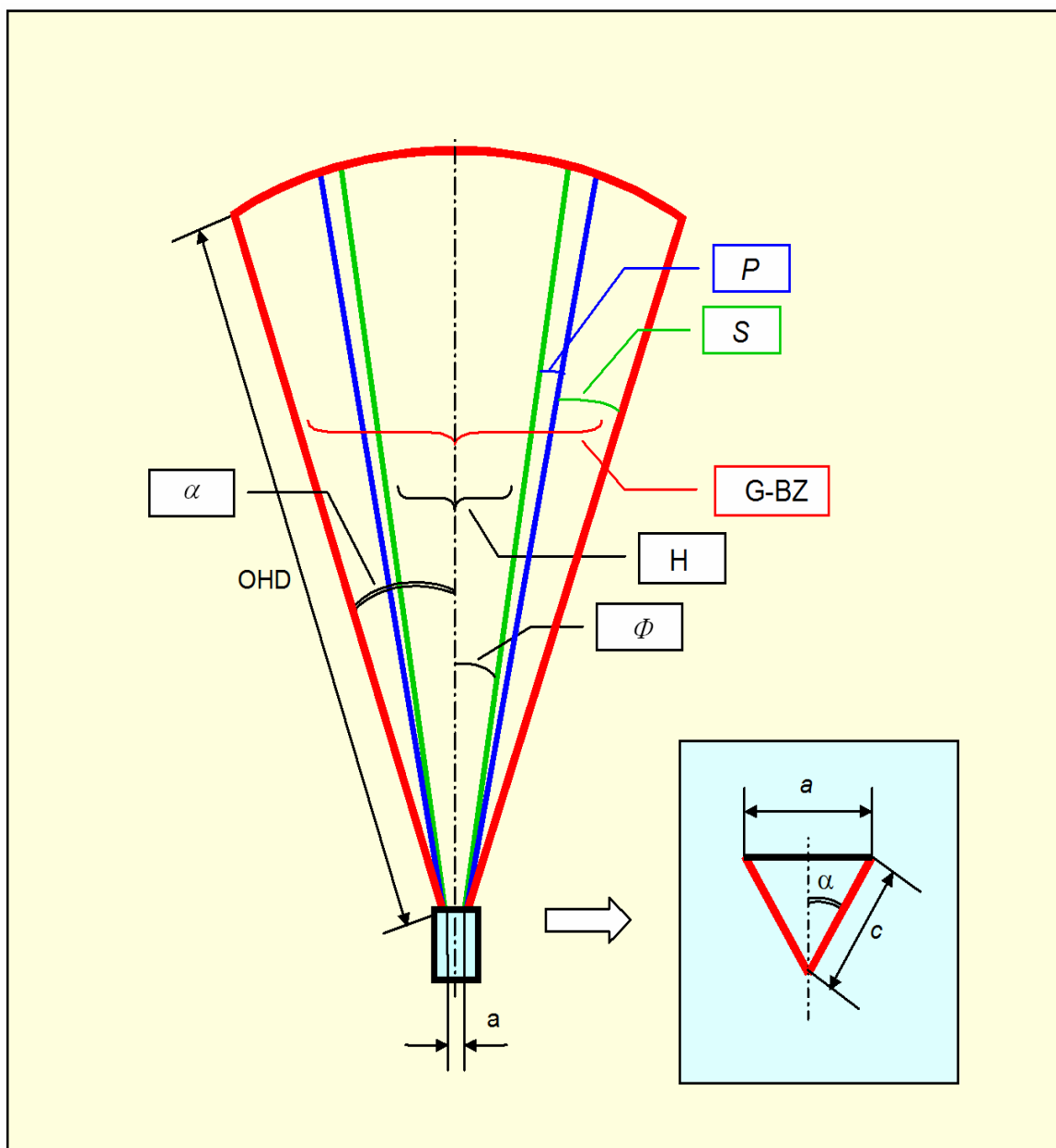


Figure 6-8: GLS Buffer Zone (G-BZ).

Obviously, the shape and dimension of the effective G-BZ (BZE) vary depending on the GLS position relative to the target, and also depending on the relative dimensions of the target with respect to the incident laser beam (also affected by the GLS-target relative geometry). These aspects are illustrated in Figure 6-9.

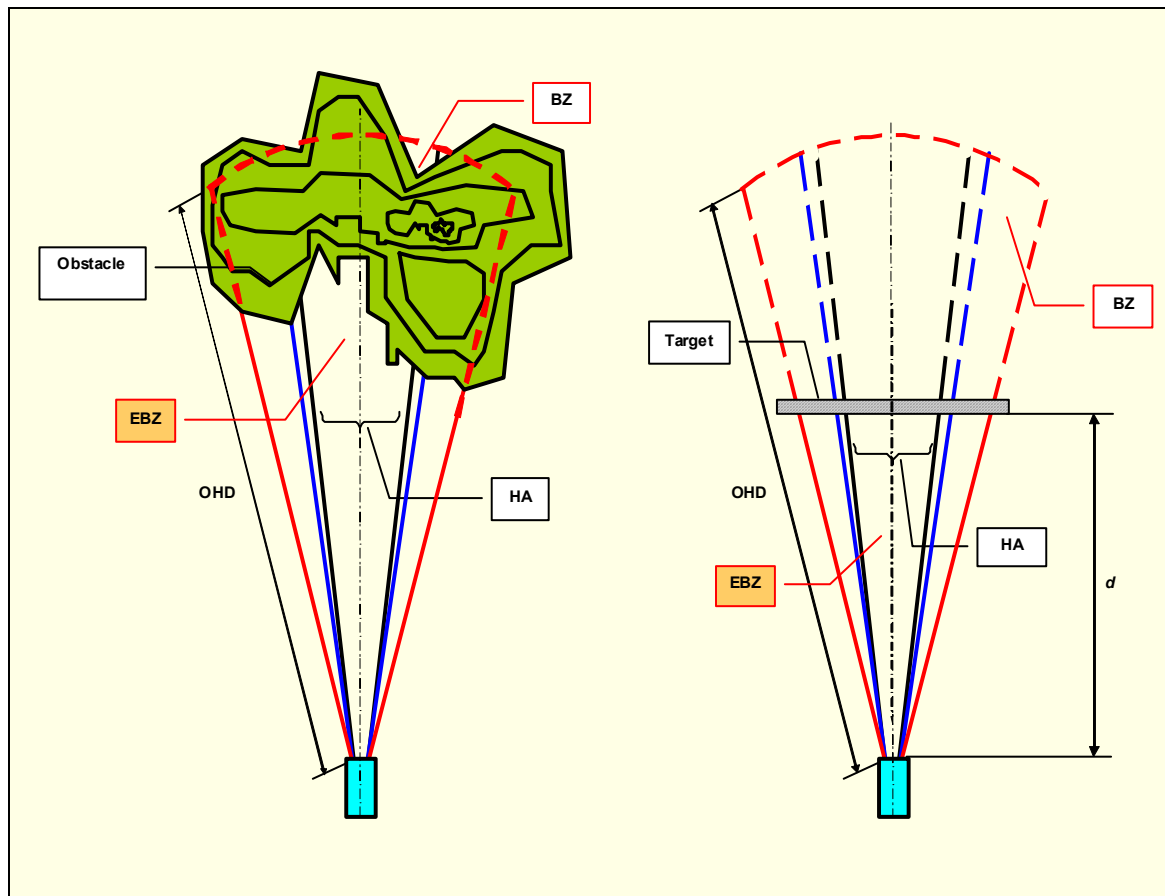


Figure 6-9: GLS Effective G-BZ (BZE) Geometry.

6.5.3.1 BZE for Single Axis LOS Misalignment

For a generic distance $d \leq \text{OHD}$ of the GLS from the target, the BZE is a spherical sector if the target dimensions are inferior to the G-BZ orthogonal section at the target location (at the specified distance and laser beam incidence angle), and is a conical section if the dimensions of the target are greater than the corresponding G-BZ orthogonal section. In the case of a laser beam normal to the target surface, the G-BZ orthogonal section is a circle with radius (r) given by:

$$r = [d \cdot \tan(\Phi + PE + SM)] + a/2 \quad (6.21)$$

Therefore, since $\alpha = \Phi + PE + SM$, we can write:

$$r = (d \cdot \tan \alpha) + a / 2 \quad (6.22)$$

When the GLS LOS is not aligned in elevation (γ) and/or in azimuth (β) to the target normal, the G-BZ footprint on the target surface is elliptical. Determination of the dimension and orientation of this Elliptical Footprint of the G-BZ (EF-BZ) is essential in order to perform GLS safety studies.

Let us consider first the two cases of horizontal ($\beta \neq 0$ and $\gamma = 0$) or vertical ($\beta = 0$ and $\gamma \neq 0$) LOS misalignment. Figure 6-10 shows the geometry relative to the horizontal misalignment (to simplify our analysis, all geometric elements are shown except the output beam diameter a that will be discussed later).

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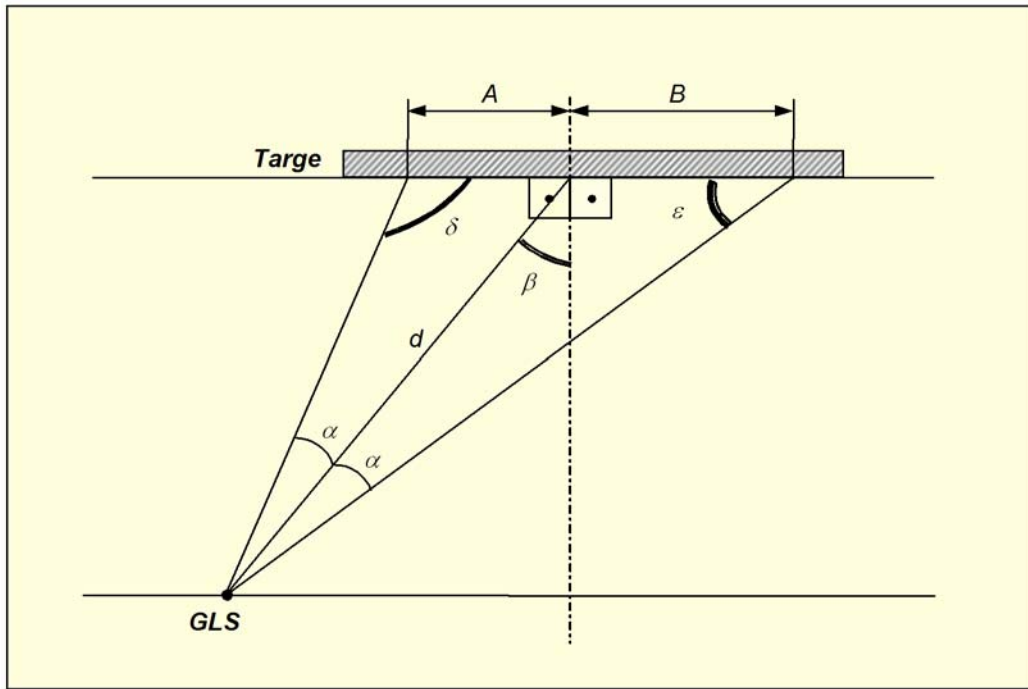


Figure 6-10: Geometry for EF-BZ Calculation.

From Figure 6-10, we notice that:

$$\varepsilon = 90 - \alpha - \beta \quad (6.23)$$

$$\delta = 90 - \alpha + \beta \quad (6.24)$$

Therefore, we can write:

$$A = \frac{d}{\cos(\alpha - \beta)} \cdot \sin \alpha \quad (6.25)$$

$$B = \frac{d}{\cos(\alpha + \beta)} \cdot \sin \alpha \quad (6.26)$$

With reference to Figure 6-11, the dimensions of the EF-BZ (not considering the output beam diameter), for the case of horizontal LOS misalignment only, are given by:

$$r_1 = A + B = d \cdot \sin \alpha \cdot \left[\frac{1}{\cos(\alpha - \beta)} + \frac{1}{\cos(\alpha + \beta)} \right] \quad (6.27)$$

$$r_2 = 2 \cdot d \cdot \tan \alpha \quad (6.28)$$

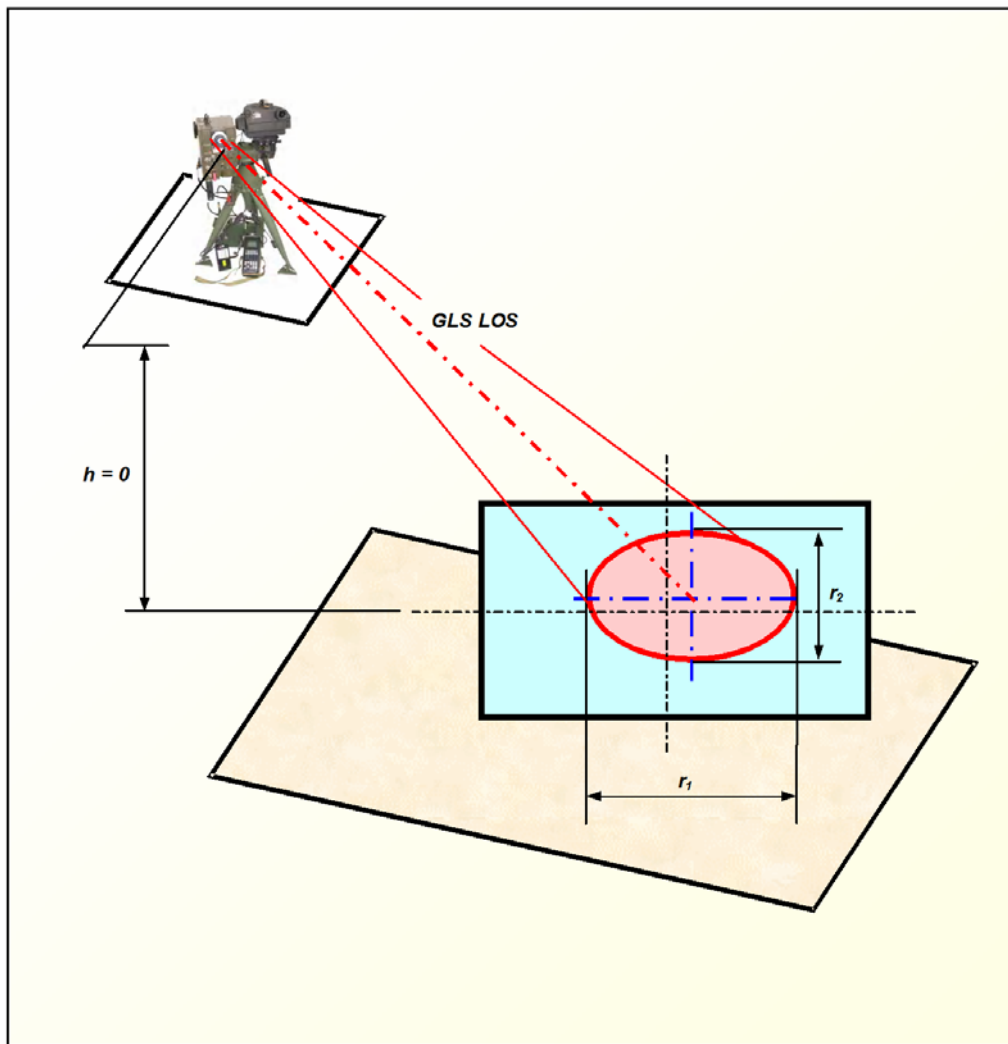


Figure 6-11: Geometry of the EF-BZ with Horizontal LOS Misalignment Only.

Obviously, in the case of vertical LOS misalignment only ($\beta = 0$ and $\gamma \neq 0$), we have:

$$r_1 = 2 \cdot d \cdot \tan \alpha \quad (6.29)$$

$$r_2 = d \cdot \sin \alpha \cdot \left[\frac{1}{\cos(\alpha - \gamma)} + \frac{1}{\cos(\alpha + \gamma)} \right] \quad (6.30)$$

Let us now consider the GLS laser beam output diameter (a). Adopting the geometry in Figure 6-12, we can write:

$$C = \frac{a}{\cos \beta} \quad (6.31)$$

The diagram illustrates the geometry of a target area and the sensor's field of view. A horizontal shaded rectangle represents the 'Target'. A vertical dashed line passes through the center of the target. The horizontal distance from the left edge of the target to the vertical dashed line is labeled A . The horizontal distance from the vertical dashed line to the right edge of the target is labeled B' . The total horizontal width of the target is labeled C . A dashed line extends from the bottom-left corner of the target area, passing through a point labeled a on a line segment. The angle between this dashed line and the vertical dashed line is labeled β . The angle between the dashed line and the line segment is labeled $90 - \beta$. The angle between the line segment and the horizontal line is labeled α . The label 'GLS' is placed near the bottom-left corner of the target area.

RTO-AG-300-V26

6.5.3.2 BZE for Double Axis LOS Misalignment

In order to extend our results to the case of simultaneous azimuth and elevation LOS misalignment we must define the conditions for the validity of equations (6.32) and (6.35), also when $\beta \neq 0$ and $\gamma \neq 0$. To facilitate the operational use of the models developed, we shall express these conditions as mathematical functions of parameters readily measurable with the instrumentation already available at the test/training range (i.e., GPS systems, theodolites and LRF). These parameters include the distance d of the GLS from the target (which, for instance, can be measured directly by the GLS) the azimuth angle β (which can be determined using GPS or theodolite measurements) and the relative height of the GLS system with respect to the target.

Let us consider, first of all, that the dimensions of the EF-BZ on the target surface do not vary if the GLS laser aperture is positioned along the perimeter of a circle laying on a plane parallel to the target surface. With reference to Figure 6-13, the EF-BZ dimensions are the same for any position of the GLS corresponding to the points of the circle with radius \overline{BE} (only varies the EF-BZ orientation). Similarly, the dimensions of the EF-BZ would be unaltered if the GLS was positioned along the perimeter of the circle with radius \overline{BC} . The angle δ_{MAX} in Figure 6-13 represents the maximum misalignment in azimuth or in elevation admitted at a given distance (d) of the GLS from the target. This angle can be calculated using equation (12) or (15), taking into account the dimensions of the target. Particularly, writing this equation:

$$r_{MIN} = d \cdot \sin \alpha \cdot \left[\frac{1}{\cos(\alpha - \delta_{MAX})} + \frac{1}{\cos(\alpha + \delta_{MAX})} \right] + \frac{a}{\cos \delta_{MAX}} \quad (6.36)$$

the value of δ_{MAX} can be calculated using the minimum dimension of the illuminated target surface (r_{MIN}).

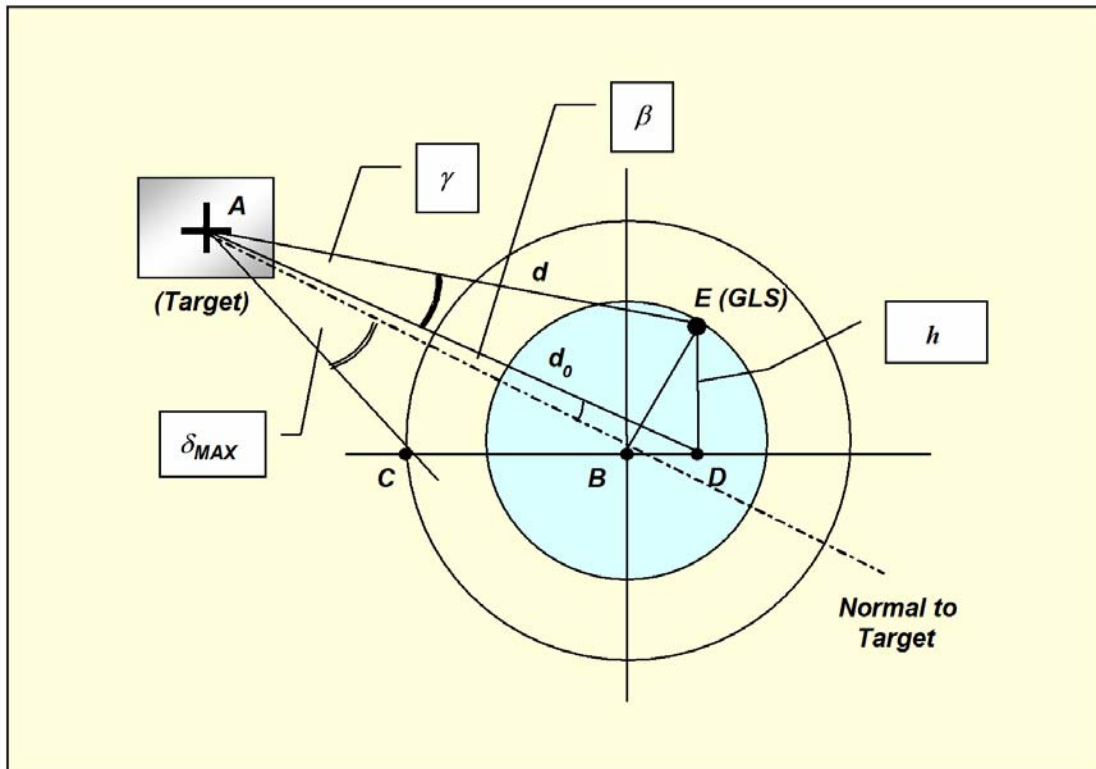


Figure 6-13: GLS-Target Geometry with Horizontal and Vertical LOS Misalignment.

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From Figure 6-13 we observe that a condition sufficient to avoid that the EF-BZ exceeds the target dimensions is the following:

$$\overline{BE} \leq \overline{BC} \quad (6.37)$$

therefore:

$$\overline{BE} \leq \overline{AB} \cdot \tan \delta_{MAX} \quad (6.38)$$

$$\overline{BE}^2 \leq \left(d^2 - \overline{BE}^2 \right) \cdot \tan^2 \delta_{MAX} \quad (6.39)$$

$$\overline{BE}^2 \leq \frac{d^2 \cdot \tan^2 \delta_{MAX}}{1 + \tan^2 \delta_{MAX}} \quad (6.40)$$

In order to express \overline{BE} as a function of the known parameters, we can write:

$$d_0^2 \cdot \sin^2 \beta + h^2 \leq \frac{d^2 \cdot \tan^2 \delta_{MAX}}{1 + \tan^2 \delta_{MAX}} \quad (6.41)$$

and then:

$$\left(d^2 - h^2 \right) \cdot \sin^2 \beta + h^2 \leq \frac{d^2 \cdot \tan^2 \delta_{MAX}}{1 + \tan^2 \delta_{MAX}} \quad (6.42)$$

From the (6.42), setting:

$$K_1 = \frac{d^2 \tan^2 \delta_{MAX}}{1 + \tan^2 \delta_{MAX}} \quad (6.43)$$

$$K_2 = d^2 \sin^2 \beta \quad (6.44)$$

$$K_3 = 1 - \sin^2 \beta \quad (6.45)$$

we obtain:

$$h_{MAX} = \sqrt{\frac{K_1 - K_2}{K_3}} \quad (6.46)$$

$$\beta_{MAX} = \arcsin \sqrt{\frac{h^2 - K_1}{h^2 - d^2}} \quad (6.47)$$

where h_{MAX} is the maximum altitude difference admitted between the GLS and the target, with the GLS positioned at a known slant-range (d) from the target and with a known LOS azimuth (β); while β_{MAX} is the maximum admitted horizontal LOS misalignment of the GLS with respect to the target normal, with the GLS positioned at a known slant-range (d) from the target and with an altitude difference GLS-target (h) also known. As already mentioned, the G-BZ can be represented by a tri-dimensional geometric figure (i.e., spherical sector or conical section). Therefore, depending on the GLS position and angular displacement with respect to the target, and the characteristics of the natural and man-made obstacles existing in the range area, there will be different requirements for both the Ground Evacuation Areas (GEA) and the Hazard Air Space (HAS). Particularly, while the GEA is clearly defined by the G-BZ intersection with the ground surface, the HAS exists only if the G-BZ is not entirely limited by natural/

man-made obstacles (including the target), or if the GLS/target are located in a position higher than the possible air traffics. The concepts illustrated are summarised in Figure 6-14.

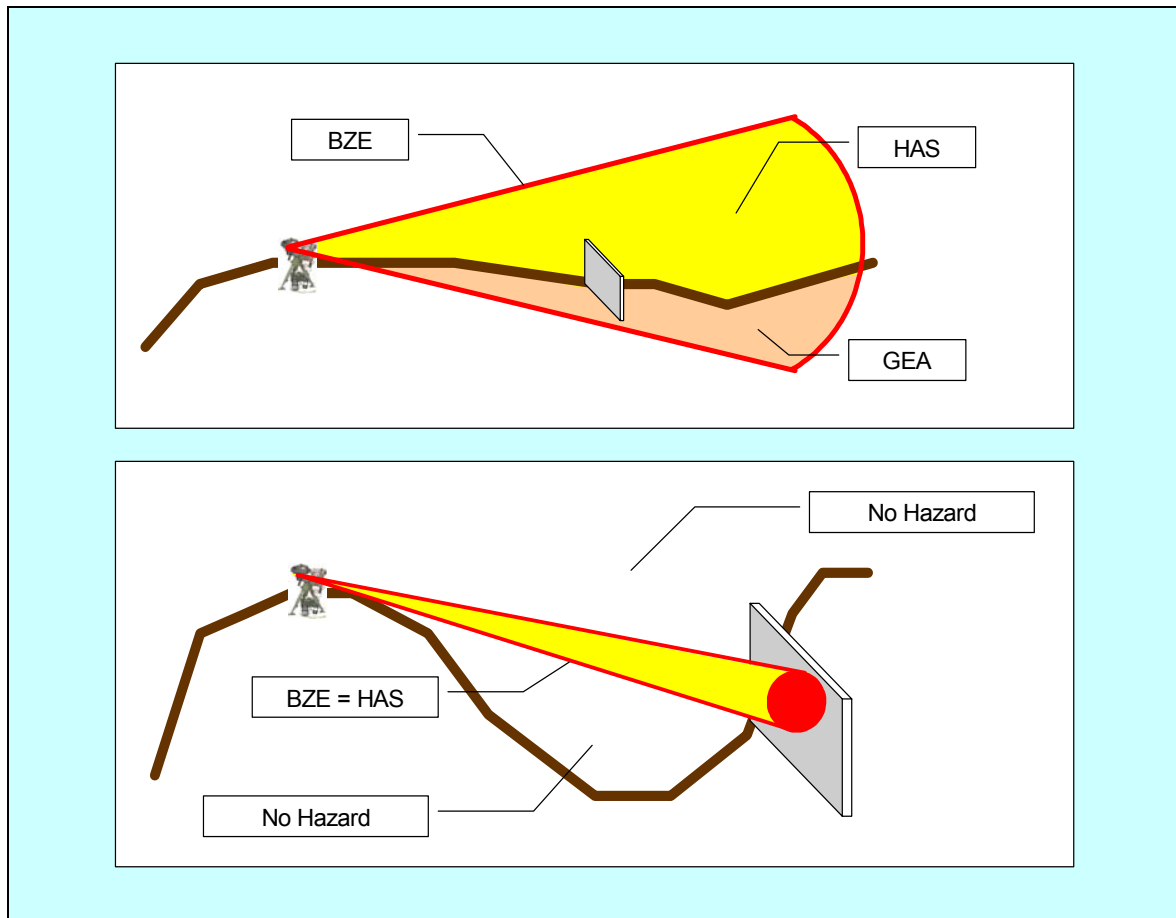


Figure 6-14: Ground Evacuation Area (GEA) and Hazard Air Space (HAS).

6.5.4 Extended Buffer Zone

As already seen in the case of ALS systems, when reflecting objects are present in the G-BZ, it is necessary to consider another hazard area, called Extended Buffer Zone (G-EBZ). According to the SMD-W-001 laser safety standard, the dimensions of the G-EBZ are calculated in different ways, depending on the type of reflector (i.e., specular or diffuse) present in the G-BZ. In general, however, in the case of diffuse reflection (e.g., reflection from a target suitably built and painted to maximise the Lambertian reflection component), the G-EBZ usually is so small that they can be neglected. On the other hand, in the worst case of a specular reflection in the G-BZ, the G-EBZ will in general determine the existence of an Extended GEA (EGEA) and/or Extended HAS (EHAS), with dimensions and geometries affected by the ground altitude profile, by the obstacles and by the GLS position relative to the target (similarly to ALS, the EGEA/EHAS for GLS are bounded by a surface generated by a vector centred at the reflection point, whose intensity is such that the sum of the distance GLS-reflector with the vector length itself is equal to the OHD). Obviously, removal of reflecting objects in the GEA prevents the existence of an EGEA.

6.5.5 Range Safety Procedures

According to laser hazard areas calculations results, appropriate procedures can be defined for implementation at the laser range, in order to guarantee a safe and practical employment of GLS. These

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procedures, have to follow, in general, the national safety regulations and standards (e.g., SMD-W-001 or JSP 390). However, in many real cases the calculated laser hazard areas for the required mission geometries, are not be compatible with the range size. This is mainly due to the very high energy output and low divergence of state-of-the-art GLS. Therefore, there are cases where additional criteria have to be adopted in order to allow a safe execution of test/training tasks with representative mission geometries and co-operative scenarios.

6.5.5.1 Procedures in Accordance with SMD-W-001

The Safety Margin (SM) to be adopted for G-BZ calculations is defined by the applicable laser safety standards (e.g., STANAG 3606 and SMD-W-001). Referring to the STANAG 3606 and to the Italian SMD-W-001 national standard, the SM to be adopted for ground systems is 10, 5 or 2 mrad depending on the stability of the system LOS. Furthermore, the following procedures have been developed in accordance with the GLS safety analysis concepts previously illustrated and with the safety standards recommendations.

Procedure N° 1

- A target should be used with shape and dimensions adequate to contain the entire EF-BZ at the defined GLS-target slant-ranges and GLS LOS incidence angles. The G-BZ has to be calculated taking into account the output diameter of the laser beam (a), the beam divergence (Φ), the pointing error (PE) of the GLS, and the additional safety margin (SM) contemplated by the applicable safety standards (e.g., STANAG-3606 and SMD-W-001). The target has to be free from fenditures or apertures and to be characterised by a diffuse reflectivity.
- Access in the G-BZ should be prohibited to unprotected personnel.
- Intersection of the G-BZ with the ground and natural/man-made obstacles should be avoided.
- The GLS operator should verify, before activating the laser, that the LOS of the GLS is aimed at the centre of the selected target (GLS operator).
- The use of magnifying optical instruments not suitably filtered should be prohibited in the entire laser range.

Procedure N° 2

If it is not possible to use a target with the characteristics previously mentioned, the following actions should be implemented:

- Remove all reflecting objects present in the GEA.
- Prohibit access of unprotected personnel in the GEA.
- Prohibit flying into the HAS without suitable aircrew protection.
- Prohibit the use of magnifying optical instruments not suitably filtered in the laser range.

Procedure N° 3

If it is not possible to remove reflecting objects in the GEA, it is required to:

- Prohibit access of unprotected personnel in the EGEA.
- Prohibit flying into the EHAS without suitable aircrew protection.
- Prohibit the use of magnifying optical instruments not suitably filtered in the laser range.

6.5.5.2 PILASTER GLS Safety Procedure

An additional option was conceived in order to allow a safe execution of test/training tasks at the PILASTER laser range, with representative mission geometries (i.e., GLS-target slant-ranges, height differences and LOS incidence angles). An essential pre-requisite for implementation of this procedure is a dedicated test activity aimed at determining the GLS LOS pointing accuracy (PE_{eff}) and the effective beam divergence (Φ_{eff}), by measuring the GLS laser spot position/diameter on the target surface. Both parameters may in fact be significantly different from those predicted by calculations or quoted in the technical documentation provided by the manufacturer. Using the experimental data the EF-BZ can be calculated with $\alpha = \Phi_{eff} + PE_{eff}$ (i.e., without considering any additional SM), and the following procedure can be implemented.

Procedure N° 4

- A target is used with shape and dimensions adequate to contain the entire EF-BZ at the defined GLS-target slant-ranges and GLS LOS incidence angles. The G-BZ has to be calculated taking into account the output diameter of the laser beam (a), the effective beam divergence (Φ_{eff}) and the effective pointing error (PE_{eff}) of the GLS. The target has to be free from fenditures or apertures and to be characterised by a diffuse reflectivity.
- Access in the G-BZ is prohibited to unprotected personnel.
- Intersection of the G-BZ with the ground and natural/man-made obstacles has to be avoided.
- The GLS operator verifies, before activating the laser, that the LOS of the GLS is aimed at the centre of the selected target (GLS operator).
- The laser spot is monitored in real-time by using the PILASTER NIR cameras, in order to continuously verify that during laser firing the entire spot is on the illuminated target surface. The GLS laser is immediately deactivated if the laser spot deviates from the target centre (significantly exceeding the PE_{eff}) or if the spot is not entirely on the target surface.
- The use of magnifying optical instruments not suitably filtered is prohibited in the entire laser range.

6.5.5.3 Operational Considerations

There are important operational considerations to be done about the procedures previously described. Although in theory all of them are possible options for GLS safe operation at the range, for reasons of practicality the Procedures N° 2 and N° 3 are not commonly implemented. The removal of reflecting objects in the GEA, imposed by procedure n° 2, is in fact extremely difficult (if not impossible) to be done at a test/training range. Procedure N° 3, on the other hand, may determine an EGEA with dimensions exceeding the size of the laser range ground area. Furthermore, implementation of both Procedures N° 2 and N° 3 determine the existence of no-flying areas (HAS and EHAS respectively) which, in some cases, may exceed the dimensions of the range controlled air-space. Therefore, only the Procedures N° 1 and N° 4 are to be considered viable options in most cases of practical interest. However, the Procedure N° 1 has the disadvantage of requiring the adoption of a SM in the EF-BZ calculations (following the safety standards recommendations), which determines considerable limitations in the GLS-target slant-range, relative height and angular displacement envelopes. Therefore, the Procedure N° 4, developed during this research for employment at the PILASTER range, is the option best matching both the eye-safety requirements and the need of executing test/training missions in a variety of conditions (GLS-target geometry, terrain profiles, co-operative tasks, guided weapons deliveries, etc.) representative of the real operational scenarios.

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6.6 REFERENCES

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Chapter 7 – LABORATORY EXPERIMENTAL ACTIVITIES

7.1 GENERAL

A number of experiments were performed in order to select suitable sensors/systems for the PILASTER range, optimising operational and test/training activities with the systems in service (e.g., LTDs and LGWs), and developing new systems (e.g., LOAS). Some of these experiments, such as LGW seeker detection threshold determination, PILASTER sensors selection/characterisation tests and measurements of target materials reflection properties, were conveniently performed in a laboratory facility. On the other hand, further important measurements and tests were performed during appropriate field and flight test sessions.

Laboratory experimental activities performed during this program included the following:

- Determination of LGW Seekers Detection Thresholds;
- Measurements of Surface/Paints Reflection Properties (PILASTER targets);
- PILASTER Sensors Testing and Calibration;
- LOAS Laser System Testing; and
- Test of protection filters and eye-wears (cinetheodolites, ground crew and aircrew).

This chapter describes the laboratory experimental activities carried out during the program. Particularly, the test aims, specific test methods (instrumentation requirements, details of measures performed, etc.) and test results, are discussed in the following sections.

7.2 LGW SEEKER DETECTION THRESHOLD

The primary aim of this experiment was to determine the Minimum Detectable Power Density (MDPD) of a real LGW seeker. The secondary aim was to develop a test method valid for any LGW seeker system. For classification reasons, the name of the tested LGW seeker is omitted. With the available instrumentation, seeker detection threshold determination was performed in two steps:

- Seeker activation codes generation (i.e., pulse duration, PRF and train); and
- Measurement of the MDPD (pulse) based on train energy measurements.

The two steps are discussed below.

7.2.1 Seeker Activation Codes Generation

The STANAG 3733 titled: “Laser Pulse Repetition Frequencies (PRF) Used for Target Designation and Weapon Guidance”, defines the LGW activation codes characteristics and the related tolerances.

This activity was performed in order to check the LGW seeker functionality and properly preparing the successive power density measurements. The activity consisted in determining adequate pulse and pulse train durations, matching the instrumentation response and compatible with activation of the LGW seekers (i.e., PRF codes defined by the STANAG 3733).

In order to perform these measurements, the following instrumentation was used:

- Q-Switched Nd:YAG laser (Quantel STU-452/N);
- Nd:YAG Attenuation Filters (Quantel);

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- Beam collimating optics (FIAR STU-452/N);
- Silicon Photodiode Detector (Newport Low Power Detector mod. 818-SL);
- Laser Power-meter (Newport Dual Channel Optical Meter mod. 2835); and
- Digital Oscilloscope (HP mod. 54502A and LeCroy mod. 154-B54).

Additionally, a control panel was required, including the laser remote control and the LGW seeker electrical and mechanical interfaces (necessary for guidance circuit's activation). The instrumentation set-up is shown in Figure 7-1. A detail of the target simulator is shown in Figure 7-2.

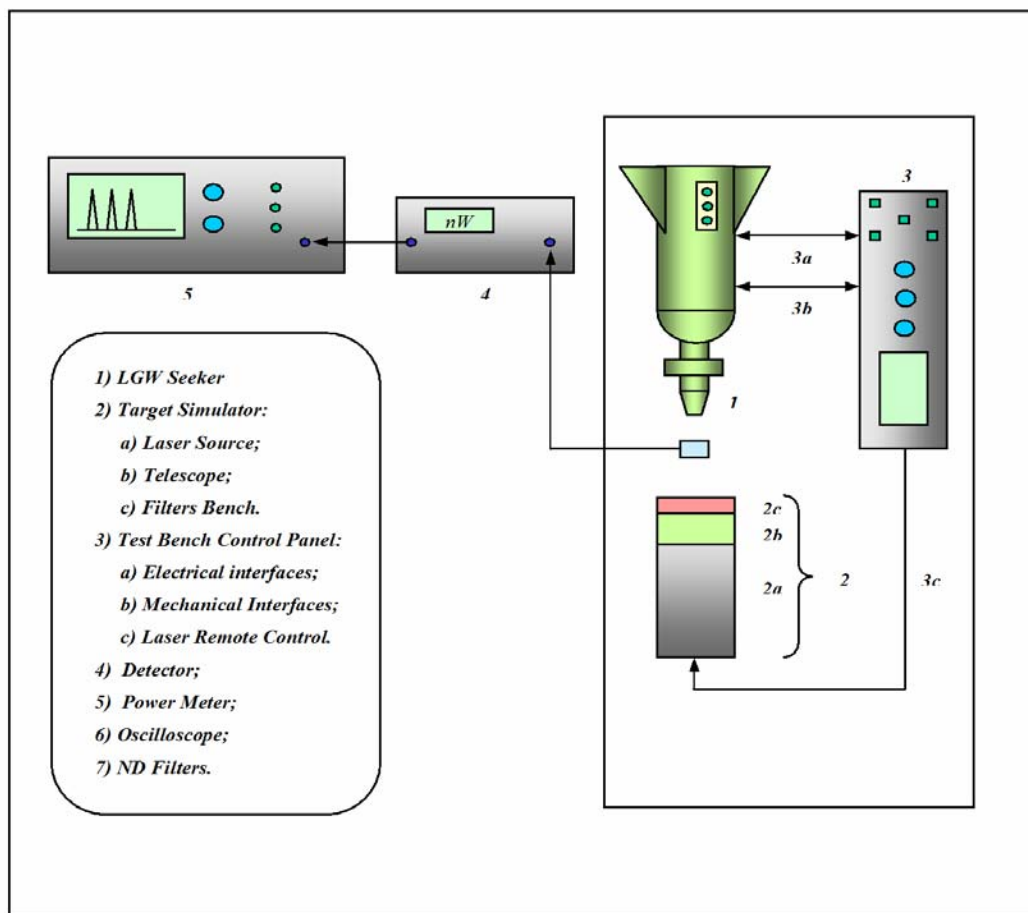


Figure 7-1: Seeker Test Instrumentation Set-up.

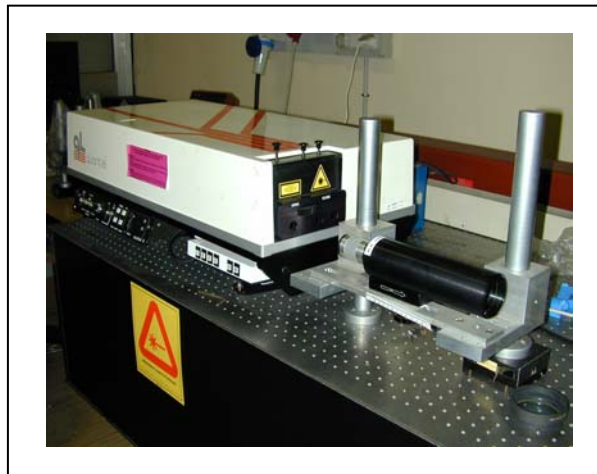


Figure 7-2: Target Simulator.

An initial experiment, performed with a real LGW seeker and the described instrumentation, permitted to fully characterise and reproduce some LGW activation codes (PRF according to STANAG 3733). A number of 24 activation codes were reproduced during the test (in the 10 *Hz* nominal band). After various attempts, it was verified that, for the seeker under test, the minimum pulse train duration for guidance circuits activation was about 0.5 *sec* (0.5 ± 0.1 *sec*).

The minimum number of pulses contained in each guidance activation train was variable between 5 and 6 depending on the selected code. Some oscilloscope traces are shown in the Figure 7-3 to Figure 7-5 relative to measurements performed with a specific code. Using that code, with a pulse duration of 9 *ms* and an average amplitude of 72.4 *mV* displayed on the oscilloscope (72.4 ± 2.0 *mV*), corresponding to a laser energy density of about 120 *pJ/cm*² (train of 19 pulses), the Full Width at Half Maximum (FWHM) was about 4.6 *ms* (4.6 ± 0.5 *ms*).

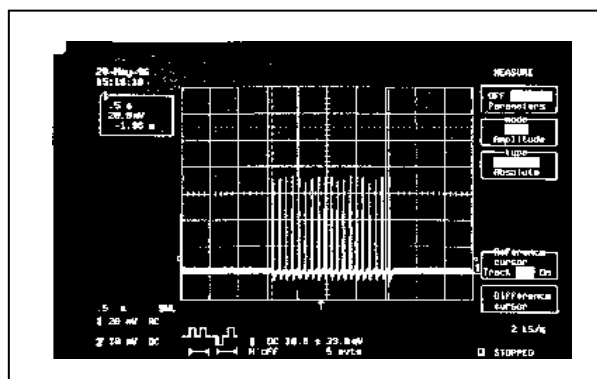


Figure 7-3: Typical Train Profile.

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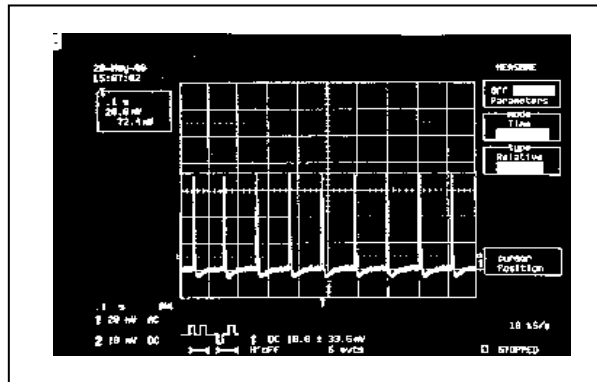


Figure 7-4: Train Pulses Amplitude.

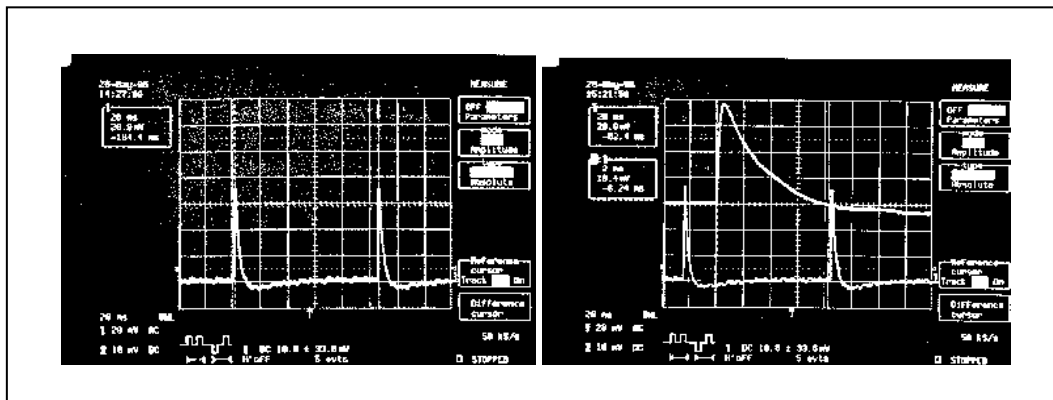


Figure 7-5: Pulse-to-Pulse Period and Pulse Duration.

7.2.2 MDPD Determination

The approach adopted for determining the Minimum Detectable Power Density (MDPD) of the seeker is described in this paragraph. The laser output energy was progressively reduced using filters of increasing neutral optical densities. Adding various suitable filters, the laser power reached a threshold value (i.e., a further small increase of attenuation prevents the seeker activation). The experimental set-up is shown in Figure 7-6.

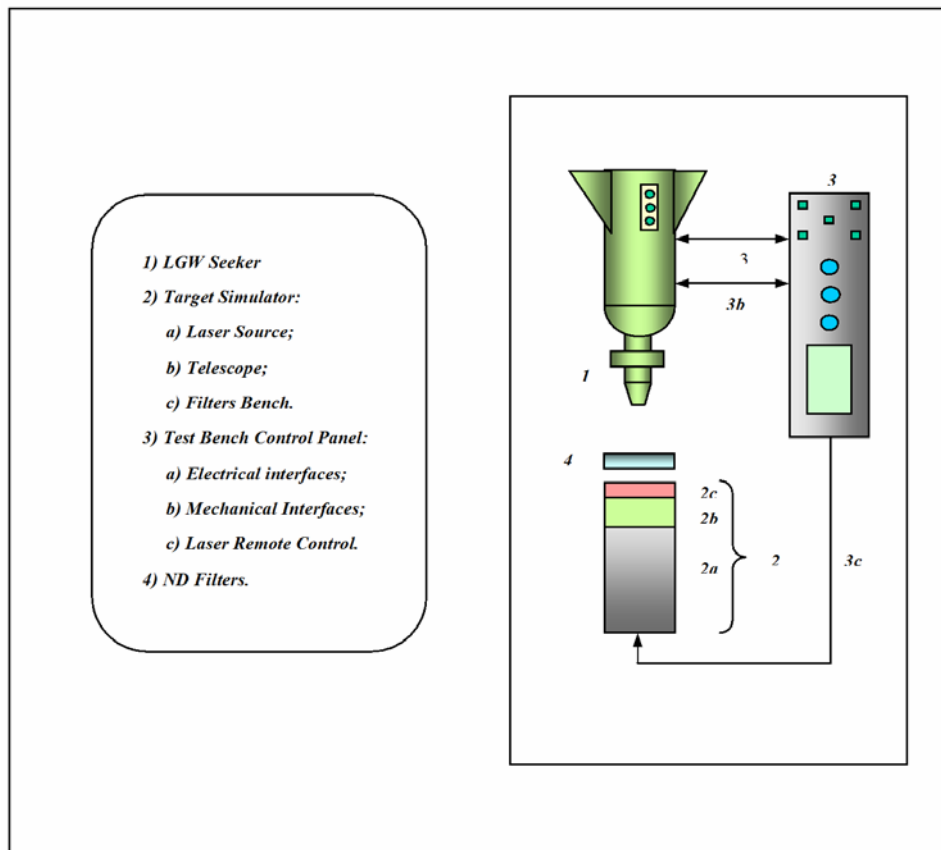


Figure 7-6: Seeker MDPD Test Instrumentation Set-up.

After determining the limiting condition (i.e., maximum attenuation compatible with seeker activation), the MDPD value was determined with 2 different methods:

- 1) By measurement, adopting the instrumentation set-up described in Figure 7-1 (with interposition of the ND filters between the detector and the target simulator), using the power meter and oscilloscope readouts; and
- 2) By calculation, knowing the peak power output of the target simulator and the transmittance of the ND filters.

Method 1: Using the same seeker mentioned in the previous paragraph and the same activation code (i.e., pulse peak amplitude $72.4 \pm 2.0 \text{ mV}$, train energy density 120 pJ/cm^2 , FWHM $4.6 \pm 0.5 \text{ ms}$ and max pulse duration 9 ms), an experiment was performed with the procedure described above. Using filters with an optical density greater than 0.25 ND (corresponding to a 56% transmittance), the seeker under test was not activated. With 0.25 ND, the oscilloscope measured a pulse peak amplitude of 29.9 mV. Oscilloscope traces of the original and attenuated pulse trains are shown in Figure 7-7 and Figure 7-8.

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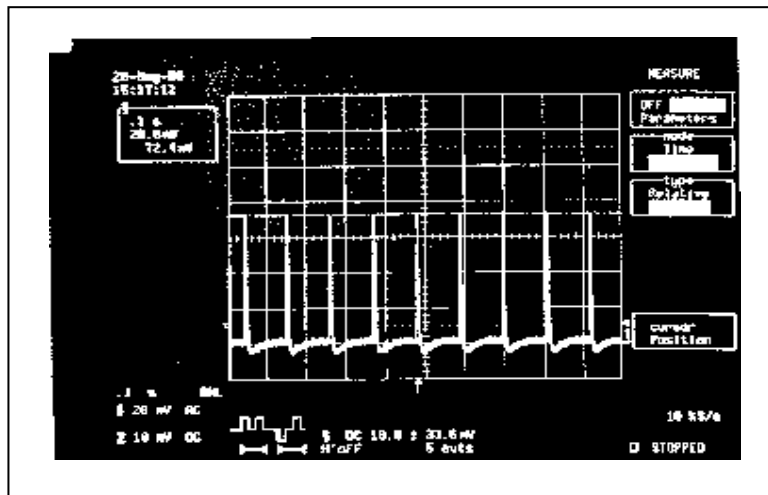


Figure 7-7: Target Simulator Pulses Amplitude (72.4 mV).

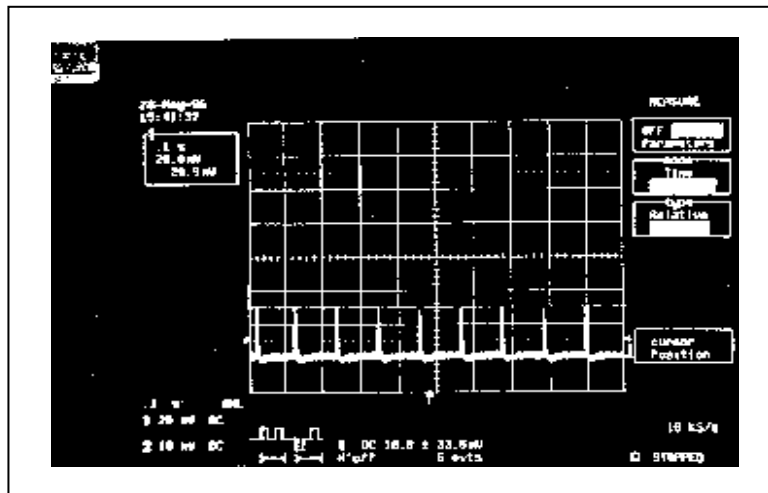


Figure 7-8: Train Pulses Amplitude.

Since the voltages measured by the oscilloscope were proportional to the energy measured by the power meter, the MDPD was estimated using 2 series of energy density measurements associated to the train of pulses. The results obtained with this method are given in Table 7-1.

Table 7-1: MDPD Estimation (Method 1)

Measurement Series	1	57.8 48.0 54.0 47.0 48.0 47.5 49.0 50.0 49.0 47.0 44.0
	2	54.0 54.0 54.0 48.0 47.0 51.0 49.0 49.0 45.0 45.0 45.0
Energy Densities		Train (avg): $E_T \cong 50 \text{ pJ/cm}^2$ Pulse: $E_P \cong 2.6 \text{ pJ/cm}^2$
Pulse Power Density Hypothesis (a): the pulse is assumed rectangular		$W_P \cong 2.6 \text{ pJ/cm}^2 / 9 \text{ ms} \cong 2.9 \times 10^{-10} \text{ W/cm}^2$
Pulse Power Density Hypothesis (b): the pulse is assumed triangular (semi-base = FWHM)		$W_P \cong 2.6 \text{ pJ/cm}^2 / 4.6 \text{ ms} \cong 5.7 \times 10^{-10} \text{ W/cm}^2$
MDPD (pulse)		$2.9 \text{ } \mu\text{W/m}^2 < \text{MDPD} < 5.7 \text{ } \mu\text{W/m}^2$

Method 2: Using filters with an optical density greater than 0.25 ND, the seeker under test was not activated. Therefore, since this limiting condition corresponded to a 56% transmittance, the MDPD value was calculated using the target simulator known power density output ($8 \text{ } \mu\text{W/m}^2$) as follows:

$$\text{MDPD} = 8 \text{ } \mu\text{W/m}^2 \times 0.56 \cong 4.5 \text{ } \mu\text{W/m}^2 \quad (7.1)$$

7.3 LASER BEAM PROFILING

Laser Beam Profiling (LBP) in a laboratory facility was an additional requirement for the PILASTER program, as it was necessary in order to determine the output characteristics of the laser systems under test, before performing experimental measurements at the range. Furthermore, some experiments performed during the program (i.e., laboratory tests, field trials and flight test activities) had to be carried out in well defined and repeatable conditions, in order to detect errors affecting the measurements, thus defining the validity and applicability of the results. Also in these cases LBP was used.

Therefore, various CCD cameras and suitable software packages for beam profiling were examined, in order to select a combination suitable for matching the PILASTER test requirements. The features common to all software packages included:

- Intensity distribution analysis;
- Gaussian fit analysis;
- Image, capture, store, and playback of 2-D and 3-D intensity plots; and
- Printing of text and pictures.

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Typical examples of a program outputs are shown in Figure 7-9.

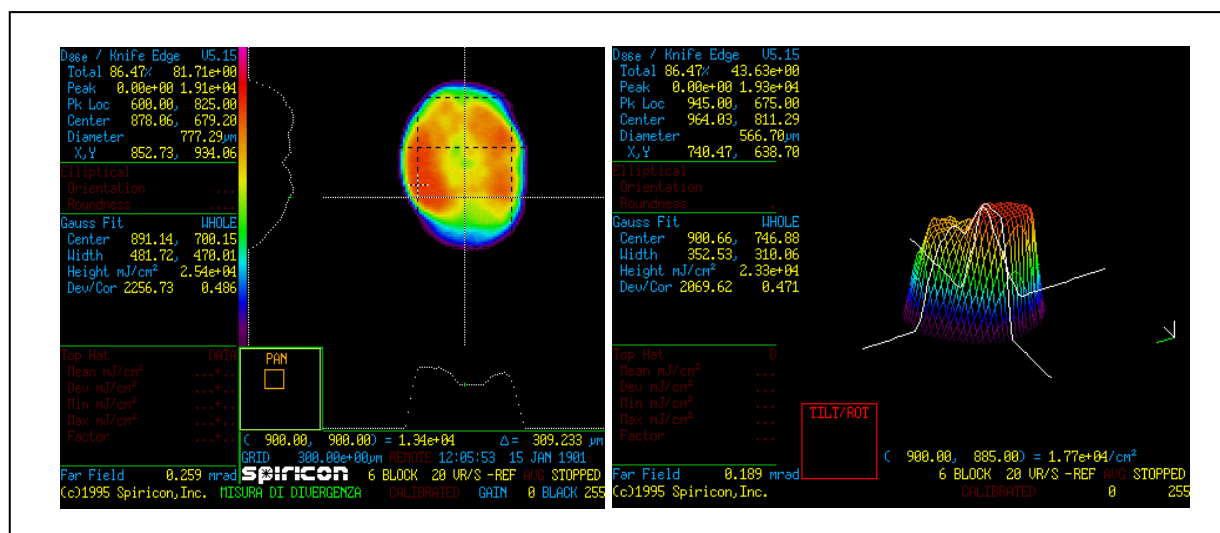


Figure 7-9: Spiricon™ (Ophir Optonics Ltd.) 2-D and 3-D Display Format.

In order to match the various PILASTER requirements, the laser beam profiler should be able to analyse both continuous wave (CW) and pulsed lasers, and detect a wide range of different signals (power levels, PRFs, pulse durations, etc.). The main technologies available today for laser beam diagnostics are:

- Spatial cameras as the beam characterisation system.
- Moving mechanical slit or knife edges to scan across the incoming beam.

The main advantage of the mechanical scanning devices over a camera type laser beam profiler is the large dynamic range that allows accurate measurements of beams with both high and low intensities. On the other hand, camera type laser beam profilers are excellent for fast and detailed analysis of laser beam intensity profiles, but are limited in their accuracy due to a relatively low dynamic range.

However, to overcome the limited dynamic range of a camera type beam profiler and accurately measure faint laser beam structures, it is possible to sample the beam several times, each measurement being performed at a different attenuation or electronic shutter speed.

Although initial experiments were carried out with the Spiricon™ CCD profiler, the BeamStar™ profiler (by Duma Optonics Ltd.) was finally selected for the PILASTER program. Various types of cameras can be used with this software. The standard camera, supplied with the beam profiler software (Figure 7-10), is a Monochrome Interline Transfer CCD ½", with an active area of 6.47×4.83 mm. The camera spectral response is 190 – 1100 nm and the maximum power density on filter is 50 W/cm^2 . With this CCD camera, using electronic shuttering and ND filters, the system (with software) can capture and reply pictures and statistics from both continuous and pulsed lasers. In the first case, the maximum optical dynamic range is $2 \times 10^8:1$ (shutter speeds 1/50 to 1/10000 sec) and the maximum frame rate is 30 Hz. For pulsed lasers (1 – 100 Hz), the optical dynamic range is 256:1. For transmission of the output images (640×480 resolution) and data, an RS-232 standard interface is available (also available for a remote control).

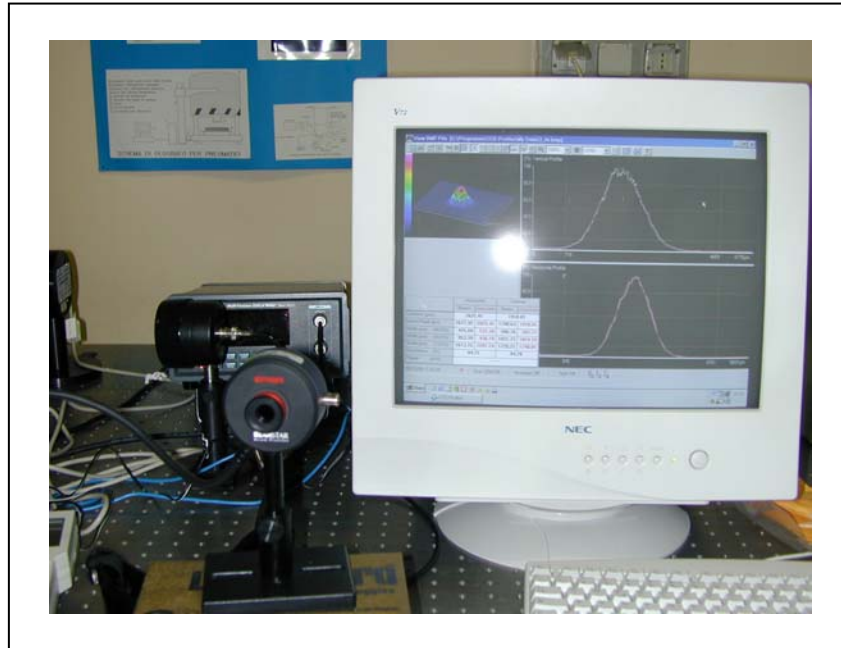


Figure 7-10: Beamstar™ CCD Camera.

7.4 SURFACE REFLECTION MEASUREMENTS

Determination of target surface reflection properties at laser wavelengths is essential for predicting realistic range performance of ground and airborne laser systems, as well as for aircraft tactics (flight profile) optimisation, test range design activities, analysis of flight/ground test data and assessment of training exercises with laser systems. In the following paragraphs, we describe the test activities performed for determining both the general reflection properties of various materials/paints in the visible and infrared portions of the spectrum (i.e., in terms of total reflectance), and the specific reflection characteristics of the PILASTER target materials at Nd:YAG laser wavelength ($\lambda = 1064$ nm) subject to specific geometrical constraints, in terms of Bidirectional Reflectance Distribution Function (BRDF). An essential pre-requisite for both activities was the correct analysis of target materials physical properties, such as surface profile characterisation (roughness statistics, coating/painting standards, etc). LBP was also performed during BRDF measurements to ensure repeatability of the experiments.

7.4.1 Samples Identification and Surface Characterisation

The samples for surface scattering measurements were selected in order to allow an appropriate choice of the paints to be used for the PILASTER targets (Group-I), and also to gather useful data regarding the reflective properties of materials normally encountered in the operational use of laser systems (Group-II). The samples selected for both reflectance and BRDF measurements (i.e., candidates for construction of the PILASTER targets), were the following:

Group-I

- a) White *Spectralon™* (Labsphere Ltd.);
- b) White Refractive Road Paint (GEN-M-P0017);
- c) White Building Paint (*Baldini S.p.A.* n° 345.998);
- d) Diffusive Black Paint (*Nextel™* 97B/3W – AER-M-P039e);

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- e) Diffusive White Paint (*Nextel*TM 3B/97W – AER-M-P039a);
- f) White Non refractive Road Paint (GEN-M-P0016);
- g) Dark Grey Paint (AER-M-G039f);
- h) Light Green Paint (AER-M-H067d); and
- i) Dark Green Paint (AER-M-H074e).

The sample of SpectralonTM (whose BRDF characteristics were provided by the manufacturer) also served to test the BRDF measurement instrumentation set-up.

The materials selected for reflectance measurements only ($\lambda = 400 - 1200$ nm) were the following:

Group-II

- a) IR Grey Paint n° 1 (AER-M-G056);
- b) IR Grey Paint n° 2 (FS 36280);
- c) Concrete n° 1 – Runway;
- d) Concrete n° 2 – Shelter;
- e) Airport Parking Area Material;
- f) Asphalt n° 1 – Runway; and
- g) Asphalt n° 2 – Road Material.

All paint samples were prepared using 2×2 inches polished aluminium plates. Before performing BRDF measurements, the rms surface roughness (σ) and slope (s) of the Group-I samples was measured using a surface profilometer (*Hommer Tester T1000*) which measured the surface roughness every $0.25 \mu\text{m}$ along a 15 mm scan. The rms roughness of the samples ranged from $0.42 \mu\text{m}$ to $16.87 \mu\text{m}$. The results of the measurements are listed in Table 7-2.

Table 7-2: Surface Characterisation for BRDF Measurements

Sample	rms Roughness (σ)	rms Slope (s)
a	$0.47 \mu\text{m}$	11.4°
b	$6.88 \mu\text{m}$	23.6°
c	$19.96 \mu\text{m}$	22.4°
d	$4.80 \mu\text{m}$	22.3°
e	$4.41 \mu\text{m}$	24.3°
f	$1.76 \mu\text{m}$	20.5°
g	$1.52 \mu\text{m}$	18.1°
h	$0.60 \mu\text{m}$	11.7°
i	$0.42 \mu\text{m}$	13.5°

7.4.2 Reflectance Measurements

As a first step into the analysis of the samples reflection properties, reflectance measurements were performed in the visible and near infra-red ($\lambda = 400 - 1200$ nm). The measurements were performed with the integrating-sphere spectrophotometer Perkin-Elmer mod. 'Lambda 19'. The results obtained for the two groups of samples are presented in Figure 7-11 and Figure 7-12.

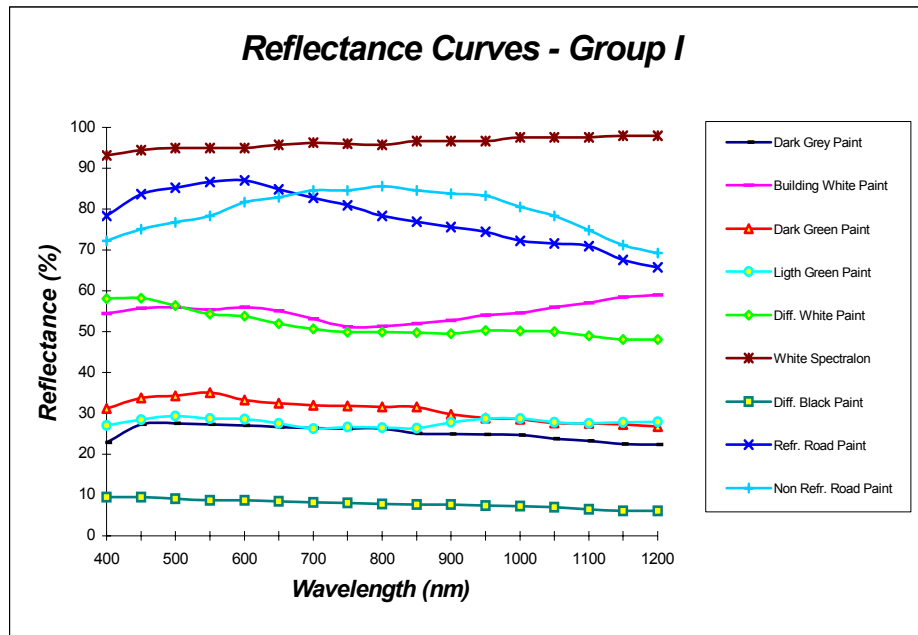


Figure 7-11: Group-I Reflectance Measurements Results.

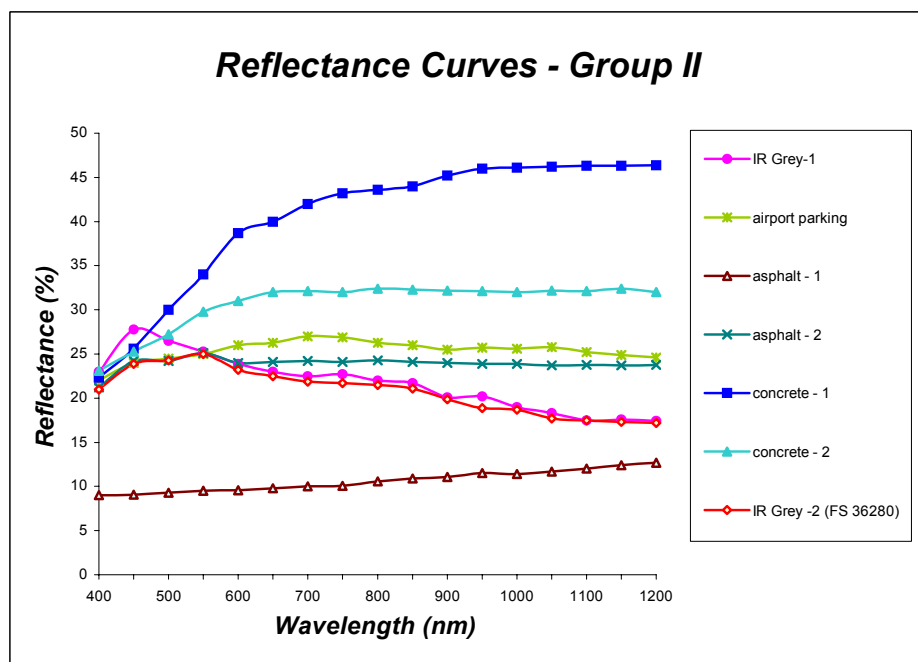


Figure 7-12: Group-II Reflectance Measurements Results.

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7.4.3 BRDF Measurements

The Bidirectional Reflectance Distribution Function (BRDF) is defined as the ratio of the radiance of a sample to the irradiance upon that sample, for a given direction of incidence and direction of scatter. For BRDF measurements with the Group-I samples (i.e., PILASTER targets candidate paints and materials), a Laser Scatter-meter (LSM) was built. To briefly summarise the fundamental concepts involved, necessary to describe the LSM experimental arrangement, we refer to the LSM beam coordinate system illustrated in Figure 7-13.

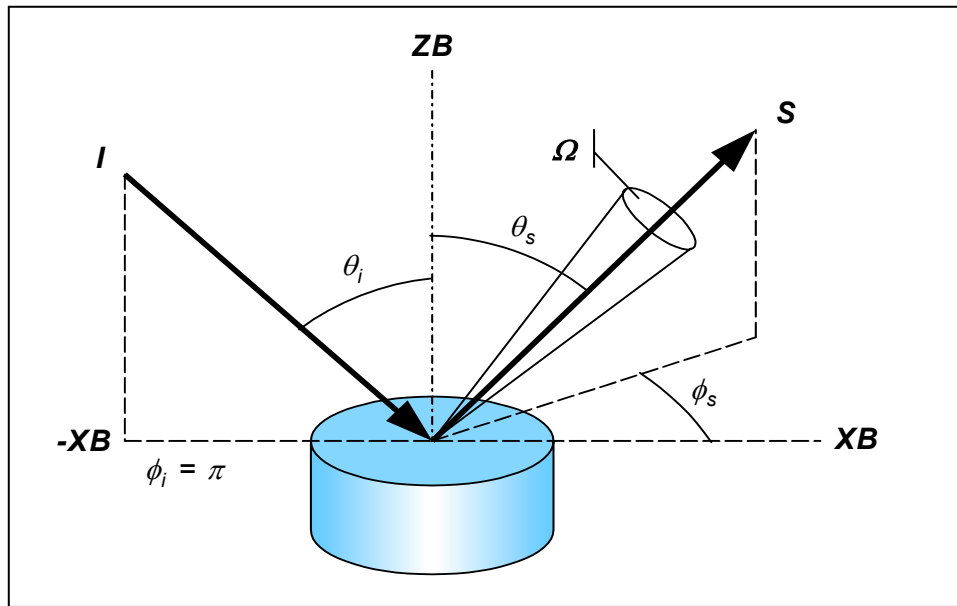


Figure 7-13: LSM Beam Coordinate System.

The origin of the beam coordinate system is the point at which the central ray of the incident radiation (I) strikes the sample surface. The ZB axis is normal to the sample surface, and the XB axis lies in the plane defined by ZB and I . The incident direction is specified by two angles: the angle of incidence (θ_i), and the incident azimuth angle (ϕ_i), where $\phi_i = \pi$ by definition. Similarly, the scatter direction is specified by the scatter angle (θ_s), and the scatter azimuth angle (ϕ_s). In order to measure BRDF, a LSM should allow the sample to be illuminated with a collimated laser beam from a range of incident directions. Furthermore, a receiver, subtending a solid angle Ω and viewing the entire illuminated area, should be positioned at a range of scatter directions. For any given LSM configuration, an average sample irradiance (E_e) is calculated from the power P_i incident on the sample and the illuminated area A . An average sample radiance L_e is calculated from the power P_s collected by the receiver, the receiver solid-angle, and the area of illumination. Therefore, the sample BRDF is calculated as the ratio of these two quantities:

$$BRDF = \frac{L_e}{E_e} = \frac{(P_s / \Omega A \cos \theta_s)}{(P_i / A)} = \frac{P_s}{P_i \Omega \cos \theta_s} \quad [sr^{-1}] \quad (7.2)$$

Alternatively, the relative radiance of the sample may be measured versus that of a standard whose BRDF is known for the bi-directional geometry in question. The sample BRDF may then be calculated by multiplying the resulting ratio by the known BRDF of the standard.

Our LSM limits the collection of BRDF data to receiver positions in the plane of incidence, which is defined by the central ray of the incident flux and the sample normal. This is referred to as “in-plane” data

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(data collected with receiver positions confined to the plane perpendicular to the plane of incidence, and containing the sample normal, is referred to as “cross-plane” data).

BRDF, with its units of inverse steradians, appears as a fairly abstract quantity. The BRDF of a given sample is closely related to a more concrete quantity, however, its bi-directional reflectance factor. This is defined as the ratio of the flux scattered in a given direction by the sample, to that which would be scattered in that direction by the perfect reflecting diffuser, under identical conditions of illumination. The relation between BRDF (B) and bi-directional reflectance factor (R) is expressed by:

$$R(\theta_i, \phi_i, \theta_s, \phi_s) = \pi B(\theta_i, \phi_i, \theta_s, \phi_s) \quad (7.3)$$

It is important to observe that the BRDF of a perfectly diffuse (Lambertian) sample would be constant for all bi-directional geometries. However, the power collected by the receiver (P_s) is strongly dependent on the scatter angle (θ_s), and becomes very small as θ_s approaches $\pi/2$. For this reason, we should expect that the effects of noise, and other sources of measurement error, become much more pronounced at large scatter angles.

Both the polarization state of the incident flux and the polarization bias of the receiver may be important variables in BRDF measurements. Many scattering materials significantly depolarise incident flux, while other materials selectively absorb flux with a certain polarization. A complete characterization of sample scattering also requires evaluation of these polarization effects. The experimental arrangement of the LSM is shown in Figure 7-14.

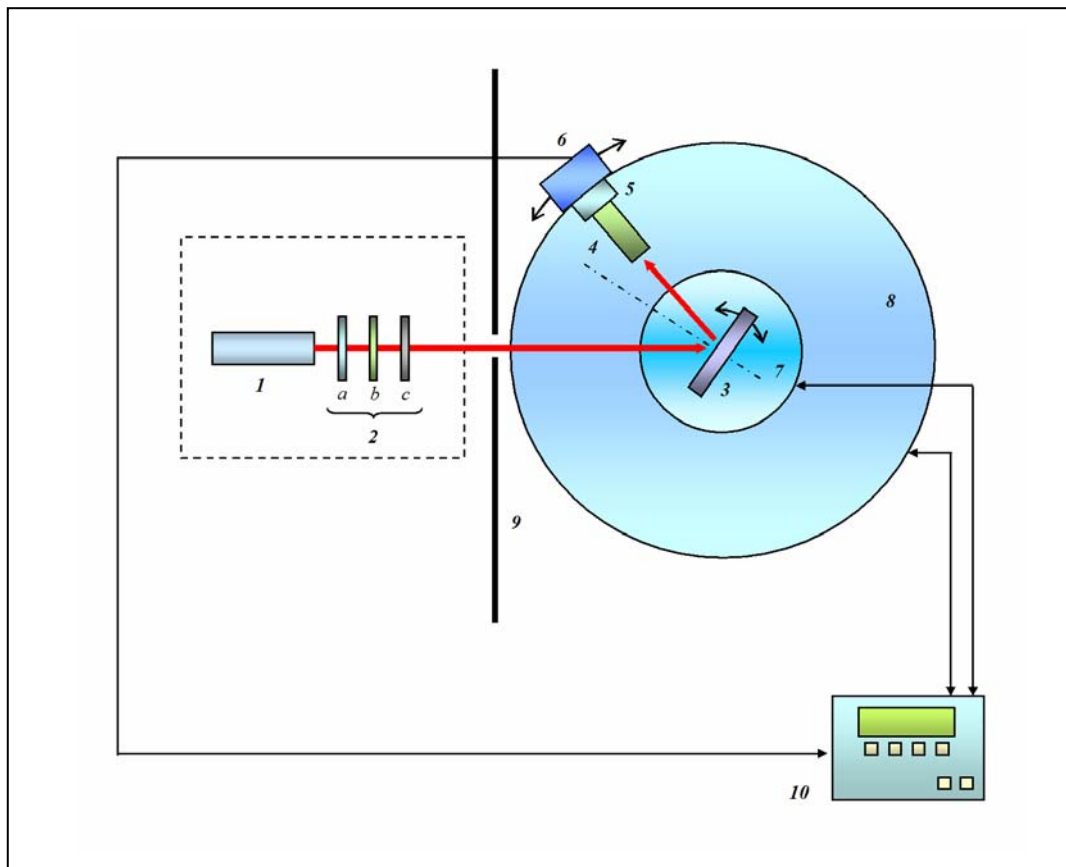


Figure 7-14: Laser Scatter-Meter Experimental Arrangement.

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The LSM was composed by three main parts: (A) the laser unit (including the laser source and the intensity/polarization control units), (B) the target turn-table unit (allowing orientation of the target sample), (C) the detection unit, mounted on a second turn-table (including the collimator, the polarizing filter and the detector), and (D) the measurements unit, including the energy/power meter and a motion control unit for automatic (continuous) data acquisition, both connected to a PC for data monitoring and recording. Particularly, with reference to Figure 7-14, the LSM employed the following components:

- 1) Laser source.
- 2) Intensity and polarization control:
 - a) ND filters;
 - b) Linear polarizer; and
 - c) Retardation plates.
- 3) Sample.
- 4) Collimator, 5) Polarising filter (analyser) and 6) Detector.
- 7) Sample turn-table and 8) Receiver turn-table.
- 9) Light shield.
- 10) Energy/power meter, motion control unit and computer.

The BRDF measurements were performed at a wavelength of 1064 nm (Nd:YAG laser). Particularly, the BRDF of Group-I samples was determined. Before performing BRDF measurements, the characteristics of the Nd:YAG laser beam incident on the sample surface were determined using the BeamStar™ CCD profiler. The parameters relative to the Gaussian fit of the horizontal and vertical cross-sections of the beam produced by a single laser pulse are shown in Figure 7-15. Particularly, in this case, a difference is evidenced between the shapes of the horizontal and vertical cross-sections (also due to the distortions introduced by the LSM optical circuit), leading to a correlation with the Gaussian fit of about 80% in both cases. With laser sequences of up to 10 seconds in duration and PRF up to 20 Hz, it was also found that the stability of the beam shape (i.e., correlation with the Gaussian fit) was always within a limit of 73%.

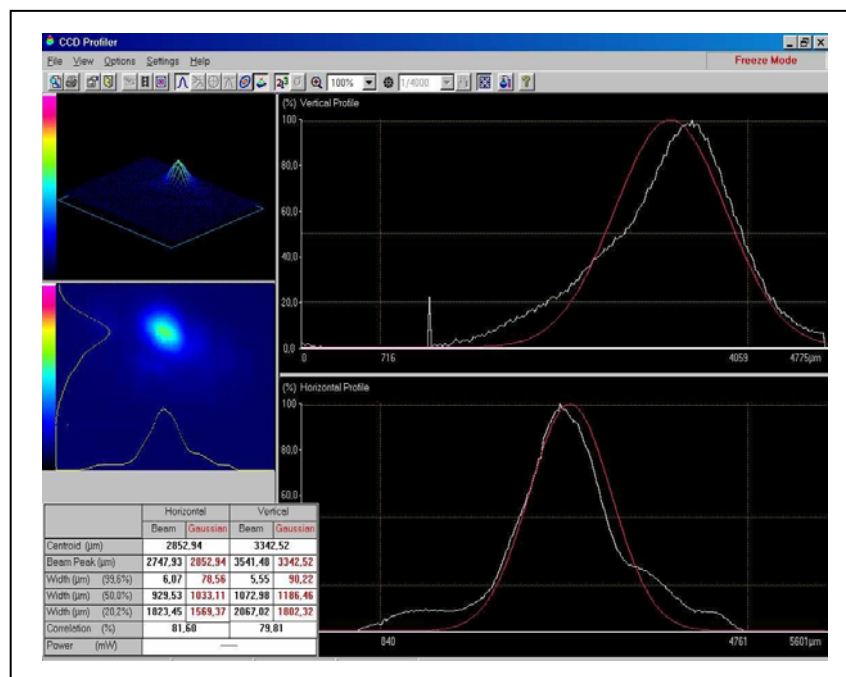


Figure 7-15: Nd:YAG Laser Beam Profile for BRDF Measurements.

All BRDF measurements were performed with linearly polarised illumination, with the direction of polarization parallel (P) to the plane of incidence. In selected cases (samples d and e), the receiver was also polarised, with bias parallel (P) or perpendicular (S) to the plane of incidence. In this case, for a material which does not affect the polarization of the incident flux, the observed BRDF for the cross-polarized configuration (PS) would be zero. On the other hand, for a perfect depolarising sample, the BRDF values would be identical for both (PP) and (PS) measurement configurations.

The results of the BRDF measurements are reported below in the Figure 7-16 to Figure 7-24. Particularly, the BRDF relative to all samples for three different laser incidence angles ($\psi = 0^\circ, 30^\circ, 45^\circ$ and 60°) are reported. Furthermore, the BRDF variations with receiver polarization parallel (P) and perpendicular (S) to the plane of incidence (with $\psi = 0^\circ$ and 45°) are reported for the two paints that, after the initial reflectance and BRDF measurements, were identified as the best candidates for the PILASTER targets (samples d and e).

a. White Spectralon™

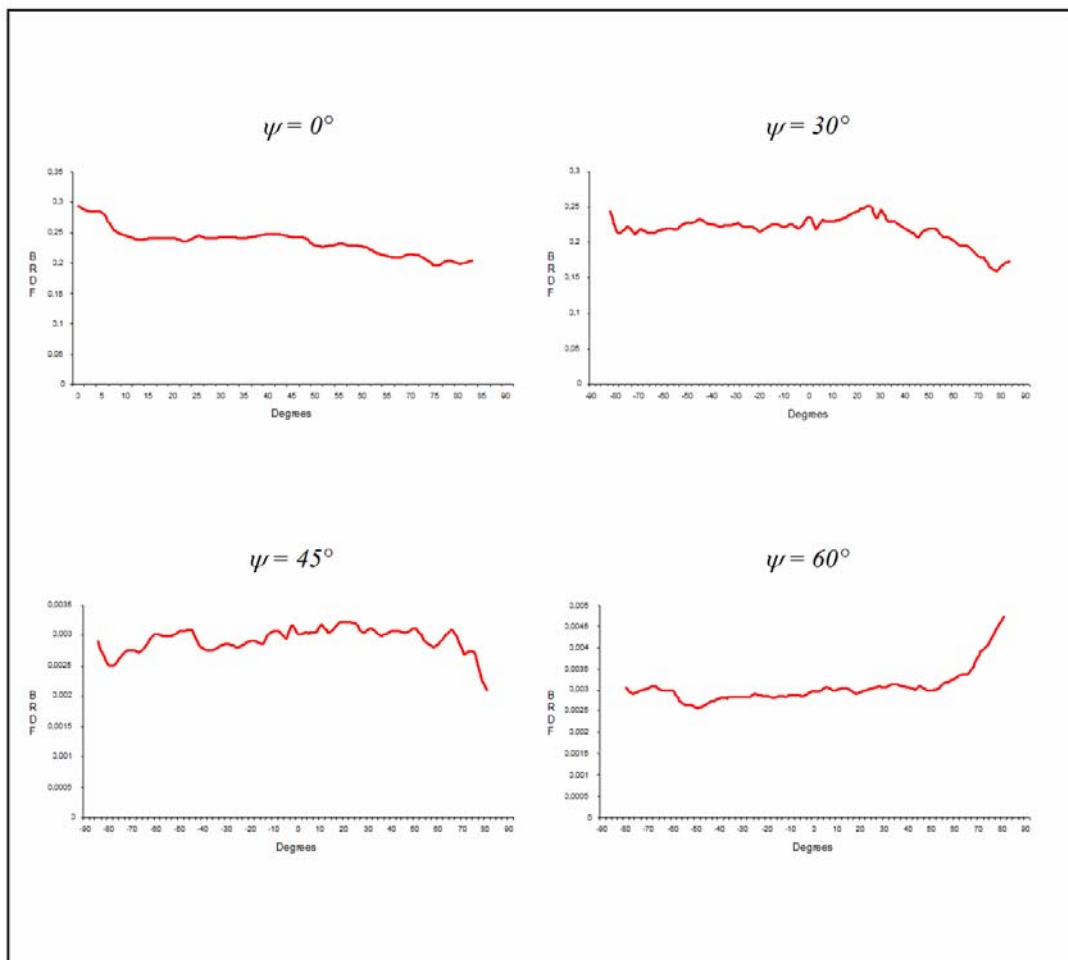


Figure 7-16: BRDF for White Spectralon.

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b. White Refractive Road Paint

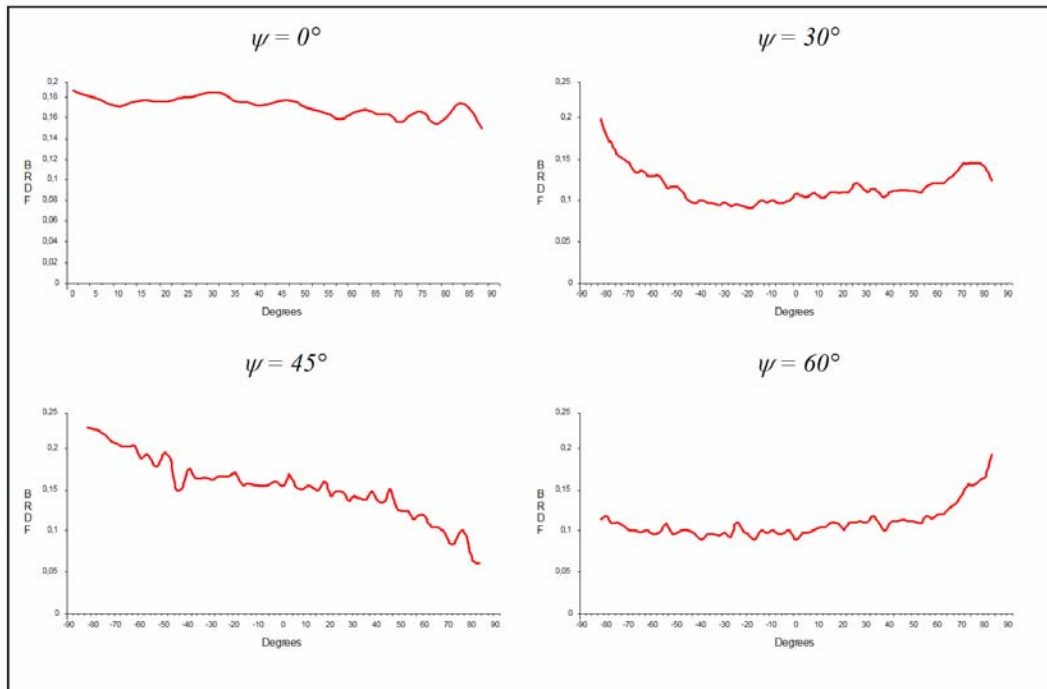


Figure 7-17: BRDF for White Refractive Road Paint.

c. Building White Paint

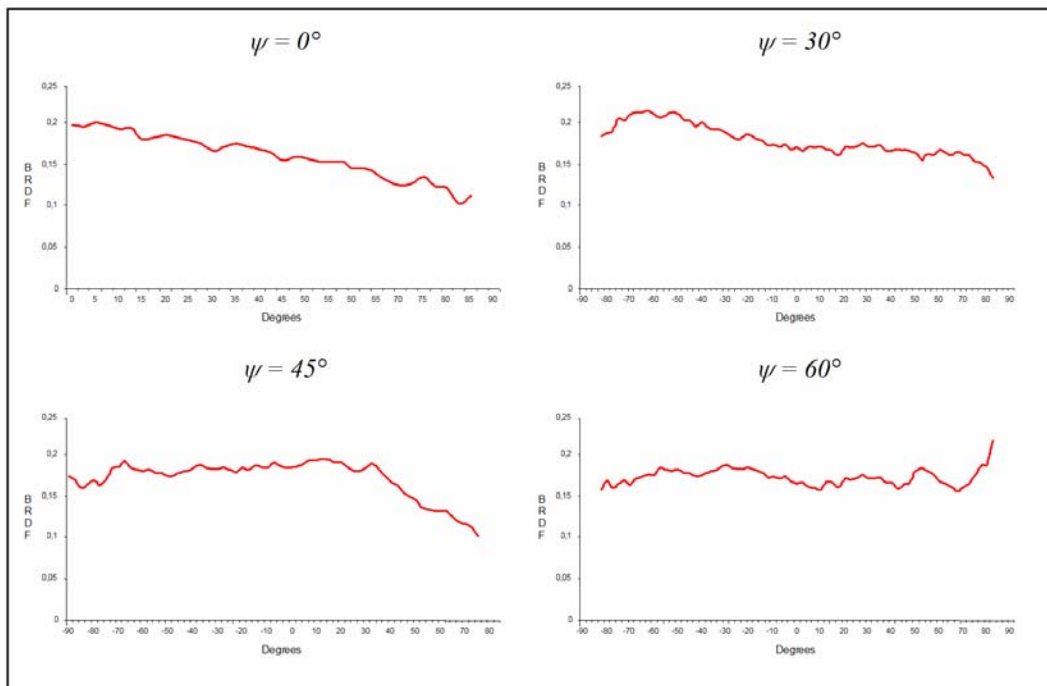


Figure 7-18: BRDF for White Building Paint.

d. Diffusive Black Paint

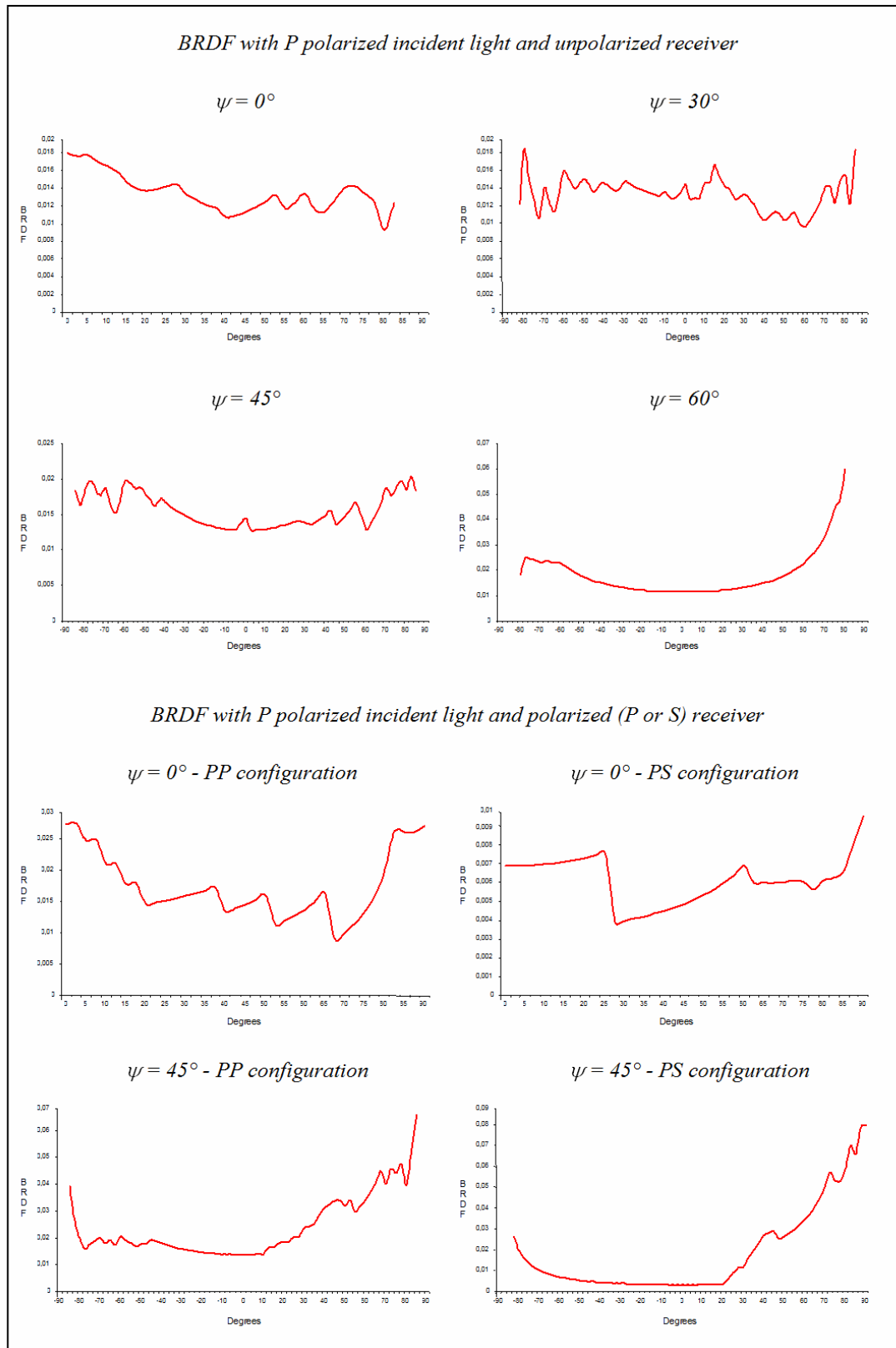


Figure 7-19: BRDF for Highly Diffusive Black Paint.

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e. Diffusive White Paint

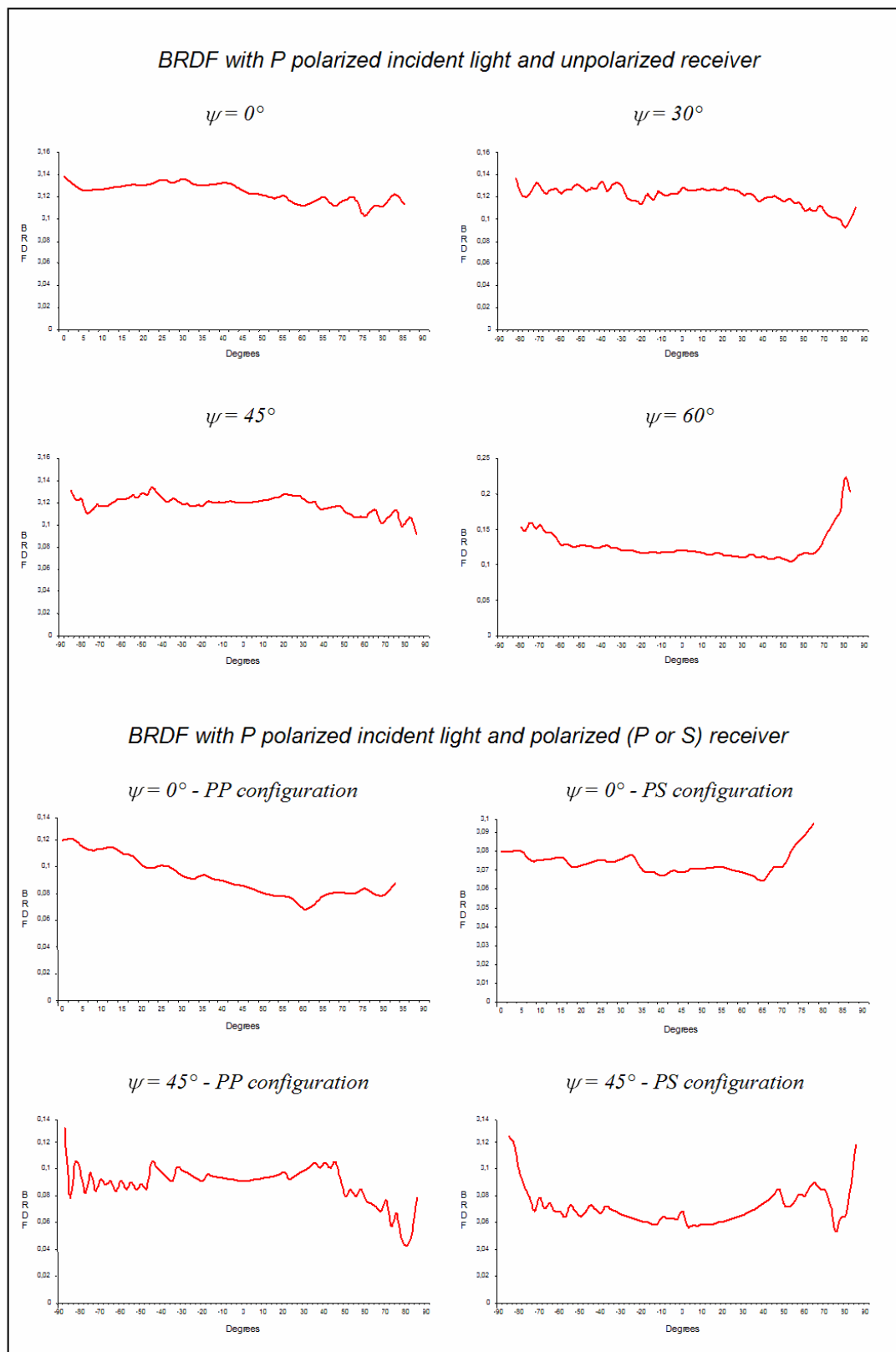


Figure 7-20: BRDF for Highly Diffusive White Paint.

f. White Non-Refractive Road Paint

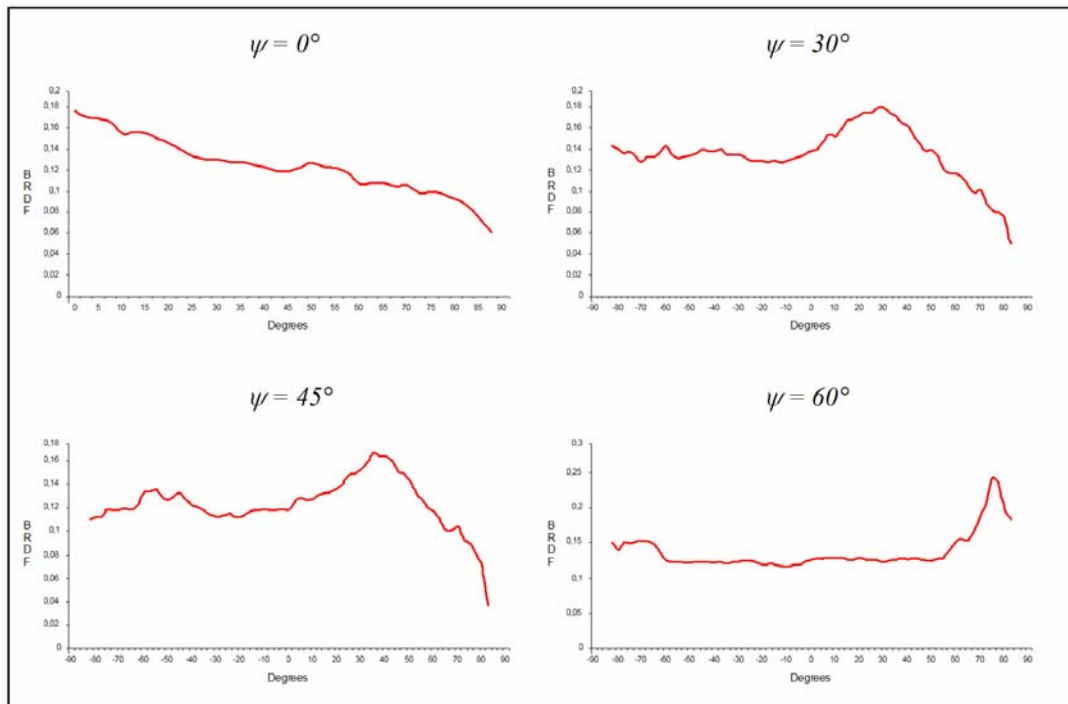


Figure 7-21: BRDF for White Non-Refractive Road Paint.

g. Dark Grey Paint

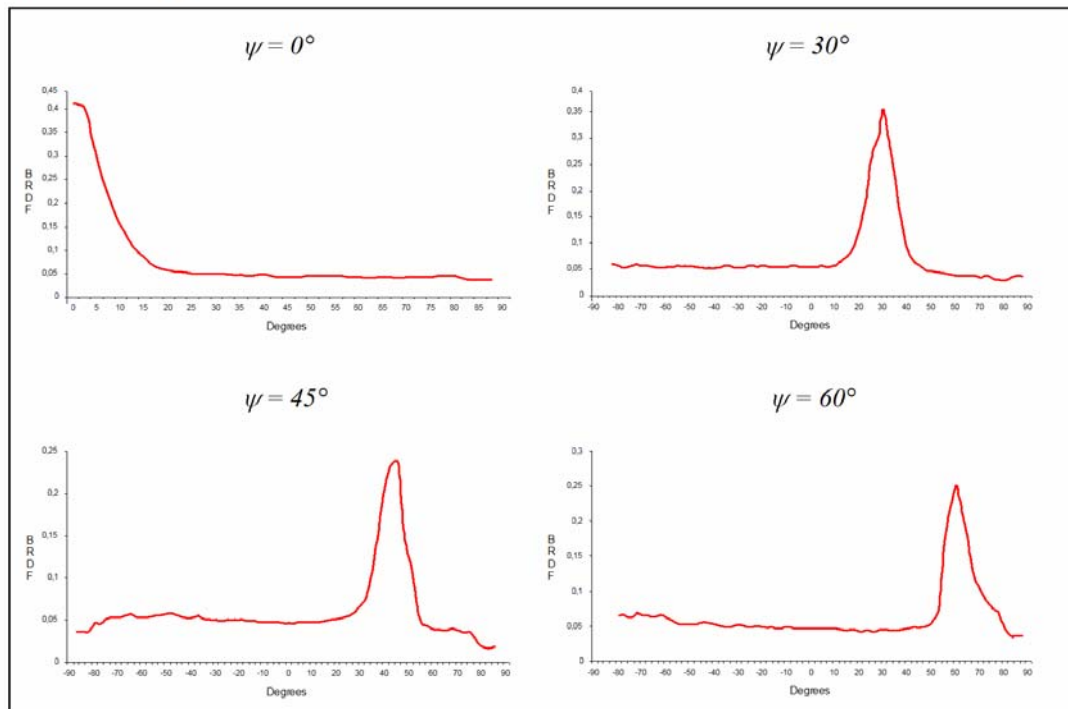


Figure 7-22: BRDF for Dark Grey Paint.

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h. Light Green Paint

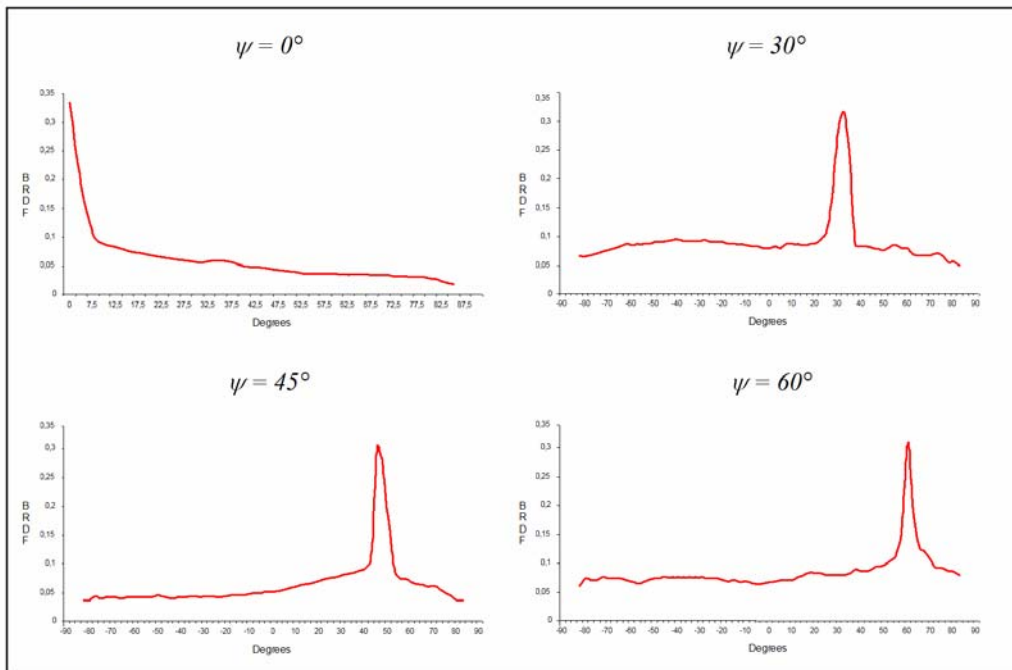


Figure 7-23: BRDF for Light Green Paint.

i. Dark Green Paint

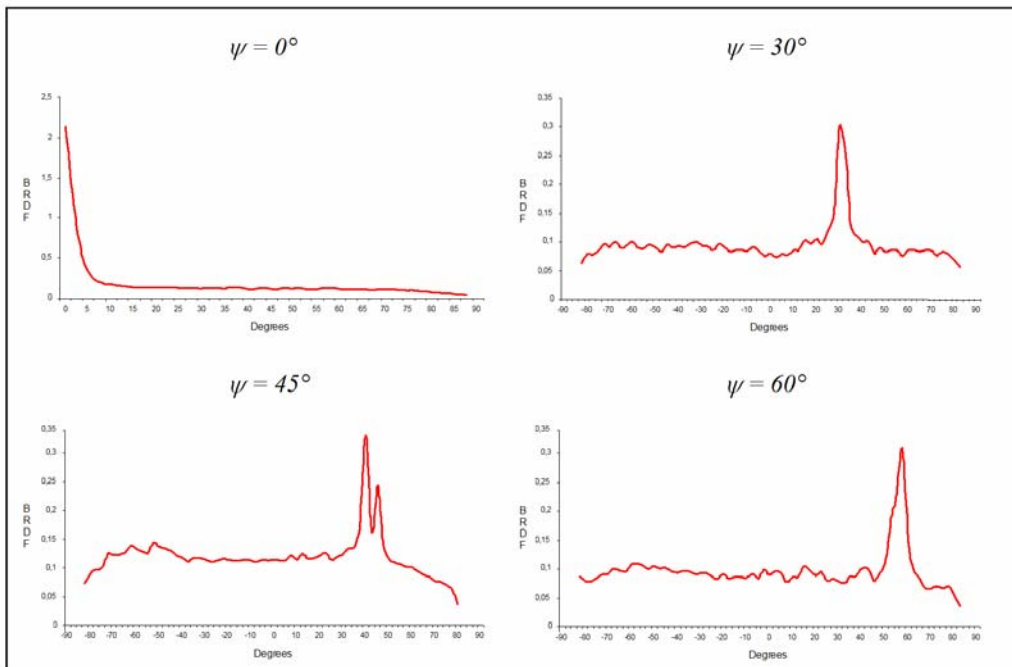


Figure 7-24: BRDF for Dark Green Paint.

Due to their excellent contrast in the visible and their good *Lambertian* characteristics, the Diffusive Black Paint AER-M-P039e (sample d) and the Diffusive White Paint AER-M-P039a (sample e), were selected for the PILASTER permanent target (FXDT) panels. Although these paints were technically adequate also for the PILASTER FRCT modular target (i.e., destroyable target for real weapon deliveries), they were not used for this application due to their very high cost. In this case, a combination of the Dark Grey Paint AER-M-G039f (sample g) with either the White Non refractive Road Paint GEN-M-P0016 (sample f), or the White Refractive Road Paint GEN-M-P0017 (sample b), was considered acceptable. It must be underlined that all these paints (samples b, d, e, f and g) are produced for employment by the Italian military forces, and their reflectance characteristics are claimed to remain constant in a wide range of environmental/weather conditions and due to aging. The use of the low cost White Building Paint *Baldini* n° 345.998 (sample c), was suggested only when laser spot measurements on the PILASTER targets were not required (being the only non military product, the characteristics of this paint may vary significantly due to aging or other factors).

7.5 PILASTER SYSTEMS TESTING

Laboratory experimental activities also included initial tests for selection of the systems/sensors candidate for the PILASTER Program. These activities included:

- Near Infrared Cameras (NIR) Testing;
- Modified Laser Warning Receiver (LWR) System Testing; and
- Power/Energy Meter and Detectors Testing.

Test methods and results are described in the following paragraphs.

7.5.1 NIR Cameras Testing

Two NIR cameras based on Focal Plane Array (FPA) sensors were tested for use in the PILASTER program, these are:

- the MERLINTM NIR camera; and
- the PHOENIXTM NIR camera;

both produced by the Indigo Systems Corporation (USA). Both NIR cameras had a spectral band 0.9 – 1.7 μm , and employed Indium Gallium Arsenide (InGaAs) detectors. In both cases, the array format was 320 H \times 256 V and the detector size was 30 microns. Furthermore, optics with different focal lengths and FOV/IFOV were available (e.g., 25 and 50 mm focal lengths with FOV/IFOV of $22^\circ \times 16^\circ/1.3$ mrad and $11^\circ \times 8^\circ/0.6$ mrad respectively). Both cameras were equipped with real-time imaging electronics, remote controls, and NTSC/PAL video outputs. The PHOENIXTM camera was also equipped with a high-speed digital acquisition system, composed of a rack mount, high speed PentiumTM processor, a camera interface/sync board and Bit-Flow frame grabber. It captured the full bandwidth of digital video from the camera (40 MHz) and provided pseudo real-time VGA video for aiming and focusing the camera.

The aim of the laboratory test activity was to verify the performance of the PHOENIX and MERLIN NIR Cameras (together with the relative Data Acquisition Systems) in the presence of laser spots generated by very short laser pulses ($\text{PD} < 20$ nsec), with PRF, energy levels and spot characteristics compatible with the PILASTER requirements. With reference to the test setup shown in Figure 7-25, the following systems and instrumentation were used for the experiments:

- PHOENIX and MERLIN NIR Cameras (1);
- PC based Data Acquisition Systems (2) with IMAGE-PRO PLUS 4.1 Software;
- Laboratory Target 3.0×1.5 m (3);

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- Q-Switched Nd:YAG laser (4);
- Nd:YAG Attenuation Filters (5);
- Beam Splitter (6) and Mirror (7);
- Beam Expanding Optics for Narrow (8) and Wide Laser Beams (9); and
- Aberration Filter (10).

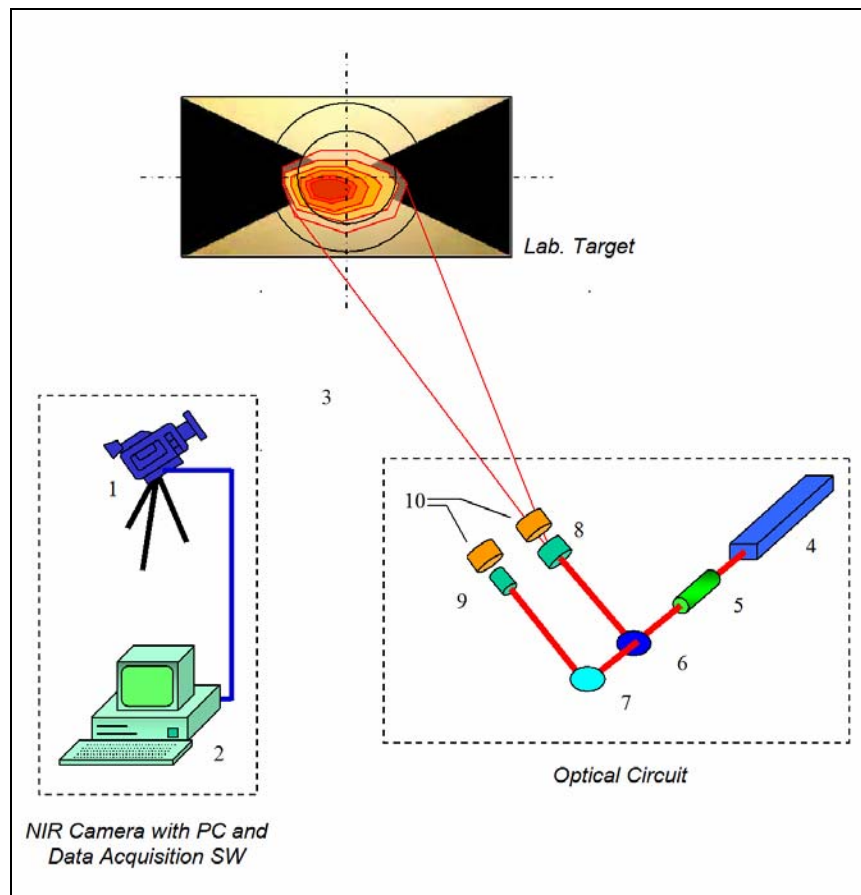


Figure 7-25: NIR Cameras Test Instrumentation Setup.

The 3.0×1.5 m target, painted in back and white with paints of considerably different reflectance at 1064 nm (i.e., 7% and 50% respectively), was located at a distance of about 5 m from the beam expanding optics ($\Phi_{wide} = 50$ mrad and $\Phi_{narrow} = 2$ mrad). With this geometry, the effective spot diameters were about 50 cm and 2 cm. The PHOENIX/MERLIN NIR Cameras, equipped with suitable optics (in order to see the entire target) and connected to the Data Acquisition PC, was also located at a distance of about 5 metres from the target. An Aberration Filter (AF) was also used at the expanding optics output to generate highly distorted laser spot profiles on the target (with similar characteristics to the spots expected to be encountered in the future operational use of the cameras at the PILASTER).

During the test, the different requirements associated with the intended use of the two cameras were taken into account, setting appropriate integration times for data acquisition in order to obtain:

- Post-processing data analysis (i.e., geometry, energy distribution, time analysis), for the maximum number of pulses (spots) in a sequence, for the PHOENIX NIR camera; and
- Real-time visualization of the spot sequence, in the case of the MERLIN NIR camera.

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For both NIR cameras, an important requirement was to minimise the memory required for frames recording, maximising at the same time the performances of the cameras with and without synchronisation of spot data acquisition with laser signal transmission (i.e., number of useful frames for the PHOENIX NIR camera and quality of the real-time displayed image for the MERLIN NIR camera). Therefore, it was first of all necessary to find adequate Frame Frequencies (f_F) of the NIR cameras according to the specific application. This was done in order to maximise the number of recorded pulses in the first case (PHOENIX NIR camera) and to obtain high quality real-time sequences in the second case (MERLIN NIR camera). A number of tests were performed in order to experimentally determine the optimal f_F for the two NIR cameras. A more detailed analysis for f_F optimisation was performed during the ground test activities (see Chapter 8). In general, setting the f_F at twice the PRF, it was empirically found to be a good compromise for the PHOENIX NIR camera, while for the MERLIN NIR camera intended application (i.e., real-time spot monitoring) a f_F of 10 Hz was adequate for PRFs of 1 – 4 Hz, and a f_F of 20 Hz was better suited for PRFs of 10 – 20 Hz. The key parameters for evaluating the performance of the two cameras were:

- Percentage of Acquired Pulses (%AP) with respect to the total number of laser pulses transmitted in a certain Pulse Train Duration (PTD) for the PHOENIX NIR camera; and
- Real-time Image Quality (RIQ) for the MERLIN NIR camera.

Particularly, for the RIQ the following ranking scale was used in the assessment:

- 0/4 Spot image absent;
- 1/4 Spot image not clear (fading);
- 2/4 Spot image intermittent but clear; and
- 4/4 Spot image continuous and clear.

The final results of the two performance assessments are summarized in Table 7-3.

Table 7-3: NIR Cameras Tests Results

Laser Parameters						PHOENIX		MERLIN	
PRF	PTD	Energy	BE	AF	P_D	f_F	%AP	f_F	RIQ
1 Hz	10 s	2 μ J	Wide	Yes	20 ns	2 Hz	52%	10 Hz	4/4
	10 s	2 μ J	Wide	No	20 ns	2 Hz	66%	10 Hz	3/4
	10 s	2 μ J	Narrow	Yes	20 ns	2 Hz	53%	10 Hz	4/4
	10 s	2 μ J	Narrow	No	20 ns	2 Hz	67%	10 Hz	3/4
4 Hz	10 s	2 μ J	Wide	Yes	20 ns	8 Hz	47%	10 Hz	4/4
	10 s	2 μ J	Wide	No	20 ns	8 Hz	66%	10 Hz	3/4
	10 s	2 μ J	Narrow	Yes	20 ns	8 Hz	48%	10 Hz	4/4
	10 s	2 μ J	Narrow	No	20 ns	8 Hz	62%	10 Hz	4/4
10 Hz	10 s	2 μ J	Wide	Yes	20 ns	20 Hz	66%	20 Hz	3/4
	10 s	2 μ J	Wide	No	20 ns	20 Hz	56%	20 Hz	3/4
	10 s	2 μ J	Narrow	Yes	20 ns	20 Hz	62%	20 Hz	4/4
	10 s	2 μ J	Narrow	No	20 ns	20 Hz	51%	20 Hz	3/4
20 Hz	10 s	2 μ J	Wide	Yes	20 ns	40 Hz	43%	20 Hz	3/4
	10 s	2 μ J	Wide	No	20 ns	40 Hz	65%	20 Hz	4/4
	10 s	2 μ J	Narrow	Yes	20 ns	40 Hz	52%	20 Hz	4/4
	10 s	2 μ J	Narrow	No	20 ns	40 Hz	48%	20 Hz	4/4

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7.5.2 Modified RALM-01 System Testing

This test activity was performed in order to assess the Modified RALM-01 (M-RALM-01) Laser Warning Receiver (LWR) performance in the presence of laser spots generated by very short laser pulses, with PRFs and energy/power levels compatible to the PILASTER program requirements. Particularly, the Optical Units (OUs) of the system were 'stimulated' with laser pulses of low energy levels ($E_t \leq 0.1$ nJ) and power densities ($D_p \leq 5$ mW/m²). The instrumentation arrangement used for the experiment is shown in Figure 7-26.

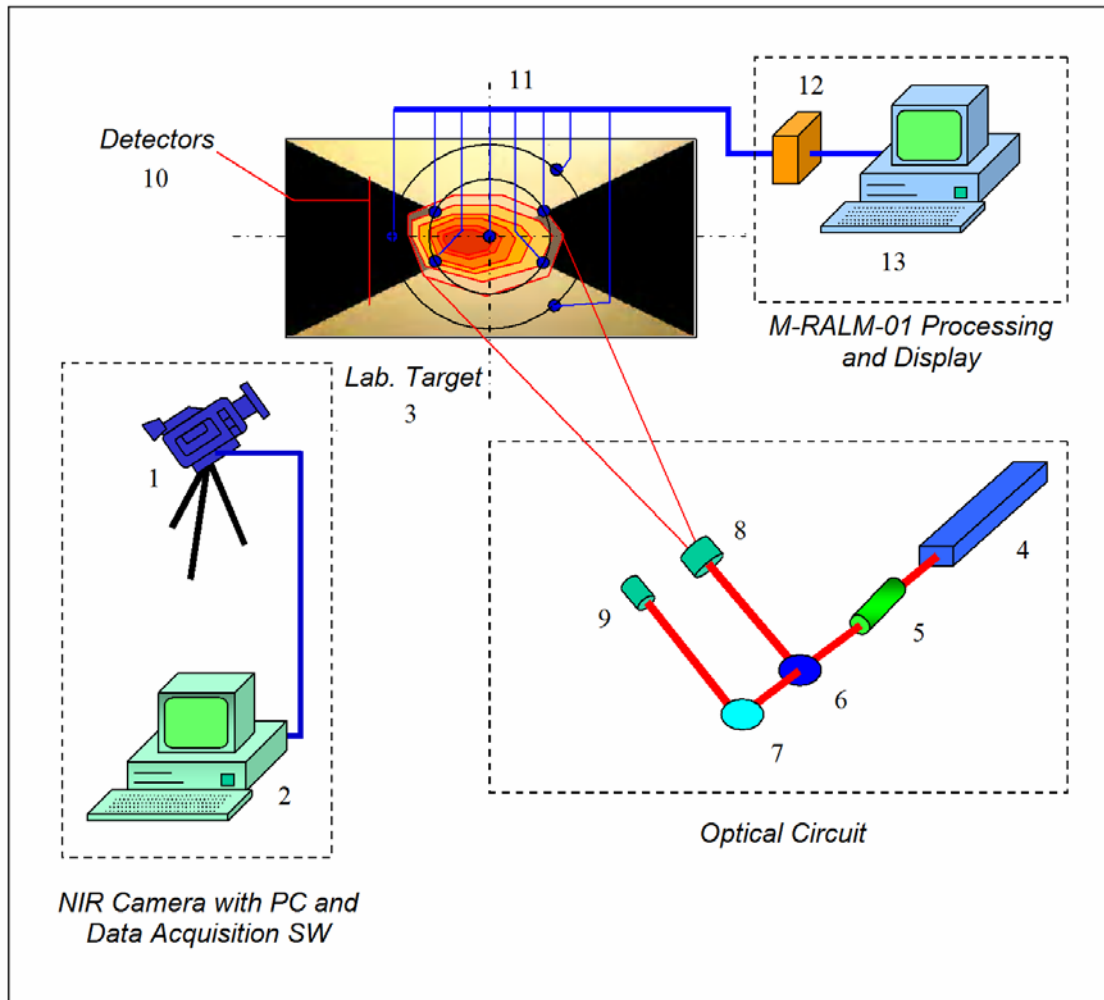


Figure 7-26: RALM-01 Test Instrumentation Setup.

Particularly, the following equipment was used in the experiment:

- PHOENIX NIR Camera (1);
- PC based Data Acquisition Systems (2) with IMAGE-PRO PLUS 4.1 software;
- Laboratory Target 3.0×1.5 m (3);
- Q-Switched Nd:YAG laser (4);
- Nd:YAG Attenuation Filters (5);
- Beam Splitter (6) and Mirror (7);

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- Beam Expanding Optics for Narrow (8) and Wide Laser Beams (9);
- M-RALM-01 Optical Units (10) and Optical Fibre (OF) Cables (11);
- M-RALM-01 Processing Units (12); and
- PC based Data Recording and Display System (13).

The MARCONI LWR Optical Units (OUs) family is shown in Figure 7-27, with evidenced the type of OU used for the M-RALM-01 test (a total number of 8 OU were used for the M-RALM-01 test).



Figure 7-27: MARCONI LWR OU Family and M-RALM-01 Test OU.

For comparison purposes, the M-RALM-01 system was also tested without OU, using ‘shielded’ OF terminations, as shown in Figure 7-28, in order to get a maximum angle of acceptance of $\pm 20^\circ$ in accordance with the OF specifications. The PHOENIX NIR camera was also used in the experiment, in order to measure the effective laser spot diameter on the target surface.

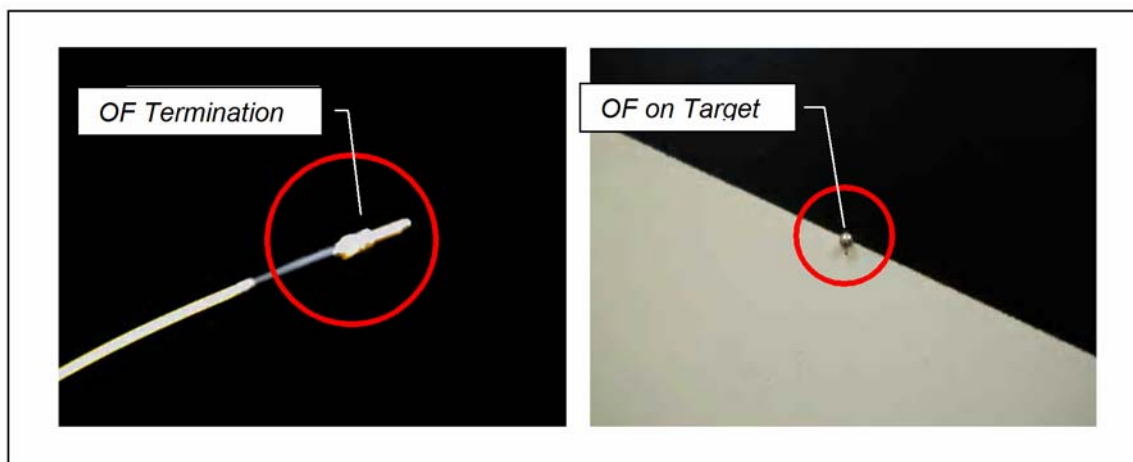


Figure 7-28: Optical Fibres Shielded Termination.

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The M-RAM-01 Processing Unit, together with an example of the PC based display software format is shown in Figure 7-29.

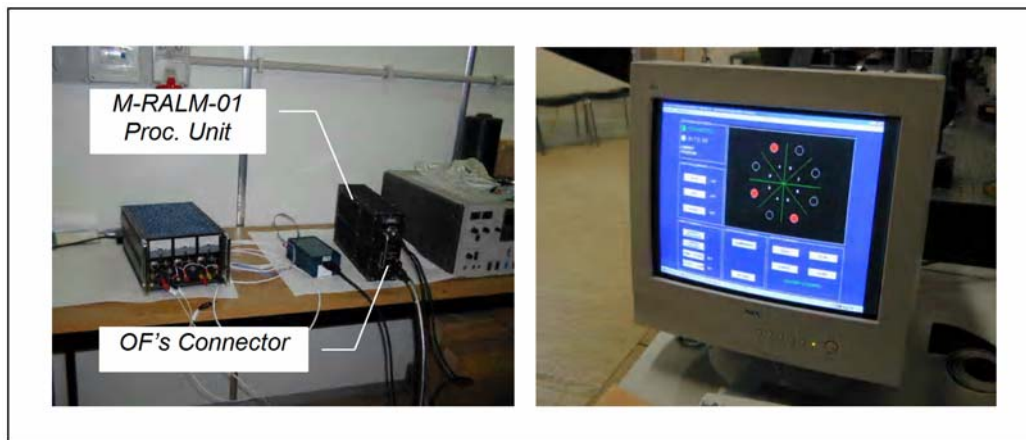


Figure 7-29: M-RALM-01 MARCONI LWR Processing Unit and PC Display Software.

In all cases, the M-RALM-01 was capable of detecting the presence of the laser spots, even when the associated pulses peak energies were of the same order of magnitude of the background noise (and the other available instrumentation was not able to detect the laser spots). Furthermore, it was verified that using the OU the directional discrimination capability was substantially increased with respect to the case of 'shielded' OF without OU. Particularly, using very narrow laser spots (i.e., few millimetres), it was observed an acceptance angle of $\pm 5^\circ$ using the OU, against an effective acceptance angle of $\pm 26^\circ$ using the 'shielded' OF. However, it was verified that, in both cases, the angular discrimination capability of the system, in the presence of larger laser spots (i.e., 10 – 100 cm) was seriously affected by undesired multiple reflections of the laser spots (i.e., multipath). The conclusion was that, although suitable for detecting the presence of extremely low energy laser pulses and for determining the PRF of incident laser sources, the M-RALM-01 system was not suitable for the laser spot energy measurements required for the PILASTER STU. Therefore, it was decided to use the M-RALM-01 system only as an additional sensor for confirming the presence of laser spots on the PILASTER FXDT target (or in its vicinity) for safety purposes and measuring the PRF of incident laser sources, during both test and training missions.

7.5.3 Laser Energy Meter and Detectors Testing

As described in Chapter 5, the PILASTER EMT-1 technique was based on direct energy measurements performed at specific locations on the permanent target, and use of the NIR camera grey-scale PIM to reconstruct the spot energy profile. This concept presented several difficulties for its practical implementation. In fact, it was difficult to find off-the-shelf detectors with sufficiently low NEP characteristics, capable of measuring NIR laser energy from pulses of very low duration (i.e., $P_D = 20$ nsec) and energy levels ranging from the nJ to the mJ.

After an extensive market survey, and various preliminary laboratory experiments, the best candidate for the PILASTER EMT-1 application (i.e., direct energy measurements at the target location) was the ORIEL 70834 Laser Energy Meter (LEM), equipped with the ORIEL 708XX Pyroelectric Probes (PEP). Some relevant information about the ORIEL 708XX Pyroelectric Probes (PEP) family is reported in Table 7-4.

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Table 7-4: PEP Sensors Characteristics

PEP Size (mm)	Max. PD (μs)	Max. Pulse Energy		Max. PRF (Hz)	Max. Avg. Power (W)	Typical Voltage Resp. (VmJ^{-1})	Noise Equivalent Energy	Model No.
		@ 10 ns	@ 1 μs					
5	50	1 mJ	1 mJ	400	2	3	15 nJ	70810
9	100	4 mJ	4 mJ	200	2	0.8	35 nJ	70811
25	200	150 mJ	1250 mJ	100	5	0.008	4 μJ	70825
50	400	600 mJ	5000 mJ	50	10	0.002	50 μJ	70827

The aim of this test was to verify the performance of the ORIEL 70834 Laser Energy Meter (LEM), equipped with the ORIEL 708XX Pyroelectric Probes (PEP), in terms of data accuracy obtainable using trains of laser pulses with PRF = 10 Hz, very short durations ($P_D = 20$ nsec) and various energy levels (ranging from the μJ to the hundreds of mJ).

The experiment was carried out using the test setup shown in Figure 7-30, which included the following instrumentation:

- Q-Switched Nd:YAG laser (1);
- Nd:YAG Attenuation Filters (2);
- Narrow band (1064 nm) Filter (3);
- LEM (5) and PEP sensors Under Test (4);
- Oscilloscope (6); and
- PC with Software for Data Display, Analysis and Recording (7).

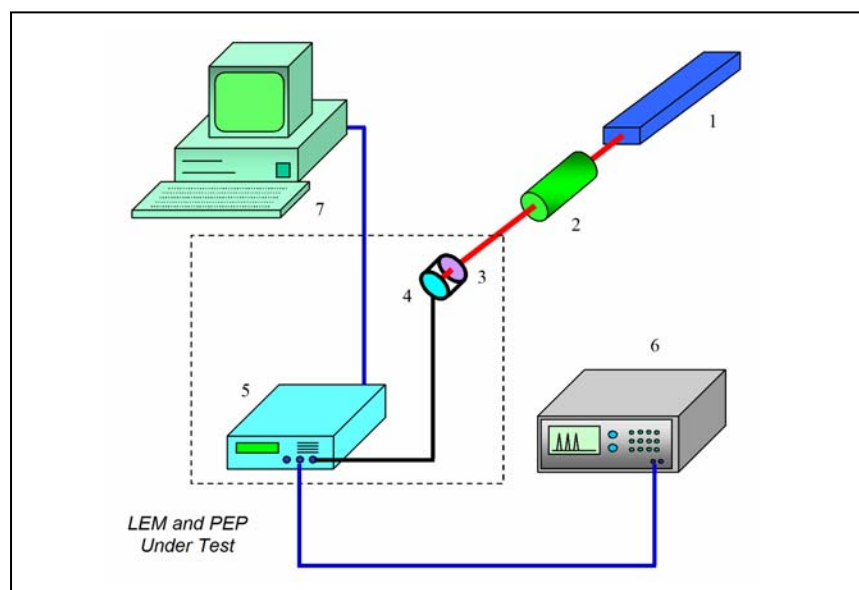


Figure 7-30: PEP/LEM Initial Test Setup.

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The test was performed with different values of the Laser Output Energy (LOE), a PRF of 10 Hz and a PTD of 5 sec.

The results of the tests performed are reported in Table 7-5. Particularly, the differences (average of 50 measurements and relative standard deviation) between the PEP-LEM readings and the LOE values ($\Delta\%_{PEP-LOE}$), are listed in the table.

Table 7-5: PEP/LEM Initial Test Results

Laser Parameters					$\Delta\%_{PEP-LOE}^*$	
PEP	PRF	PTD	LOE	PD	$\mu_{PEP-LOE}$	$\sigma_{PEP-LOE}$
70810	10 Hz	5 s	2 μ J	20 ns	2.876%	1.647%
		5 s	20 μ J	20 ns	1.060%	1.072%
		5 s	200 μ J	20 ns	-1.120%	2.283%
70811		5 s	200 μ J	20 ns	3.764%	1.760%
		5 s	2 mJ	20 ns	-3.022%	1.445%
70825		5 s	2 mJ	20 ns	-2.120%	1.836%
		5 s	20 mJ	20 ns	-2.334%	1.945%
70827		5 s	20 mJ	20 ns	-4.045%	2.240%
		5 s	200 mJ	20 ns	3.908%	1.808%

* From 50 PEP measurements.

7.5.4 PHOENIX NIR Camera Calibration

Definition of a reliable calibration procedure for the PHOENIX NIR camera was very important for the PILASTER program. Particularly, calibration was required in order to convert the ‘grey scale’ numeric information associated with the acquired laser spot images (Grey-scale Pixel Intensity Matrix – PIM), into a value of incident energy (integrated in the spectral band of the camera). For this purpose, an Integrating Sphere was used (Figure 7-31). Particularly, with reference to Figure 7-31, the following instrumentation setup was used for the NIR camera calibration:

- PHOENIX NIR Camera (1);
- PC based Data Acquisition Systems (2) with IMAGE-PRO PLUS 4.1 software;
- Q-Switched Nd:YAG laser (3);
- Nd:YAG Attenuation Filters (4);

- Beam Steering Optics (5); and
- Integrating Sphere (6).

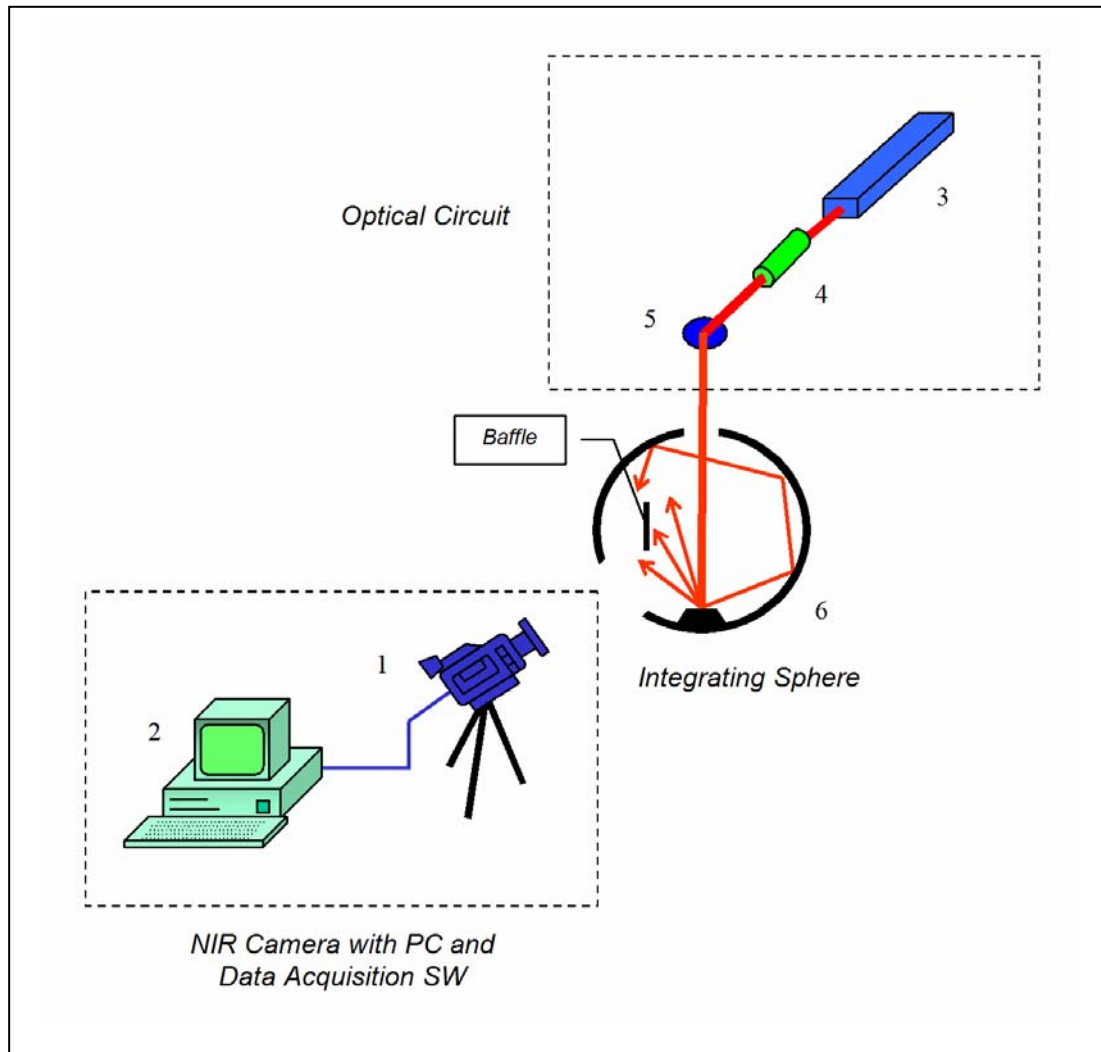


Figure 7-31: NIR Camera Calibration Procedure.

IR cameras employing photo-detectors are characterized by an output signal proportional to the incident IR energy. Particularly, in a NIR camera employing a bi-dimensional sensor matrix (i.e., Focal Plane Array – FPA) this is true for every single pixel. Therefore, from the numeric information associated to the image (i.e., Grey-scale Pixel Intensity Matrix – GPIM) it is possible to reconstruct the bi-dimensional map of the energy irradiated by a target within the scene observed by the NIR camera (integrated radiance in the camera spectral band).

In the PHOENIX NIR camera, the FPA analog signals are processed by the read-out electronic circuits, producing a digital output of the image (i.e., 12-bit Analog Digital Unit – ADU). Therefore, constructing a calibration curve for the Radiant Intensities ($\text{W}/\text{cm}^2\text{sr}$) associated to the ADU Grey-scale values, and using a dedicated image analysis software (i.e., IMAGE-PRO PLUS 4.1), it is possible to obtain the image Energy Pixel Intensity Matrix (EPIM) giving the energy associated to each pixel in the NIR camera image.

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The linearity of the photo-detector response allows accurate measurements in the camera dynamic range, with only a limited number of calibration data points. Furthermore, NIR cameras like the PHOENIX, featuring a variable integration time (selectable by the operator), give the opportunity of performing measurements in a linear regime within a wide interval of integrated radiance values, thus obtaining reliable measurements.

Calibration of the PHOENIX camera can then be defined as the experimental procedure that allows determination of the ADU/Integrated Radiance Response Function (AIRF). The inverse of the AIRF is used by the image analysis software tool in order to obtain, directly as an image attribute, the values of integrated energy in the spectral band of the camera.

In the case of a photo-detector the response of a single pixel in terms of Analog Digital Unit (ADU) is:

$$ADU_{i,j} \propto \frac{A}{4 \cdot f\#^2 + 1} \cdot g \cdot i_{time} \cdot \int_{\lambda_1}^{\lambda_2} \tau_{\lambda} \eta_{\lambda} E_{\lambda} d\lambda \quad (7.4)$$

where λ is wavelength, λ_1 and λ_2 are the limits of the camera spectral band (with filter), η_{λ} is the detector quantum efficiency (whose spectral distribution is typically constant), E_{λ} is the spectral radiance, τ_{λ} is the optics transmittance, A is the pixel area (30 μm x 30 μm for the PHOENIX-NIR camera), g is the gain of the read-out electronics, $f\#$ is the f-number of the optics and i_{time} is the camera integration time.

Therefore, the experimental parameters to be controlled during the calibration procedure are the integration time, the optics f -number and other settings of the NIR camera (e.g., the gain of the read-out electronics which may be selected by the operator). Fixing these parameters for a certain interval of integral radiance, it is possible to determine the AIRF of the camera by using an extended reference source. The function (calibration curve) so obtained, valid for the specific setup of the camera previously defined, is then used to determine the values of integral radiance to be used for reconstructing the radiant intensity map of the target. The spectral response (determined experimentally) of the InGaAs sensor employed in the PHOENIX NIR camera is shown in Figure 7-32.

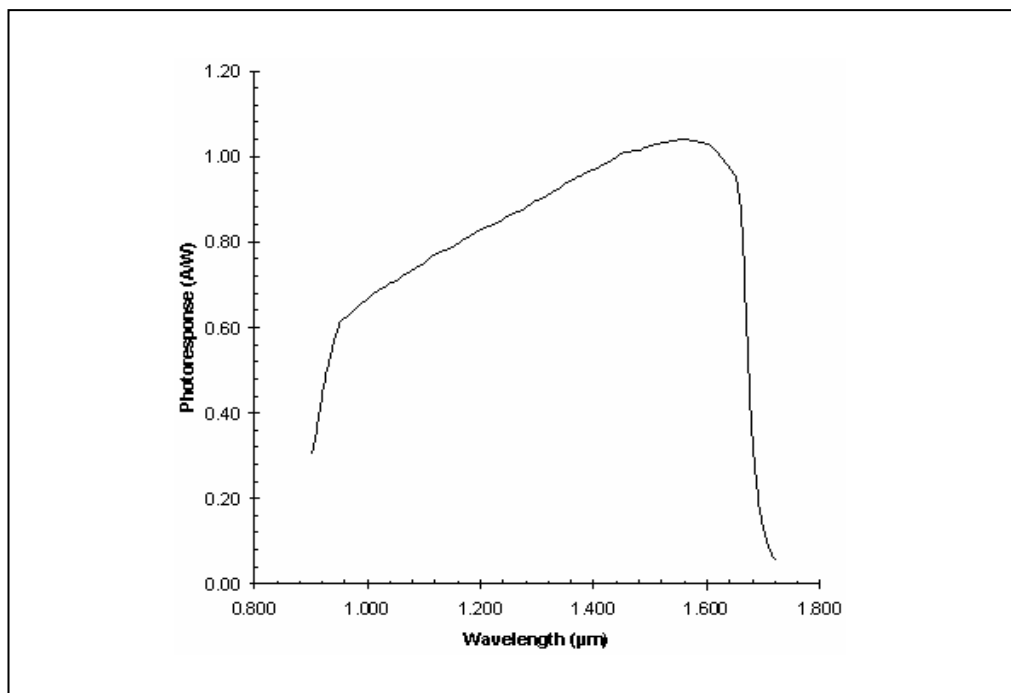


Figure 7-32: Spectral Response of the FPA Employed in the PHOENIX NIR Camera.

The curve shows that the sensor output is a value of radiance integrated in the band $0.9 - 1.6 \mu\text{m}$. This implies that, in order to perform measurements of the energy reflected by a target (with known reflectance characteristics) illuminated by a laser, it is necessary to considerably reduce the spectral response of the camera by using a narrow band filter (centred at 1064 nm), in order to drastically reduce the contributions of the background. The use of such a filter allows, using the same camera setup, accurate measurements of laser energy, independently from the ambient illumination, both in day and night conditions.

The required calibration source has to be characterised by known (tuneable) energy intensity over an extended area. The ideal match to such requirement is to use an Integrating Sphere with an input from an external variable power reference laser. This is because the Integrating Sphere characteristics are such that it can produce an output uniform energy distribution by using a narrow beamwidth laser as an input.

The steps required to accomplish the NIR camera calibration procedure are the following:

- Define the camera setup parameters (i.e., integration time, f-number of the optics and read-out).
- Set a value P_1 of the output power of the laser.
- Obtain the first data point (P_1, ADU_1), acquiring the camera image and determining the corresponding ADU value (ADU_1) using the image analysis and processing tool.
- Modify the laser output power (value P_2) and repeat the step 3 in order to determine the second data point (P_2, ADU_2).
- Repeat the step 4 a number of times sufficient to obtain a stable AIRF solution as the output of a linear interpolation process using all data points (P_n, ADU_n).
- Repeat the Steps 1 – 5 as required to obtain an AIRF for each combination of camera setup parameters needed operationally.

Using these AIRF with suitable software routines in the image analysis and processing tool, allows obtaining directly on the NIR camera images the relative values of integrated radiance.

7.6 LOAS LASER SUB-SYSTEM TESTING

Before performing ground and flight test activities using the LOAS laser system, its Er^{++} doped fibre laser sub-system (IRE POLUS Group mod. ELPM-20K) was tested in the laboratory, in order to determine, against the manufacturer specification documents, the following characteristics:

- Average power transmitted;
- Pulse duration;
- Pulse Repetition Frequency (PRF);
- Laser beam misalignment with respect to the beam-expander support; and
- Power consumption, Weight and Dimensions.

The ELPM-20K laser is shown in Figure 7-33. The instrumentation used for the tests is the following:

- Tester *Hewlett Packard* 3478A;
- Surface Absorption Disk Calorimeter *Scientech* 36-0001;
- Micrometric Support;
- Multimode Optical adapter SMA-FC-PC;
- He-Ne Laser *Melles Griot* 05-LHR-991;

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- Oscilloscope *Tektronix 520D*;
- Optical probe *Tektronix P6703B*;
- Optical probe *Tektronix P6701B*;
- Power Supply *Delta 7020*; and
- ND Optical Filters.



Figure 7-33: ELPM-20K Laser (LOAS).

The test setup is shown in Figure 7-34. All the measurements were performed in a temperature interval of $18 \div 22^{\circ}\text{C}$.

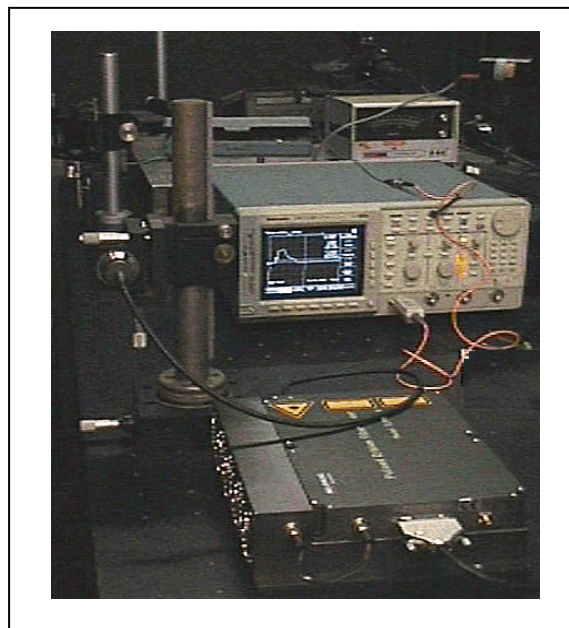


Figure 7-34: ELPM-20K Test Setup.

7.6.1 Average Power Transmitted

For measuring the average optical power of the laser the disk calorimeter readout has been used, adopting the following procedure:

- Beam expander-calorimeter alignment;
- Laser activation;
- Regulation of the beam direction in order to obtain the maximum readout value on the calorimeter;
- Wait for laser stabilization (20 minutes); and
- Calorimeter readout recording.

Although all prescribed calibration procedures were followed, to check the correctness of the measurement, the calorimeter internal calibration resistance was connected to the power supply. Then the power supply was regulated in order to obtain the same readout previously recorded during the laser activation, and the voltage applied to the resistance was measured using the tester. The voltage readout was $V = 7.757$, with a resistance $R = 41 \Omega$. Using the formula:

$$P = \frac{V^2}{R \cdot C_o} \quad (7.5)$$

where C_o is the calorimeter optical absorption coefficient (whose value is 0.98), the optical power P equates to 1.49 Watt.

7.6.2 Pulse Duration

The laser pulse duration was measured using the oscilloscope optical probe (using the multi-mode optical adapter and ND optical filters between the optical fiber and the beam expander to avoid probe saturation). The result is shown in Figure 7-35.

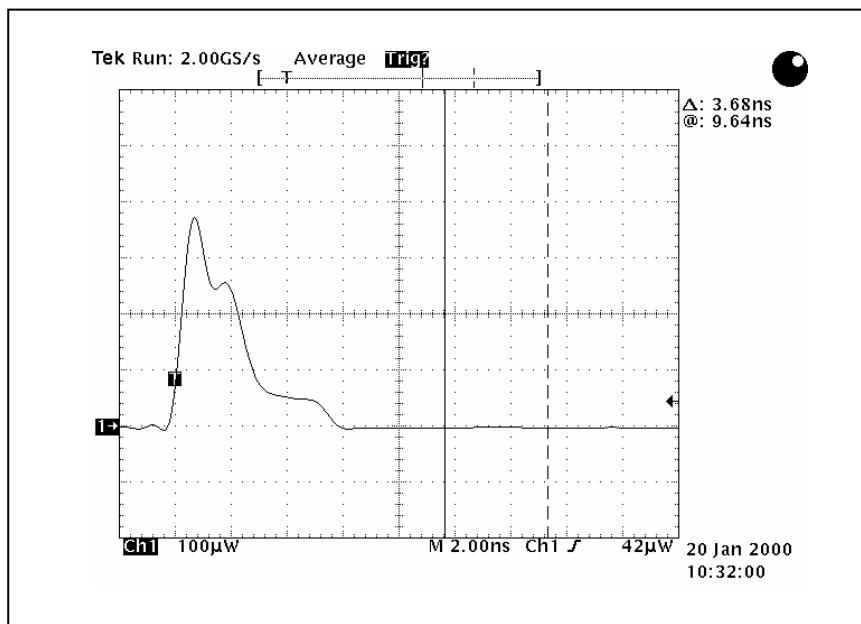


Figure 7-35: ELPM-20K Pulse Duration Measurement.

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During the measurements, it was noted that there was a marked dependency of the pulse shape on the observation position (probably due to the different modes of propagation of the optical fiber). Therefore, further measurements were performed using the signal reflected by a surface (as in the LOAS real case, where the optical signal received by the APD is reflected from an obstacle).

The result of one of the tests performed using a green painted aluminium target are shown in Figure 7-36. In this situation, an integration of the various optical fiber propagation modes produces a “smooth” pulse shape. This fact is beneficial in terms of the required electrical band for optical-electrical conversion (APD) and signal amplification.

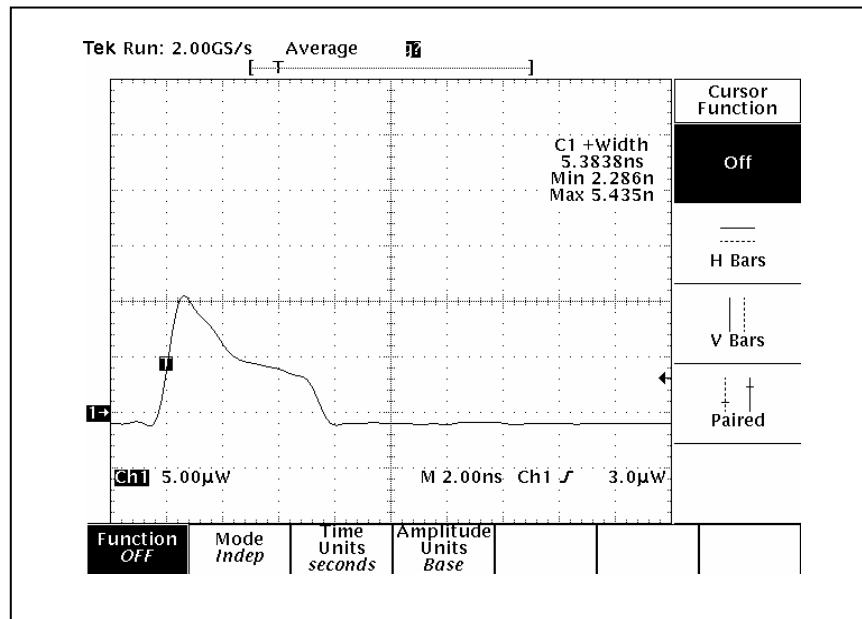


Figure 7-36: ELPM-20K Pulse Reflected from a Green Painted Target.

7.6.3 Laser Beam Misalignment with Respect to the Beam-Expander Support

For measuring the beam misalignment, the beam expander was placed into the micrometric support, and regulated (azimuth and elevation), in order to obtain a maximum for the signal amplitude measured by the oscilloscope (Figure 7-34). Then the beam expander was replaced by the He-Ne *Melles Griot* laser, whose cylindrical packaging, with the same diameter of the beam expander, is aligned with its laser beam with an error ≤ 1 mrad (small with respect to the alignment error that had to measure: expected value ≤ 10 mrad). Using the probe 6701B ($0.5 \mu\text{m} \div 0.95 \mu\text{m}$ band), the micrometric support was regulated in order to obtain a maximum for the amplitude of the signal measured by the oscilloscope. Therefore, measuring the micrometers shifts in azimuth and elevation, the laser beam misalignment was determined. Particularly, the measured misalignment was 5 mrad.

7.6.3.1 Pulse Repetition Frequency

The PRF measurement results (oscilloscope records) are displayed in Figure 7-37.

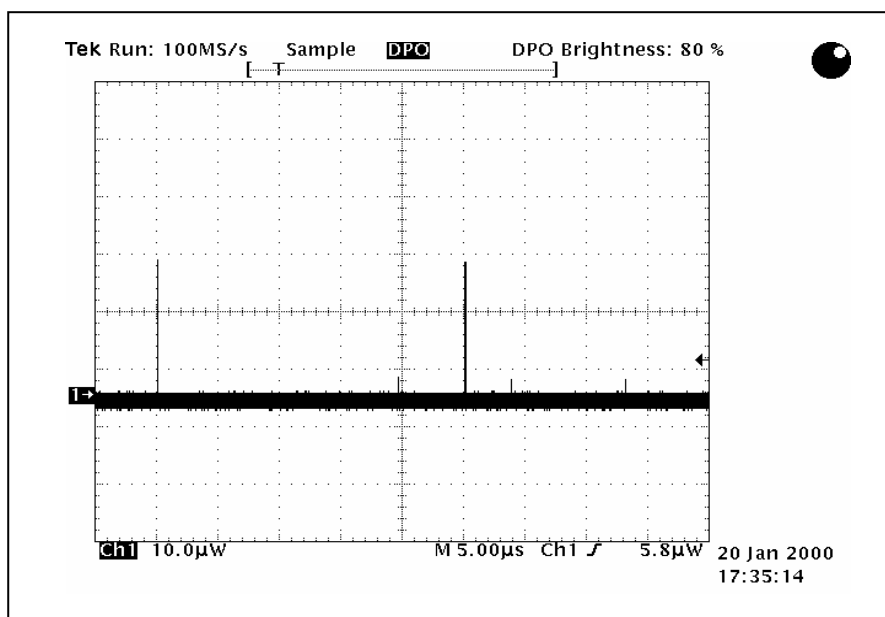


Figure 7-37: ELPM-20K Pulse Repetition Frequency (PRF).

7.6.3.2 Power Consumption, Weight and Dimensions

The power consumption measured at 25°C was about 50 W. The need to maintain a constant temperature for the pumping diode (using *Peltier* elements), made power consumption a function of ambient temperature. Tests conducted in a thermal chamber with a temperature range of $-10^{\circ}\text{C} \div 50^{\circ}\text{C}$ demonstrated a maximum consumption of 80 W. ELPM-20K laser weight and dimensions were adequate for integration in the LOAS system. The results of all tests performed are summarized in Table 7-6.

Table 7-6: ELPM-20K Laser Test Results

PARAMETER	LOAS SPEC	MEASURE
Average power transmitted	1.2 W	1.49 W
Pulse duration	2 ÷ 5 nsec	2.8 nsec
Pulse Repetition Frequency (PRF)	40 KHz	40 KHz
Laser beam misalignment with respect to the beam-expander support	10 mrad	5 mrad
Power consumption	< 200 W	< 50 W @ 25°C
Weight	< 4.8 Kg	3.1 Kg
Dimensions	270 x 50 x 190 mm (LXAXP)	270 x 35.5 x 190 mm (LXAXP)

7.7 TEST OF PROTECTION FILTERS

During the PILASTER program, a number of laboratory measurements were performed on various protection filters, in order to select the best of current (commercially available) systems (optical density, transmittance in the visible, etc.) for employment at the PILASTER. These measurements included:

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- Ground personnel protection goggles;
- Aircrew protection visors and spectacles; and
- LTR Cinetheodolites Operator Sight (COS) filters.

In the last case, the optical gain of the COS needed to be determined first. For all systems, the principal objectives of the laboratory activities were:

- Determination of the filters Optical Density (OD) at $\lambda = 1064 \text{ nm}$; and
- Determination of the transmittance in the visible.

7.7.1 Filters for Ground Personnel and Aircrew

The instrumentation arrangement required to perform the measurements on ground personnel/aircrew protection filters is illustrated in Figure 7-38. With reference to the figure, the following equipment was used:

- 1) Nd:YAG laser (*Quantel YG 780-20*).
- 2) Neutral density filters (*Optics for Research 0.1 ÷ 4.0 ND*).
- 3) Beam-steering optics.
- 4) Protection filters:
 - *Laser Vision* mod. 01.307.00 (spectacles);
 - *Laser Vision* mod. 01.606.00 (spectacles);
 - *Cilas* mod. IR3-01 (spectacles); and
 - *Gentex* mod. 91A8053-3 (aircrew helmet visor).
- 5) Lithium tantalite energy detector (*Newport mod. 818J-50*).
- 6) Multi function optical meter (*Newport mod. 2835*).

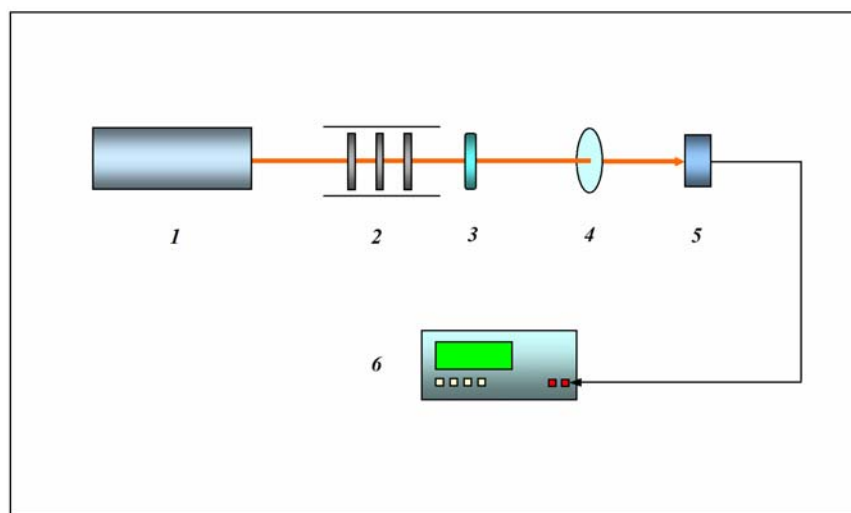


Figure 7-38: Instrumentation for Filters OD Determination.

The Optical Densities (OD) of each protection filter was obtained using the average of 5 energy measurements obtained with and without interposition of the protection filter in the optical circuit shown in Figure 7-38, and using the formula:

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$$OD = \log_{10} \frac{E_i(H_i)}{E_t(H_t)} \quad (7.6)$$

where $E_i(H_i)$ is the Incident Irradiance (Radiant Exposure) and $E_t(H_t)$ is the Transmitted Irradiance (Radiant Exposure). The various protection filters tested are shown in Figure 7-39.

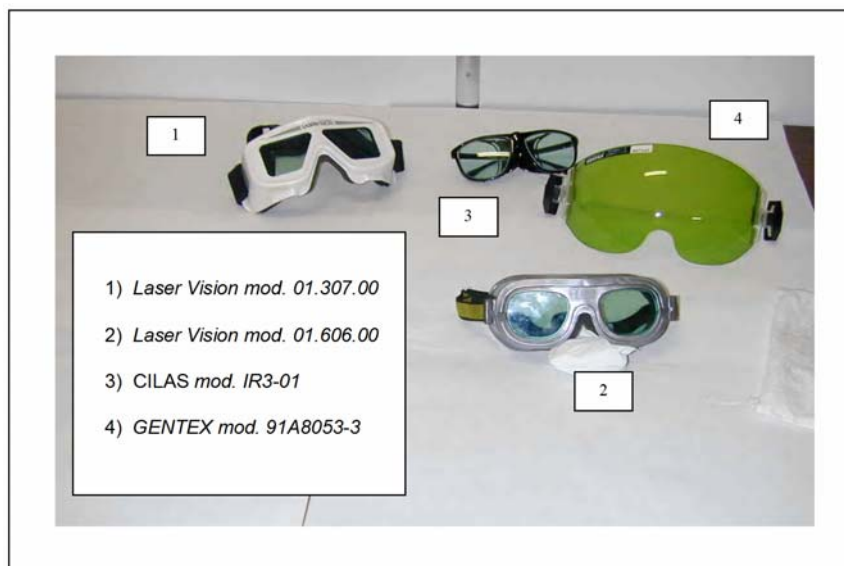


Figure 7-39: Tested Laser Protection Filters.

The results of the measurements are reported in Table 7-7.

Table 7-7: Protection Filters OD Measurements Results

FILTERS	OD	
	Specified	Measured
<i>Laser Vision</i> mod. 01.307.00	5	5.4
<i>Laser Vision</i> mod. 01.606.00	5	5.7
<i>Cilas</i> mod. IR3-01	4	4.6
<i>Gentex</i> mod. 91A8053-3	3.5	3.5

Transmission in the visible ($T\%$) was measured using the *Perkin Elmer* Lambda-19 spectrometer, equipped with an integrating sphere and capable to determine transmittance in the $350 \div 2500$ nm spectral range. Before performing the measurements, the instrument was calibrated with a standard BaSO_4 reference. For each filter, it was initially performed a scan in the entire instrument spectral range in order to determine the cut-off frequencies, then a fine measurement was performed in the $350 \div 750$ nm interval. The results of the measurements are presented in Figure 7-40.

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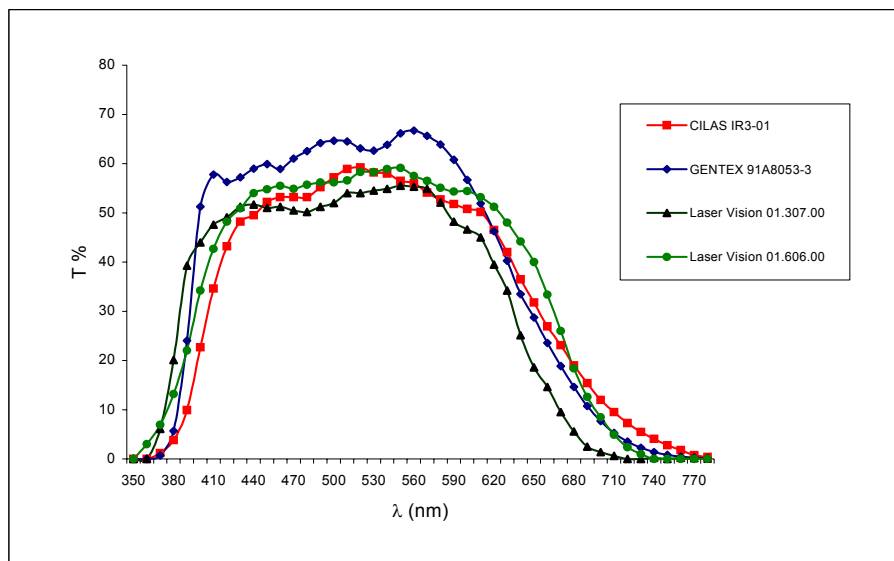


Figure 7-40: Protection Filters Transmission Measurements Results.

Although all filters matched the PILASTER program requirements, the filters finally selected were the *Laser Vision* 01.606.00 for ground personnel and the *Gentex* 91A8053-3 visor for aircrews. This last filter, in comparison with other possible laser visors and spectacles, also offered the advantage of an easy integration into the HGU-55/G standard helmet (also produced by *Gentex*) already in service with the Italian Air Force.

7.7.2 Test of PILASTER Cinetheodolite Optics

The instrumentation arrangement required to perform the measurements of COS optical gain (G) is illustrated in Figure 7-41.

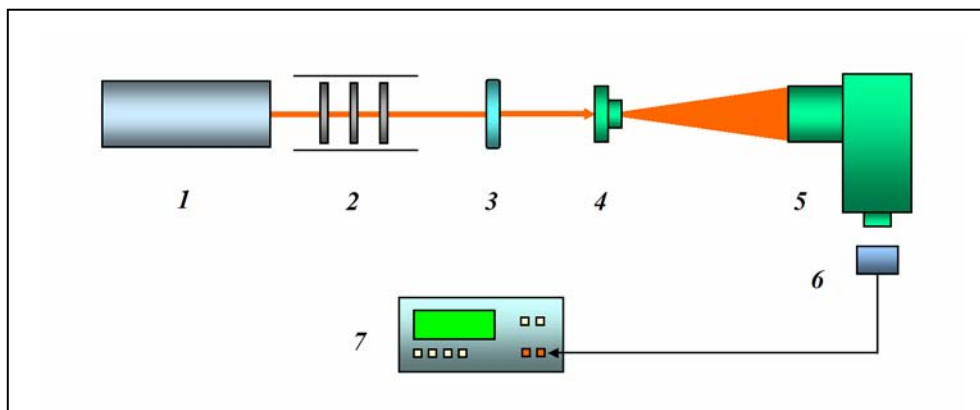


Figure 7-41: Instrumentation for COS Optical Gain Determination.

With reference to the figure, the following equipment was used:

- 1) Nd:YAG laser (*Quantel* YG 780-20);
- 2) Neutral density filters (*Optics for Research* 0.1÷4.0 ND);

- 3) Beam-steering optics;
- 4) Beam expanding optics;
- 5) PILASTER CITE Operator Sight (*Kern “Solmar”* optics 2× and 12×);
- 6) Si-photodiode detector (*Newport* low-power detector mod. 818 SL); and
- 7) Multi function optical meter (*Newport* mod. 2835).

As the COS features two different magnification options ($M = 4$ and $M = 12$), the measurements were performed with $M = 12$ (worst case for safety). The laser irradiance was then measured before the COS input (E_i) and successively at the exit pupil of the instrument (E_o). The measurements have been performed with different values of input irradiance. The results are reported in Table 7-8, where the values of output laser power (P_o) have been normalized (referred to the unit surface).

Table 7-8: COS Optical Gain Determination

Measure	$E_i (\mu W cm^{-2})$	$P_o (\mu W)$	$E_o (\mu W cm^{-2})$	$E_o / E_i = G^2$	G
1	1.4	18.0	143.2	102.3	10.11
2	2.8	36.2	288.1	102.9	10.14
3	8.5	108.0	859.4	101.1	10.06
4	26.8	344.2	2739.1	101.5	10.07
5	49.2	635.3	5055.6	102.8	10.14

The optical gain G is required for safety calculations and determination of the appropriate OD for COS operator protection filters. Particularly, given the NOHD of the system to be used at the PILASTER range, the Extended Nominal Ocular Hazard Distance (ENOHD) is given by:

$$ENOHD = NOHD \cdot G + \frac{a \cdot (G - 1)}{\phi} \quad (7.7)$$

The OD of the COS operator protection filter is given by:

$$OD \geq \log_{10} \frac{E_{i,KOS}}{E_{MPE}} \quad (7.8)$$

where E_{MPE} is maximum irradiance permitted for the naked human eye (either for a single pulse or for a train of pulses, depending on system mode of operation) and $E_{i,KOS}$ is the irradiance expected to reach the COS operator eye in the absence of a filter, which is given by:

$$E_{i,KOS} = E_{MPE} \cdot G^{-2} \quad (7.9)$$

From the calculation performed using the ELOP-PLD and CLDP technical data, considering the geometries involved with typical test/training missions, a filter with $OD \geq 5$ could be used successfully for COS operator protection. Therefore, the *Laser Vision* 01.606.00 filter, already selected for ground personnel, was also suitable for COS operator protection during ELOP-PLD and CLDP missions at the PILASTER range.

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Chapter 8 – GROUND EXPERIMENTAL ACTIVITIES

8.1 GENERAL

Ground experiments performed during this research included Near Infrared (NIR) laser beam atmospheric propagation measurements, LTD/LRF pointing accuracy tests, systems harmonisation and performance evaluation trials of the PILASTER STU components. Furthermore, dedicated ground trials were performed with the LOAS system in order to assess its detection performance (in various weather conditions), and to verify the reliability of its obstacle classification algorithms. This chapter describes field trials and experiments carried out during the research. Particularly, tests objectives and procedures, instrumentation requirements and the data analysis methods are described, together with results of all ground experimental activities.

8.2 ATMOSPHERIC EXTINCTION MEASUREMENTS

In order to characterise atmospheric propagation at $\lambda = 1064$ nm and $\lambda = 1550$ nm, various tests were performed at the PISQ laser test range, using the PILASTER STU and additional instrumentation. Particularly, the following activities were performed:

- Determination of atmospheric extinction with different visibilities, temperatures, relative humidity values, wind intensities/directions, etc.; and
- Determination of atmospheric extinction with different types of rain (rainfall-rate, raindrops dimensions, etc.).

For this purposes, the ELOP-PLD and a modified version of the LOAS systems were used, in conjunction with suitable weather monitoring instrumentation. The primary aim of these test activities was to start data acquisition for compilation of a Laser Propagation Data Base (LPDB), necessary to validate/improve the propagation models used for simulation and analysis at the PILASTER range.

Propagation measurements at $\lambda = 1064$ nm were performed using the same basic equipment employed for the PILASTER STU, including detectors at the targets locations and NIR cameras for beam characterization (i.e., energy measurement systems). Furthermore, some additional instrumentation was used for performing extinction measurements at $\lambda = 1550$ nm, in conjunction with the modified LOAS system. During the measurements, a number of atmospheric parameters were monitored and recorded: meteorological visibility (V), temperature (T), relative humidity (RH), atmospheric pressure (P), wind direction and velocity (W_d and W_v), solar radiation (E_s), and cloud amount. The local atmospheric parameters were continuously measured/recorded, during the test sessions, using the PILASTER meteorological instrumentation. These parameters were also monitored by the local Air Force Meteorological Office (some relevant vertical profiles were also determined with the aid of instrumented meteorological-balloons).

Meteorological data were collected at the PILASTER test range in different seasons and at different times of the day (4 times a day with 6 hours sampling intervals), in order to define a set of representative weather conditions for performing laser propagation measurements. The WMO scales used to classify cloud amount and horizontal visibility are defined in Table 8-1. The Cumulative Frequency Distribution Functions (CDF) relative to the data collected in the years 1998 – 2003 (divided in four groups of three months: Dec/Jan/Feb, Mar/Apr/May, Jun/Jul/Aug and Sept/Oct/Nov) are shown in the Figure 8-1 to Figure 8-3.

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Table 8-1: WMO Scales Used to Classify Cloud Amount and Horizontal Visibility

<i>WMO code</i>	<i>Cloud amount</i>	<i>WMO code</i>	<i>Horiz. visib.</i>
0	No clouds	90	< 50 m
1	1/8	91	50-200 m
2	2/8	92	200-500 m
3	3/8	93	500-1000 m
4	4/8	94	1-2 km
5	5/8	95	2-4 km
6	6/8	96	4-10 km
7	7/8	97	10-20 km
8	8/8	98	20-50 km
9	Upper air not visible	99	>50 km

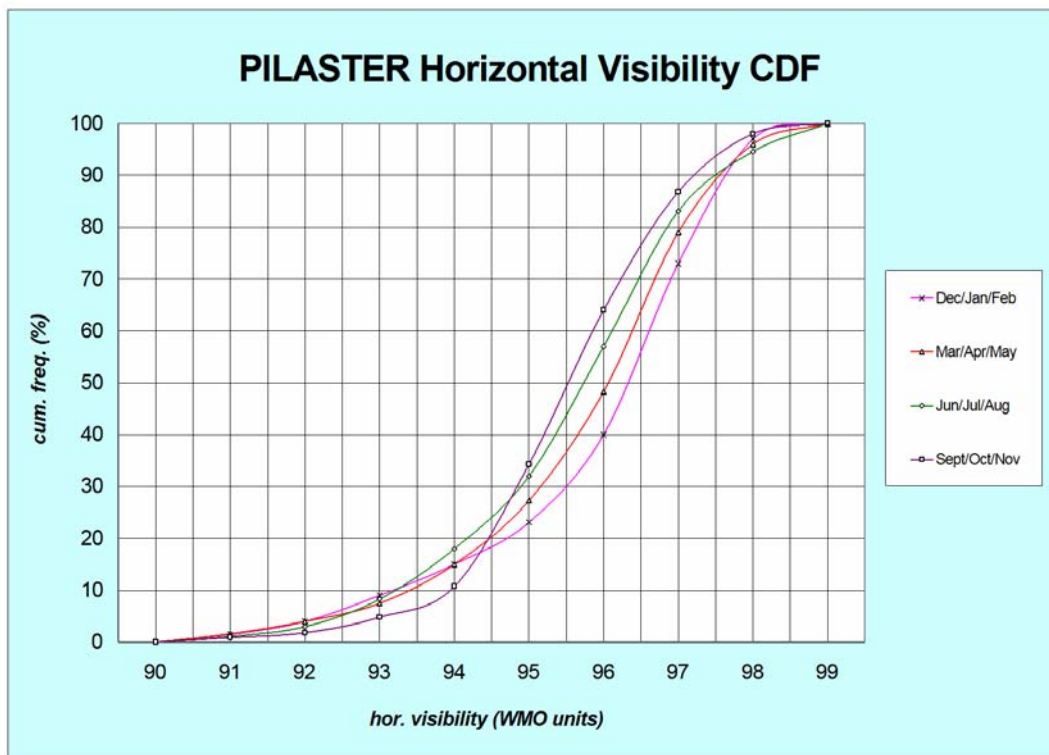


Figure 8-1: PILASTER Horizontal Visibility CDF (1998 – 2003).

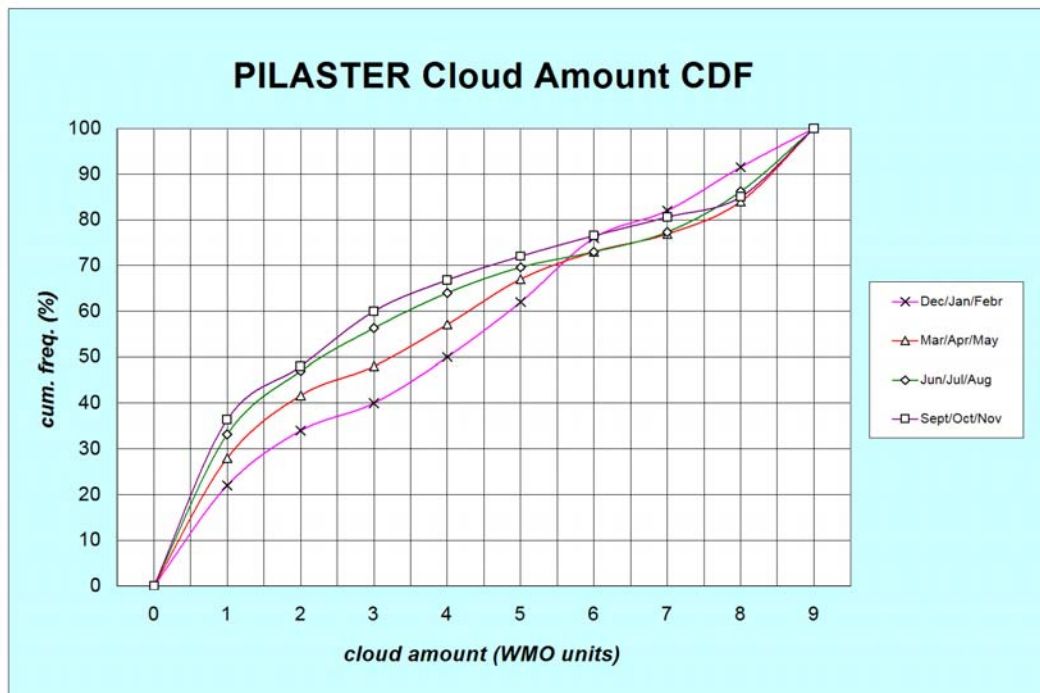


Figure 8-2: PILASTER Cloud Amount CDF (1998 – 2003).

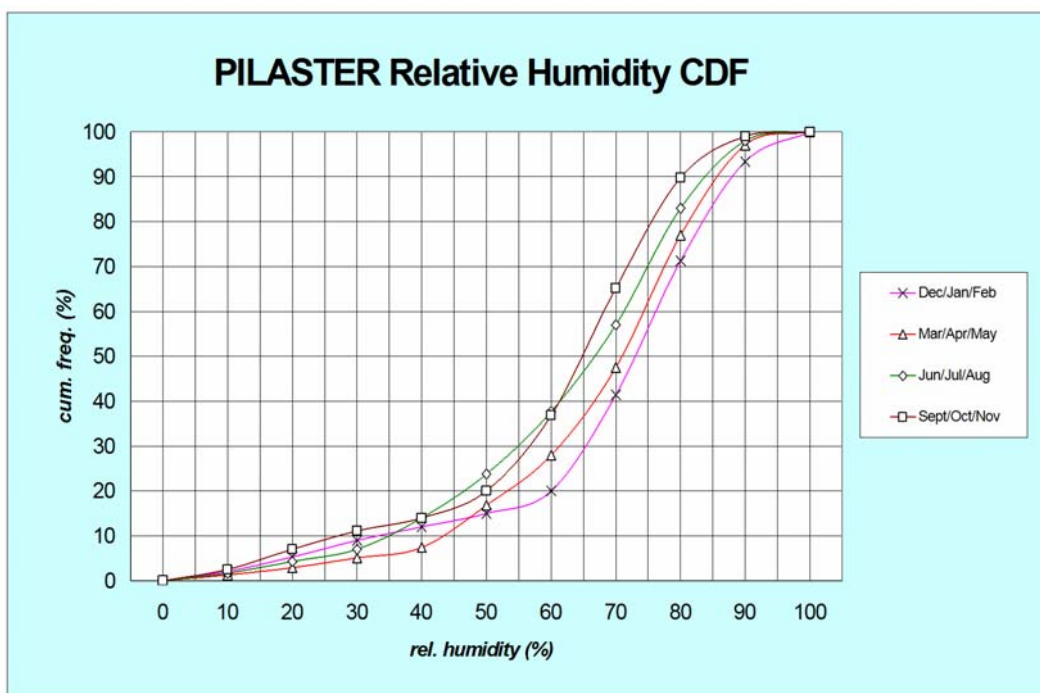


Figure 8-3: PILASTER Relative Humidity CDF (1998 – 2003).

The ELOP-PLD ($\lambda = 1064$ nm) and the LOAS ($\lambda = 1550$ nm) systems were used as the laser sources for propagation measurements. Particularly, in order to perform measurements at $\lambda = 1550$ nm the LOAS transmitter and receiver sub-systems were mounted on a tripod, as shown in Figure 8-4.

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ELOP-PLD



LOAS transmitter/receiver

Figure 8-4: ELOP-PLD and Modified LOAS Systems.

The PILASTER test range areas used for laser beam propagation measurements and the locations of systems and targets used for tests at $\lambda = 1064 \text{ nm}$ and $\lambda = 1550 \text{ nm}$ are shown in Figure 8-5. More details about propagation tests geometries are presented later in this chapter.

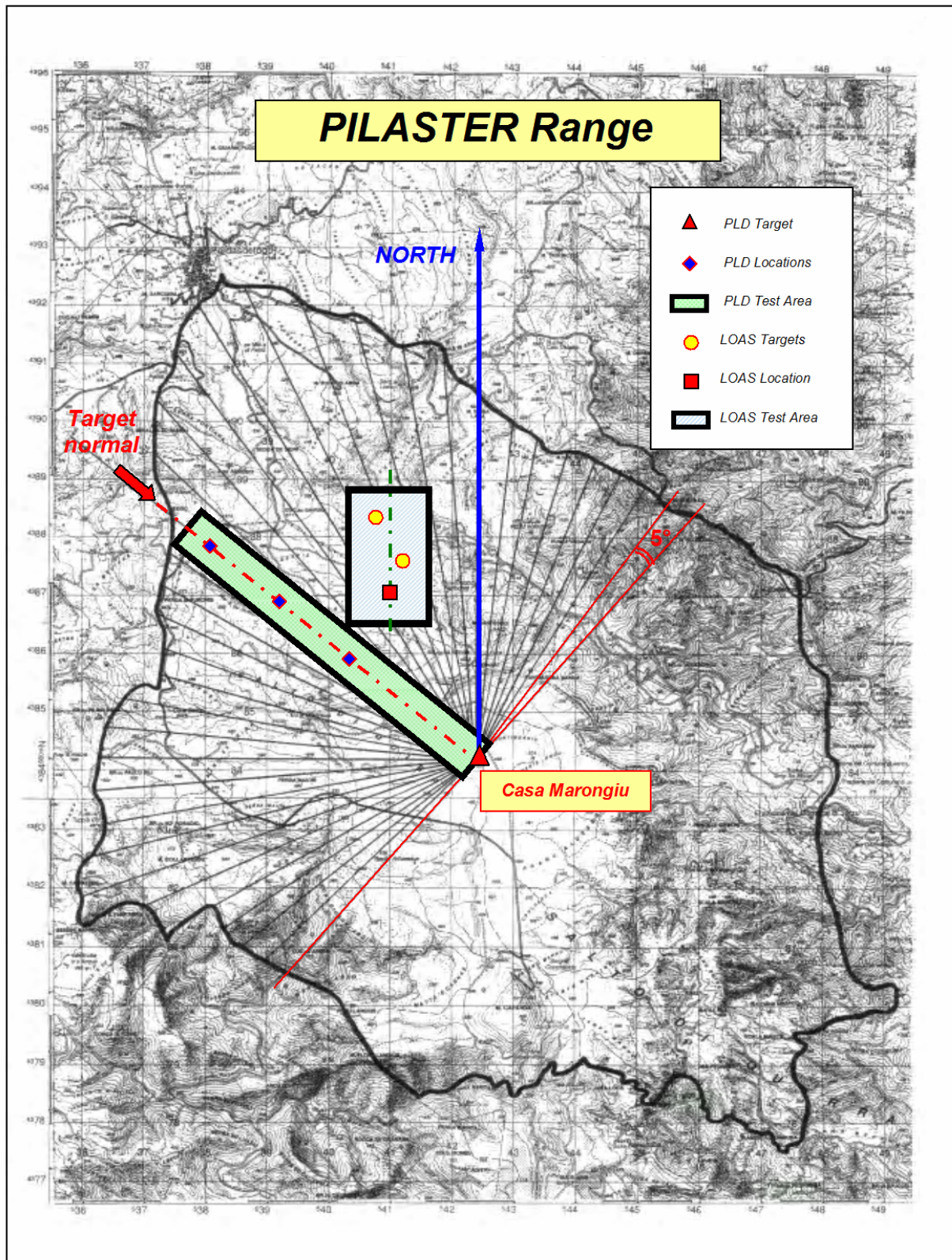


Figure 8-5: PILASTER Areas Used for Atmospheric Propagation Measurements.

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The three techniques used for atmospheric propagation tests were the following:

- Extinction Measurement Technique N° 1 (EMT-1), employing PILASTER STU instrumentation (i.e., non-calibrated Phoenix NIR camera and PEP sensors), for measurements at $\lambda = 1064$ nm.
- Extinction Measurement Technique N° 2 (EMT-2), employing the PILASTER calibrated Phoenix NIR camera, for measurements at $\lambda = 1064$ nm.
- Extinction Measurement Technique N° 3 (EMT-3), specifically developed for measurements at $\lambda = 1550$ nm, using the modified LOAS system.

EMT-3 had to be adopted instead of EMT-1 and EMT-2 (PILASTER standard techniques), because the LOAS laser transmitter presented a PRF of 40 kHz, not compatible with the standard PILASTER STU sensors response. Therefore, the Phoenix NIR camera was filtered and calibrated only for measurements at $\lambda = 1064$ nm. Furthermore, a Control Technique (EMT-CT) was adopted for field calibration of the PILASTER EMT-1 and EMT-2. The EMT-1 and EMT-2 techniques were described in Chapter 5. The rationales of EMT-CT and EMT-3 are presented below.

8.2.1 EMT Control Technique (EMT-CT)

A control technique was adopted to verify the reliability and accuracy of the PILASTER EMT-1 and EMT-2. This control technique was based on a very simple concept (see Figure 8-6). Placing the PLD/LOAS systems and the PILASTER NIR camera (with appropriate optics) very close to the target surface (100 m and 80 m respectively) in conditions of very good visibility ($V > 20$ km) and low humidity ($RH < 65\%$ at $T < 25^\circ$), it was reasonable to assume that the entire output laser energy reached the target surface (i.e., $\tau_{atm} \cong 100\%$), and that the NIR camera detected the whole laser spot energy.

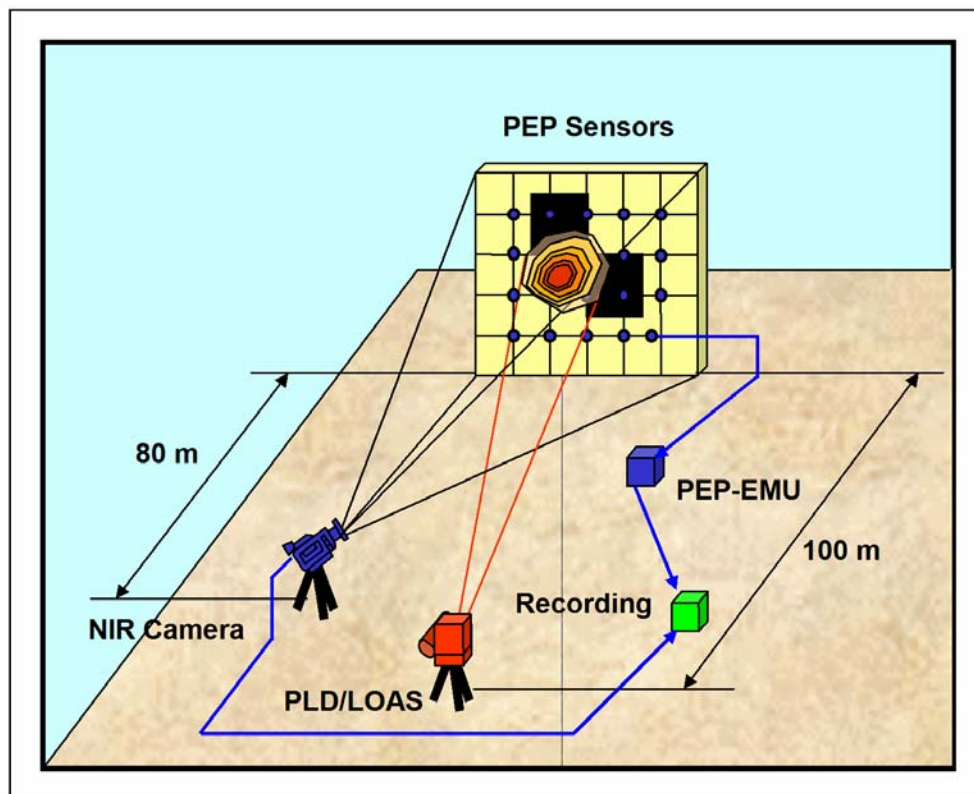


Figure 8-6: Experimental Arrangement for EMT-CT Tests.

Beam expansion and calibrated attenuation optics were used to conveniently modify the output laser beam for performing simultaneous NIR camera and PEP sensors measurements. Therefore, using the test instrumentation set up shown in Figure 8-6 and performing a large number of measurements, the errors of the PILASTER instrumentation in measuring atmospheric transmittance (EMT-1 and EMT-2) could be estimated by standard mathematical and statistical techniques.

8.2.2 Description of EMT-3

Since the LOAS laser transmitter presented a PRF of 40 kHz, not compatible with the standard PILASTER STU sensors response (*Phoenix* NIR camera full-frame), an additional technique was developed for performing atmospheric propagation measurements at $\lambda = 1550$ nm. This technique allowed indirect determination of atmospheric extinction measuring the LOAS transmitted laser power and the anodic voltage at the receiver. The rationale of this new technique is the following.

In general, the function describing the anodic voltage at the receiver can be expressed in the form:

$$V = R_L \cdot R_S \cdot P \quad (8.1)$$

where V is the anodic voltage, R_L is the anodic load (Ω), R_S is the detector responsivity (A/W), and P is the power reaching the receiver detector (W).

From the discussion about laser systems performance calculation (Chapter 3), assuming an extended target, the power at the detector can be expressed as follows:

$$P = K_{SYS} \cdot \rho \cdot \frac{1}{d_o^2} \cdot e^{-2\gamma d_o} \quad (8.2)$$

where ρ is the target reflectivity, d_o is the distance of the target from the transmitter/receiver, and γ is the extinction coefficient. K_{SYS} is a constant which accounts for all relevant transmitter/receiver systems parameters (e.g., transmitted laser power (P_o), efficiency of the transmitting and receiving optics (η_{TX} , η_{RX}), output beam diameter and divergence (D_L , α_T), transmitter/receiver LOS geometry).

Therefore, using two identical *Lambertian* targets placed at slant-ranges d_1 and d_2 respectively from the laser transmitter/receiver with a similar LOS geometry, and assuming that the extinction coefficient is constant in the slant-ranges considered, the following expressions can be written for the two anodic voltages measured at the receiver using Target N° 1 (V_1) and Target N° 2 (V_2):

$$V_1 = R_L \cdot R_S \cdot \left(K_{SYS} \cdot \rho \cdot \frac{1}{d_1^2} \cdot e^{-2\gamma d_1} \right) \quad (8.3)$$

$$V_2 = R_L \cdot R_S \cdot \left(K_{SYS} \cdot \rho \cdot \frac{1}{d_2^2} \cdot e^{-2\gamma d_2} \right) \quad (8.4)$$

It is reasonable to assume that, measuring the anodic voltages V_1 and V_2 , all system parameters remain constant, except the transmitted laser power (P_o) which may vary significantly in the time intervals where the two measurement sessions are performed.

With these assumptions, we can write the following expressions:

$$V_1 = K \cdot P_{o1} \cdot \frac{e^{-2\gamma d_1}}{d_1^2} \quad (8.5)$$

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$$V_2 = K \cdot P_{O2} \cdot \frac{e^{-2\gamma d_2}}{d_2^2} \quad (8.6)$$

where P_{O1} and P_{O2} are the transmitted laser powers, and the factor K contains all constant terms. Therefore:

$$\frac{V_1}{V_2} = \frac{P_{O1}}{P_{O2}} \cdot \frac{d_2^2}{d_1^2} \cdot e^{2\gamma(d_2 - d_1)} \quad (8.7)$$

and finally we obtain:

$$\gamma = \frac{1}{2\Delta d} \cdot \ln \left[\frac{\left(\frac{V_1}{P_{O1}} \right) \cdot d_1^2}{\left(\frac{V_2}{P_{O2}} \right) \cdot d_2^2} \right] \quad (8.8)$$

where the difference of the system to target slant-ranges ($d_1 - d_2$) has been replaced by the symbol Δd . It should be noted that all parameters contributing to the constant K do not affect the measurements (i.e., knowledge of these parameters is not required if their value remains constant during the measurements performed on Target N° 1 and N° 2). Obviously, the accuracy in the measurement of γ is affected by:

- The error in measuring the distances d_1 and d_2 ;
- The error in measuring the voltages V_1 and V_2 ; and
- The error in measuring the powers P_{O1} and P_{O2} .

Therefore, considering the errors relative to the measured parameters (σ_{d1} , σ_{d2} , σ_{V1} , σ_{V2} , $\sigma_{P_{O1}}$, $\sigma_{P_{O2}}$), we can write:

$$\begin{aligned} \sigma_\gamma^2 = & \frac{1}{(2\Delta d)^2} \cdot \left(\frac{\sigma_{V1}^2}{V_1^2} + \frac{\sigma_{V2}^2}{V_2^2} \right) + \frac{1}{(2\Delta d)^2} \cdot \left(\frac{\sigma_{P_{O1}}^2}{P_{O1}^2} + \frac{\sigma_{P_{O2}}^2}{P_{O2}^2} \right) + \\ & + \frac{\gamma^2}{\Delta d^2} \cdot \left(d_2 + \frac{1}{\gamma} \right)^2 \cdot \frac{\sigma_{d2}^2}{d_2^2} + \frac{\gamma^2}{\Delta d^2} \cdot \left(d_1 + \frac{1}{\gamma} \right)^2 \cdot \frac{\sigma_{d1}^2}{d_1^2} \end{aligned} \quad (8.9)$$

Assuming that the error σ_d and the relative errors σ_V/V and σ_{P_O}/P_O are the same for the measurements performed with Target N° 1 and Target N° 2, we have:

$$\sigma_\gamma^2 = \frac{1}{2\Delta d^2} \cdot \left(\frac{\sigma_V^2}{V^2} + \frac{\sigma_{P_O}^2}{P_O^2} \right) + \frac{\gamma^2}{\Delta d^2} \cdot \left[\left(d_1 + \frac{1}{\gamma} \right)^2 \cdot \frac{\sigma_d^2}{d_1^2} + \left(d_2 + \frac{1}{\gamma} \right)^2 \cdot \frac{\sigma_d^2}{d_2^2} \right] \quad (8.10)$$

Rearranging the terms in eq. (8.10), we obtain:

$$\sigma_\gamma = \frac{1}{\Delta d} \cdot \sqrt{\left\{ \frac{1}{2} \cdot \left(\frac{\sigma_V^2}{V^2} + \frac{\sigma_{P_O}^2}{P_O^2} \right) + \gamma^2 \cdot \left[\left(d_1 + \frac{1}{\gamma} \right)^2 \cdot \frac{\sigma_d^2}{d_1^2} + \left(d_2 + \frac{1}{\gamma} \right)^2 \cdot \frac{\sigma_d^2}{d_2^2} \right] \right\}} \quad (8.11)$$

Thus, it is evident that the error in the measurement of γ is strongly affected by the distance between the two targets. For instance, in the case of the LOAS transmitter/receiver parameters, $\sigma_V/V = 5\%$ and $\sigma_{P_O}/P_O = 2\%$. Assuming $\sigma_d = 1$ m, $d_1 = 800$ m, $\Delta d = 100$ m, $d_2 = 800$ m, $\gamma = 7 \times 10^{-4} \text{ m}^{-1}$, from eq. (8.11)

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we obtain a relative measurement error σ_r/γ of about 54%. Obviously, doubling the distance between the two targets (e.g., assuming $\Delta d = 200$ m and $d_2 = 1000$ m), the estimated relative error would be 27% (half of the previous case). The experimental arrangement used for the extinction measurements at $\lambda = 1550$ nm is shown in Figure 8-7.

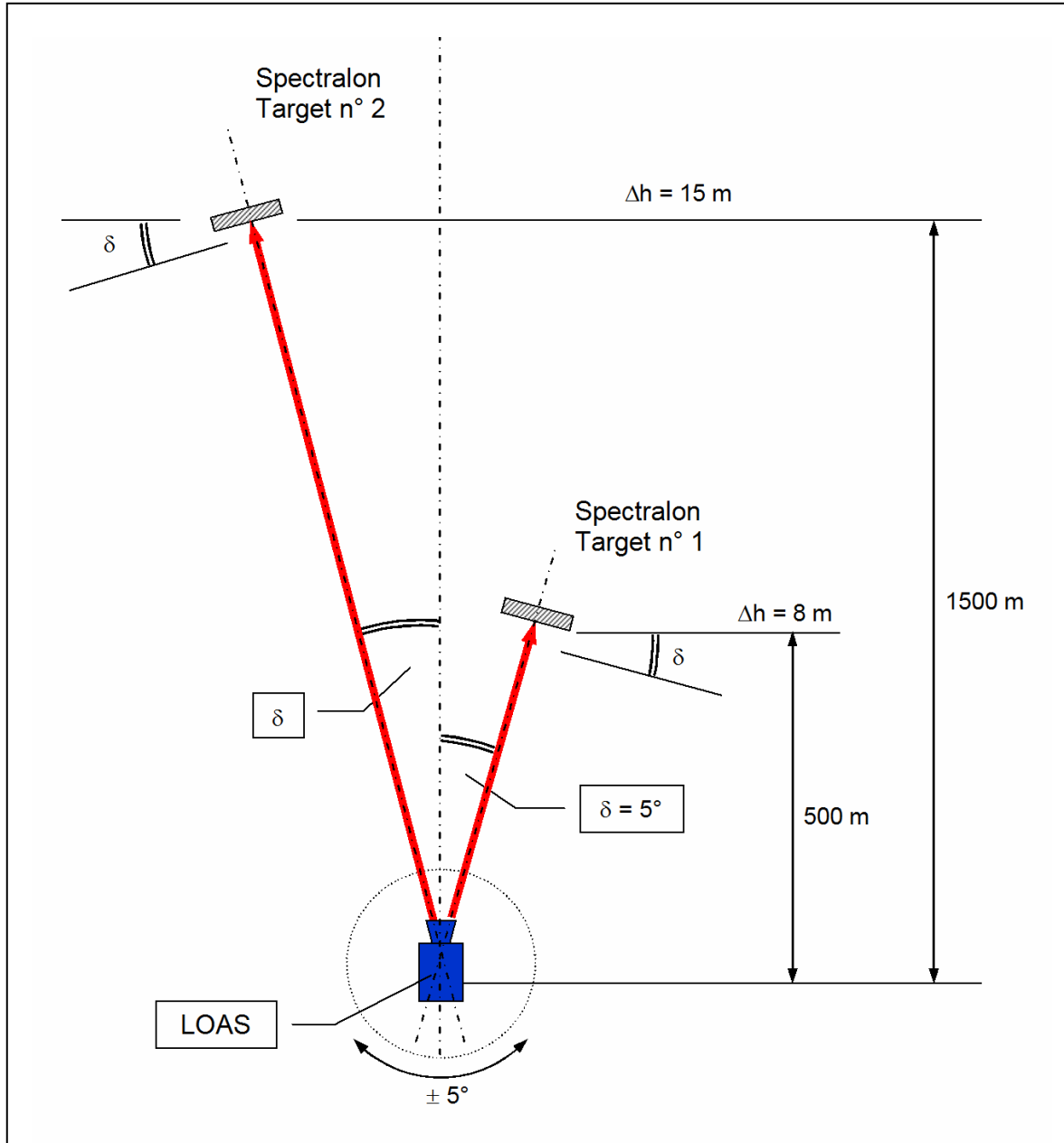


Figure 8-7: Experimental Arrangement for Propagation Tests at $\lambda = 1550$ nm.

Since the LOAS and the targets co-ordinates were determined by means of Differential GPS (DGPS) static surveys, we had $\sigma_d \leq 0.01$. Therefore:

$$\frac{1}{2} \cdot \left(\frac{\sigma_v^2}{V^2} + \frac{\sigma_{P_o}^2}{P_o^2} \right) \gg \gamma^2 \cdot \left[\left(d_1 + \frac{1}{\gamma} \right)^2 \cdot \frac{\sigma_d^2}{d_1^2} + \left(d_2 + \frac{1}{\gamma} \right)^2 \cdot \frac{\sigma_d^2}{d_2^2} \right] \quad (8.12)$$

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and:

$$\sigma_{\gamma} \cong \frac{1}{\Delta d} \cdot \sqrt{\frac{1}{2} \cdot \left(\frac{\sigma_V^2}{V^2} + \frac{\sigma_{P_o}^2}{P_o^2} \right)} \quad (8.13)$$

As in our case $\Delta d = 1000$ m, the estimated measurement error was:

$$\sigma_{\gamma} \cong \frac{1}{\Delta d} \cdot \sqrt{\frac{1}{2} \cdot \left(\frac{\sigma_V^2}{V^2} + \frac{\sigma_{P_o}^2}{P_o^2} \right)} = 3.81 \cdot 10^{-5} \text{ m}^{-1} \quad (8.14)$$

Therefore, since in general $\gamma > 10^{-4} \text{ m}^{-1}$, we calculated a maximum relative error σ_{γ}/γ of about 4%.

8.2.3 Verification and Optimisation of EMT-1 and EMT-2

During the initial phases of the experimental activity, it was understood that *Phoenix* NIR camera frame rate optimisation was crucial to data acquisition for both PILASTER techniques (EMT-1 and EMT-2), as well as to definition of the DAS (Digital Acquisition and Data Recording System) memory requirements for NIR camera data recording. Furthermore, significant differences were observed between the transmittance measurements obtained using EMT-1/EMT-2 and the transmittance values predicted by mathematical models. This aspect also had to be investigated to allow practical implementation of EMT-1 and EMT-2 at the PILASTER. Therefore, some ground experimental activities were performed in order to:

- Optimise the NIR camera frame rates for data acquisition at the PILASTER with state-of-the-art systems having pulse durations $P_D < 20$ ns and pulse repetition frequencies (PRF) between 10 Hz and 40 kHz (e.g., 10 or 20 Hz for ELOP-PLD, and 40 kHz for LOAS);
- Determine the computer memory requirements for NIR camera data recording at 10 Hz/20 Hz (ELOP-PLD) and 40 kHz (LOAS); and
- Evaluate/improve both EMT-1 and EMT-2 for measurements at $\lambda = 1064$ nm.

Phoenix NIR camera frame rate optimisation was carried out with preliminary calculations and two separated experimental sessions performed with the ELOP-PLD and the LOAS systems. During the same sessions, it was also verified the compatibility of the NIR camera frame rates with the commercial PC memories installed in the Phoenix DAS system. Evaluation of the PILASTER EMT-1/EMT-2 reliability was obtained by performing various test sessions with the PLD system, using EMT-CT. With this control techniques, it was also possible to determine useful correction for the EMT-1 and EMT-2 measurements at $\lambda = 1064$ nm.

8.2.3.1 NIR Camera Frame Rate Optimisation

After the initial ground tests with the NIR camera, it was decided that the NIR camera acquisition windows were not synchronised with the laser pulses incident on the target surface. In fact, although the NIR camera could be triggered by the laser pulses incident on the target using the PILASTER instrumentation, good synchronisation became extremely difficult even at low PRF and almost impossible as the PRF increased (also due to the existence of dark zones in the NIR camera acquisition windows). Therefore a preliminary study was required in order to determine optimal frame rates for the NIR camera acquisition as a function of the known laser pulses parameters. After that, some experimental sessions were performed to verify the validity of the models developed.

8.2.3.2 Frame Rate Optimisation Analysis

Let us consider the train of pulses shown in Figure 8-8. The parameters describing the train of pulses are the pulse duration (τ), the pulse period (T_P) and the PRF (f) given by:

$$f = \frac{1}{T_P} \quad (8.15)$$

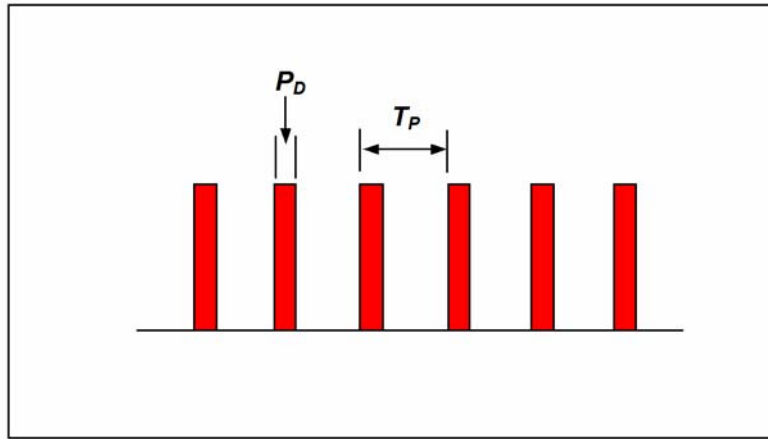


Figure 8-8: Train of Pulses.

The NIR camera image acquisition process is defined by the frame period (T_F) and the corresponding frame frequency (f_F) given by:

$$f_F = \frac{1}{T_F} \quad (8.16)$$

Each frame consists of a 320×256 pixels matrix. In general, the NIR camera real acquisition time (T_A) is inferior to the corresponding framing window defined by T_F . The difference between T_F and T_A is the so called camera ‘dark-time’ (T_{dark}). For the Phoenix camera T_{dark} is 2% of the frame period (T_F). Therefore:

$$T_{dark} = T_{dark\%} \cdot T_f = 0.02 \cdot T_f \quad (8.17)$$

$$T_A = T_F - 0.02 \cdot T_f \quad (8.18)$$

A schematic representation of the NIR camera acquisition windows and dark zones is shown in Figure 8-9.

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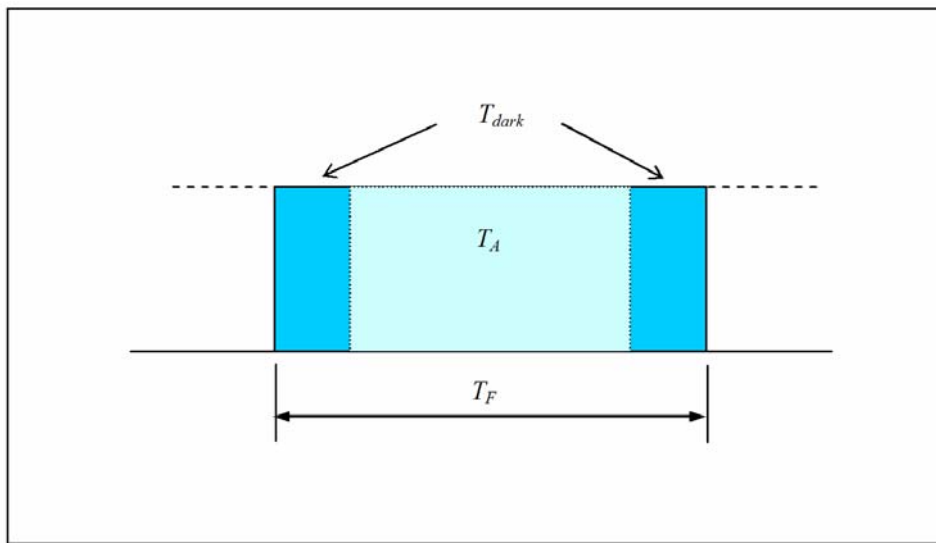


Figure 8-9: NIR Camera Acquisition Windows and Dark Zones.

Since the NIR camera frames are not synchronised with the laser pulses, considering the NIR camera acquisition windows sequence as our time base (T_b), the instant of arrival of the first laser pulse (reflected from the target) at the NIR camera (T_o) can be treated as a random variable (see Figure 8-10).

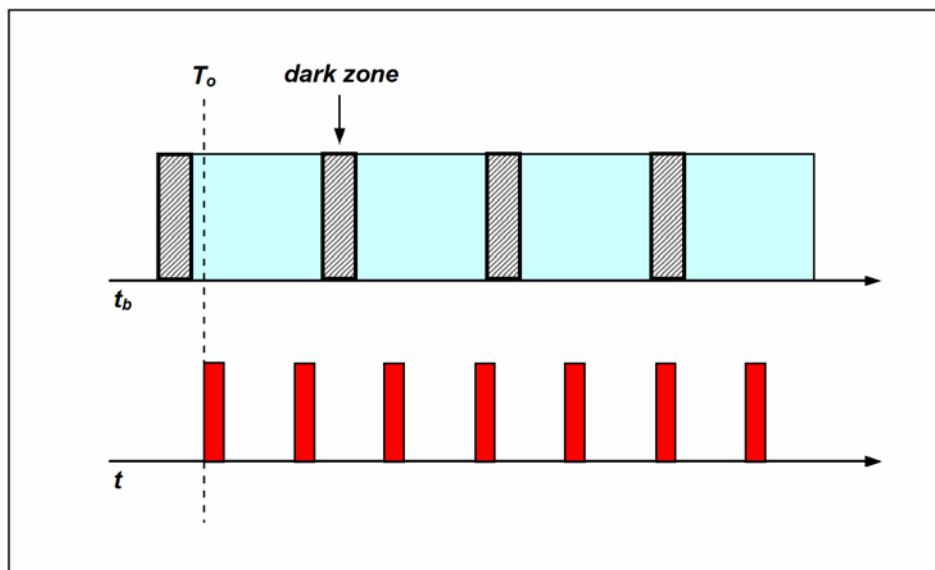


Figure 8-10: NIR Camera Acquisition Windows Sequence and Laser Pulses.

Therefore, our optimisation problem consists in determining the frame period (T_F) satisfying the following conditions:

- Cond. 1** → Only one pulse has to be acquired in a single frame.
- Cond. 2** → The probability of a laser pulse being entirely or partially in the dark zones of the NIR camera acquisition windows sequence has to be minimised.

To satisfy the first condition, we set:

$$T_F \leq T_P \quad (8.19)$$

Since we consider as ‘error’ the event of a laser pulse being totally or partially in the ‘dark zones’, we have to take into account the duration of the laser pulses (τ) in our analysis. To simplify calculations, we model the laser pulses as pure *Dirac*-pulses (i.e., pulses of zero duration), simply by adding τ to the dark periods (T_{dark}) at the beginning and at the end of the acquisition windows (Figure 8-11). Therefore, we define the ‘effective dark time’ (T_{dark_eff}) as follows:

$$T_{dark_eff} = T_{dark} \% T_F + \tau \quad (8.20)$$

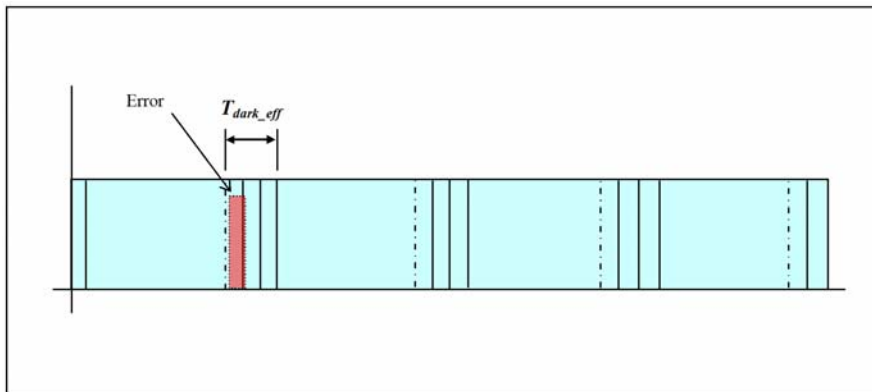


Figure 8-11: Effective Dark Time.

The resulting model used for analysis is shown in Figure 8-12.

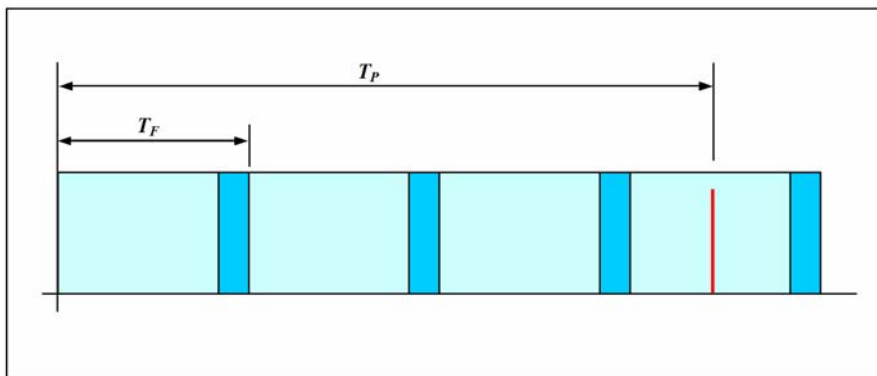


Figure 8-12: Model Used for Analysis.

Having defined our reference windows sequence, we have to choose the probability distribution modelling the arrival of a laser pulse into windows sequence. Since $T_F \leq T_P$, in a single pulse period there may be various acquisition windows. Therefore, knowing that in the time interval $[0; T_P]$ only one pulse has to be present, we model the time of arrival of the laser pulse as a uniform random variable (Figure 8-13).

Diagram illustrating a rectangular pulse function. The horizontal axis is labeled with 0 and T_P . The vertical axis is labeled with $1/T_P$. A rectangular pulse of height $1/T_P$ starts at 0 and ends at T_P . An arrow points from the label $1/T_P$ to the top of the pulse. A box contains the text: $T_{arrival_pulse} \succsim U(0, T_P) \rightarrow f_x = \frac{1}{T_P}$.

The error probability with varying T_F is given by:

We have the two cases described below.

Case-1: In the interval $[0; T_p]$ there is an integer number of dark zones. Thus, the error probability becomes:

Where N_d is the number of dark zones in the interval $[0; T_P]$.

Case-2: In the interval $[0; T_p]$ there is a decimal number of dark zones (Figure 8-14).

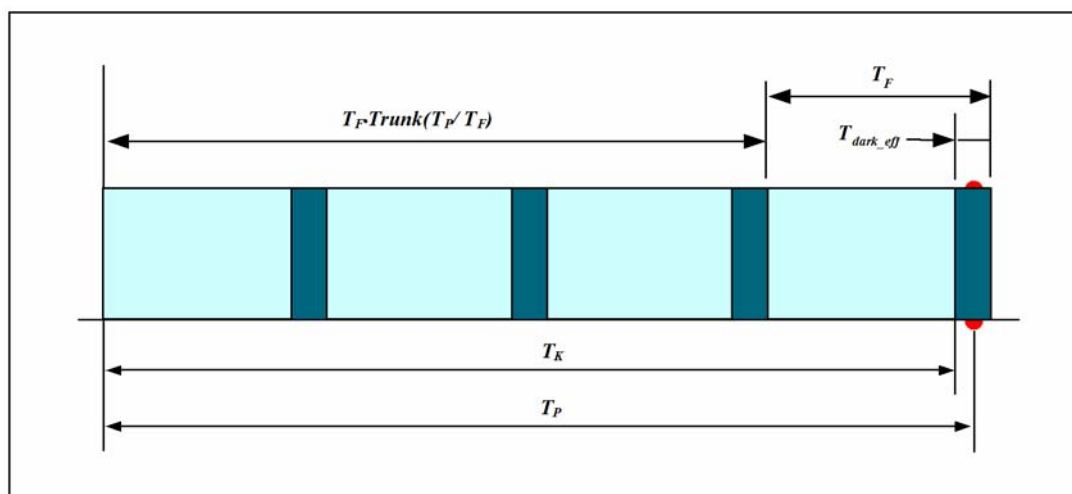


Figure 8-14: Decimal Number of Dark Zones in the Interval $[0; T_P]$.

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For our analysis, *Case-2* represents the general case (i.e., includes *Case-1*). As we notice in Figure 8-14, we have an integer number of dark zones plus a fraction of dark zone partially included in the interval $[0; T_P]$. Therefore, if we let:

$$T_K = T_F [1 + Trunk(T_P / T_F)] - T_{dark_eff} \quad (8.23)$$

the error probability in the general case is given by:

$$P_{err} = Trunk\left(\frac{T_P}{T_F}\right) \frac{T_{dark_eff}}{T_P} + \left(\frac{1}{T_P} \int_{T_K}^{T_P} dx\right) \cdot b \quad (8.24)$$

where b is a Boolean variable of the form:

$$\begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } T_P - T_F \left[1 + Trunk\left(\frac{T_P}{T_F}\right)\right] + T_{dark_eff} > 0 \\ 0 & \text{if } T_P - T_F \left[1 + Trunk\left(\frac{T_P}{T_F}\right)\right] + T_{dark_eff} < 0 \end{cases} \quad (8.25)$$

Therefore, we obtain:

$$P_{err} = \left[Trunk(T_P / T_F) + \frac{1}{T_P} \{T_P + T_{dark_eff} - T_F [1 + Trunk(T_P / T_F)]\} \cdot b \right] \frac{T_{dark_eff}}{T_P} \quad (8.26)$$

where the number of dark zones in the interval $[0; T_P]$ is:

$$N_D = Trunk(T_P / T_F) + \frac{1}{T_P} \{T_P + T_{dark_eff} - T_F [1 + Trunk(T_P / T_F)]\} \cdot b \quad (8.27)$$

Substituting eq. (8.20) into eq. (8.26), taking into account the eq. (8.25), we obtain the expressions of P_{err} listed in Table 8-2, where the function P_{err} has been defined with $N = 1, 2, 3 \dots$

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Table 8-2: Error Probability (P_{err}) Equations in the Definition Intervals

T_F	P_{err}
$\frac{T_P + \tau_{pulse}}{2(1 - T_{dark\%}/2)} < T_F < T_P$	$\frac{T_{Buo\%}}{T_P} T_F + \frac{\tau_{pulse}}{T_P}$
$\frac{T_P}{2} < T_F < \frac{T_P + \tau_{pulse}}{2(1 - T_{dark\%}/2)}$	$\left(\frac{T_{dark\%}}{T_P} T_F + \frac{\tau_{pulse}}{T_P} \right) \times$ $\times \left[1 + \frac{T_P + (T_{dark\%} - 2)T_P + \tau_{pulse}}{\tau_{pulse} + T_{dark\%} T_F} \right]$
•	•
•	•
•	•
$\frac{T_P + \tau_{pulse}}{(N+1)(1 - T_{dark\%}/(N+1))} < T_F < \frac{T_P}{N}$	$N \left(\frac{T_{dark\%}}{T_P} T_F + \frac{\tau_{pulse}}{T_P} \right)$
$\frac{T_P}{(N+1)} < T_F < \frac{T_P + \tau_{pulse}}{(N+1)[1 - T_{dark\%}/(N+1)]}$	$N \left(\frac{T_{dark\%}}{T_P} T_F + \frac{\tau_{pulse}}{T_P} \right) \times$ $\times \left[N + \frac{T_P + (T_{dark\%} - (N+1))T_P + \tau_{pulse}}{\tau_{pulse} + T_{dark\%} T_F} \right]$
•	•
•	•
•	•

The function P_{err} , calculated for $f = 10$ Hz and $\tau_{pulse} = 19$ nsec (ELOP-PLD system) is shown in Figure 8-15.

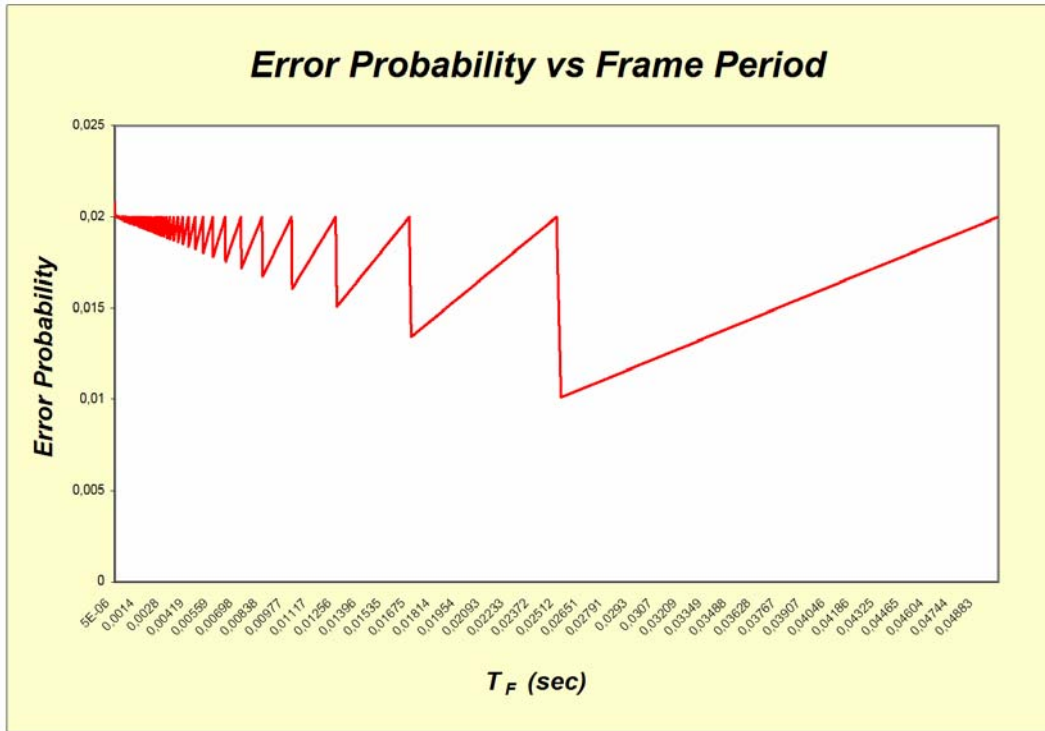


Figure 8-15: NIR Camera Error Probability Function for $f = 10$ Hz.

In general, the relative minimums of the error probability function are found for:

$$T_F = \frac{T_P + \tau_{pulse}}{(N+1) \left(1 - \frac{T_{dark\%}}{N+1} \right)} \quad (8.28)$$

giving the following values of P_{err} :

$$P_{Err} = N \frac{T_P + \tau_{pulse}}{(N+1) \left(1 - \frac{T_{dark\%}}{N+1} \right)} \frac{T_{dark\%}}{T_P} + \frac{N \tau_{pulse}}{T_P} \quad (8.29)$$

The absolute minimum (optimal) value of P_{err} is found for:

$$T_{F_opt} = \frac{T_P + \tau_{pulse}}{2 \left(1 - \frac{T_{dark\%}}{2} \right)} \quad (8.30)$$

giving:

$$P_{Err_opt} = \frac{T_P + \tau_{pulse}}{2 \left(1 - \frac{T_{dark\%}}{2} \right)} \frac{T_{dark\%}}{T_P} + \frac{\tau_{pulse}}{T_P} \quad (8.31)$$

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In most cases of practical interest, and particularly for both the ELOP-PLD and LOAS systems (i.e., $\tau_{pulse} < 20$ ns and $10 \text{ Hz} < f < 40 \text{ kHz}$), we have that $T_P \gg \tau_{pulse}$. Therefore, the equations (8.30) and (8.31) become:

$$T_{F_opt} = \frac{T_P + \tau_{pulse}}{2 \left(1 - \frac{T_{dark\%}}{2} \right)} \cong \frac{T_P}{2 \left(1 - \frac{T_{dark\%}}{2} \right)} \cong \frac{T_P}{2} \quad (8.32)$$

$$P_{Err_opt} = \frac{T_P + \tau_{pulse}}{2 \left(1 - \frac{T_{dark\%}}{2} \right)} \cdot \frac{T_{dark\%}}{T_P} + \frac{\tau_{pulse}}{T_P} \cong \frac{T_P}{2 \left(1 - \frac{T_{dark\%}}{2} \right)} \cdot \frac{T_{dark\%}}{T_P} \cong \frac{T_P}{2} \cdot \frac{T_{dark\%}}{T_P} = \frac{T_{dark\%}}{2} \quad (8.33)$$

Let us now try to interpret the behaviour of the function P_{err} taking into account the physics involved. We know that the error probability is a function of the total dark time (i.e., the sum of all dark intervals in the acquisition windows) in the pulse period. Therefore, we deduce that increasing the number of acquisition windows in the same pulse period would produce more dark intervals (i.e., the overall dark time would increase), with the consequence that P_{err} would also increase. This is confirmed by the general trend of the P_{err} function which decreases as T_F increases. However, we have to explain why the function P_{err} experiences sudden increases at the points where T_P is a multiple integer of T_F .

Using eq. (8.20), considering that $T_{dark\%} = 2\%$ for the NIR camera, and that $\tau_{pulse} < 20$ nsec, we can write:

$$T_{dark_eff} = T_{dark\%} T_F + \tau_{pulse} \cong T_{dark\%} T_F \quad (8.34)$$

Therefore, since T_{dark_eff} is a fraction ($T_{dark\%}$) of the acquisition window, in the particular cases where T_P is a multiple integer of the acquisition window, the total dark time does not vary. In fact, if we consider n windows in the interval $[0; T_P]$, we will have n dark intervals, with a total dark time given by:

$$T_{dark_tot} = n T_{dark\%} T_{F1} \quad (8.35)$$

Obviously, for $n = 1$ $T_{dark_tot} = T_{dark\%} T_F$, but $T_F = NT_{F1}$ and, therefore, as the total dark time does not vary, the error probability is the same. This is why all points of maximum have the same value for T_F far from zero. As T_F gets closer to zero, τ_{pulse} becomes significant, but this is a characteristic not useful for our analysis. Therefore, the graph in Figure 8-15 tells us that, with a given T_P , the value of T_{dark_tot} (and T_{dark_eff}) decreases as T_F decreases, up to the point where the dark zone of the last frame enters the interval $[0; T_P]$. When this happens, T_{dark_tot} (and T_{dark_eff}) goes back to the previous value, but then immediately starts to decrease again. Consequently, the minimum of P_{err} does not occur exactly at $T_F = T_P/2$, but for a value of T_F a bit greater than $T_P/2$, which would guarantee the first pulse to be just outside the dark zone of the second frame (Figure 8-16).

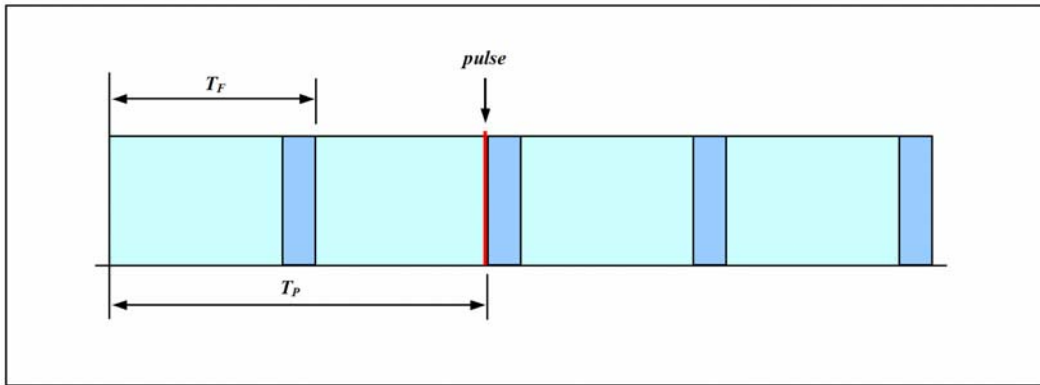


Figure 8-16: Condition of Minimum Error Probability.

We can now select the optimal frame rate (F_{F_opt}) for $f = 10$ Hz (i.e., ELOP-PLD Band N° 1). As explained before, if the T_F could be set at exactly $T_P/2$ minus a small quantity (e.g., $T_F = (T_P/2) - 10^{-4}$), our optimisation problem was solved. However, as T_F (and F_F) is affected by instability (i.e., a variance σ_{T_F} in the order of 10^{-4} sec about the nominal T_F), in order to avoid a possible increase of the P_{err} , it is convenient to choose our optimal T_F at about $2\sigma_{T_F}$ from the $T_P/2$ point. This is shown in Figure 8-17, where it is evidenced that the T_F instability may cause the error to be maximised for a value of T_F not sufficiently greater than $T_P/2$ (Case 1). The improvement (reduction of P_{err}) is evident with $T_F = 2\sigma_{T_F} + T_P/2$ (Case 2). Therefore, in terms of frame rate optimisation, we can write:

$$F_{F_opt} = 2(f - \sigma_{F_F}) \quad (8.36)$$

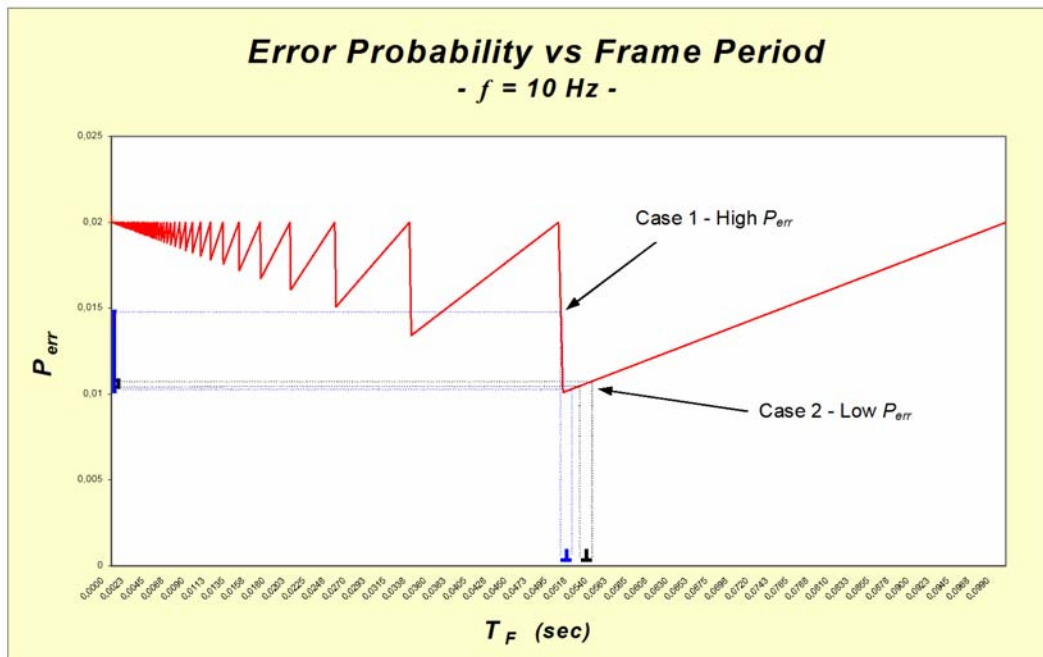


Figure 8-17: Effects of T_F Uncertainty on P_{err} for $f = 10$ Hz.

As the P_{err} function and σ_{T_F} do not vary significantly up to $f = 345$ Hz for full frame NIR camera acquisition, the same optimisation criteria applies for $f = 20$ Hz (i.e., ELOP-PLD Band N° 2).

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Let us now consider the case of $f = 40$ kHz (i.e., LOAS system). In this case, the function P_{err} previously defined, has the behaviour shown in Figure 8-18. Again, the first part of the function, where T_F is still close to the pulse duration, is not interesting for our analysis. We notice that, also in this case, the minimum P_{err} is found for a T_F of about $T_P/2$. However, as in this case the variance of T_F (σ_{T_F}) is in the order of about 10^{-5} sec, it is convenient to choose a T_F intermediate between $T_P/2$ and T_P (see Figure 8-18). Therefore:

$$T_{F_opt}' = \frac{3}{4} T_P \quad (8.37)$$

$$F_{F_opt}' = \frac{4}{3} f \quad (8.38)$$

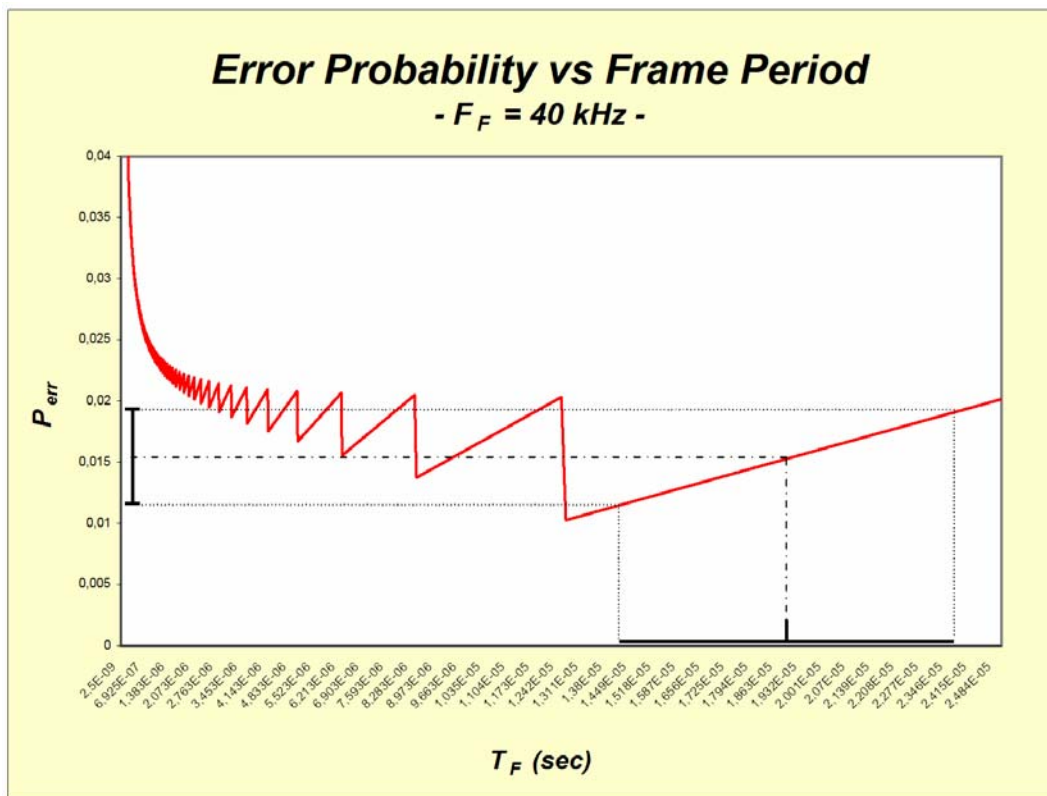


Figure 8-18: Effects of T_F Uncertainty on P_{err} for $f = 40$ kHz.

The results of the frame rate optimisation analysis, referred to the two boundary conditions $f = 10$ Hz (i.e., ELOP-PLD) and $f = 40$ kHz (i.e., LOAS) are summarised in Figure 8-19.

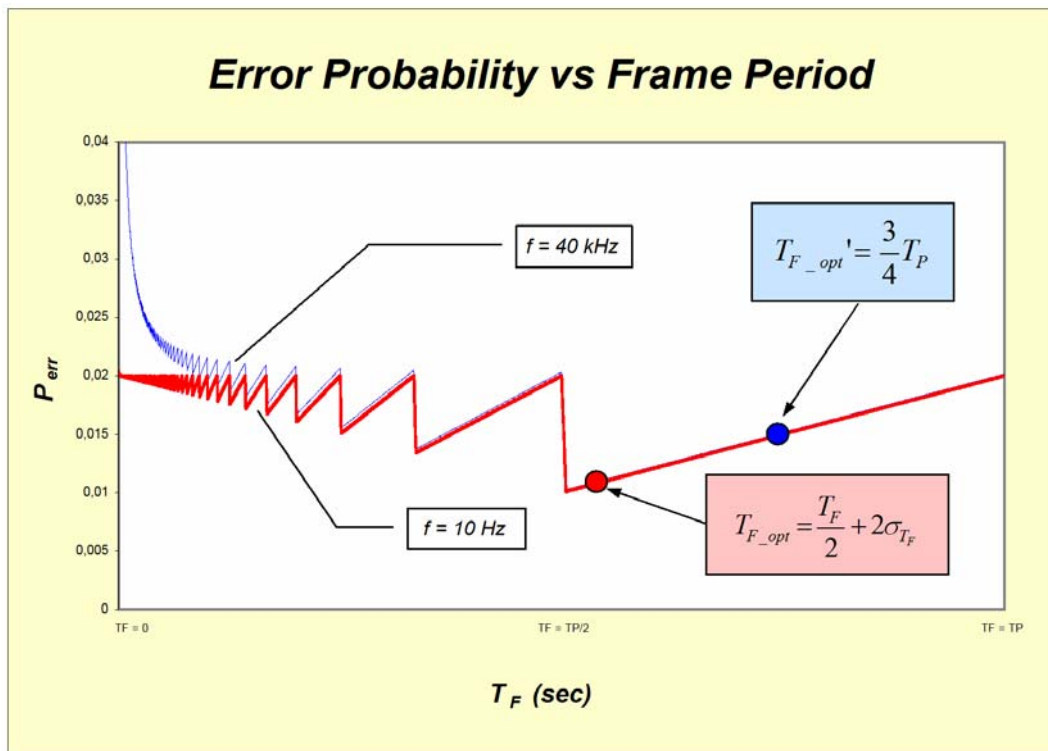


Figure 8-19: Results of NIR Camera Frame Rate Optimisation Analysis.

8.2.3.3 Frame Rate Optimisation Tests

In order to verify the results of the optimisation analysis, and to find good compromises for the NIR camera F_F applicable to the real cases, two dedicated ground test sessions were performed using the PLD and LOAS systems, with laser pulse repetition frequencies (f) of 10 Hz, 20 Hz (ELOP-PLD) and 40 kHz (LOAS). From eq. (8.36), the optimal F_F for $f = 10$ Hz was about 19.9997 Hz, and for $f = 20$ Hz was about 39.9997 Hz. However, as the NIR camera F_F settings were only possible with steps of 0.5 Hz, to avoid sudden increases of P_{err} (see discussion in Section 8.1.1.1), F_F was set to 19.5 Hz in the first case and to 39.5 Hz in the second case. From eq. (8.38), the optimal F_F for $f = 40$ kHz (LOAS system) was about 53 kHz. Unfortunately, the upper F_F limit of the Phoenix NIR camera with DAS was 38 kHz in smallest window (2×128 pixels) and 345 in full frame (320×256 pixels). Therefore, in this case it was not possible to use the NIR camera for full frame data recording (and therefore for EMT-1 and EMT-2 implementation), because the full frame was acquired at such a low rate (345 Hz) that a great number of laser pulses entered the same acquisition window. Furthermore, even setting F_F to the maximum value for the smallest window (e.g., for laser transmission event recording and experimental PRF determination), we had to accept a large error probability. In this case, in fact, the relatively large variance of T_F did not allow optimisation of P_{err} . Therefore, for the two test sessions F_F was initially set to the values:

- $F_{F_{10}} = 19.5$ Hz in full frame with $f = 10$ Hz (ELOP-PLD);
- $F_{F_{20}} = 39.5$ Hz in full frame with $f = 20$ Hz (ELOP-PLD); and
- $F_{F_{40k}} = 38$ kHz in smallest window with $f = 40$ kHz (LOAS).

The key parameter used for evaluating the performance of the Phoenix NIR camera was the Percentage of Acquired Pulses (%AP) with respect to the total number of laser pulses transmitted in a certain Pulse Train Duration (PTD). Results relative to the NIR camera tests performed with the ELOP-PLD system are presented in Table 8-3.

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Table 8-3: Phoenix NIR Camera F_F Tests Results ($f = 10$ Hz and 20 Hz)

<i>ELOP-PLD Parameters</i>			<i>PHOENIX NIR</i>	
<i>PRF</i>	<i>PTD</i>	τ	F_F	<i>%AP</i>
10 Hz	10 s	19 ns	19.5 Hz	67%
	30 s	19 ns	19.5 Hz	62%
	60 s	19 ns	19.5 Hz	71%
	120 s	19 ns	19.5 Hz	65%
20 Hz	10 s	19 ns	39.5 Hz	63%
	30 s	19 ns	39.5 Hz	68%
	60 s	19 ns	39.5 Hz	52%
	120 s	19 ns	39.5 Hz	58%

Results relative to the Phoenix NIR camera tests performed with the LOAS system are presented in Table 8-4.

Table 8-4: Phoenix NIR Camera F_F Tests Results ($f = 40$ kHz)

<i>ELOP-PLD Parameters</i>			<i>PHOENIX NIR</i>	
<i>PRF</i>	<i>PTD</i>	τ	F_F	<i>%AP</i>
40 kHz	10 s	5 ns	38 kHz	17%
	30 s	5 ns	38 kHz	12%
	60 s	5 ns	38 kHz	19%
	120 s	5 ns	38 kHz	18%

8.2.3.4 Determination of DAS Memory Requirements

The Phoenix NIR camera Digital Acquisition System (DAS), employed at the PILASTER STU, was based on commercial PC technology. Therefore, before performing ground and flight experimental activities, it was essential to define the DAS memory required for recording the digital frames acquired by the NIR camera during representative test/training missions. The duration (D) of typical test/training recording sessions was identified between 10 and 120 seconds. The maximum frame rate of the Phoenix NIR camera

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(with DAS) is 38 kHz. Each frame is composed by $R = 320 \times 256$ pixels, and each frame occupies memory 14 bits (grey scale images). Therefore, in the absence of any data compression and neglecting the few bits introduced by the IMAGE-PRO PLUS imaging software, the data flow from the camera to the PC, considering a typical 5% incidence of the communication flag bits, we obtain:

$$F_{data} = F_F \cdot R \cdot 14 \cdot 1.05 \text{ bit/sec} \quad (8.39)$$

The memory required for acquisition is given by:

$$M = \frac{D \cdot F_{data}}{8} \text{ Byte} \quad (8.40)$$

For instance, for $D = 120$ secs and $F_F = 39.5$ Hz (e.g., optimal F_F for ELOP-PLD in Band N° 2), considering a full frame data acquisition, we obtain:

$$M = \frac{120 \text{ sec} \cdot 47.6 \text{ Mbit/sec}}{8} \cong 713.50 \text{ MByte} \quad (8.41)$$

Considering a 38 kHz data acquisition in smallest window ($R = 2 \times 128$ pixels), assuming $D = 120$ secs, we obtain:

$$M = \frac{120 \text{ sec} \cdot 143 \text{ Mbit/sec}}{8} \cong 2.15 \text{ GByte} \quad (8.42)$$

A graph showing the DAS memory requirements as a function of mission duration, for various representative frame rates, is shown in Figure 8-20. Therefore, as the DAS memory requirements were fulfilled by commercial technology, a standard 40 GByte PC hard-disk was installed in the Phoenix DAS computer.

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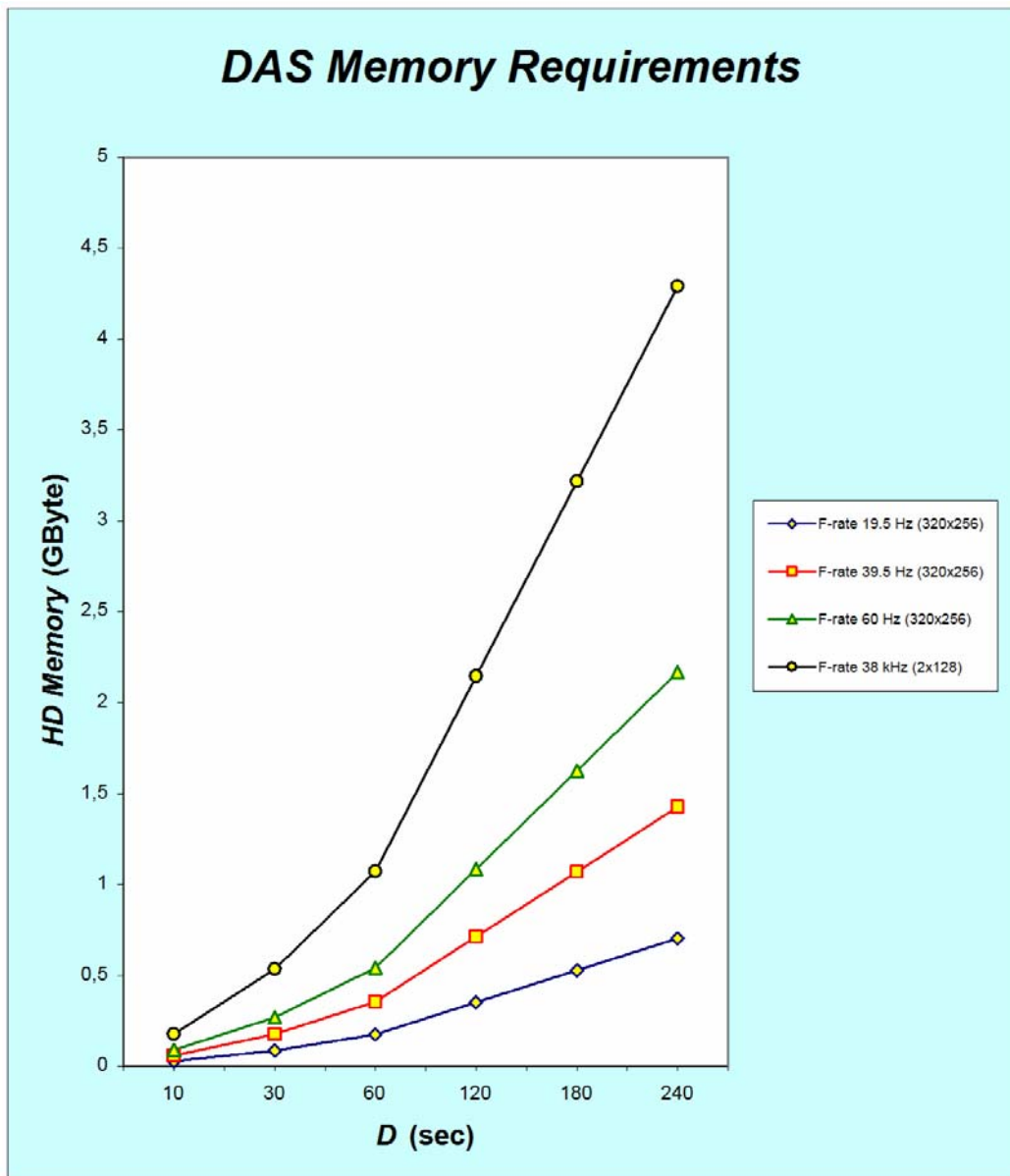


Figure 8-20: DAS Computer Hard-Disk Memory Requirements.

8.2.4 EMT-CT Sessions at $\lambda = 1064$ nm

Using the ELOP PLD system, operating at $\lambda = 1064$ nm, preliminary ground tests were performed using the EMT-CT. Particularly, the laser source (ELOP-PLD) and the NIR camera were placed very close to the target surface (i.e., 100 m and 80 m respectively) in a day with very good visibility ($V = 34$ km) and low humidity ($RH = 41\%$ at $T = 15^\circ\text{C}$). During the experiment with this control technique, the PLD laser was activated 10 times for periods of 30 seconds. For each test session, a minimum of 25 spot images were recorded (and at least 2 PEP readings for each spot image). The maximum and minimum differences (ε_{\max} and ε_{\min}) observed between the energy values obtained using EMT-1/EMT-2 and the PLD output energy are reported in Table 8-5.

Table 8-5: Differences between PLD Output and PILASTER Measurements

Session	EMT-1		EMT-2	
	ε_{max}	ε_{min}	ε_{max}	ε_{min}
1	-27.12%	-12.51%	-11.03%	-4.86%
2	-19.34%	-7.34%	-10.47%	-5.12%
3	-28.06%	-18.64%	-13.95%	-6.65%
4	-33.24%	-15.04%	-14.76%	-10.23%
5	-28.29%	-19.12%	-12.79%	-8.49%
6	-18.02%	-10.27%	-9.87%	-4.22%
7	-21.13%	-18.35%	-13.57%	-9.43%
8	-15.90%	-11.67%	-11.70%	-7.42%
9	-34.69%	-8.78%	-9.07%	-6.43%
10	-27.42%	-10.18%	-8.48%	-5.54%

Both EMT-1 and EMT-2 gave under estimated values of the incident spot energy (i.e., a negative systematic error). In many cases EMT-1 could only provide rough estimations of the laser spot energy, with significant discrepancies between the various test sessions (i.e., -34.69% maximum and -7.34% minimum errors). On the other hand, using EMT-2 the error never exceeded -14.76% with an observed minimum error of -4.22%. These errors were due to sensors detection thresholds, loss of some spot fringes in the NIR images due to background noise, and other systematic or random errors affecting both techniques EMT-1/EMT-2 and the EMT-CT itself.

Cumulating the experimental data relative to the various test sessions, two samples of 300 error measurements were formed, relative to the EMT-1 and EMT-2 errors. These data were statistically analysed in order to determine corrections for the measurements performed using the two techniques. The normality of the data samples was verified using standard statistical techniques (i.e., χ^2 tests). The values of mean and standard deviation calculated for the error samples (s) and the 95% confidence intervals (CI) for the mean (μ) and standard deviations (σ) calculated for the corresponding normal populations are reported in Table 8-6. The 95% CI for μ and σ were calculated as follows:

$$\bar{x} - 1.96 \frac{s}{\sqrt{n-1}} < \mu < \bar{x} + 1.96 \frac{s}{\sqrt{n-1}} \quad (8.43)$$

$$\frac{s}{\left[1 + \left(\frac{1.96}{\sqrt{2n}}\right)\right]} < \sigma < \frac{s}{\left[1 - \left(\frac{1.96}{\sqrt{2n}}\right)\right]} \quad (8.44)$$

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Table 8-6: Results of Errors Statistical Analysis for EMT-1 and EMT-2

	EMT-1		EMT-2	
	Mean (%)	SD (%)	Mean (%)	SD (%)
Sample	$\bar{x}_1 = -17,57$	$s_1 = 3,54$	$\bar{x}_2 = -9,29$	$s_2 = 2,47$
Pop. 95% CI	$-18.06 < \mu < -17.08$	$3.28 < \sigma < 3.85$	$-9.57 < \mu < -9.01$	$2.29 < \sigma < 2.68$

Figure 8-21 shows the Probability Density Functions (PDF) obtained from the experimental data.

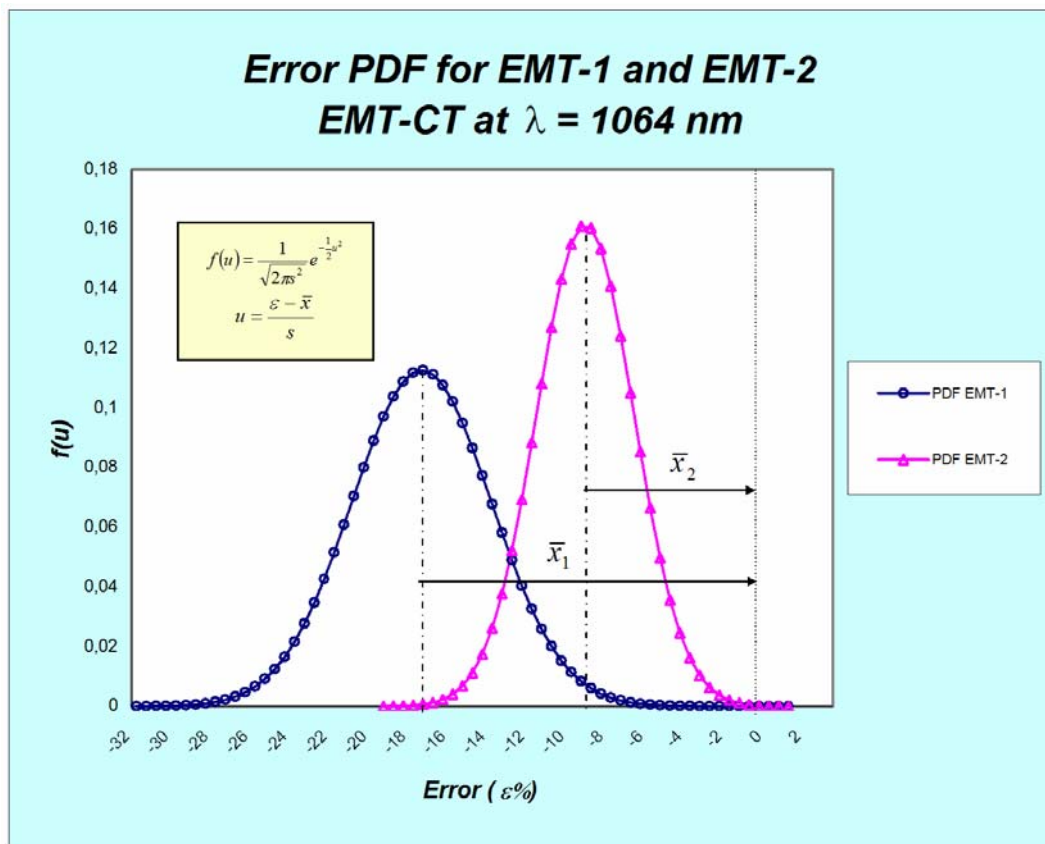


Figure 8-21: Error PDF for EMT-1 and EMT-2.

Using these results, it was possible to improve the reliability of the two techniques. This was done by applying a correction factor in the transformation from the NIR camera grey scale Pixel Intensity Matrix (PIM) to the corresponding Energy Intensity Matrix (EIM). The correction factors C_1 and C_2 (for EMT-1 and EMT-2 respectively) were:

$$C_1 = 1 + |\bar{x}_1| = 1.1757 \quad (8.45)$$

$$C_2 = 1 + |\bar{x}_2| = 1.0929 \quad (8.46)$$

The ELOP-PLD factory data gave a Probable Error (PE_{PLD}) of $\pm 4\%$ for the system energy output due to instability, aging, etc. (i.e., 130 mJ $\pm 4\%$). Considering the results of our analysis, since $PE = 0.6745 \cdot \sigma$, we obtained $PE_1 = \pm 2.39\%$ and $PE_2 = \pm 1.67\%$ for EMT-1 and EMT-2 respectively. Therefore, accumulating the errors, the PE of the measurements performed using the two techniques (PE_{M1} , PE_{M2}) were the following:

$$PE_{M1} = \sqrt{PE_{PLD}^2 + PE_1^2} = \pm 4.66\% \quad (8.47)$$

$$PE_{M2} = \sqrt{PE_{PLD}^2 + PE_2^2} = \pm 4.33\% \quad (8.48)$$

8.2.5 Propagation Trials Results

After the initial test phase devoted to PILASTER measurement techniques verification and optimisation, actual extinction measurement trials were performed at the PILASTER range using EMT-1/EMT-2 for $\lambda = 1064$ nm (ELOP-PLD) and EMT-3 for $\lambda = 1550$ nm (LOAS). Most of the test activities were carried out during fall, spring and summer in the years 2002 and 2003. Propagation tests at $\lambda = 1064$ nm were performed in dry weather conditions, while tests at $\lambda = 1550$ nm were performed in both dry and rainy weather conditions. Test conditions and results are presented below.

8.2.5.1 Propagation Trials at $\lambda = 1064$ nm

Propagation trials at $\lambda = 1064$ nm were performed using the PILASTER modular target located at the *Casa Marongiu* site and the ELOP-PLD laser system positioned along the target normal at a distance of 2.5 km, 4 km and 5.5 km. The target Mean Sea Level (MSL) altitude was about 500 m and the maximum altitude difference between the laser transmitter and the target was about 140 m at a distance of 5.5 km. The geometry of the $\lambda = 1064$ nm propagation tests performed at the PILASTER range are shown in Figure 8-22. Table 8-7 shows the relevant data describing the meteorological conditions in which the atmospheric propagation measurements were performed (dry-air conditions). The various test cases have been grouped for classes of visibility and the corresponding International Visibility Code (IVC) classes are reported. When significant variations of T and/or RH were observed during the measurements, only the average values calculated in the relevant time intervals have been reported. The prevailing wind direction/intensity during the measurements is listed with respect to the laser to target slant-path (usual counter-clockwise convention). The values of the Turbulence Structure Constant (C_n) were determined using the *Scintec* BLS900 laser scintillometer, with a measurement baseline of 5 km between transmitter and receiver (along the target normal).

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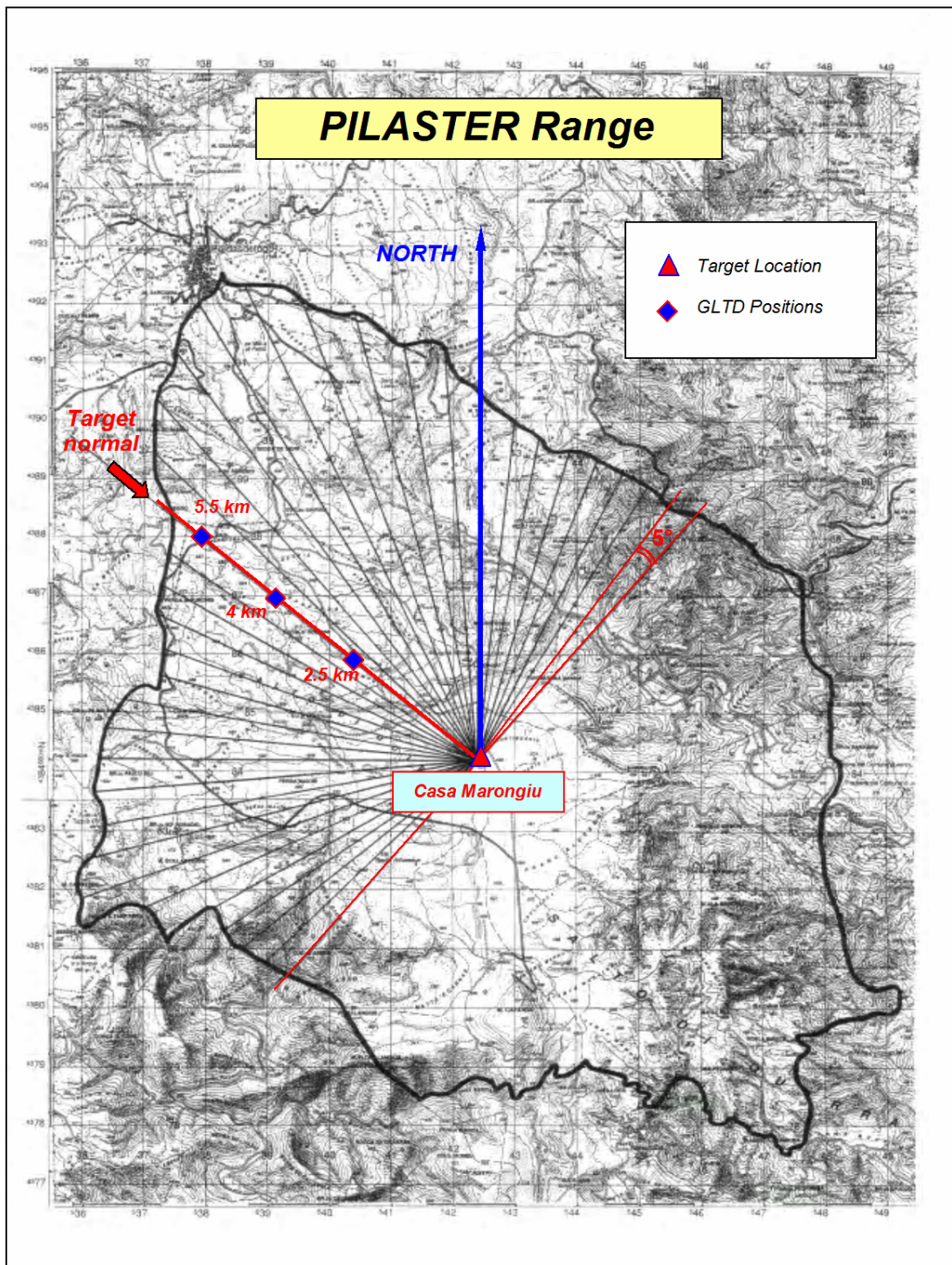


Figure 8-22: Geometry of Atmospheric Propagation Measurements at $\lambda = 1064$ nm.

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Table 8-7: Meteorological Data for Dry-Air Propagation Measurements at $\lambda = 1064$ nm

<i>Group</i>	<i>Case</i>	<i>V</i> (km)	<i>RH</i> (%)	<i>T</i> (°C)	<i>C_n</i>	<i>Cloud</i>	<i>Wind</i> (°/kts)	<i>IVC</i>
<i>I</i>	<i>A</i>	2.5	82	24	$6.77 \cdot 10^{-8}$	6/8	0/0	Haze
	<i>B</i>	3.0	85	15	$1.80 \cdot 10^{-8}$	5/8	0/0	
	<i>C</i>	3.5	76	23	$9.86 \cdot 10^{-7}$	7/8	92/2	
<i>II</i>	<i>A</i>	5	73	25	$8.79 \cdot 10^{-8}$	3/8	0/0	Light Haze
	<i>B</i>	6.0	66	27	$6.67 \cdot 10^{-8}$	4/8	237/3	
	<i>C</i>	7.0	68	7	$1.82 \cdot 10^{-7}$	7/8	0/0	
<i>III</i>	<i>A</i>	8.0	67	24	$8.96 \cdot 10^{-8}$	3/8	0/0	
	<i>B</i>	8.5	58	28	$6.70 \cdot 10^{-8}$	3/8	120/5	
	<i>C</i>	9.0	64	30	$2.92 \cdot 10^{-7}$	4/8	0/0	
<i>IV</i>	<i>A</i>	10.0	51	20	$7.16 \cdot 10^{-7}$	2/8	40/6	Clear
	<i>B</i>	10.5	58	28	$1.87 \cdot 10^{-7}$	1/8	95/12	
	<i>C</i>	11	51	18	$6.39 \cdot 10^{-8}$	2/8	120/8	
	<i>D</i>	12.5	48	32	$8.56 \cdot 10^{-7}$	3/8	0/0	
<i>V</i>	<i>A</i>	14.5	52	18	$1.09 \cdot 10^{-8}$	2/8	22/4	
	<i>B</i>	15.0	44	32	$4.87 \cdot 10^{-7}$	3/8	320/7	
	<i>C</i>	18.5	56	24	$7.98 \cdot 10^{-8}$	0/8	35/5	
<i>VI</i>	<i>A</i>	20.5	40	31	$4.49 \cdot 10^{-8}$	0/8	0/0	Very Clear
	<i>B</i>	22.5	41	35	$5.87 \cdot 10^{-7}$	2/8	25/8	
	<i>C</i>	25.0	47	35	$7.56 \cdot 10^{-7}$	1/8	125/10	
	<i>D</i>	34.0	35	32	$6.84 \cdot 10^{-8}$	0/8	15/7	

For each case listed in Table 8-7, a minimum of 25 energy measurements were performed (samples of 25 to 50 laser spot measurements were used) using at least two of the ELOP-PLD locations shown in Figure 8-22. Dry-air extinction tests were performed in all meteorological conditions listed in Table 8-7 only with a system to target slant-range (SR) of 2.5 km. With SR = 4 km and SR = 5.5 km, extinction tests were performed in a representative sub-set of dry-air meteorological conditions. Rain extinction tests were not performed at $\lambda = 1064$ nm.

Transmittance and extinction coefficient values relative to the various test cases (i.e., meteorological conditions listed in Table 8-7), calculated using the ESLM model with SR = 1 km, are listed in Table 8-8.

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Table 8-8: Calculated Extinction Coefficients for Dry-Air Conditions (SR = 2.5 km)

Group	Case	IVC Categ.	Model τ	Model γ (km ⁻¹)
I	A	Haze	0.077	1.025
	B		0.127	0.824
	C		0.168	0.714
II	A	Light Haze	0.287	0.500
	B		0.351	0.419
	C		0.448	0.321
III	A		0.455	0.315
	B		0.470	0.302
	C		0.476	0.297
IV	A	Clear	0.549	0.240
	B		0.532	0.252
	C		0.583	0.216
	D		0.575	0.221
V	A		0.652	0.171
	B		0.622	0.190
	C		0.675	0.157
VI	A	Very Clear	0.688	0.149
	B		0.684	0.152
	C		0.687	0.150
	D		0.755	0.112

The extinction coefficients in Table 8-8 were computed from ESLM model transmittances, using the simple equation:

$$\gamma = -\frac{\ln \tau}{SR} \quad (8.49)$$

However, it is important to observe that, although the ESLM model provides independent estimates of both absorptive transmittance (τ_{ai}) and scattering transmittance (τ_{si}), only the scattering contribution to the extinction coefficient (γ_{si}) is independent of range. We should remember, in fact, that the total precipitable water in mm is $w = SR \cdot AH$ (where SR is the slant-range in km and AH is the absolute humidity in g/m³), and AH is approximated by:

$$AH = 1322.8 \frac{RH}{T} \exp \left[\frac{25.22(T - 273.16)}{T} - 5.31 \ln \left(\frac{T}{273.16} \right) \right] \quad (8.50)$$

According to the ESLM model, as $w < 54$ in all cases listed in Table 8-7, the ESLM absorptive transmittance is given by:

$$\tau_{ai} = e^{-0.0363 \cdot \sqrt{w}} \quad (8.51)$$

Therefore, in this case, the absorptive extinction coefficient (γ_{ai}) is given by:

$$\gamma_{ai} = 0.0363 \cdot AH \cdot \frac{1}{\sqrt{SR}} \quad (8.52)$$

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where the SR dependency of γ_{ai} is evident (obviously, for SR = 1 km the model γ_{ai} becomes a function of AH only). For instance, with SR = 10 km, the model γ_{ai} is about one third of the value calculated, with the same RH and T conditions, with SR = 1 km. In other words, the ESLM empirical model implies a range dependency of the extinction coefficient, which prevents a direct comparisons of the experimental γ values found at a certain SR with γ values predicted or measured at a different SR. Although this appears as a limitation of the ESLM model for practical applications, for all SR considered we determined τ from NIR-camera energy measurements and γ using equation (8.34), and compared the calculated values with the experimental results. Therefore, for each SR, different sets of corrections were computed simply by comparing the predicted ESLM τ and γ values with the experimental data.

Since the initial phases of the test activity, data collected in various meteorological conditions and with various laser slant-paths, demonstrated moderate discrepancies between the extinction measurements performed with EMT-1 and EMT-2 (i.e., 8% maximum difference, after EIM correction with C_1 and C_2). Furthermore, using the two techniques, no significant correlation was observed between the differences in the measurements and the lengths of the laser slant-paths used to gather the experimental data. Table 8-9 shows the results of transmittance measurements performed using the EMT-2 technique for a laser slant-path of 2.5 km, compared with ESLM model computations.

Table 8-9: Transmittance Data and ESLM Model Corrections ($\lambda = 1064$ nm – SR = 2.5 km)

Group	Case	IVC Categ.	Experim. τ	Model τ	Error (%)	Group Corr.	IVC Cat. Corr.
I	A	Haze	0.088	0.077	14.91	1.149	1.149
	B		0.146	0.127	15.15		
	C		0.192	0.168	14.57		
II	A	Light Haze	0.331	0.287	15.46	1.150	1.141
	B		0.406	0.351	15.69		
	C		0.510	0.448	13.80		
III	A	Light Haze	0.513	0.455	12.80	1.131	1.131
	B		0.537	0.470	14.20		
	C		0.535	0.476	12.40		
IV	A	Clear	0.630	0.549	14.58	1.140	1.132
	B		0.597	0.532	12.17		
	C		0.666	0.583	14.23		
	D		0.662	0.575	15.14		
V	A	Clear	0.737	0.652	13.00	1.125	1.125
	B		0.704	0.622	13.20		
	C		0.751	0.675	11.20		
VI	A	Very Clear	0.765	0.688	11.14	1.113	1.113
	B		0.767	0.684	12.16		
	C		0.760	0.687	10.52		
	D		0.840	0.755	11.27		

In all cases, the measured transmittance values (i.e., average of 25 – 50 spot measurements) were greater than the values computed using the ESLM model. The observed differences between measured and ESLM transmittances varied between 10.52% and 16.64%. The ESLM transmittance model corrections computed for each group and for each IVC category are also listed in Table 8-9. It is evident, looking at the results in Table 8-9 and at their graphical representation in Figure 8-23, that the difference between predicted and measured transmittance decreases significantly as atmospheric visibility increases.

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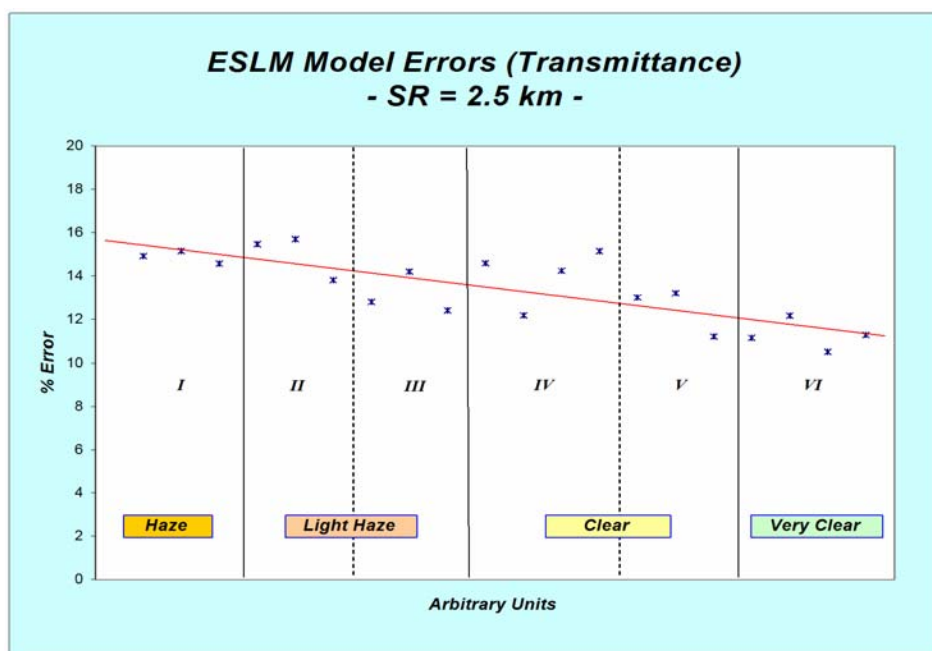


Figure 8-23: ESLM Model Errors (Transmittance) for SR = 2.5 km.

Table 8-10 presents the same results (SR = 2.5 km) in terms of extinction coefficient.

Table 8-10: Extinc. Coeff. Data and ESLM Model Corrections ($\lambda = 1064 \text{ nm}$ – SR = 2.5 km)

Group	Case	IVC Categ.	Experim. γ (km^{-1})	Model γ (km^{-1})	Error (%)	Group Corr.	IVC Cat. Corr.
I	A	Haze	0.967	1,025	-5.64	0.923	0.923
	B		0.757	0,824	-8.09		
	C		0.647	0,714	-9.34		
II	A	Light Haze	0.437	0,500	-12.62	0.857	0.846
	B		0.360	0,419	-14.15		
	C		0.269	0,321	-16.10		
III	A	Light Haze	0.265	0,315	-15.99	0.836	0.836
	B		0.249	0,302	-17.59		
	C		0.250	0,297	-15.75		
IV	A	Clear	0.186	0,240	-22.70	0.772	0.750
	B		0.207	0,252	-18.20		
	C		0.163	0,216	-24.66		
	D		0.165	0,221	-25.47		
V	A	Clear	0.122	0,171	-28.57	0.728	0.728
	B		0.140	0,190	-26.11		
	C		0.115	0,157	-27.01		
VI	A	Very Clear	0.107	0,149	-28.24	0.692	0.692
	B		0.106	0,152	-30.21		
	C		0.110	0,150	-26.64		
	D		0.070	0,112	-37.99		

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Experimental data and error computations relative to the measurements performed with SR = 4 km and SR = 5.5 km are presented in Table 8-11 to Table 8-14. Although measurements with these SRs were not performed in all meteorological conditions listed in Table 8-7, looking at the available data it appears evident that the ESLM model errors, both for transmittance and extinction coefficient calculations, are comparable with the errors computed for SR = 2.5 km.

Table 8-11: Transmittance Data and ESLM Model Corrections ($\lambda = 1064 \text{ nm}$ – SR = 4 km)

Group	Case	IVC Categ.	Experim. τ	Model τ	Error (%)	Group Corr.	IVC Cat. Corr.
II	A	Light Haze	0.179	0.147	17.88	1.214	1.213
	C		0.351	0.290	17.39		
III	B		0.384	0.323	15.92	1.212	
	C		0.410	0.332	18.96		
IV	A	Clear	0.489	0.406	17.03	1.192	1.168
	B		0.463	0.393	15.18		
V	C		0.652	0.570	12.52	1.143	
VI	A	Very Clear	0.681	0.590	13.34	1.154	1.154

Table 8-12: Transmittance Data and ESLM Model Corrections ($\lambda = 1064 \text{ nm}$ – SR = 5.5 km)

Group	Case	IVC Categ.	Experim. τ	Model τ	Error (%)	Group Corr.	IVC Cat. Corr.
II	B	Light Haze	0.143	0.118	20.78	1.252	1.280
	C		0.233	0.188	19.48		
III	B		0.285	0.224	21.48	1.308	
	C		0.314	0.234	25.45		
IV	A	Clear	0.381	0.303	20.42	1.259	1.255
	B		0.371	0.294	20.69		
V	A		0.537	0.439	18.30	1.252	
	B		0.527	0.412	21.82		
VI	B	Very Clear	0.611	0.512	16.18	1.181	1.181
	D		0.726	0.621	14.41		

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Table 8-13: Extinc. Coeff. Data and ESLM Model Corrections ($\lambda = 1064 \text{ nm} - \text{SR} = 4 \text{ km}$)

Group	Case	IVC Categ.	Experim. γ	Model γ	Error (%)	Group Corr.	IVC Cat. Corr.
II	A	Light Haze	0.430	0.480	-10.40	0.872	0.849
	C		0.262	0.309	-15.30		
III	B		0.239	0.283	-15.48	0.827	
	C		0.223	0.276	-19.17		
IV	A	Clear	0.179	0.225	-20.59	0.810	0.787
	B		0.192	0.233	-17.45		
V	C		0.107	0.140	-23.50	0.765	
VI	A	Very Clear	0.096	0.132	-27.19	0.728	0.728

Table 8-14: Extinc. Coeff. Data and ESLM Model Corrections ($\lambda = 1064 \text{ nm} - \text{SR} = 5.5 \text{ km}$)

Group	Case	IVC Categ.	Experim. γ	Model γ	Error (%)	Group Corr.	IVC Cat. Corr.
II	B	Light Haze	0.346	0.388	-10.80	0.881	0.850
	C		0.264	0.304	-13.00		
III	B		0.228	0.272	-16.16	0.818	
	C		0.211	0.264	-20.20		
IV	A	Clear	0.176	0.217	-19.09	0.809	0.774
	B		0.178	0.223	-19.29		
V	A		0.113	0.150	-24.71	0.738	
	B		0.116	0.161	-27.66		
VI	B	Very Clear	0.090	0.122	-26.53	0.703	0.703
	D	0.058	0.087	-32.95			

The ESLM model errors for computing γ , relative to the various test cases are shown in Figure 8-24. The error trends were not significantly affected by the system to target SR and, in all cases, the ESLM model always over-estimated the extinction coefficient (i.e., under-estimated transmittance). Therefore, the experimental results are not in contrast with the $1/\sqrt{\text{SR}}$ dependency of γ_{ai} implied in the ESLM empirical model. The under estimation of τ can be explained observing that the ESLM model is a two components model (i.e., scattering transmittance τ_{si} and absorptive transmittance τ_{ai}) whose empiric equations were derived from independent scattering and absorption measurements, in which either absorption or scattering were neglected due to the particular test conditions. On the other hand, the effects of turbulence and other linear and non-linear propagation phenomena not included in the ESLM model, did not seem to significantly affect the energy measurements performed using EMT-2 and the ELOP-PLD laser system in the specified test conditions.

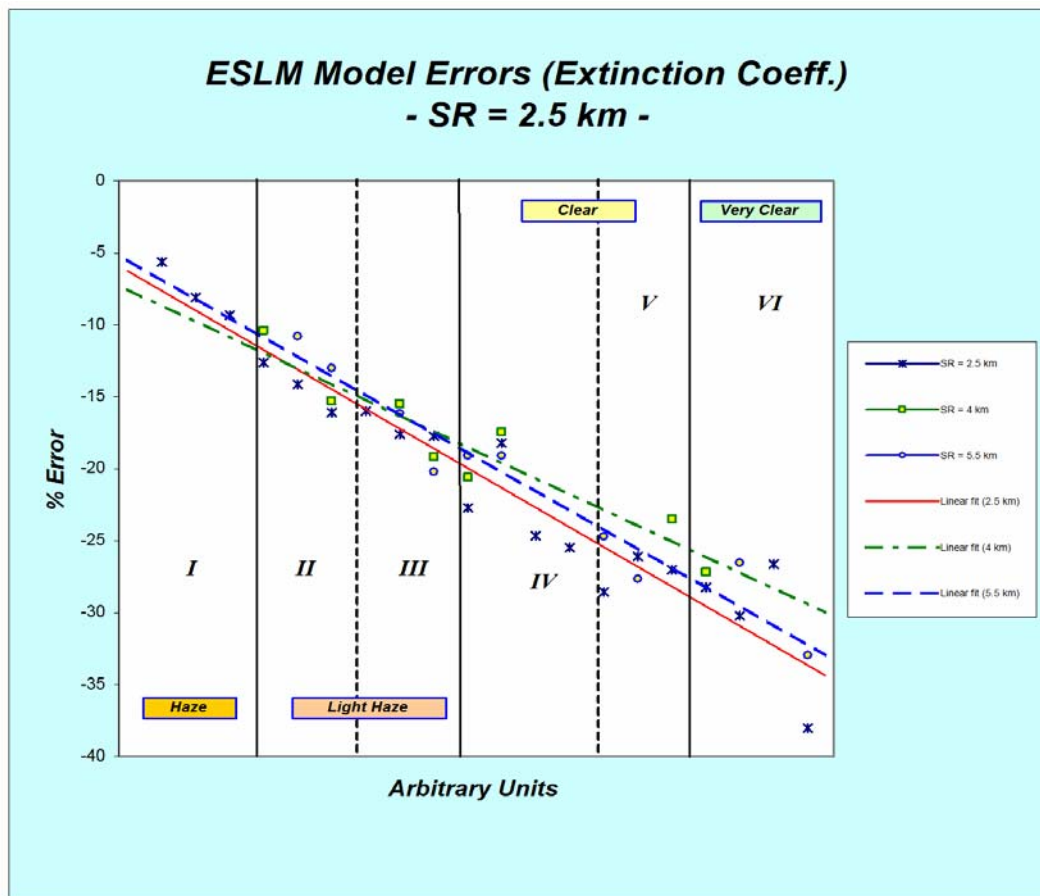


Figure 8-24: ESLM Model Errors for Computation of γ ($\lambda = 1064 \text{ nm}$ – SR = 2.5 km).

8.2.5.2 Propagation Tests at $\lambda = 1550 \text{ nm}$

Propagation tests at $\lambda = 1550 \text{ nm}$ were performed using EMT-3, with the geometry illustrated in Figure 8-7. The parameters describing the meteorological conditions during the tests are listed in the Table 8-15 and Table 8-16.

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Table 8-15: Meteorological Data for Dry-Air Propagation Measurements at $\lambda = 1550$ nm

<i>Group</i>	<i>Case</i>	<i>V</i> (km)	<i>RH</i> (%)	<i>T</i> (°C)	<i>C_n</i>	<i>Cloud</i>	<i>Wind</i> (°/kts)	<i>IVC</i>
1	a	3.0	82	25	$7.45 \cdot 10^{-8}$	5/8	92/8	Haze
	b	4.0	85	21	$4.49 \cdot 10^{-8}$	3/8	95/2	
2	a	7.0	78	22	$5.27 \cdot 10^{-8}$	5/8	0/0	Light Haze
	b	8.0	67	25	$7.30 \cdot 10^{-7}$	2/8	120/5	
	c	9.0	72	29	$2.65 \cdot 10^{-8}$	4/8	45/8	
3	a	12.0	61	23	$3.15 \cdot 10^{-8}$	3/8	0/0	Clear
	b	15.5	49	31	$5.90 \cdot 10^{-8}$	0/8	0/0	
	c	18.0	55	28	$7.66 \cdot 10^{-7}$	0/8	70/2	
	d	20.0	57	30	$5.23 \cdot 10^{-7}$	2/8	54/11	
4	a	22.5	52	31	$5.80 \cdot 10^{-7}$	0/8	0/0	Very Clear
	b	24.0	44	35	$4.65 \cdot 10^{-7}$	0/8	130/6	
	c	28.0	57	35	$6.40 \cdot 10^{-8}$	2/8	46/7	

Table 8-16: Meteorological Data for Propagation Measurements with Rain at $\lambda = 1550$ nm

<i>Group</i>	<i>Case</i>	<i>V</i> (km)	<i>RH</i> (%)	<i>T</i> (°C)	<i>C_n</i>	<i>Wind</i> (°/kts)	<i>Rainfall</i> (cm/hr)	<i>Type of Rain</i>
5	a	3.0	100	10	$3.22 \cdot 10^{-7}$	23/4	2.10	Heavy rain
	b	5.0	90	12	$5.90 \cdot 10^{-7}$	122/10	1.45	Med. Rain
	c	6.0	90	18	$8.12 \cdot 10^{-8}$	15/5	0.30	Light rain

The extinction coefficients calculated, for each case listed in the Table 8-15 and Table 8-16, using the ESLM model, are listed in the Tables 8-17 and 8-18.

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Table 8-17: Calculated Extinction Coefficients for Dry-Air

<i>Group</i>	<i>Case</i>	<i>IVC</i>	<i>Model γ (km⁻¹)</i>
1	a	Haze	1.082
	b		0.890
2	a	Light Haze	0.689
	b		0.661
	c		0.671
3	a	Clear	0.573
	b		0.572
	c		0.556
	d		0.565
4	a	Very Clear	0.555
	b		0.556
	c		0.579

Table 8-18: Calculated Extinction Coefficients for Rain

<i>Group</i>	<i>Case</i>	<i>Type of Rain</i>	<i>Model γ (km⁻¹)</i>
5	a	Heavy rain	2.944
	b	Med. rain	2,429
	c	Light rain	1,231

The ESLM extinction coefficients in the Table 8-17 and Table 8-18 were computed from model transmittances using the equation $\gamma = -\ln \tau / SR$ with $SR = 1$ km. Experimental data and ESLM model errors relative to the measurements performed in both dry and rainy conditions are presented in the Table 8-19 and Table 8-20.

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Table 8-19: Dry-Air Experimental Data and ESLM Model Corrections ($\lambda = 1550$ nm)

Group	Case	IVC	Model γ	Exper. γ	Error %	Case Corr.	IVC Cat. Corr.
1	a	Haze	1.082	0.816	-24.56	0.754	0.745
	b		0.890	0.655	-26.43	0.736	
2	a	Light Haze	0.689	0.446	-35.20	0.648	0.647
	b		0.661	0.479	-27.58	0.724	
	c		0.671	0.381	-43.27	0.567	
3	a	Clear	0.573	0.332	-42.10	0.579	0.584
	b		0.572	0.382	-33.30	0.667	
	c		0.556	0.350	-37.10	0.629	
	d		0.565	0.261	-53.80	0.462	
4	a	Very Clear	0.555	0.324	-41.60	0.584	0.601
	b		0.556	0.354	-36.30	0.637	
	c		0.579	0.337	-41.67	0.583	

Table 8-20: Rain Experimental Data and ESLM Model Corrections ($\lambda = 1550$ nm)

Group	Case	Type of Rain	Model γ	Exper. γ	Error %	Case Corr.
5	a	Heavy rain	2.596	2.266	-12.70	0.873
	b	Med. rain	2.080	2.006	-3.56	0.964
	c	Light rain	0.864	0.729	-15.67	0.843

It is evident that, also at $\lambda = 1550$ nm, there is a considerable difference between the experimental data and the ESLM model results. Again, the over estimation of γ can be explained observing that the ESLM model is a two components model whose empiric equations were derived from independent scattering and absorption measurements, in which either absorption or scattering were neglected due to the particular test conditions.

Furthermore, as the ESLM model uses different sets of equations for modelling absorption at $\lambda = 1064$ nm and $\lambda = 1550$ nm, and slightly different parameters in the equations for modelling atmospheric scattering at the two wavelengths, remarkable differences were observed between the results obtained at $\lambda = 1064$ nm and $\lambda = 1550$ nm. The differences in the overall (scattering plus absorption) transmittances and extinction coefficients, computed for a transmission path of 1 km and the same set of meteorological parameters listed in Table 8-15 (dry-air), are shown in Figure 8-25. The greater contribution to the observed differences was due to absorptive extinction, which for $\lambda = 1550$ nm and $w > 1.1$, was modelled as:

$$\gamma_{ai} = - \frac{\ln \left(0.802 \cdot \frac{1.1}{w} \right)^{0.111}}{SR} \quad (8.53)$$

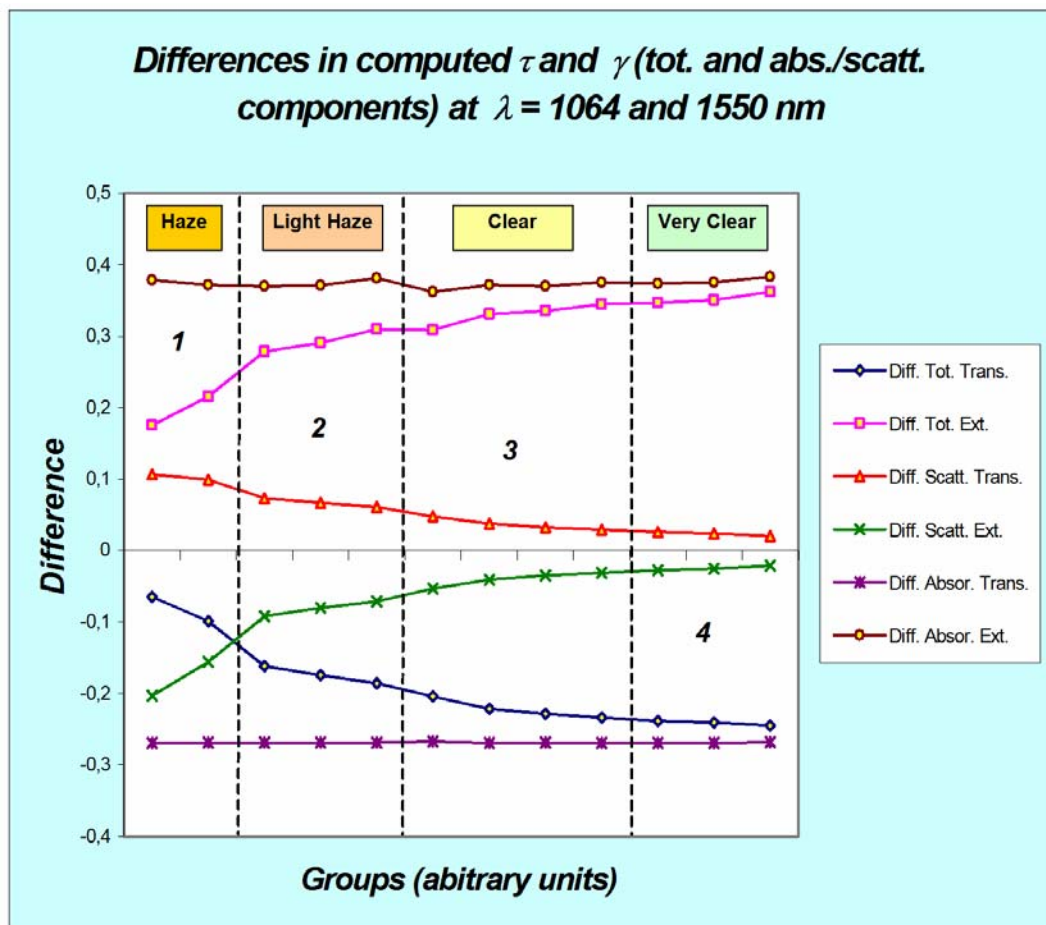


Figure 8-25: Differences in τ and γ (Total and Absorptive/Scattering Components) Computed with the ESLM Model for $\lambda = 1064$ nm and $\lambda = 1550$ nm.

On the other hand, the ESLM model for rainy conditions (modified using the LOWTRAN equation for estimating the scattering coefficient), fitted reasonably well the experimental data, with transmittance computation errors not exceeding 15.67% (light rain case).

8.2.5.3 Laser Propagation Data Base

Although the PILASTER Laser Propagation Data Base (LPDB) is at the initial stages of its compilation, and the quantity of experimental data collected is limited at the moment, current and future activities performed at the PILASTER range are expected to produce sufficient data to compute accurate correction factors required to increase the reliability of the propagation models used for simulation, mission planning and system performance analysis purposes.

With reference to the ESLM empirical model, the correction factors to the model presented above were computed by comparing measured and calculated transmittance/extinction values obtained from atmospheric visibility, relative humidity and temperature observations. Particularly, all experimental data (i.e., spot energy measurements) collected for each group-case were cumulated, and only results relative to the average energy measurements were presented in the various tables. Adopting this approach, it is evident that some information was lost in the process (i.e., the fluctuations experienced by the measured laser spot energies and the consequent variations of the errors/corrections computed for each spot measurement in all samples considered). It is believed that a statistical approach, making use of the LPDB,

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would be well suited for a progressive refinement of the atmospheric model corrections. As an example, the Atmospheric Model Correction Functions (AMCFs) relative to the tests performed in dry weather at $\lambda = 1064 \text{ nm}$ are shown in Figure 8-26.

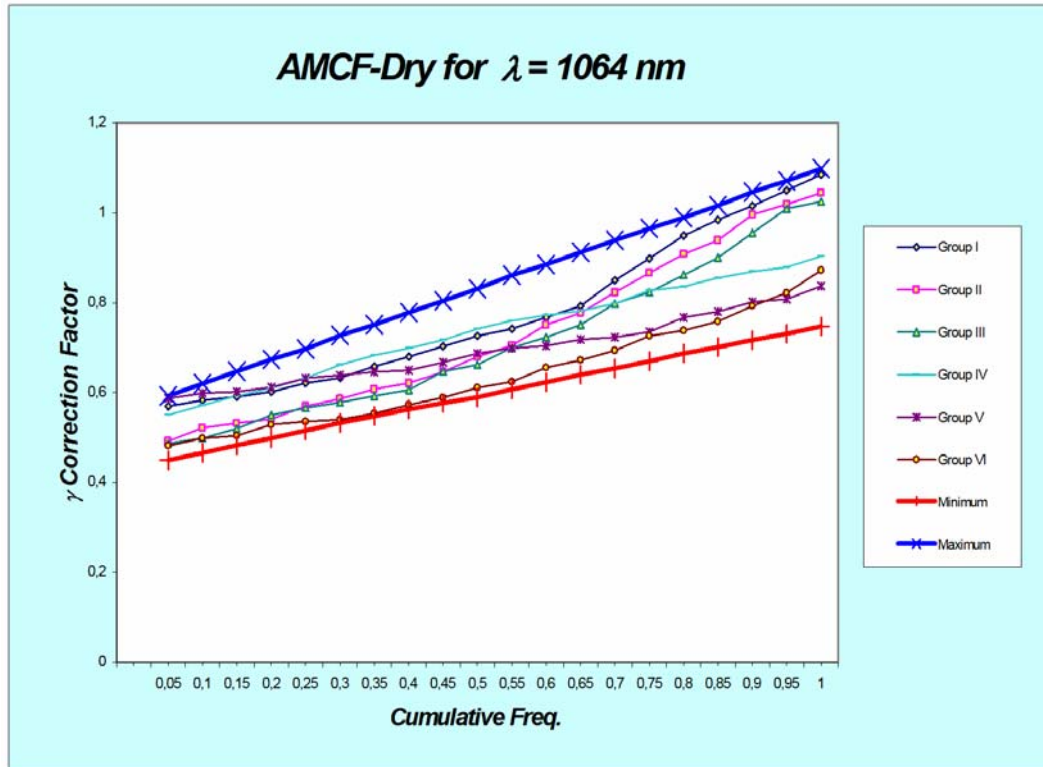


Figure 8-26: Correction Functions for ESLM-Dry γ Computations with $\lambda = 1064 \text{ nm}$.

The lines denoted “Minimum” and “Maximum” in the graph, represent the lower and upper bounds of all AMCFs. The equations fitting these lines are the following:

$$\text{Minimum} \rightarrow y = 0.3123x + 0.4344 \quad (8.54)$$

$$\text{Maximum} \rightarrow y = 1.8812x + 1.0656 \quad (8.55)$$

Depending on the specific application, these equations can be used to determine corrections for the atmospheric propagation factors computed using the ESLM model. For instance, eq. (8.39) can be used in eye-safety studies, where a lower bound approximation for the computed atmospheric extinction is to be considered acceptable, while eq. (8.40) is most convenient for applications like range performance prediction and simulation studies for the operational employment of laser guided weapons, where an upper bound approximation is preferable.

It is important to note that an essential pre-requisite to this approach is the definition of a probability level which is adequate for the specific application. In most safety studies for test/training operations at the ranges a 100% probability would be adopted, while for the majority of operational mission planning tasks (e.g., range performance calculations and ‘spiker’ aircraft mission profile optimisation) a lower probability level may be accepted (e.g., 50 – 80%), depending on the operational needs and the geometric constraints of the mission (target ‘lethal range’, aircraft/systems limitations, time constraints, etc.).

8.2.6 LRF/LTD Systems Pointing Accuracy

Using the LTM-STU instrumentation, the pointing accuracy of various ground LRF/LTD systems (for FAC operations) was determined. The tests were performed using the PILASTER modular target and STU instrumentation. The tested Nd:YAG LRF/LTD systems were the following:

- ELOP (Electro-optics Industries Ltd) PLD;
- LITTON (Litton Systems Inc.) GLTD; and
- CILAS (Compagnie Industrielle de Lasers) G3.

The measurements were performed with the 3 LRF/LTD systems (PRF = 10 Hz) located at a slant-range of 5 km from the target (laser spot perpendicular to the target). The systems were aimed at the target by qualified FAC operators and activated for periods of 30 seconds, in the same atmospheric conditions ($V = 22$ km, $T = 32^\circ\text{C}$ and $RH = 45\%$).

The pointing accuracy data (i.e., displacement of the energetic and geometric centres of the laser spots on the target with respect to the target centre) were obtained using the procedures described below for the three cases of slightly distorted, highly distorted and broken laser spots.

Moderately/Highly Distorted Spots: For laser spots preserving a shape almost circular and an energy profile approximately *Gaussian* (like the original laser signal at the system aperture), the geometric centre was computed as the centre of the smallest circle inscribing the laser spot. The spot energy centroid (maximum of the laser energy) was determined by using a dedicated interpolation function available with the IMAGE-PRO PLUS software (see Figure 8-27).

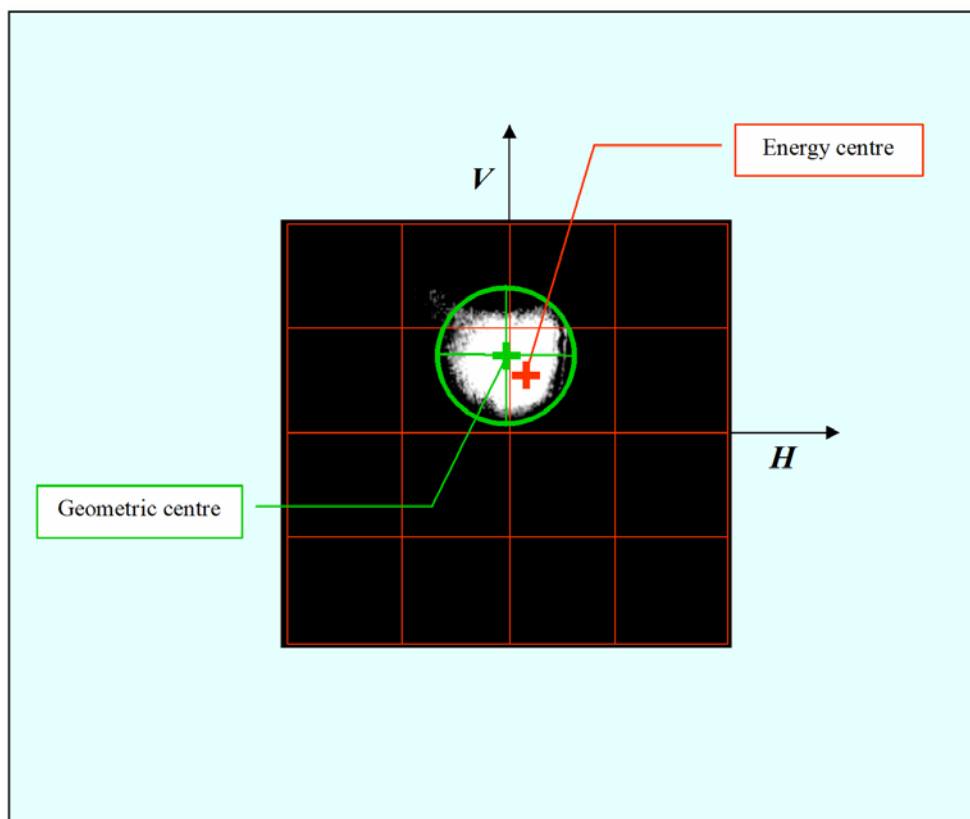


Figure 8-27: Pointing Accuracy Measurements on a Slightly Distorted Laser Spot.

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An example of computations performed on a highly distorted laser spot is shown in Figure 8-28.

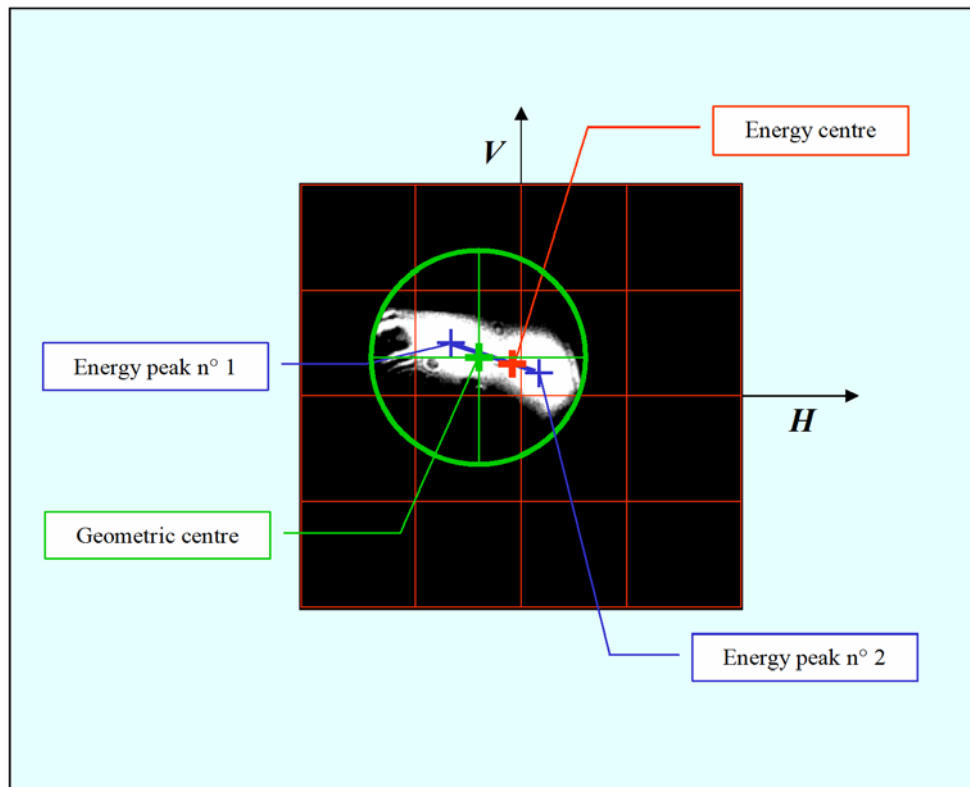


Figure 8-28: Pointing Accuracy Measurements on a Highly Distorted Laser Spot.

Broken Spots: For broken spots (with significantly high energy densities in the broken parts), the energy centre was also computed with the same IMAGE-PRO PLUS interpolation function. In this case, however, the geometric centre of the spot was computed with a dedicated algorithm, using as many circles as the broken portions (with dimensions inscribing the portions) and performing a weighted average in which the weighting factors were the ratios of the single circle radii to the sum of all radii. Low energy spot portions (with energy content minor than 1%) were not considered in the computation algorithm. A scheme relative to the algorithm used for determining the broken spot geometric centre is illustrated in Figure 8-29. An example of computations performed on a broken spot (3 parts) is shown in Figure 8-30.

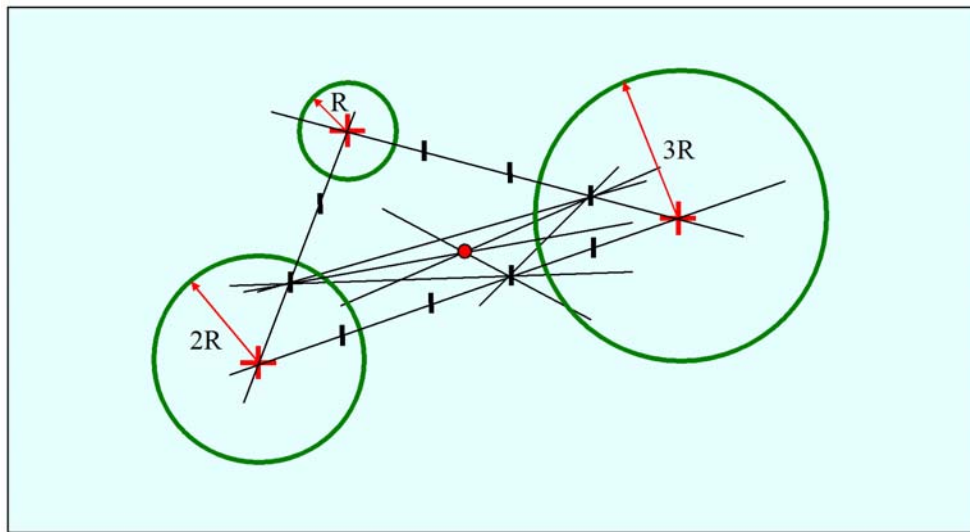


Figure 8-29: Determination of the Spot Geometric Centre (Laser Spot Broken in 3 Parts).

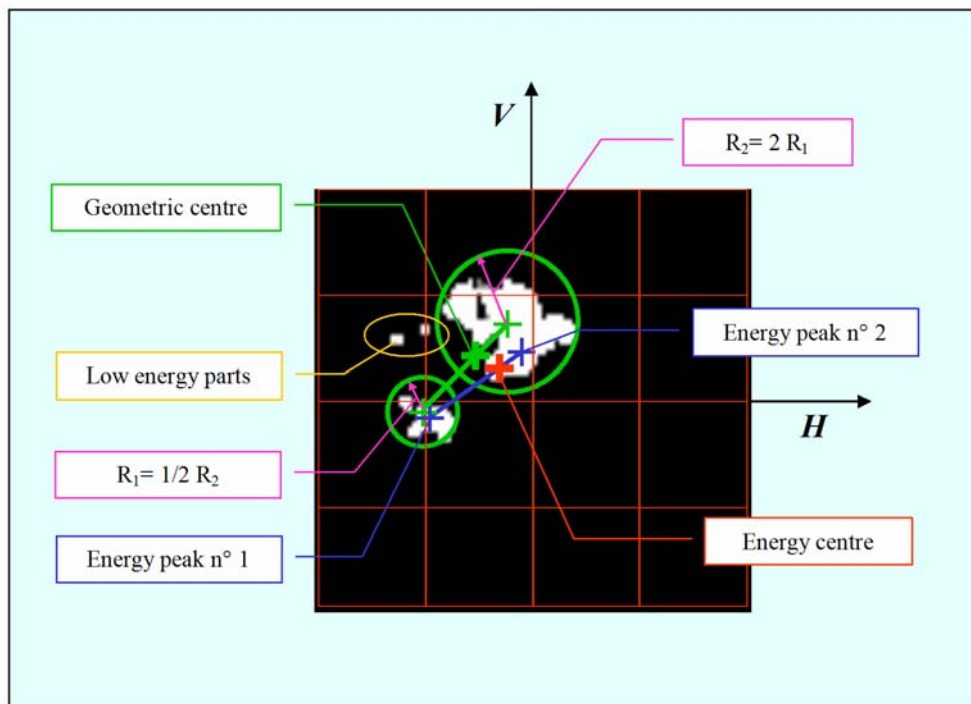


Figure 8-30: Example of Pointing Accuracy Measurements on a Broken Laser Spot.

In all cases, the position of the geometric and energetic centres was referenced to the target bi-dimensional Cartesian frame (i.e., horizontal/vertical scales and origin at the target centre). Since the operator aimed the LRF/LTD exactly at the centre of the target, the geometric and energetic pointing errors were determined (for each available spot frame) as the RSS of the horizontal and vertical error components. During these measurements, the relevant atmospheric parameters were recorded (visibility, temperature, relative humidity, wind intensity/direction, etc.).

Since the collected laser spot images were not simultaneous and the acquisition events were not synchronised, the positions of the geometric and energetic centres were computed at least 3 times for each

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second (i.e., a minimum of 90 times for each system in a 30 seconds laser illumination session), and the average displacement errors of the geometric and energetic centres (i.e., average pointing errors) were calculated for each second. The results of the measurements are shown in the Figure 8-31, Figure 8-32 and Figure 8-33.

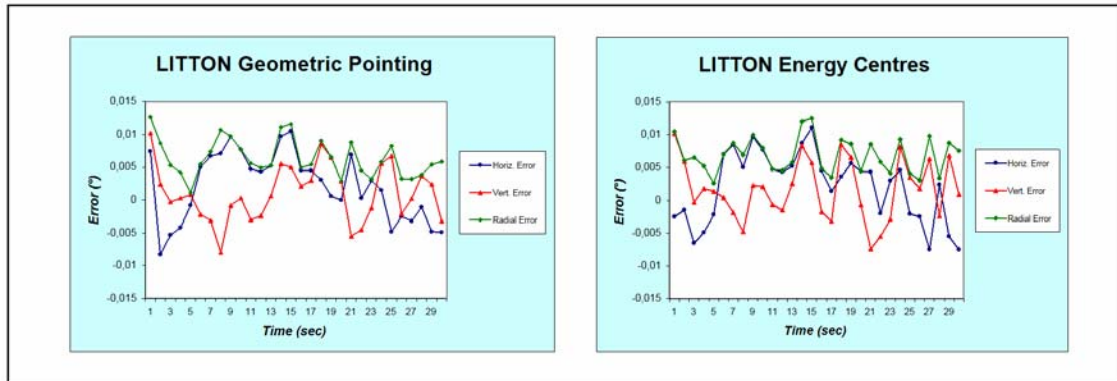


Figure 8-31: LITON GLTD Pointing Accuracy Measurements.

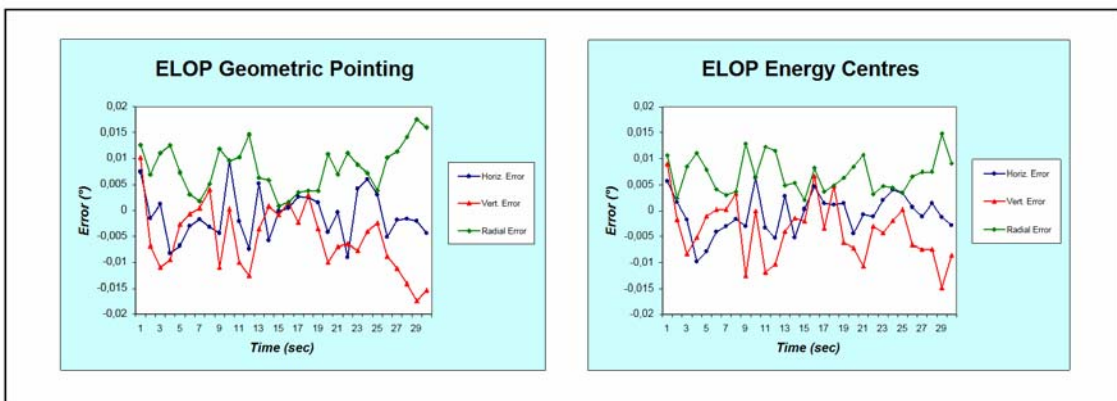


Figure 8-32: ELOP PLD Pointing Accuracy Measurements.

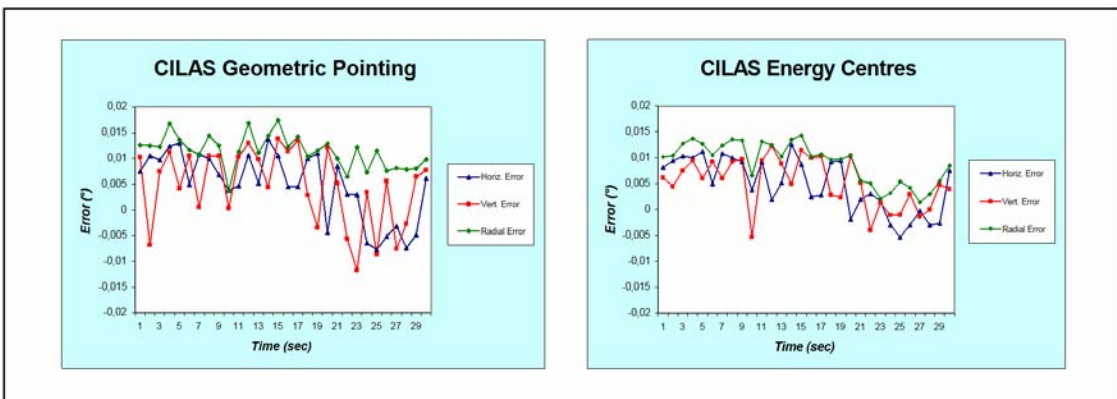


Figure 8-33: CILAS G3 Pointing Accuracy Measurements.

Figure 8-34, Figure 8-35 and Figure 8-36 show the graphs relative to the differences between geometric and energetic pointing data. Table 8-21 summarises the results of the pointing errors measurements of the three systems in terms of Geometric Pointing Accuracy (GPA) and Energy Pointing Accuracy (EPA). It is evident that the three systems had similar pointing accuracies, and that the ELOP and LITTON systems performances were slightly better than that of the CILAS system.

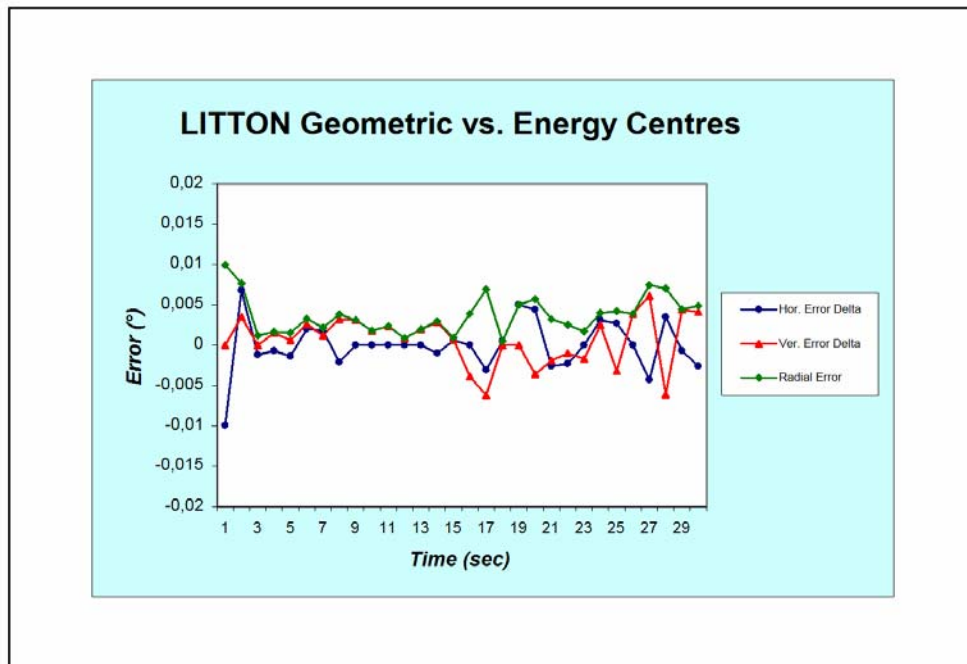


Figure 8-34: LITTON GLTD Differences in Geometric and Energy Pointing.

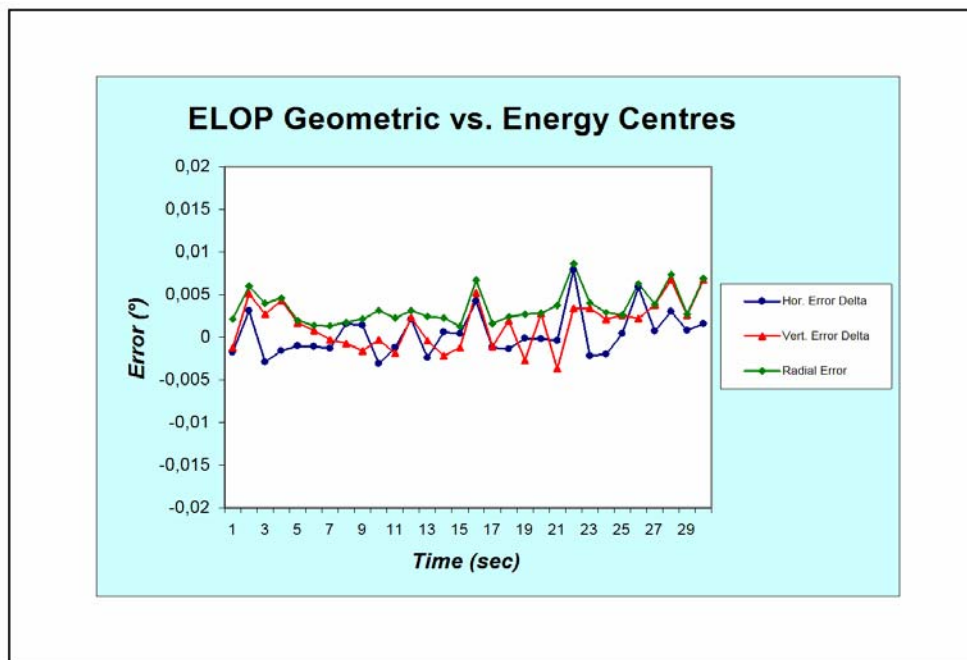


Figure 8-35: ELOP PLD Differences in Geometric and Energy Pointing.

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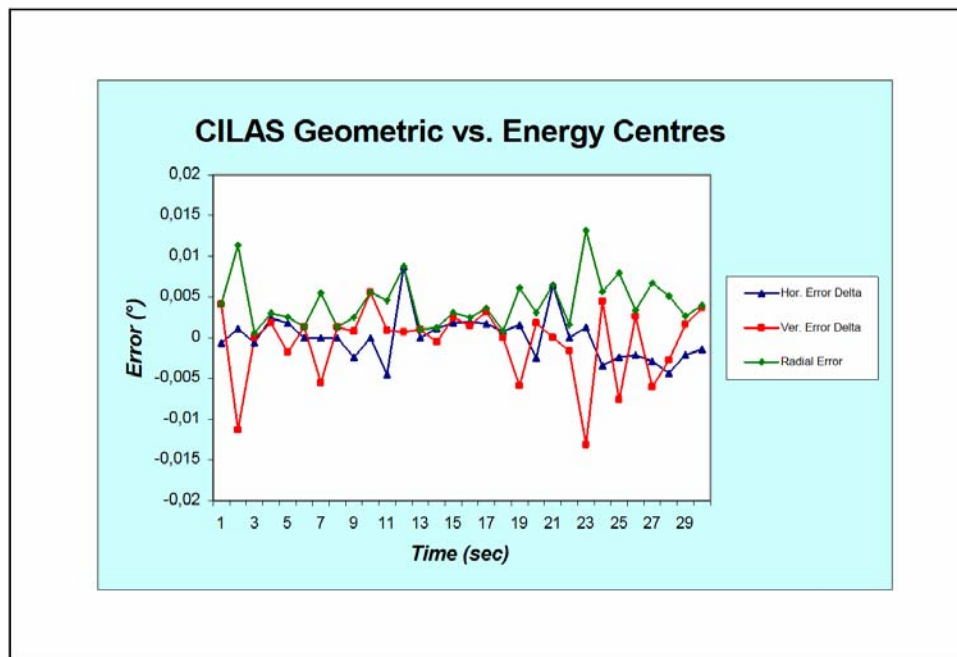


Figure 8-36: CILAS G3 Differences in Geometric and Energy Pointing.

Table 8-21: Pointing Accuracy Measurements Results

System	GPA (°)			EPA (°)			Diff- GPA-EGA (°)		
	min	max	avg	Min	max	avg	min	max	avg
LITTON	0.0011	0.0126	0.0064	0.0026	0.0125	0.0069	0.0005	0.0099	0.0037
ELOP	0.0008	0.0175	0.0083	0.0030	0.0148	0.0070	0.0013	0.0086	0.0035
CILAS	0.0038	0.0174	0.0114	0.0014	0.0143	0.0091	0.0006	0.0132	0.0052

8.2.7 Laser Spot Spreading and Distortion Measurements

Performing EMT tests at $\lambda = 1064$ nm (ELOP-PLD system), with system to target SR between 1500 m and 5.5 km, it was observed that the laser spot images collected by the Phoenix NIR-camera were characterised by a progressive increase of the spot diameters, exceeding the values predicted by theory, with increasing SR. This fact was probably due to the greater influence of both linear and non-linear propagation phenomena with longer propagation paths. In order to investigate, by monitoring the variations of the relevant meteorological parameters along the transmission paths, the effects induced by these phenomena, laser spots shapes and dimensions predicted by theory, assuming a *Gaussian* energy distribution and considering 95% of the total energy, were compared with the effective spot characteristics measured on the target. Using large data samples (i.e., 150 to 200 laser spots for each session), collected with various SR and in various weather conditions, it was possible to obtain useful data about laser spot spreading and distortion characteristics at $\lambda = 1064$ nm. The analytical methods used for spreading/distortion measurements with moderately and highly distorted laser spots are described below.

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Using the $1/e$ divergence ($\Phi_{1/e}$) of the laser beam, the laser spot divergence at 95% of total energy was computed by:

$$\Phi_{95\%} = \frac{\Phi_{1/e}}{\sqrt{\frac{\ln(1 - 0.632)}{\ln(1 - 0.95)}}} \quad (8.56)$$

For the ELOP-PLD, since $\Phi_{1/e} = 0.130$ mrad, we obtained $\Phi_{95\%} = 0.225$ mrad. The expected 95%-energy laser spot radius (R) at a given distance (d) was obtained by:

$$R = d \cdot \tan \Phi_{95\%} + a \quad (8.57)$$

where a is the output beam diameter. For instance, for the ELOP-PLD system located at SR = 5000 m, we obtained $R = 1.215$ m. In order to define the laser spot distortion characteristics, the following spot measurable elements were considered (see Figure 8-37):

- Radius of the smallest circle inscribing the entire spot (R_1);
- Radius of the smallest circle, centred in the spot geometric centre C , contained by the spot image (R_2); and
- Distance between energetic and geometric centres (d_{ge}).

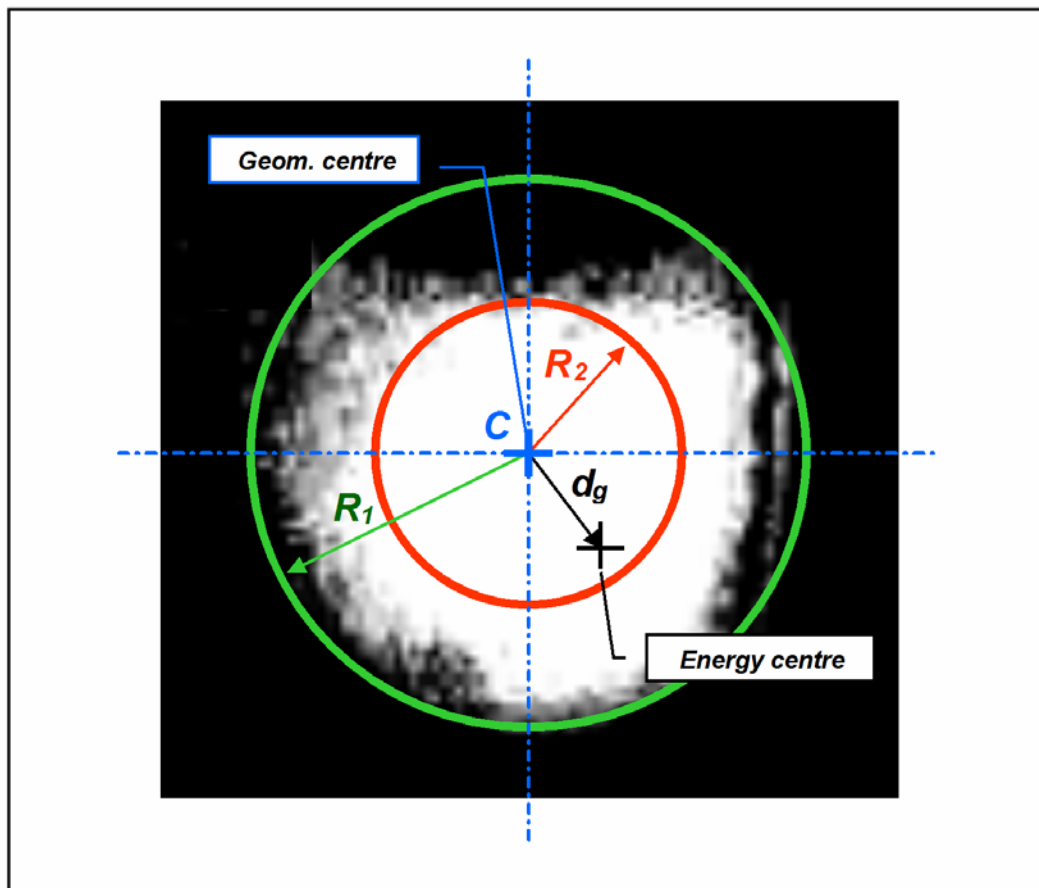


Figure 8-37: Measurable Elements Used for Distorted Spot Analysis.

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These spot elements were combined to conveniently describe the spot quality in terms of spreading and distortion. Particularly, the following Spot Distortion Parameters (SDP's) were defined:

$$Q_s = \frac{R}{R_1} \quad (8.58)$$

$$Q_{De} = 1 - \frac{d_{ge}}{R_1} \quad (8.59)$$

$$Q_{Dg} = \frac{R_2}{R_1} \quad (8.60)$$

The parameter Q_s describes the spot spreading, Q_{De} is relative to the energy profile distortion and Q_{Dg} is relative to the geometric distortion of the laser spot. Conveniently, the SDP parameters were so that they equated to 1 in the ideal *Gaussian* case and tend to 0 in the worst case.

The results of the spot spreading measurements (average $2R_1$ values) are shown in Figure 8-38, together with the calculated 1/e and 95%-energy spot diameters. Although in certain cases the measured spot diameter (average of 150 – 200 measurements) was less than the calculated 95%-energy spot diameter, the average data showed that the spot spreading was much more significant at greater slant-ranges. Furthermore, it was observed that also the SDP parameters increased significantly their values at increasing slant-ranges. The average SPD values and their variations during measurements performed with the ELOP-PLD ($\lambda = 1064$ nm) at SR = 1500 m, 3.5 km and 5.5 km are listed in Table 8-22.

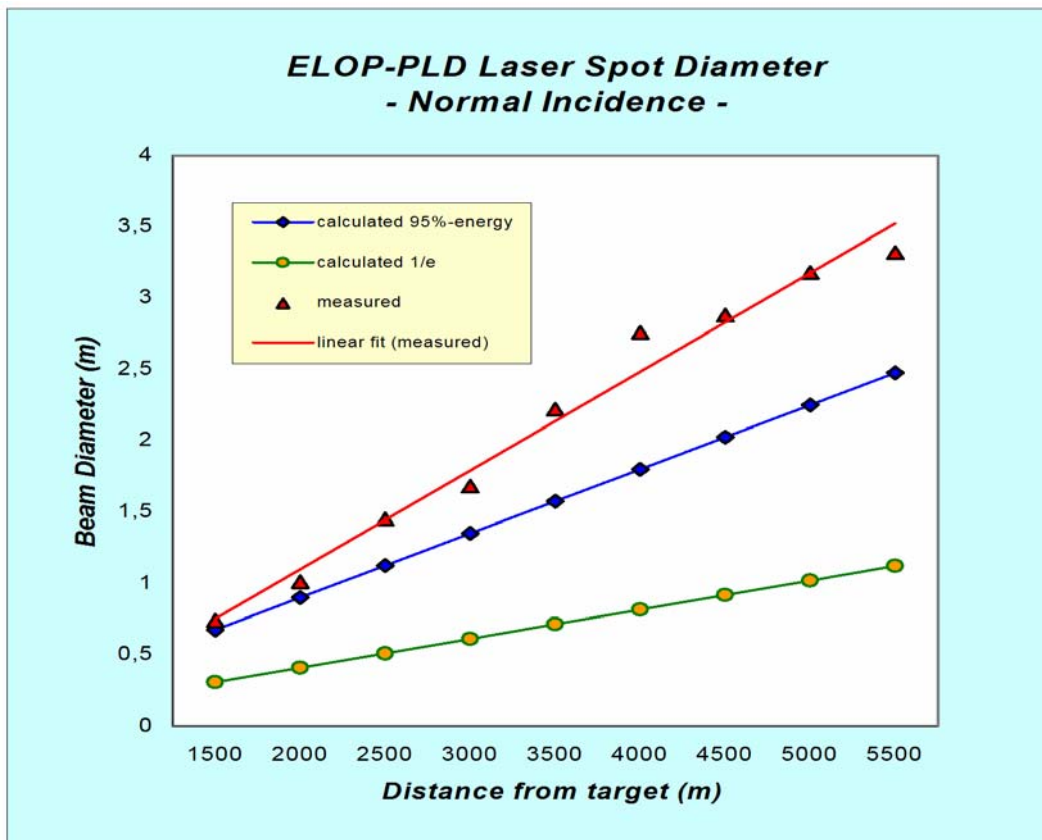


Figure 8-38: ELOP-PLD Calculated/Measured Spot Diameters for Various Slant-Ranges.

Table 8-22: SPD Parameters Relative to the ELOP-PLD Spot Distortion Measurements

SPD	1500 m		3.5 km		5.5 km	
	<i>mean</i>	σ	<i>mean</i>	σ	<i>mean</i>	σ
Q_s	0.8455	0.1350	0.8381	0.1799	0.6860	0.2830
Q_{de}	0.8329	0.0913	0.7184	0.1575	0.6119	0.1837
Q_{dg}	0.7275	0.1289	0.6930	0.1340	0.6607	0.1723

With increasing slant-range all SPD parameters were characterised by a progressive reduction of their mean values and greater dispersions. Therefore, although the exact nature of the correlation existing between the various SPD parameters was not identified with the data available, an additional parameter was defined in order to characterise the overall laser spot quality:

$$Q = \frac{R + R_1 + R_2 - d_{ge}}{3R_1} \quad (8.61)$$

Obviously, as all the SPD parameters vary between 0 and 1, also the Q parameter varies between 0 and 1 (ideal *Gaussian* case). The average values of the parameter Q calculated with the available ELOP-PLD data ($\lambda = 1064$ nm) were the following:

- $Q = 0.8020$ for SR = 1500 m;
- $Q = 0.7498$ for SR = 3500 m; and
- $Q = 0.6529$ for SR = 5500 m.

8.2.8 LOAS Ground Testing

Ground trials of the LOAS system were performed in order to verify the system detection performance in various weather conditions, and to test the validity of the mathematical models used for performance calculations. This was particularly important for preparing the LOAS flight test activity. It was in fact necessary to define a criteria for determining the system detection range performances in the worst environmental conditions, and with the worst obstacle scenarios (i.e., small wires with low reflectivity), even without performing real tests in these conditions (i.e., using experimental data collected in clear weather and with average obstacles). Mathematical modelling and ground testing of the LOAS detection performance were therefore required in order to give proper weights to the parameters playing a role in realistic operational scenarios, and to determine the target LOAS detection performances to be demonstrated in flight. Figure 8-39 illustrates this process.

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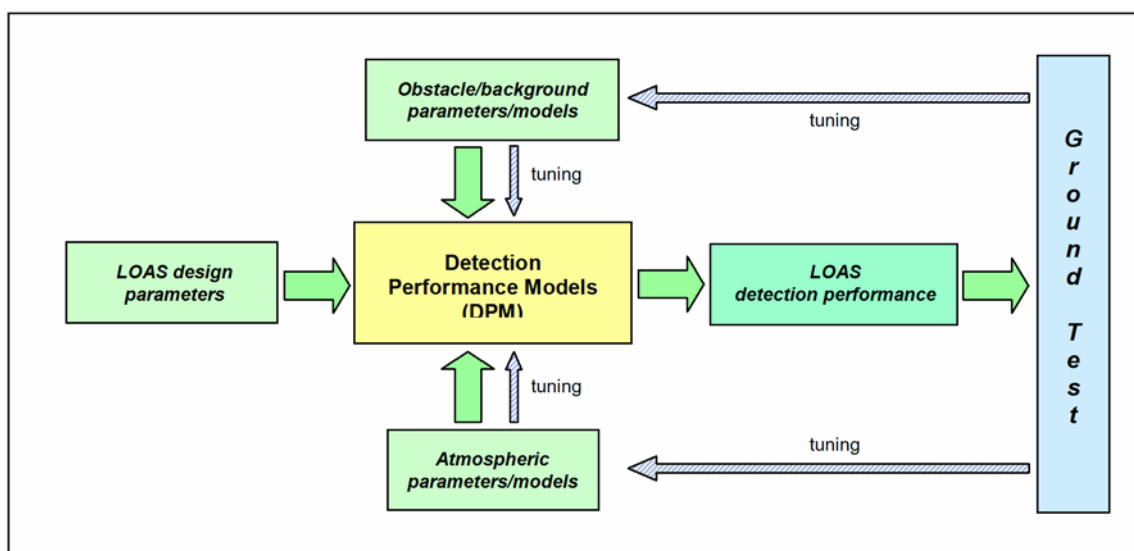


Figure 8-39: LOAS Detection Performance Modelling and Ground Testing.

As the ground test activities permitted to validate the models developed, it was then possible to identify reference sets of obstacle, background and atmospheric parameters giving the absolute minimum performance of the LOAS system. This is illustrated in Figure 8-40. Obviously, the successive flight test activities were performed only in a small portion of the LOAS/helicopter operational envelopes, but the results obtained could be extended to the entire envelopes by using the validated mathematical models.

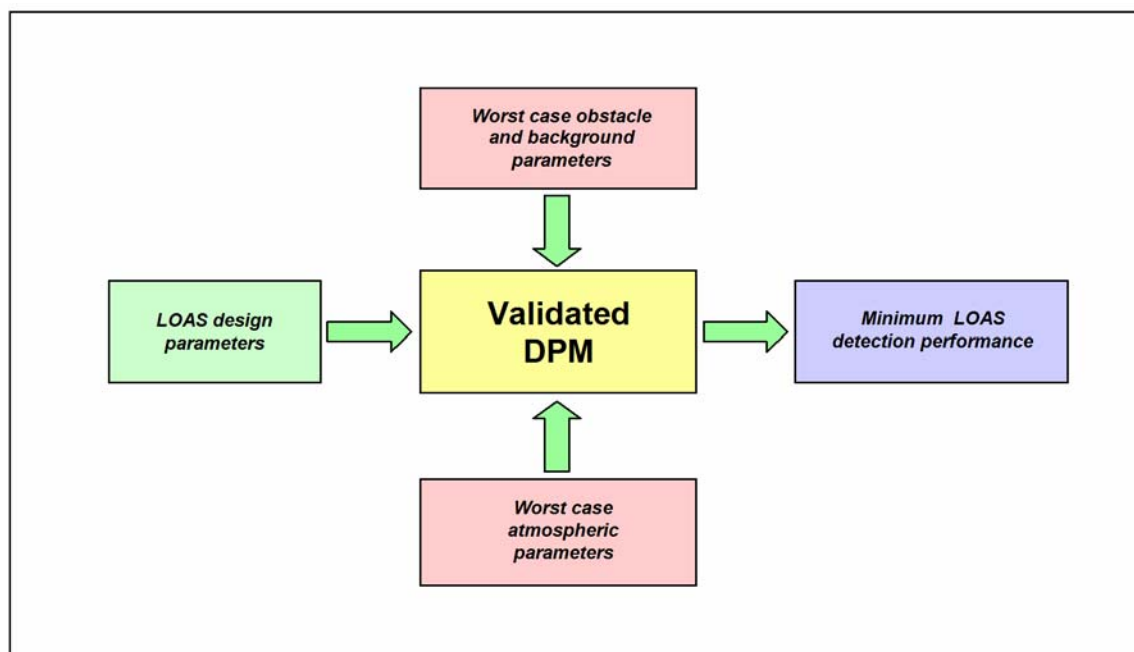


Figure 8-40: Minimum LOAS Detection Performance Calculation.

For initial design calculations, the wire obstacle detection capability of the LOAS was modelled by the following simplified Signal to Noise Ratio (SNR) equation:

$$SNR = \frac{4E_p A_r L_T L_r e^{-2\gamma R} d_w \rho}{\pi P_D R^2 (\alpha R + D) NEP} \quad (8.62)$$

where:

- E_p = output laser pulse energy;
- A_r = receiver aperture;
- L_T = transmission losses (including beam shaping);
- L_r = reception losses (including optical filter);
- γ = atmospheric extinction coefficient (calculated with corrected ESLM model);
- d_w = wire diameter;
- ρ = wire reflectivity;
- P_D = pulse duration;
- R = obstacle range;
- α = beam divergence ($1/e^2$);
- D = initial beam diameter; and
- NEP = noise equivalent power.

In order to estimate the SNR from experimental LOAS detector current measurements (i_{SIG}), obtained with certain obstacle ranges (R) and incidence angles (θ), SNR was expressed as follows:

$$SNR = 20 \log \left(\frac{i_{SIG}(R, \theta)}{i_{NOISE}} \right) \quad (8.63)$$

The noise current terms in eq. (8.63) was modelled as:

$$i_{NOISE} = \sqrt{i_{TH}^2 + i_{BK}^2 + i_{DK}^2 + i_{RA}^2} \quad (8.64)$$

where:

- i_{TH} = thermal noise current;
- i_{BK} = background noise current;
- i_{DK} = dark noise current; and
- i_{RA} = receiver amplifier noise.

According to the LOAS design characteristics, we had:

$$i_{BK} = \sqrt{2qP_s P_h M_A (2 + kM_A) B} \quad (8.65)$$

$$i_{TH} = \sqrt{4K_B \frac{T_k B k}{R_L}} \quad (8.66)$$

$$i_{DK} = 0.5 \cdot 10^{-12} \quad (8.67)$$

$$i_{RA} = 1.5 \cdot 10^{-12} \quad (8.68)$$

where:

- P_s = received solar power;
- P_h = amplifier gain;
- M_A = avalanche multiplier;
- k = noise factor of the avalanche photodiode;
- B = electronic bandwidth;

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- K_B = Boltzmann constant (1.39×10^{-23} J/°K);
 T_K = absolute temperature (°K); and
 R_L = amplifier load resistance.

The following characteristics were defined for a 'wire type' obstacle according to LOAS operational requirements:

- *Diameter:* $5 \text{ mm} \leq D_w \leq 70 \text{ mm}$;
- *Shape:* twisted or round;
- *Reflection:* Purely diffuse (Lambertian); and
- *Reflectivity:* $\geq 20\%$ ($\theta = 0$).

The reference environmental parameters were set as follows:

- *Visibility:* $V \geq 800 \text{ m}$;
- *Humidity:* $RH \leq 100\%$;
- *Temperature:* $T \leq 50^\circ\text{C}$;
- *Rain:* Light/Medium/Heavy; and
- *Background:* $P_B = 50 \text{ W/m}^2 \text{ sr } \mu\text{m}$.

For calculation purposes, the $i_{SIG}(R, \theta)$ term in eq. (8.63), was modelled as:

$$i_{SIG} = \sqrt{\frac{P_T d_w \rho D_a^3 \eta e^{-2\gamma R}}{4 R^3 \lambda}} \cdot \frac{P_h}{K_a} \cdot \frac{1}{R_L} \quad (8.69)$$

where:

- P_T = transmitted power;
 P_h = amplifier gain;
 D_a = aperture diameter; and
 K_a = aperture illumination constant = $\text{sen}(\theta)^{5.4}$.

Results of range performance calculations performed with various visibilities and with all other parameters set to the worst case, are shown in Figure 8-41.

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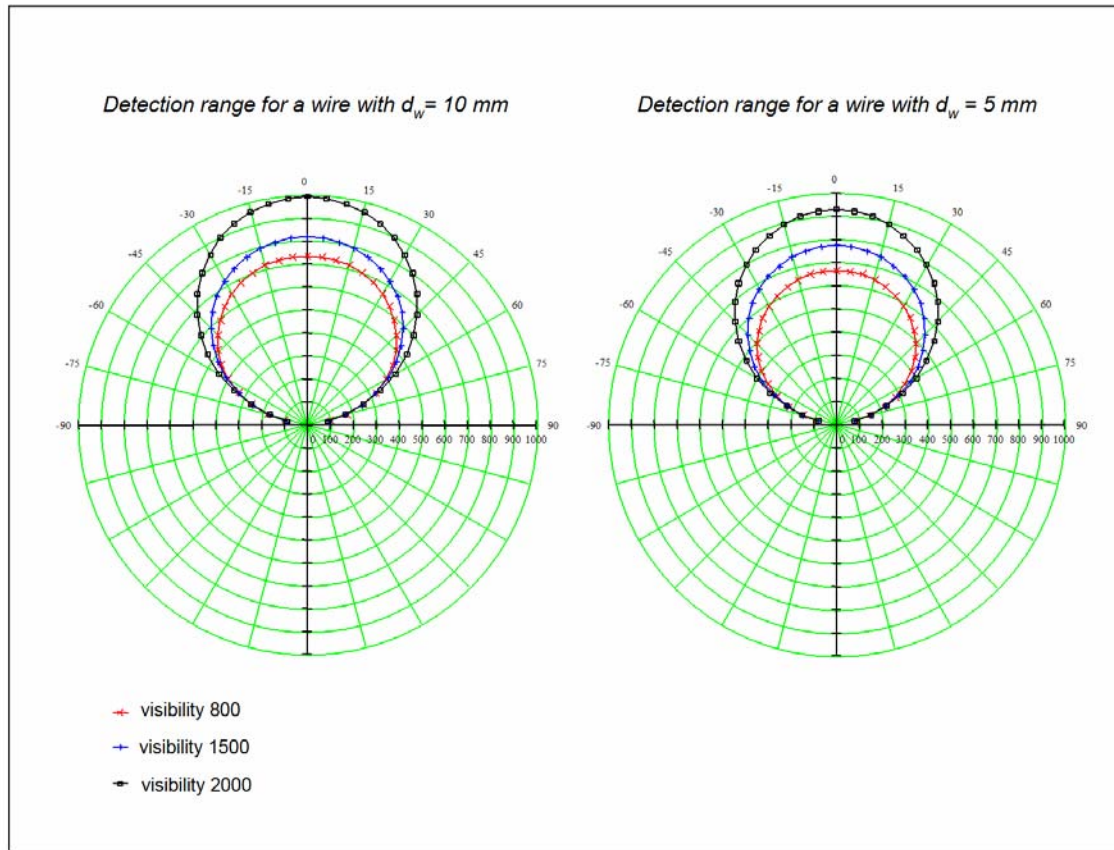


Figure 8-41: LOAS Detection Range Performance with Wires.

The false alarm probability was modelled by:

$$P_{fa} = \frac{1}{B \cdot T_{fa} \cdot \eta} \quad (8.70)$$

where:

- B = receiver bandwidth;
- T_{fa} = mean time between false alarms; and
- η = maximum useful range/maximum non ambiguous range.

The mean time between false alarms corresponds to elementary electrical false alarms at the receiver level. The probability to have several false alarms on a straight line pattern is much lower. Statistically, these phenomena are described by the False Alarm Rate (FAR) and Detection Probability (P_d). If the noise and signal distributions are known, the SNR can be estimated and the corresponding DP and FAR can be determined. According to the Rice calculation [1], the average FAR for the LOAS system is given by:

$$\overline{FAR} = \frac{1}{2\tau\sqrt{3}} \exp\left(-\frac{I_t^2}{2I_n^2}\right) \quad (8.71)$$

where:

- τ = Electrical pulse length;
- I_t = Threshold current; and
- I_n = Average noise current.

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The LOAS P_d is determined using pure *Gaussian* statistics [1], [2]:

$$P_d = \frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi}} \int_{\frac{I_t - I_n}{\sqrt{2}I_n}}^{\infty} \exp\left(-\frac{i_n^2}{2I_n^2}\right) d\left(\frac{i_n}{\sqrt{2}I_n}\right) \quad (8.72)$$

where:

I_n = average signal current; and
 i_n = instantaneous noise current.

The false alarm probability (P_{fa}) is given by:

$$P_{fa} = \tau \cdot \overline{FAR} \quad (8.73)$$

and the cumulative detection probability (P_D) is given by:

$$P_D = 1 - \sum_{i=0}^m C_M^i P_d^i (1 - P_d)^{M-i} \quad (8.74)$$

where:

M = number of possible detections; and
 m = minimum number of detections required.

To validate the LOAS performance models, ground tests were performed using a wire of known section and reflectivity ($D_w = 2.5$ cm and $\rho = 40\%$), and with various weather conditions (i.e., clear weather with $10 \leq V \leq 15$ km, and light/medium/heavy rain). The scenario in which ground tests were performed is shown in Figure 8-42.

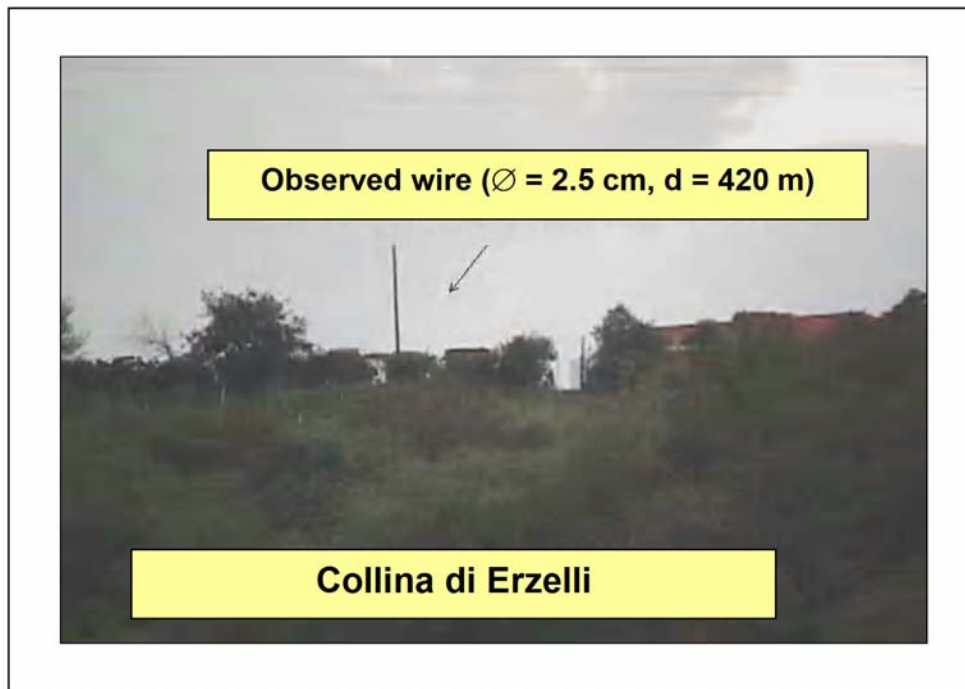


Figure 8-42: LOAS Ground Tests Scenario.

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The collected data sets showed that the returned signal power fluctuates independently from pulse to pulse according to a *Gaussian* distribution. The sets of data collected in clear and rainy weather conditions are shown in Figure 8-43.

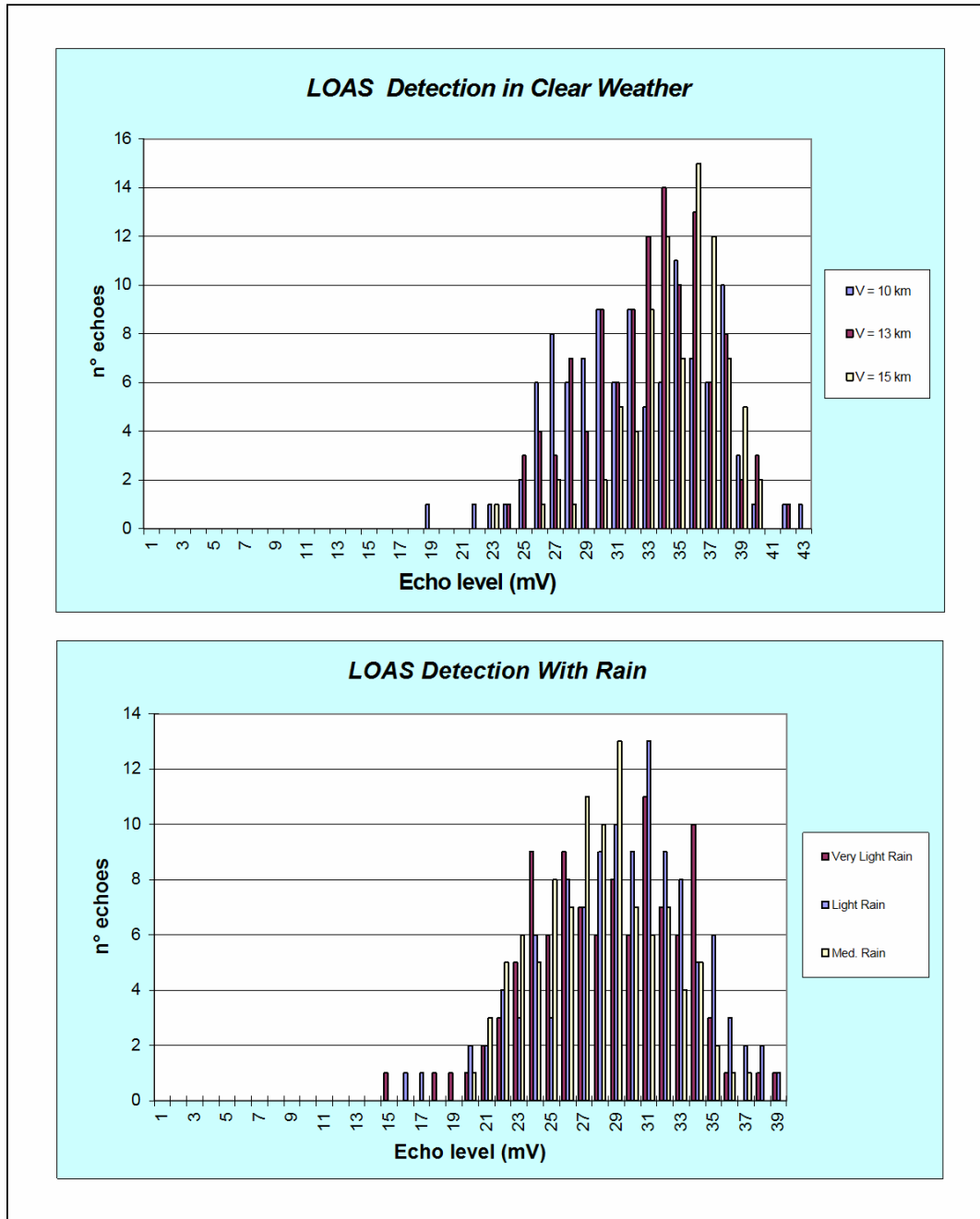


Figure 8-43: LOAS Detection Characteristics.

A comparison between the SNR predicted (SNR_p) using eq. (8.62) with γ calculated using the ESLM model ($0.19 \text{ km}^{-1} \leq \gamma \leq 0.22 \text{ km}^{-1}$ for clear weather and $1.23 \text{ km}^{-1} \leq \gamma \leq 2.94 \text{ km}^{-1}$ for rainy conditions), assuming a background power of $10 \text{ Watt/m}^2/\text{sr}/\mu\text{m}$ and $\rho = 0.5$, and estimated from experimental data (SNR_E) using eq. (8.63) to (8.69), is shown in Table 8-23.

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Table 8-23: Comparison between LOAS Predicted and Measured SNRs

	<i>Clear Weather</i>			<i>Rain</i>		
	<i>V=10 km</i>	<i>V=12.5 km</i>	<i>V=15 km</i>	<i>Light</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Heavy</i>
<i>SNR_p</i>	4.90×10^4	4.95×10^4	5.02×10^4	3.14×10^4	1.83×10^4	1.45×10^4
<i>SNR_E</i>	3.35×10^4	3.80×10^4	4.27×10^4	2.87×10^4	2.47×10^4	2.13×10^4

8.3 REFERENCES

- [1] Skolnik, M.I., "Introduction to Radar Systems". McGraw-Hill (New York). 1980.
- [2] Jelalian, A.V., "Laser Radar Systems". Artech House (Boston-London). 1992.

Chapter 9 – FLIGHT TEST ACTIVITIES

9.1 GENERAL

The most important flight test activities performed as part of the PILASTER development project, included the following:

- a) **PILASTER Systems Test Campaign** (TORNADO-IDS), including:
 - Propagation Measurements in Oblique Air-to-ground Paths;
 - CLDP Pointing Accuracy Measurements; and
 - CLDP FLIR Systems Flight Testing.
- b) **LOAS Test Campaign**, including:
 - Preliminary Flight Trials on the NH-300 Helicopter; and
 - Flight Trials on the AB-212 Helicopter.

Particularly, the PILASTER STU and MSU systems were tested during their employment in real air-to-ground missions (both with and without deliveries of guided weapons). With the PILASTER systems in their operational configuration, atmospheric extinction measurements were performed with the geometries typical of air-to-ground missions (i.e., oblique and vertical laser paths), and the correction factors for the ESLM sea-level atmospheric propagation models were determined in the conditions of greatest significance. Pointing accuracy (from geometric and energy spot centres measurements) of the CLDP were determined in flight and laser beam spread measurements were performed with various aircraft-target geometries.

The LOAS flight test activities were carried out in order to verify the functionality of the system in a real operational environment (preliminary trials) and to assess the system detection performance with various weather conditions/obstacles and the efficiency of the obstacle classification/prioritisation algorithms.

This chapter describes the flight test activities carried out during this research and gives indications about further activities planned to be performed in the future.

9.2 PILASTER/CLDP TEST CAMPAIGN

As discussed in the previous chapters, most PILASTER systems test activities were carried out during laboratory and ground sessions. However, a number of flight sorties were performed with the CLDP on TORNADO-IDS (fully instrumented with FTI and a DGPS based PRS), in order to verify the compliance of the PILASTER systems with aircraft test/training missions requirements. This activity also served to the personnel involved (aircrews and engineering officers) to gain confidence with the PILASTER systems (STU and MSU) during their operational employment. Particularly, both dry (no LGW delivery) and hot attack profiles were flown, following flight paths and executing manoeuvres compatible with both eye-safety restrictions and DGPS data gathering requirements. During the activity, a number of measurements were performed (in real-time and in post-processing) with the PILASTER systems. Together with baseline measurements required for the PILASTER operation (pointing accuracy, beam spot diameter, energy profiles, codes characteristics, etc.), also some propagation measurements were performed with different oblique air-to-ground paths.

The CLDP-IR standard FLIR and an enhanced version of the FLIR system (CLDP-IR version) was also tested, using the PILASTER IR target. Finally, using the data collected in flight, the PILASTER post-mission data analysis tools were also improved.

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9.2.1 Atmospheric Propagation Trials

Atmospheric propagation flight test activities with the CLDP-IR on TORNADO-IDS aircraft were performed with the aim of obtaining experimental data regarding the variations of the attenuation coefficient at $\lambda = 1064$ nm as a function of altitude. In order to cope with this task, it was first of all required to correctly plan the flight sorties and selecting the test points according to the aircraft envelope limitations, to the PILASTER instrumentation mode of operation and to the CLDP-IR functional characteristics. As the target used for the trials had a size of about 10×10 metres, and the entire laser spot had to be captured by the NIR cameras for data analysis, the first concern was to determine the conditions (i.e., slant-range and incidence angle) in which the size of the laser spot would not exceed the size of the target. Imposing that the aircraft had to fly towards the target surface along the radial 130, the problem of determining the laser spot size with varying altitude was reduced to the case of a pure vertical misalignment (i.e., no azimuth misalignment). Therefore, the equation used to approximately determine the major axis of the laser spot ellipse on the target (r) was the following:

$$r = (d \cdot \sin \alpha) \cdot \left[\frac{1}{\cos(\alpha - \beta)} + \frac{1}{\cos(\alpha + \beta)} \right] + \frac{a}{\cos \beta} \quad (9.1)$$

where α is the beam divergence and β is the CLDP-IR elevation angle (measured with respect to the target normal). Using this equation, two flight sorties were planned to be executed in days with visibility in excess of 15 km, including four dive manoeuvres at 45° , 35° , 25° and 15° respectively. The dive profiles envelopes are described in the Table 9-1.

Table 9-1: Flight Profiles Envelopes for Atmospheric Extinction Trials

Profile Envelope	20° Dive		30° Dive		40° Dive		50° Dive	
	Alt.	Dist.	Alt.	Dist.	Alt.	Dist.	Alt.	Dist.
Top	14000 ft	12.5 km	19000 ft	11.5 km	20000 ft	9.5 km	22000 ft	8.5 km
Bottom	6000 ft	5.5 km	7000 ft	4 km	8000 ft	4 km	8000 ft	3.5 km

When data could not be collected during the dives, straight and level passages were performed parallel to the target surface. In all cases, the CLDP-IR laser was manually activated by the WSO at the required altitudes and grazing angles. The CLDP-IR laser eye-safety envelope is shown in Figure 9-1, with superimposed the dive manoeuvres profiles.

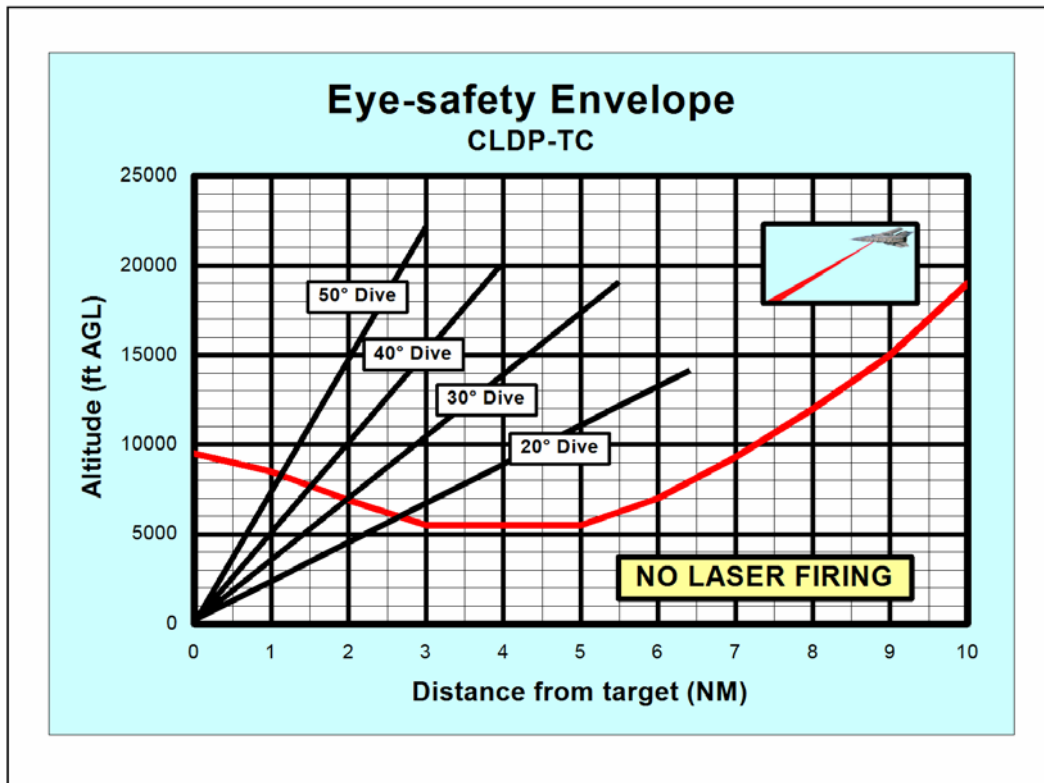


Figure 9-1: CLDP-IR Eye-Safety Envelope.

The flights were performed on two successive days during summer 2002. The meteorological data collected at the target location during the two sorties are reported in Table 9-2.

Table 9-2: Meteorological Data Relative to Propagation Flight Trials

Sortie	Visibility (km)	Rel. Hum. (%)	Temp. (°C)	Wind (°/kts)	Cloud
1	16 km	57%	35°C	120/7	0/8
2	18 km	54%	32°C	0/0	2/8

Following the planned flight profiles, experimental data collected during the two TORNADO-IDS sorties allowed to estimate the variations of the attenuation coefficient with altitude. Particularly, measuring transmittances for various aircraft grazing angles and altitudes (aircraft instrumented with DGPS and equipped with standard barometric/radar altimeters), the following results were found.

9.2.1.1 Tests with 50° Grazing Angle

The experimental data obtained with a grazing angle of 50° are plotted in Figure 9-2. The following linear approximation was found for the ratio of attenuation coefficient to its sea-level value:

$$\gamma_{atm}^H / \gamma_{atm} = -1.9568 \cdot 10^{-5} H + 0.9663 \quad (9.2)$$

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where γ_{atm}^H is the attenuation coefficient of the slant-path, γ_{atm} is the attenuation coefficient at sea-level, and H is the aircraft Mean Sea Level (MSL) altitude in thousands of ft. The second order polynomial fit of the same experimental data is:

$$\gamma_{atm}^H / \gamma_{atm} = 5.5583 \cdot 10^{-10} H^2 - 3.6243 \cdot 10^{-5} H + 1.0810 \quad (9.3)$$

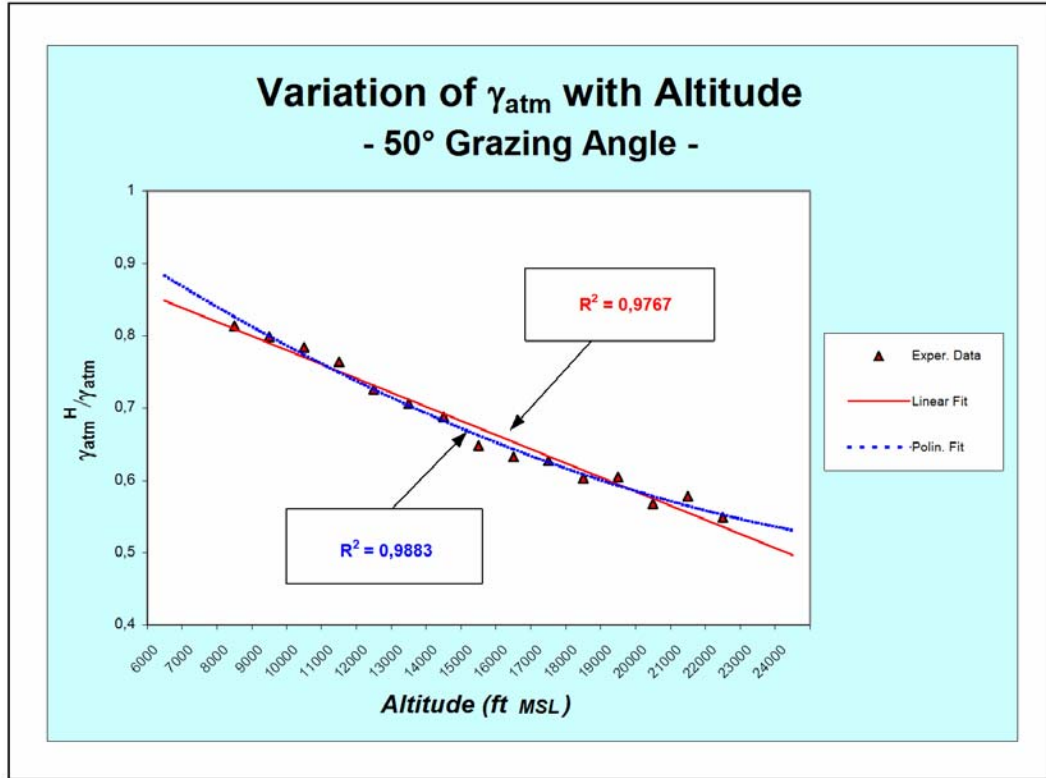


Figure 9-2: Ratio of the Attenuation Coefficient to its Sea-Level Value for 50° Grazing Slant-Paths.

9.2.1.2 Tests with 40° Grazing Angle

The experimental data obtained with a 40° grazing angle are plotted in Figure 9-3. The following linear approximation was found for the ratio of attenuation coefficient to its sea-level value:

$$\gamma_{atm}^H / \gamma_{atm} = -1.7566 \cdot 10^5 H + 0.9608 \quad (9.4)$$

The second order polynomial fit of the experimental data is:

$$\gamma_{atm}^H / \gamma_{atm} = 7.6424 \cdot 10^{-11} H^2 - 1.9706 \cdot 10^{-5} H + 0.9747 \quad (9.5)$$

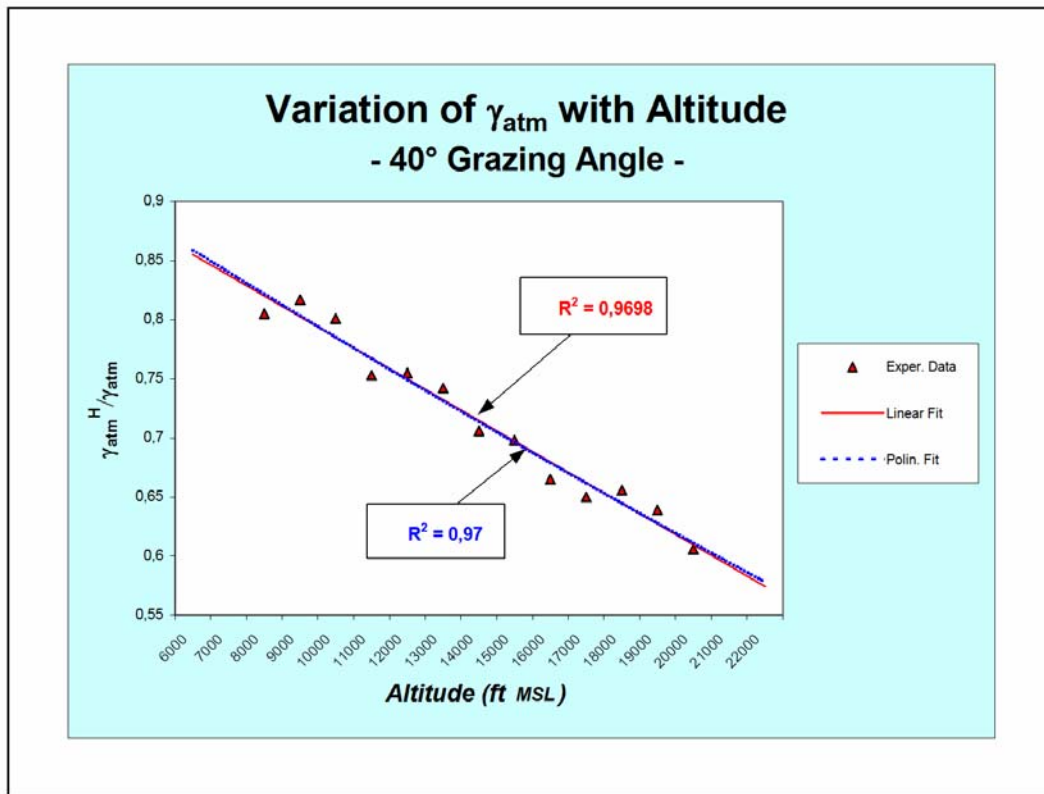


Figure 9-3: Ratio of the Attenuation Coefficient to its Sea-Level Value for 40° Grazing Slant-Paths.

9.2.1.3 Tests with 30° Grazing Angle

The experimental data obtained with a grazing angle of 30° are plotted in Figure 9-4. The following linear approximation was found for the ratio of attenuation coefficient to its sea-level value:

$$\gamma_{atm}^H / \gamma_{atm} = -1.5245 \cdot 10^{-5} H + 0.9626 \quad (9.6)$$

The second order polynomial fit of the same experimental data is:

$$\gamma_{atm}^H / \gamma_{atm} = 5.3447 \cdot 10^{-10} H^2 - 2.9675 \cdot 10^{-5} H + 1.0537 \quad (9.7)$$

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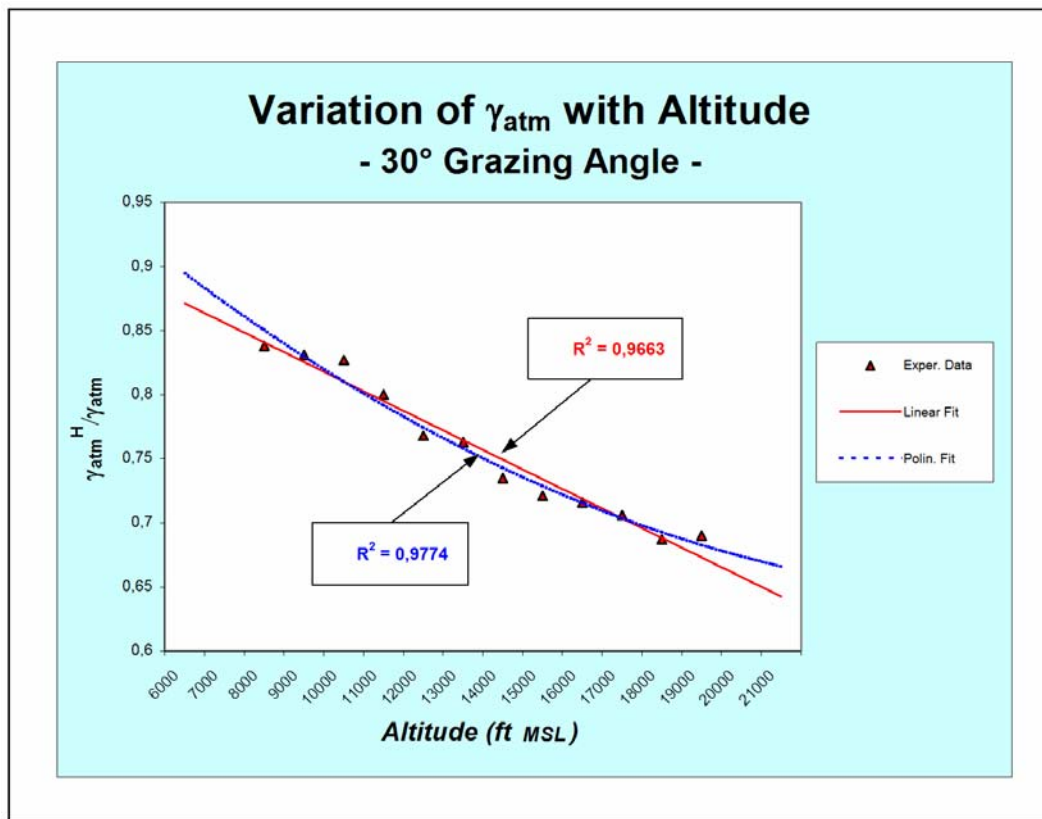


Figure 9-4: Ratio of the Attenuation Coefficient to its Sea-Level Value for 30° Grazing Slant-Paths.

9.2.1.4 Tests with 20° Grazing Angle

The experimental data obtained with manual CLDP laser activation during the 20° dive manoeuvre are plotted in Figure 9-5. The following linear approximation was found for the ratio of attenuation coefficient to its sea-level value:

$$\gamma_{atm}^H / \gamma_{atm} = -1.3758 \cdot 10^{-5} H + 0.9530 \quad (9.8)$$

The second order polynomial fit of the same experimental data is:

$$\gamma_{atm}^H / \gamma_{atm} = 3.2468 \cdot 10^{-13} H^2 - 1.3765 \cdot 10^{-5} H + 0.9531 \quad (9.9)$$

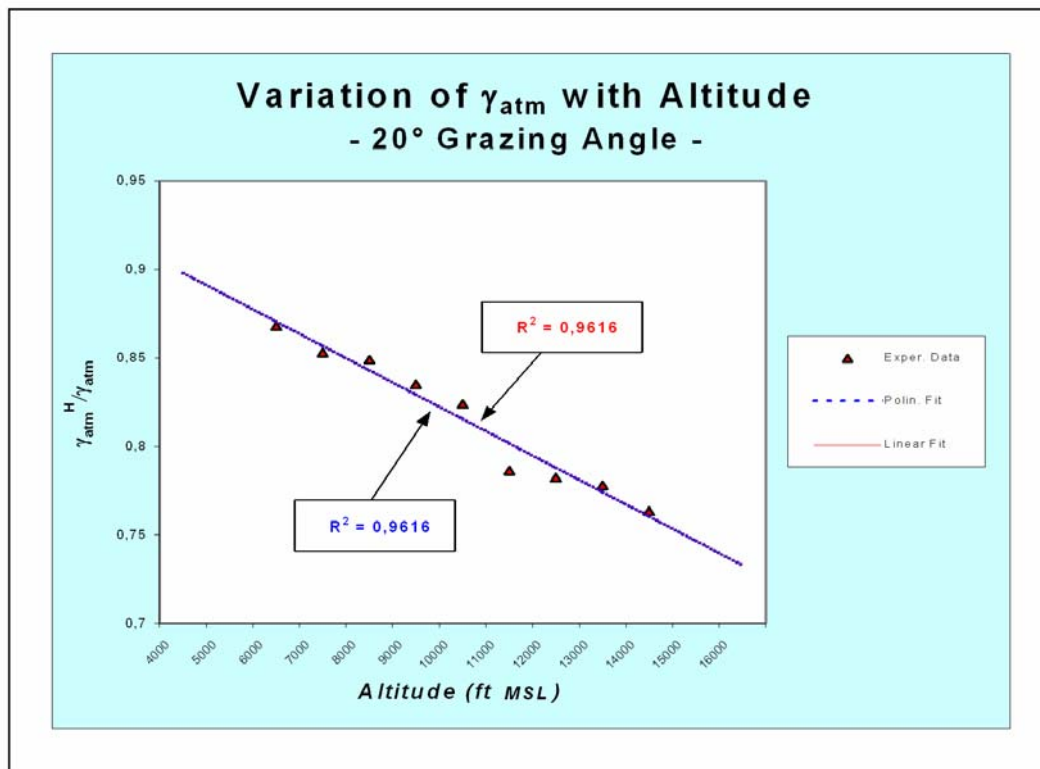


Figure 9-5: Ratio of the Attenuation Coefficient to its Sea-Level Value for 20° Grazing Slant-Paths.

9.2.1.5 Discussion of Results

All experimental data collected during the trials are shown in Figure 9-6. Looking at the data trends, it is evident that, as the grazing angle (ξ) becomes shallower, γ_{atm}^H tends to decrease at a lower rate as the altitude increases.

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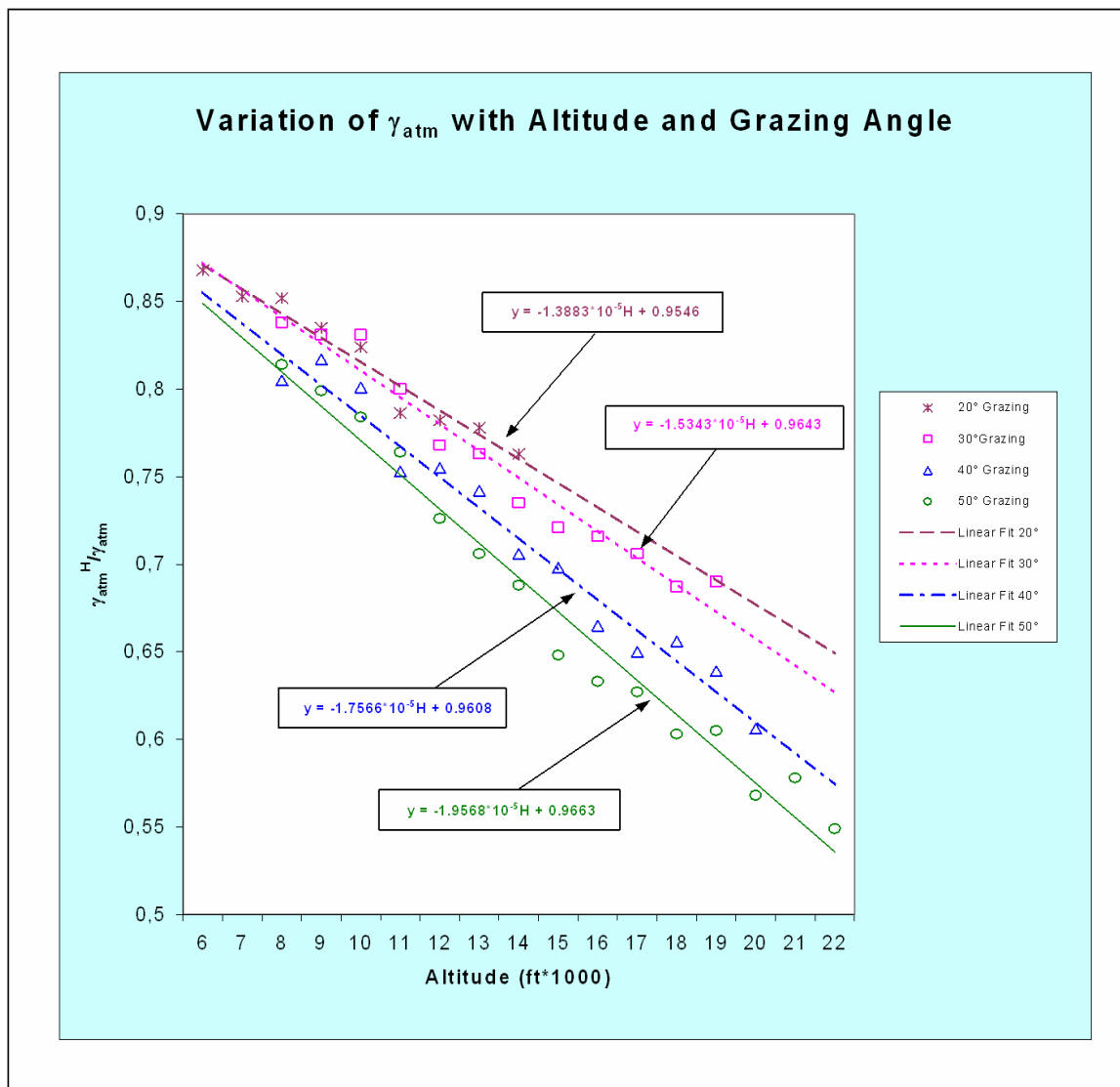


Figure 9-6: Ratio of the Attenuation Coefficient to its Sea-Level Value for Slant-Paths with 20°, 30°, 40° and 50° Grazing Angles.

It must be considered that the linear fits relative to the various grazing angles are representative of the data trends only in the altitude intervals where the experimental data were collected. Furthermore, the experimental flight sorties were carried out only in clear weather with similar values of the relevant meteorological parameters measured on the ground (i.e., visibility, relative humidity and temperature). Therefore, it is possible that using these functions beyond the respective altitude intervals and in different weather conditions may not provide reliable predictions of the attenuation coefficient.

Let us consider only the altitude interval 8000 ÷ 14000 ft. in which data were collected with all grazing angles (i.e., $\xi = 50^\circ, 40^\circ, 30^\circ$ and 20°), shown in Figure 9-7.

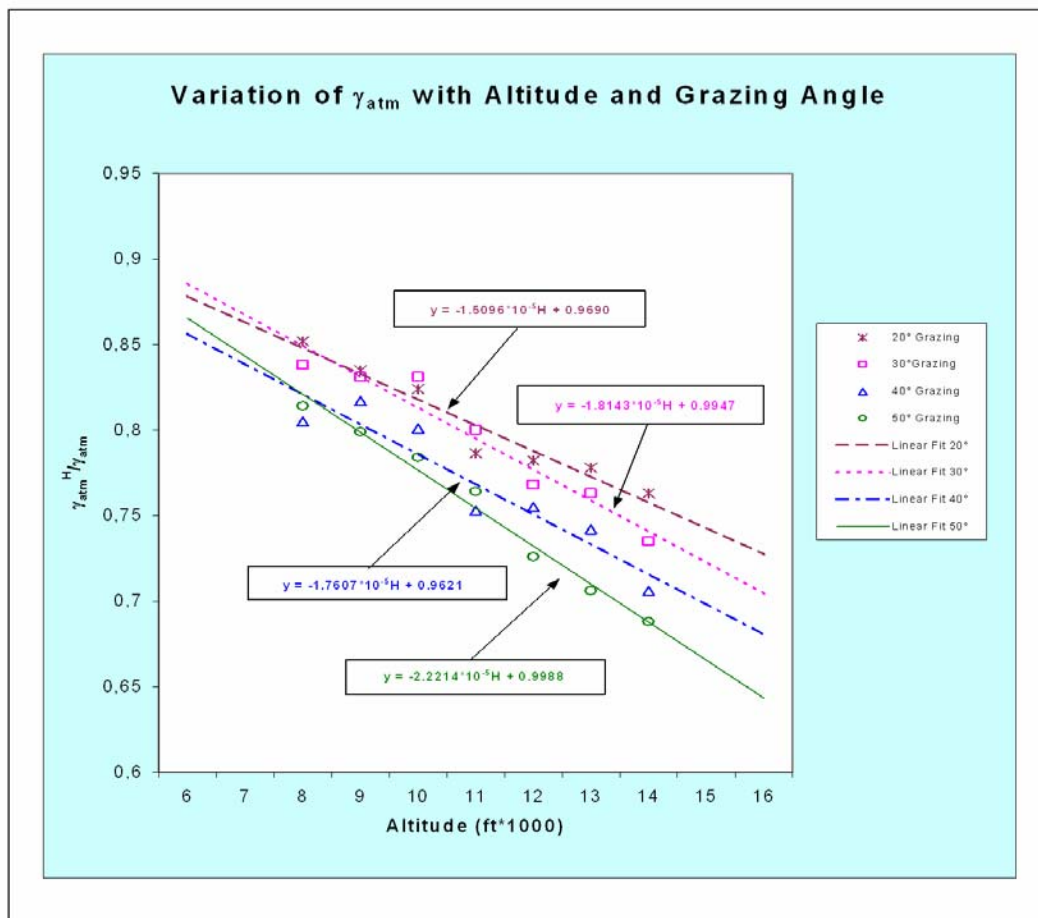


Figure 9-7: Ratio of the Attenuation Coefficient to its Sea-Level Value for Various Slant-Paths and Altitudes between 8000 and 14000 ft.

Also in this altitude interval it is confirmed that γ_{atm}^H tends to decrease less as the grazing angle becomes shallower. Furthermore, in this interval we may perform further analysis by determining an average fitting function for all data points collected. These elements are shown in Figure 9-8. By doing this, we obtain a single function which allows approximate calculations of the fractional decrease in γ_{atm} for slant-paths with $20^\circ \leq \xi \leq 50^\circ$ from sea-level to altitudes between 8000 and 14000 ft.

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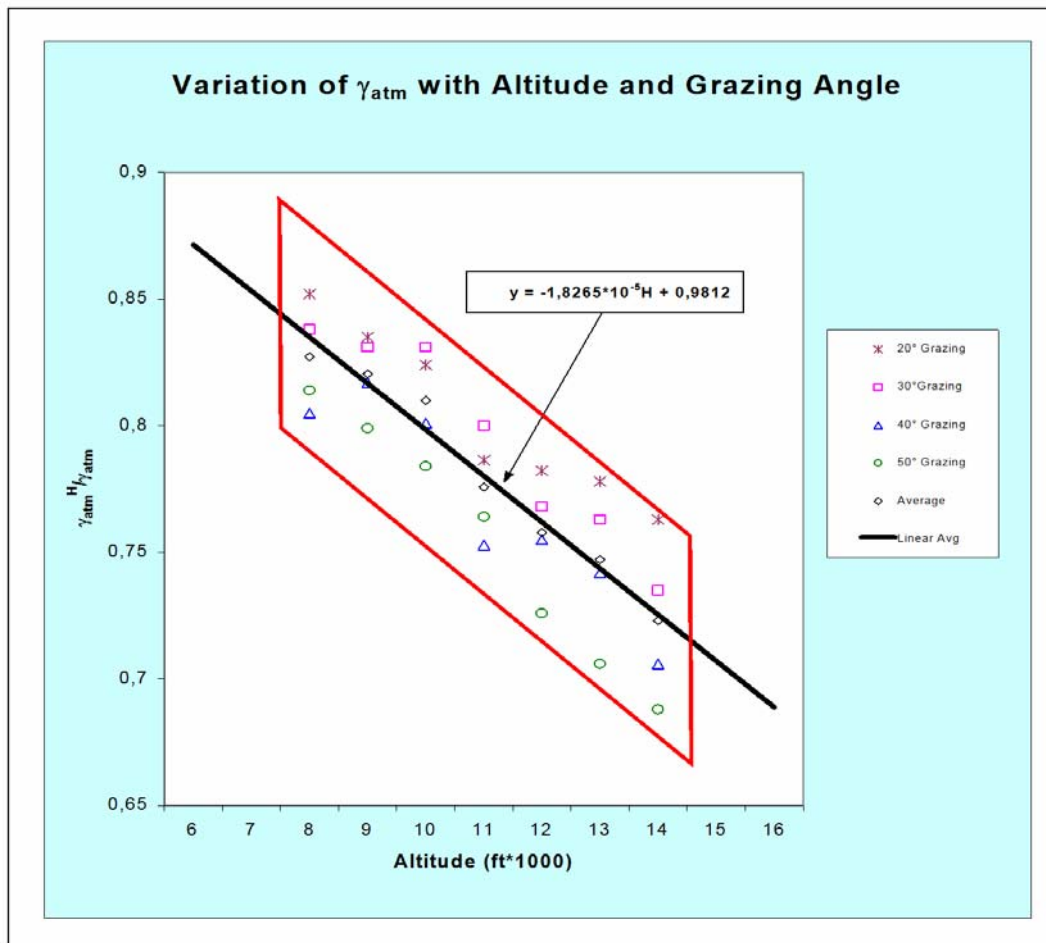


Figure 9-8: Average $\gamma_{atm}^H / \gamma_{atm}$ for Slant-Paths with Grazing Angles between 20° and 50° and Altitudes between 8000 and 14000 ft.

A similar analysis was also performed in the altitude interval 8000 ÷ 19000 ft. for the grazing angles 30°, 40° and 50°. The results are shown in the Figure 9-9 and Figure 9-10.

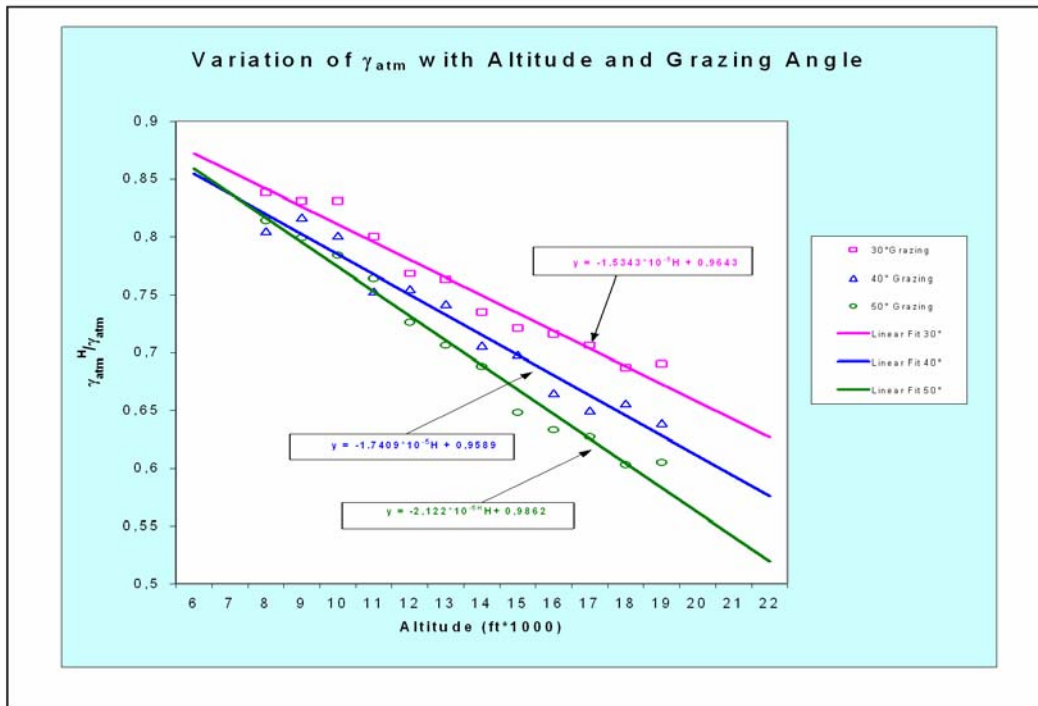


Figure 9-9: Ratio of the Attenuation Coefficient to its Sea-Level Value for Various Slant-Paths and Altitudes between 8000 and 19000 ft.

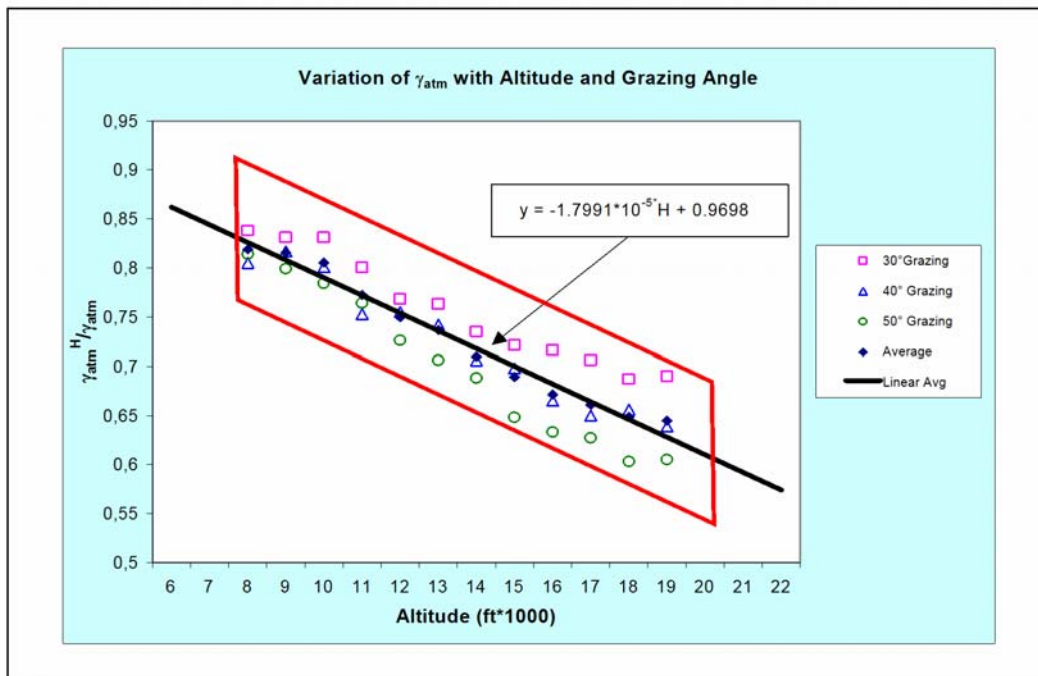


Figure 9-10: Average $\gamma_{atm}^H / \gamma_{atm}$ for Slant-Paths with Grazing Angles between 30° and 50° and Altitudes between 8000 and 19000 ft.

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In order to obtain accurate predictions of the attenuation coefficient variations with altitude required for performance data analysis and simulation purposes at the PILASTER range, it is essential to perform further trials, in appropriate meteorological and operational scenarios, including well representative weather conditions and wider portions of the TORNADO-IDS/CLDP operational flight envelopes.

9.2.2 CLDP Pointing Accuracy Tests

Using the PILASTER STU instrumentation and the permanent target described in Chapter 5, the pointing accuracy of the CLDP system, installed on the TORNADO-IDS aircraft, was determined. The aircraft flight profiles for pointing accuracy tests were defined according to the CLDP/PILASTER technical characteristics and taking into account eye-safety issues. The measurements were performed during one flight sortie performed at altitudes between 10000 and 20000 ft. and with various CLDP aspect angles and aircraft to target slant-ranges. A number of six straight-and-level passages were performed with the aircraft flying parallel to the target surface. The CLDP system was aimed at the target by using the systems TRACK and SLAVE modes (2 passages in SLAVE, 2 passages in TRACK-TAC and 2 passages in TRACK-TIC). All test points were performed with manual laser activation by the WSO for periods of about 15 seconds, in the prescribed aircraft altitude and attitude conditions. The atmospheric parameters recorded at the target location during the flight were: $V = 18$ km, $T = 31^{\circ}\text{C}$ and $RH = 45\%$ (no clouds). Pointing accuracy data (i.e., displacement error of the energetic and geometric centres of the laser spots on the target with respect to the target centre) were obtained using the same methods already described in Chapter 9 for the three cases of slightly distorted, highly distorted and broken laser spots. The results of the measurements are not presented here due to military classification issues.

9.3 FLIR SYSTEMS TESTING

Using the PILASTER IREF target described in Chapter 5, installed on the permanent FXDT target structure, the Minimum Resolvable Temperature Differences (MRTD) with spatial frequencies (cycle/mrad) corresponding to various 2-D discrimination levels, were determined for the CLDP-IR and for the enhanced CLDP-IRS FLIR systems. Furthermore, using these experimental data it was possible to calculate the detection, recognition and identification ranges of both FLIR systems, for targets of given aspect dimensions. Although the experimental results obtained are not presented in this thesis (due to the high level of military classification), the technical approach adopted is described here, which is a reference for future FLIR test activities to be performed at the PILASTER range.

9.3.1 In-Flight Test Procedure

First of all, it is important to select appropriate aircraft to target geometries for the system under test. The (angular) spatial frequency (SF) is given by:

$$SF = \frac{R_T}{W_{lc}} \quad (9.10)$$

where:

R_T = sensor-to-target range; and
 W_{lc} = width of one cycle of target.

The 'cycle' is defined as the sum of one bar and space on the reference target. In flight test practice, the spatial frequency is adjusted by varying sensor-to-target range (i.e., flying toward the target). The PILASTER test procedure steps are the following:

- a) Adjust the effective temperature differential (ΔT) of the bar target to the maximum value planned for the test.

- b) Fly a prescribed flight path, at constant altitude and airspeed, on a heading designed to pass directly over the PILASTER target, and normal to the target surface.
- c) Determine the sensor-aircraft position (and, hence, sensor-to-target range) with suitable range instrumentation (e.g., cinethodolites) or on-board position reference devices (e.g., DGPS).
- d) Acquire the IR target on the FLIR sensor under test.
- e) Continue to observe the target on the sensor until the variations in radiant intensity due to the individual bars are just discernible.
- f) Measure and record the resolvable temperature differential and the range (spatial frequency) attained in step e).
- g) Repeat steps a) through f), substituting, in step a), increasingly smaller target temperature differentials, until the variations due to individual bars are no longer discernible even at the minimum sensor-to-target ranges planned for the test.

During the in-flight tests, atmospheric conditions must be recorded in order to determine the transmittance (τ_{atm}). ΔT must be multiplied by τ_{atm} to get the normalised ΔT which is used for plotting test results. Additionally, thermo vision should be used to record IR target differential temperature as truth data to ensure the IR board is operating properly. The relationship between sensor cut-off spatial frequency (SF_s) and sensor angular resolution (θ_R) is given by:

$$\theta_R = \frac{1}{SF_c} \quad (9.11)$$

When the resolvable temperatures determined by the in-flight test are plotted versus the spatial frequency of the target, the results should be very similar to those determined by ground tests. The only significant difference should be that the in-flight spatial cut-off frequency (SF_{s-f}) of the sensor should be somewhat lower than that attained in ground tests (SF_{s-g}). The only significant difference should be that the in-flight spatial cut-off frequency of the sensor should be somewhat lower than that attained in ground tests. An example of a plot showing both in-flight and ground test results is presented in Figure 9-11. For a properly integrated and properly functioning sensor, the degradation of angular resolution in flight is due primarily to sensor line-of-sight (LOS) jitter.

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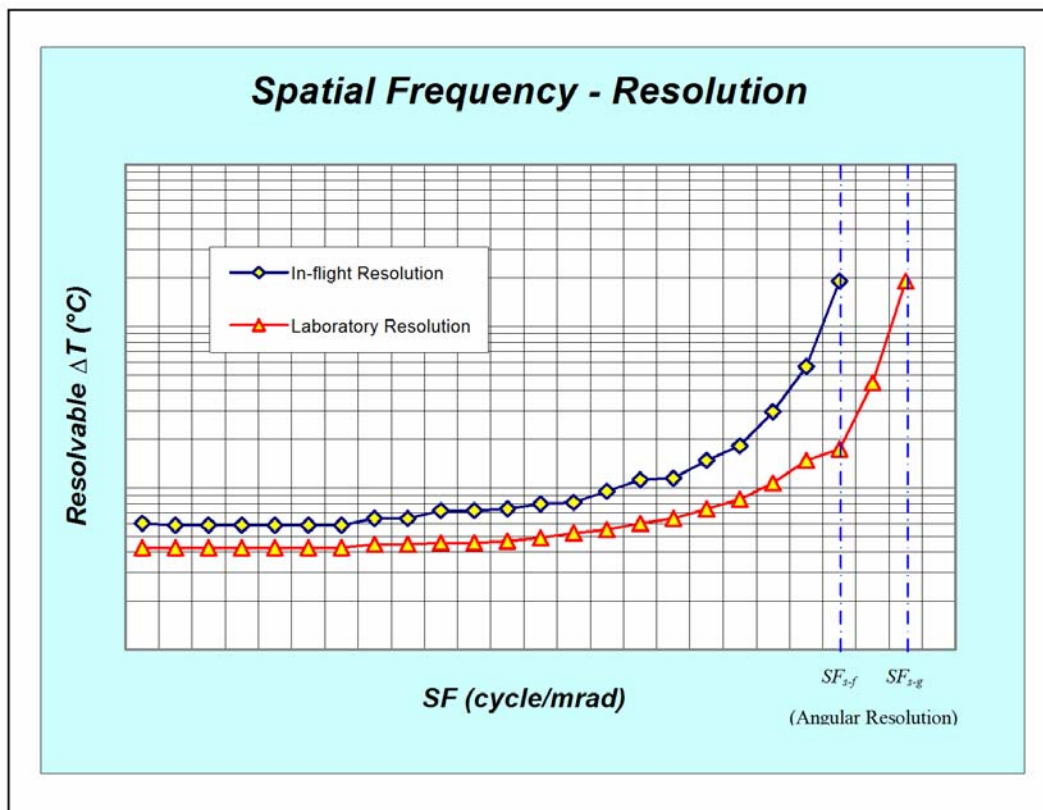


Figure 9-11: Spatial Frequency – In-Flight and Ground Resolution.

9.3.2 Range Performance Predictions

FLIR systems range performance predictions require a mathematical model that describes the eye/brain image interpretation process. Unlike the response of an electronic circuit, the response of a human observer cannot be directly measured but only can be inferred by many visual psychological experiments. The lowest level of discrimination is a distinction between something and nothing. The final level is the precise identification and description of a particular object. Between these two extremes lay a continuum of discrimination levels.

In the late fifties, Johnson studied image intensifiers discrimination performance at the US Army Engineering and Research Laboratories. He arbitrarily divided visual discrimination into four categories: detection, orientation, recognition, and identification [1]. Johnson's results allowed to correlate detectability with the sensor threshold bar pattern resolution (Table 9-3). He applied the number of cycles across the target minimum dimension, without regard to the orientation of the minimum dimension (his rasterless image intensifier imagery was radially symmetrical and therefore it was reasonable for him to ignore the bar orientation). Johnson's approach, known as the equivalent bar pattern approach, became the foundation for the discrimination methodology used today.

Table 9-3: Johnson's Experimental Results

<i>Discrimination level</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Cycles across minimum dimension</i>
<i>Detection</i>	An object is present (object versus noise)	1.0 ± 0.025
<i>Orientation</i>	The object is approximately symmetrical or unsymmetrical and its orientation may be discerned (side view versus front view)	1.4 ± 0.35
<i>Recognition</i>	The class to which the object belongs (e.g., tank, truck, man)	4.0 ± 0.80
<i>Identification</i>	The object is discerned with sufficient clarity to specify the type (e.g., T-52 tank, friendly jeep)	6.4 ± 1.50

Successive studies and tests performed at the US Army Night Vision Laboratories and by industry suggested modifications to the values originally found by Johnson. Figure 9-4 provides the current industry standard for one-dimensional target discrimination. Orientation is a less popular discrimination level. Because current standards are based upon Johnson's work, they are labelled as the Johnson criterion though they are not the precise values found by him.

Table 9-4: Current Industry Criterion for 1-D Discrimination (50% Probability Level)

<i>Discrimination level</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Cycles across minimum dimension (N_{50})</i>
<i>Detection</i>	An object is present	1.0
<i>Recognition</i>	The class to which the object belongs	4.0
<i>Identification</i>	The object is discerned with sufficient clarity to specify the type	8.0

The Johnson criterion provides an approximate measure of the 50% probability of discrimination. Results of several tests provided the cumulative probability of discrimination or target transfer probability function

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(TTPF). The TTPF can be used for all discrimination tasks by simply multiplying the 50% probability of performing the task (N_{50} in Table 9-4) by the appropriate TTPF multiplier in Table 9-5 [2]. For instance, the probability of 95% recognition is $2N_{50} = 2(4) = 8$ cycles across the target minimum dimension. Similarly, the cycles required for detection, recognition and identification with a probability level of 80% are 1.5, 6 and 12 respectively.

Table 9-5: Discrimination Cumulative Probability [2]

<i>Probability of discrimination</i>	<i>Multiplier F_m</i>
1.00	3.0
0.95	2.0
0.80	1.5
0.50	1.0
0.30	0.75
0.10	0.50
0.02	0.25
0	0

An empirical fit to the data provides [3]:

$$P(N) = \left(\frac{N}{N_{50}} \right)^E \left/ 1 + \left(\frac{N}{N_{50}} \right)^E \right. \quad (9.12)$$

where:

$$E = 2.7 + 0.7 \cdot \left(\frac{N}{N_{50}} \right) \quad (9.13)$$

Visual psychophysical experiments suggest that the eye response follow a log-normal distribution. The probability density function appears to follow [4]:

$$p(N) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi} \cdot \log(\sigma)} \cdot e^{-\frac{1}{2} \left[\frac{\log(N) - \log(N_{50})}{\log(\sigma)} \right]^2} \quad (9.14)$$

and the cumulative probability is:

$$P(N) = \int_0^{\log N} p(N) d \log(N) \quad (9.15)$$

where $\log(\sigma) = 0.198$. Both the empirical fit of eq. (9.12) and the log-normal approach (based upon a physically plausible foundation) of eq. (9.15) provide similar numerical results.

As clutter increases, the ability to discern a target decreases. To account for this reduced capability, N_{50} must increase. Most studies have broadly categorised clutter into high, moderate and low regions [5], and defined the signal-to-clutter ratio (SCR) as:

$$SCR = \frac{\max \text{ target value} - \text{background mean}}{\sigma_{clutter}} \quad (9.16)$$

where:

$$\sigma_{clutter} = \sqrt{\frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \sigma_i^2} \quad (9.17)$$

and σ_i is the rms value of the pixel values in a square cell that has side dimensions of approximately twice the target minimum dimension. The scene is composed of N adjoining cells. The use of adjoining cells introduces a spatial weighting factor that is similar to the spatial integration performed by the eye/brain process. Clutter sizes that are equal to the object size weigh more heavily in this calculation.

The results are presented in Table 9-6 [5]. Field experiments [6] demonstrated that the Johnson detection criterion applies to a “general medium to low clutter” environment. Therefore, the 50% probability of detection in Table 9-6 where normalised in moderate clutter to one cycle. These experimental findings roughly follow the empirical TTPF of eq. (9.12). It is convenient to use 0.5, 1.0 and 2.5 as a multiplier (F_d) to N_{50} for low, moderate, and high clutter environments respectively.

Table 9-6: TTPF when Clutter is Present [5]

Probability of detection	Multiplier F_d		
	Low Clutter SCR>10	Moder. Clutter 1<SCR<10	High Clutter SCR<1
1.0	1.7	2.8	**
0.95	1.0	1.9	**
0.90	0.90	1.7	7.0*
0.80	0.75	1.3	5.0
0.50	0.50	1.0	2.5
0.30	0.30	0.75	2.0
0.10	0.15	0.35	1.4
0.02	0.05	0.1	1.0
0	0.0	0.0	0.0

** No data available
 * estimated

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In order to obtain the two-dimensional discrimination levels required in a 2-D performance prediction model, each value in the one-dimensional criteria (Table 9-7) is multiplied by 0.75 [7]. The results are presented in Table 9-7.

Table 9-7: Discrimination Levels for the 2-D Model (50% Probability Level)

<i>Discrimination level</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Cycles across minimum dimension (N_{50-2D})</i>
<i>Detection</i>	An object is present	0.75
<i>Recognition</i>	The class to which the object belongs	3.00
<i>Identification</i>	The object is discerned with sufficient clarity to specify the type	6.00

The Night Vision Laboratory Static Performance Model [6] uses the minimum dimension (1-D), whereas 2-D models (e.g., FLIR92) refer to the critical dimension of the object [7]:

$$h_c = \sqrt{W_{TGT} \times H_{TGT}} \quad (9.18)$$

where W_{TGT} and H_{TGT} are the horizontal and vertical object dimensions. In this case, the number of cycles used for range performance calculations is that associated to the object critical dimension h_c . Therefore, our 2-D FLIR range performance prediction model can be summarised by the following equations:

$$R = \frac{h_c}{(N_{50-2D} \times F_d)} \times SF \text{ for detection} \quad (9.19)$$

$$R = \frac{h_c}{(N_{50-2D} \times F_m)} \times SF \text{ for recognition and identification} \quad (9.20)$$

where:

- R = predicted slant-range;
- h_c = target critical dimension;
- SF = measured spatial frequency;
- N_{50-2D} = cycles required for detection, recognition and identification (Table 9-7); and
- F_m, F_d = multipliers for the various discrimination levels (Table 9-5 and Table 9-6).

9.4 LOAS FLIGHT TEST CAMPAIGNS

LOAS system flight trials were performed using two different test platforms: NH-300 and AB-212 helicopters. Figure 9-12 shows the LOAS prototype system used for the flight trials. Particularly, the LOAS sub-units are shown in Figure 9-12(a), while the Sensor Head Unit (SHU) and pilot interface units are shown in Figure 9-12(b).

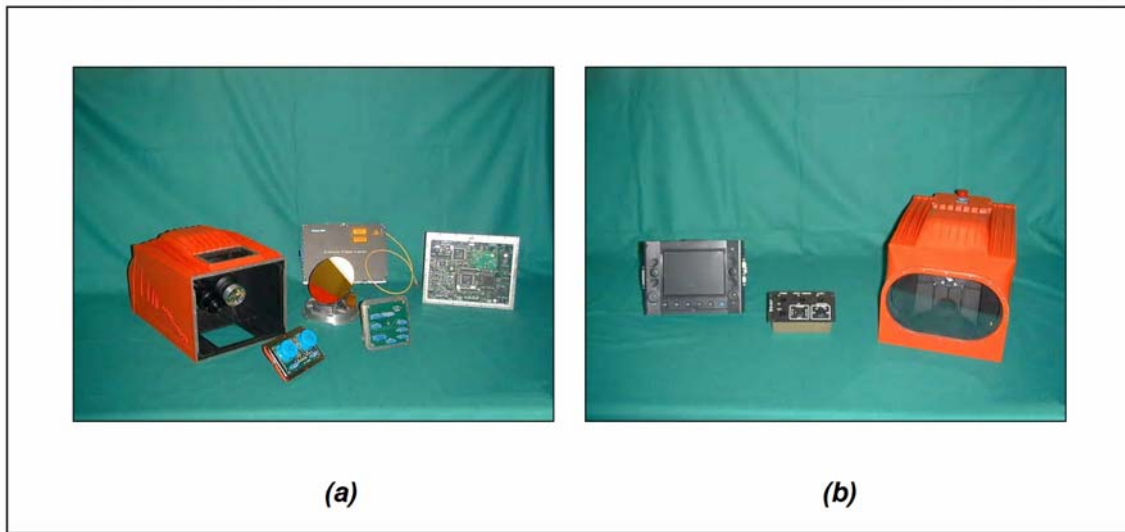


Figure 9-12: LOAS Prototype Used in the Trials.

Figure 9-13 shows the LOAS installed on the first test helicopter (NH-300).

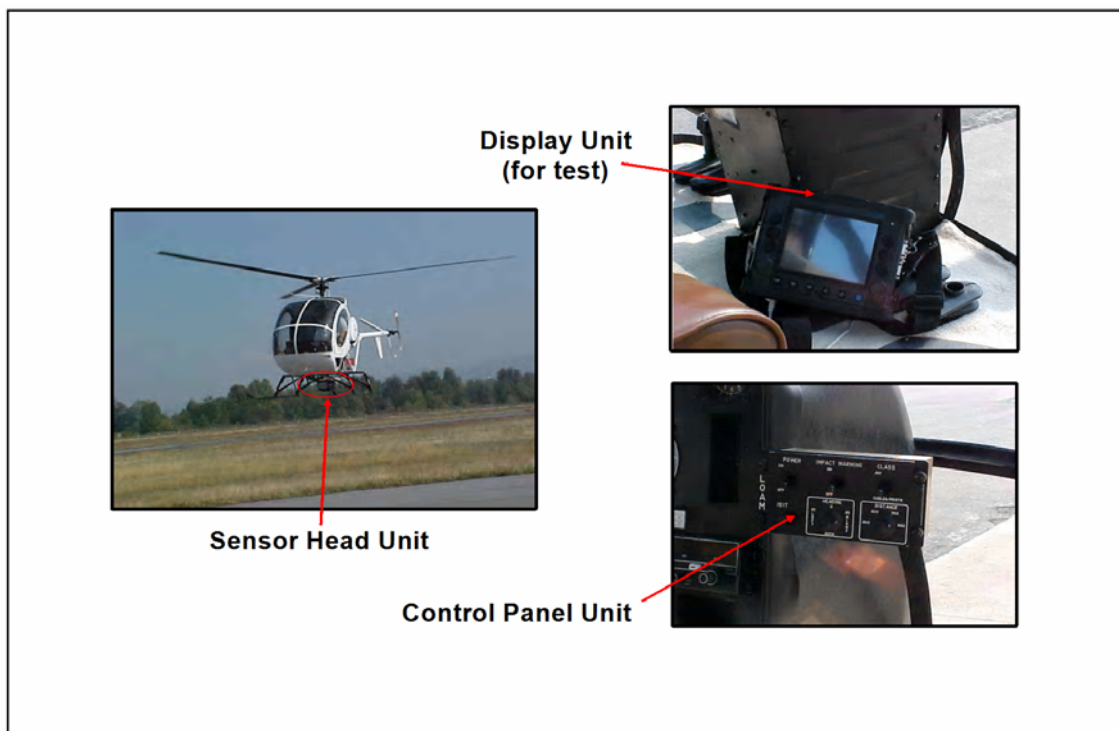


Figure 9-13: LOAS Prototype Units Installed on the NH-300 Helicopter.

Figure 9-14 shows the LOAS SHU mounted on the second test helicopter (AB-212).

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Figure 9-14: LOAS SHU Installed on the AB-212 Helicopter.

The Cockpit Display Unit (CDU) used for the AB-212 flight trials is shown in Figure 9-15(a). As shown in Figure 9-15(b), the LOAS CDU was installed in the center of the AB-212 glareshield, in order to be accessible to both pilot and co-pilot.



(a)



(b)

Figure 9-15: LOAS Display Unit Installed on the AB-212 Helicopter.

For the AB-212 test campaign, the LOAS Control Unit (LCU) was installed at the centre of the helicopter middle-console (in a position accessible to both pilot and co-pilot), as shown in Figure 9-16.

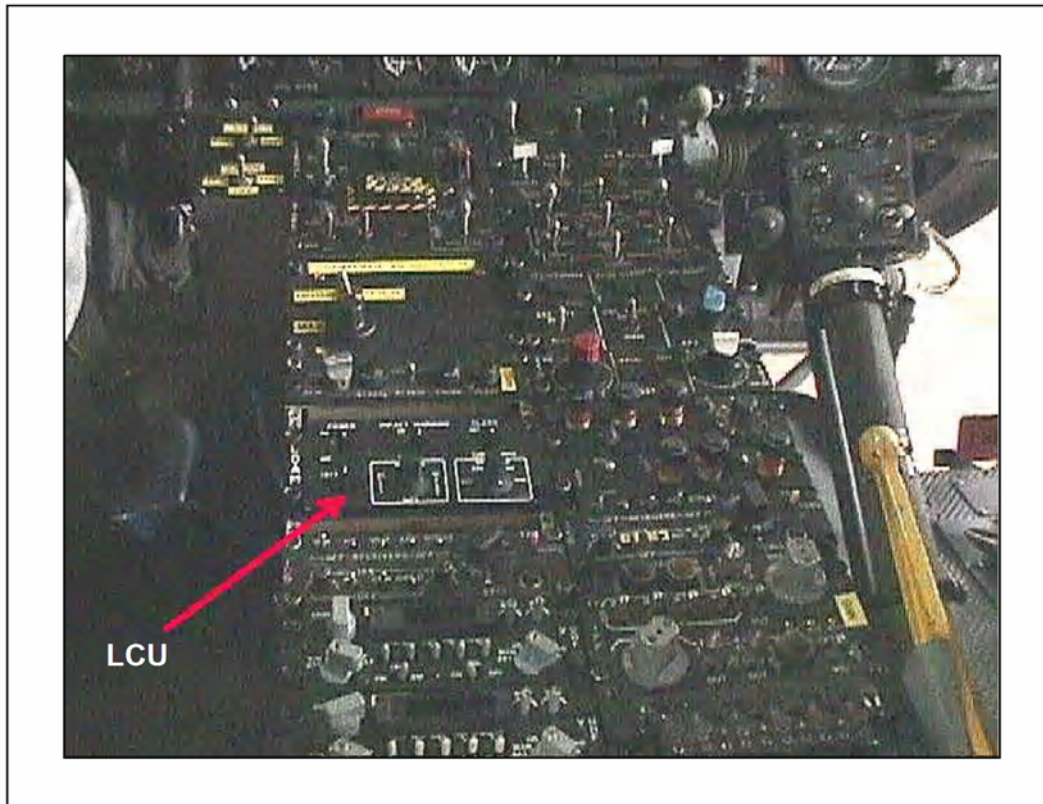


Figure 9-16: LOAS Control Unit Installed on AB-212.

For the trials, various types of well characterised cables (with different sections and physical characteristics) were used, in conjunction with suitable sustaining poles. Furthermore, five different 'slices' of terrain were identified in the test range, useful for performing a dedicated assessment of the LOAS surface rendering capability. In order to obtain accurate geodetic co-ordinates of the terrain datum points, DGPS static surveys were performed at the range. Consequently, a 3-D reference grid was produced for comparison with the LOAS 3-D terrain profile data.

During the test flights, a flight test engineer operated a computer, linked to the LOAS system and displaying in real-time the 3-dimensional (3-D) images reconstructed using the LOAS data (Figure 9-17). All images were recorded for the successive data analysis.

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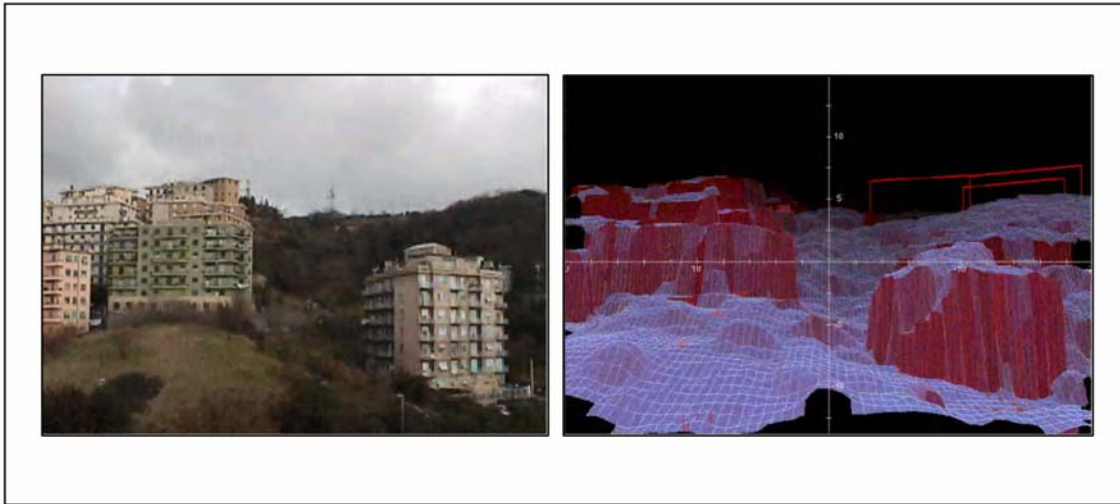


Figure 9-17: LOAS 3-D Display Format (Flight Test Engineer).

The results of the tests were encouraging. Particularly, the LOAS range performances were in accordance with the predictions obtained with mathematical models. Furthermore, the basic LOAS detection/classification data processing algorithms were validated, although a fine tuning of some processing parameters was required. Furthermore, it was verified that the LOAS “History Function” and Impact Warning Function (IWF) were implemented.

Future tests will be performed in order to further assess the LOAS system performance (sensor and processing algorithms) in day/night with various weather/environmental conditions and to optimise the system human machine interfaces. Particularly, a dedicated flight test activity will be carried out in order to assess the LOAS system performance for future installation on the Italian NH-90 TTH/NFH helicopters. This activity will be carried out using an AB-412 test-bed helicopter. The trials will be addressed to LOAS performance verification in various (reference) obstacle scenarios and with various weather conditions, and to verify the validity of the Human Machine Interface (HMI) being developed for the NH-90 helicopter. A scheme relative to the current status of the LOAS customisation for Italian NH-90 helicopters (TTH and NFH versions) is shown in Figure 9-18.

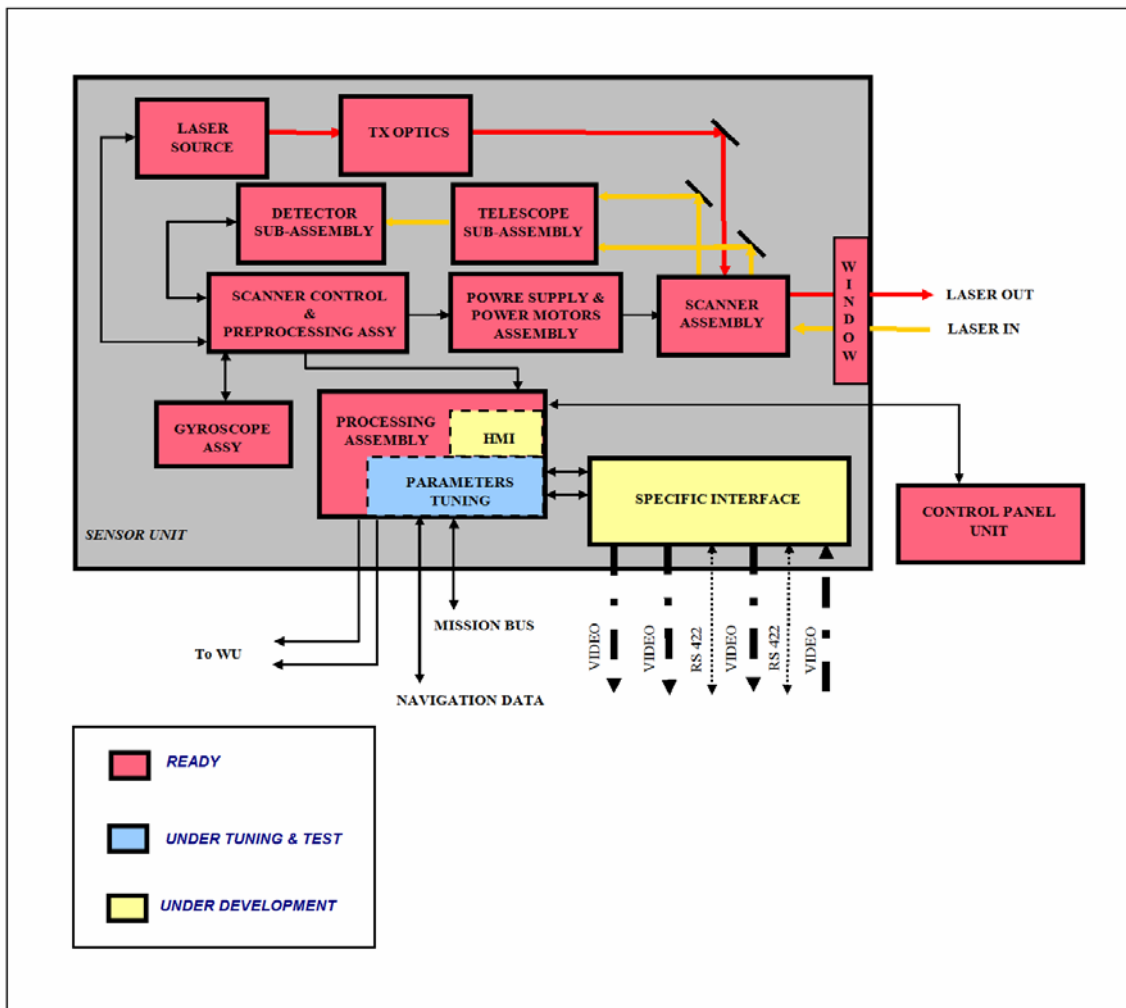


Figure 9-18: LOAS Development Status for the Italian NH-90 Helicopter.

9.5 REFERENCES

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Chapter 10 – MISSION ANALYSIS AND SIMULATION

10.1 GENERAL

This chapter is dedicated to the simulation tools developed during the PILASTER program, especially in the areas of eye-safety and system performance analysis. The theoretical and empirical models described in the previous chapters were used in the software programs, allowing a complete definition of test/training laser mission constraints and operational feasibility, together with post-mission data analysis. The assumptions adopted for implementation of the various mathematical algorithms in the PC simulation/analysis programs are presented in this chapter, together with results of some relevant simulation runs performed.

10.2 EYE-SAFETY VERIFICATION PROGRAMS

A discussion about the key-parameters considered for laser safety analysis was presented in Chapter 6, together with description of the relevant geometric elements of typical ALS/GLS operational tasks, and an underline of the safety verification algorithms developed for the various cases. In this paragraph, we detail the various assumptions adopted for implementing two MATLABTM Eye-safety Verification Programs (EVP) for both ALS (A-EVP) and GLS (G-EVP) systems. Furthermore, the results of simulations are presented, relative to the ELOP PLD ground LTD and to a typical airborne LTD system (the Thompson CLDP technical characteristics are not presented due to military classification), for operation at the PILASTER test range.

10.2.1 A-EVP and G-EVP Simulation Assumptions

The following assumptions were adopted for implementation of the A-EVP and G-EVP programs:

- **The reflecting surface (BZ) is perfectly planar:** This assumption is conservative in the case of convex surfaces laying within the BZ (these would in fact determine an increase of divergence with consequent reduction of the energy density at the observer location); while, in the case of concave surfaces, it is extremely improbable that their presence in the BZ can determine focusing (reduction of divergence) of the laser beam.
- **The laser beam reflection is totally specular:** This assumption is conservative from a safety point of view, because the energy density of a specularly reflected laser beam is always greater than in the real case. This is because reflection from any practical surface is always characterised by the co-hesitance of two components: a diffuse component and a specular component, each more or less important depending on the physical characteristics of the reflecting surface.
- **For the A-SVP the entire A-BZ is considered as a specular reflector:** This is a conservative assumption for eye-safety calculations. Moreover, considering the entire BZ as the actual reflector, the presence of any reflecting material inside the BZ is not relevant for safety (i.e., objects removal is not required within the BZ, but only evacuation of the ground personnel).
- **For the G-SVP the target surface is considered as a diffuse reflector:** This is a condition that was imposed when designing the PILASTER targets.
- **Atmospheric attenuation of the laser beam is not considered:** This assumption implies that the entire energy emitted by the LTD reaches the observer location. This is obviously a conservative assumption, since atmospheric absorption and scattering effects are neglected.
- **The NOHD is calculated for direct vision of a Gaussian laser beam:** The assumption of direct vision is conservative, since the observer is assumed to look directly at the laser source, instead of

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a reflected beam; while a Gaussian distribution of the laser beam is applicable in practice for most ALS systems (e.g., Thompson CLDP).

- **Allowance is made for atmospheric scintillation effects:** This assumption is conservative as it implies, in the absence of C_n measurements, that $OHD_s = 2.662 \cdot NOHD$.
- **For the A-SVP a significant instability of the system LOS is considered:** Both in the TRACK and in the SLAVE modes of operation of the A-LTD, the point of intersection of the LOS with the ground is not fixed. Based on data relative to various real A-LTD systems, the maximum instability was assumed to be 20 m in SLAVE mode and 4 m in TRACK mode.

Moreover, it is considered that **no magnifying instruments are used** in the test range (i.e., the NOHD can be used instead of the EOHD). This is not properly an assumption, since a prohibition can be imposed by the range authorities (as long as cinetheodolites are not required; in which event proper filtering measures are essential).

10.2.2 A-EVP Airborne LTD Simulation

The probabilities of hazardous events during real missions, for a typical airborne laser target designator (A-LTD) are presented in Table 10-1 (see also Table 6-1 and Table 6-2 in Chapter 6). For completeness of information, a description of the missions listed in the table, is give below:

- **Ferry Flight**, is a transfer mission in which the WSO does not use any of the LTD operating modes and the WSO control panel is in the SAFE position;
- **DRY Attack**, is a simulated attack mission (without activation of the laser FIRE mode), carried out with the WSO control panel in the SAFE position; and
- **HOT Attack**, is a real attack mission (with or without actual bomb dropping), in which all operational modes of the LTD are used.

Table 10-1: The Probabilities of Hazardous Events during Real Missions

MISSION	Operative Conditions	LTD Modes	Hazard Probability
Ferry Flight	N.A.	LTD ON/ Laser FIRE	$P_{SAFE \rightarrow FIRE} = 7E-6$
DRY Attack (in the range)	Controlled range target, visually acquired	LTD ON/ TRACK-SLAVE/ Laser SAFE	$P_{ROT} \cdot P_{SAFE \rightarrow FIRE} = 1.4E-9$
HOT Attack (in the range)	Controlled range target, visually acquired	LTD ON/ TRACK-SLAVE/ Laser FIRE	$P_{ROT} = 2E-6$
DRY Attack (outside range)	Target visually acquired	LTD ON/ Laser SAFE	$P_{SAFE \rightarrow FIRE} = 7E-4$
HOT Attack (outside range)	NOT POSSIBLE IN ANY CONDITION		

As indicated in Table 10-1, during HOT/DRY attacks carried out in the test range, it is essential that the target (either hard or soft) is visually acquired by the WSO and it is desirable that the clearance for firing the laser is obtained by a Laser Safety Officer, monitoring at a ground control station (connected with the aircraft through an encrypted video telemetry system) the correct pointing of the system LOS.

Using the data in Table 10-2, relative to the main technical characteristics of a generic airborne laser target designator (A-LTD) system (technical data relative to the CLDP are not presented due to military classification), together with data already presented in Table 6-1, Table 6-2 and Table 10-1 (relative to the same generic A-LTD), we give an example of a practical application of the EVP simulation program described in the previous paragraphs.

Table 10-2: A-LTD Design Characteristics

Wavelength	1064 nm
Beam Diameter	60 mm
Beam Divergence	0.2 mrad
Output Energy	100 mJ
Pulse Duration	10^{-9} sec
Pulse Repetition Rate	13 Hz
Max LOS Misalignment	SLAVE mode: 40 m TRACK mode: 4 m

The MPE_p (i.e., MPE for a single pulse) is 0.05 J/m^2 . Therefore, with the previously stated assumptions, the NOHD equates to 7679 m (i.e., about 25200 ft), and the OHD_s to 20426 m. This means that, in the absence of scintillation effects (i.e., low turbulence), the HA does not exist as long as the aircraft is flying at an altitude higher than 25200 ft (in case of turbulence, the required aircraft altitude exceeds the maximum altitude of any existing military aircraft!).

In order to carry out missions at lower altitudes, the hazard probabilities given in Table 10-1, have to be accepted. For instance, if the maximum acceptable risk level is associated with a probability of hazardous event of $1E-5$, all missions can be carried out, with exception for DRY/HOT attacks outside the test range. If, however, the probability level is set to $1E-8$, none of the missions is possible, with the exception of DRY attacks inside the test range.

Simulation results relative to the aircraft flight limitations during laser firing (i.e., minimum and maximum distance of the aircraft from the target) applicable to the PILASTER range with a maximum evacuation area of 4.3 km radius around the target location (A-EBZ), are shown in Figure 10-1 and Figure 10-2. The tolerance of the aircraft height is ± 100 ft. The ground-speed lower limit is 250 kts. No restrictions to the aircraft trajectory are applied in the horizontal plane.

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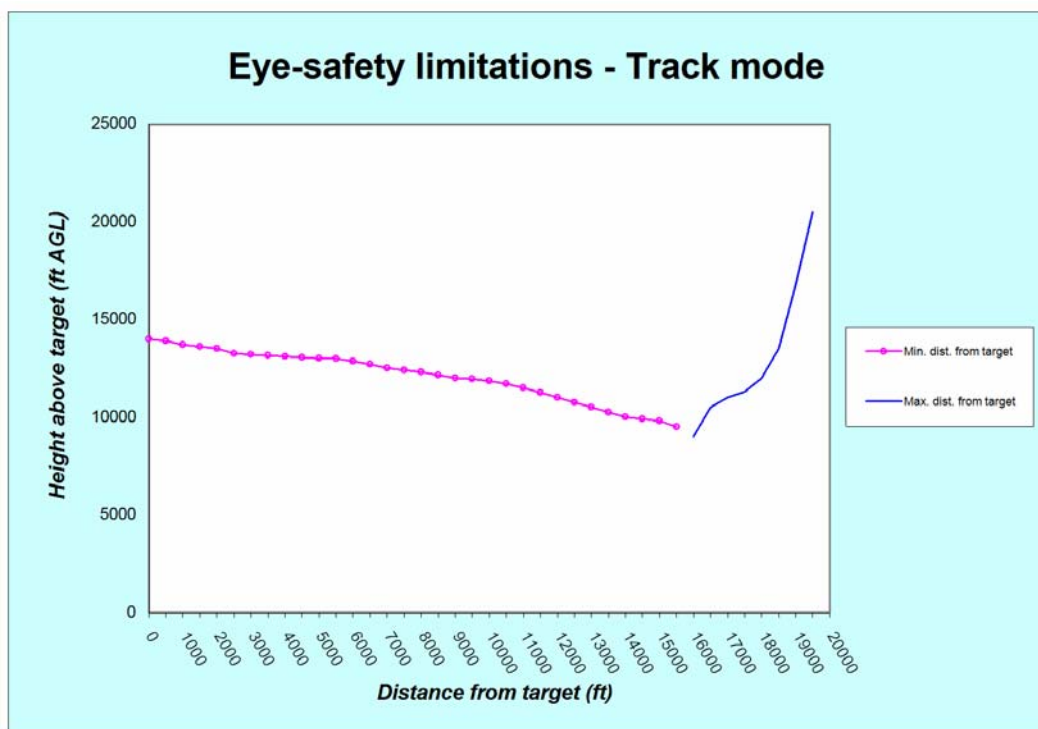


Figure 10-1: A-LTD TRACK Mode Simulation Results.

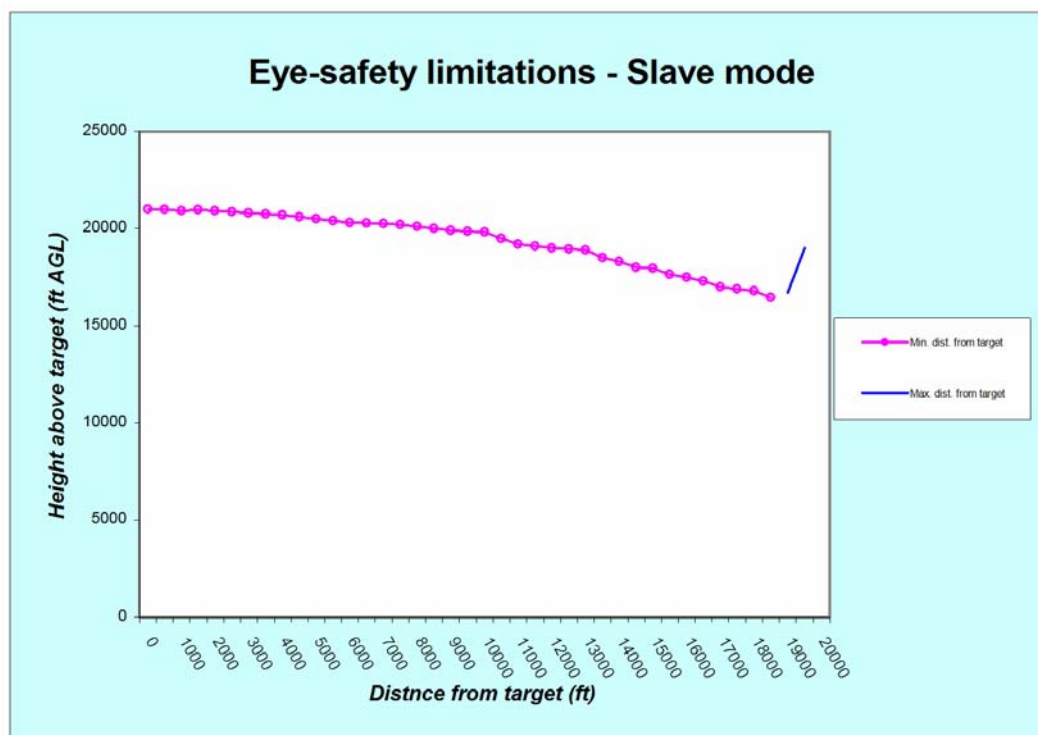


Figure 10-2: A-LTD SLAVE Mode Simulation Results.

10.2.3 G-EVP ELOP-PLD Simulation Results

The ELOP-PLD Ground LTD (G-LTD) system technical characteristics relevant to eye-safety are listed in Table 10-3.

Table 10-3: ELOP-PLD Technical Characteristics

Parameter	Value
<i>Wavelength</i>	<i>1064 nm</i>
<i>Output Energy</i>	<i>130 mJ</i>
<i>Beam Divergence</i>	<i>130 μrad (80% of the output energy)</i>
<i>Pulse Duration</i>	<i>19 nsec</i>
<i>Beam Output Diameter</i>	<i>90 mm</i>
<i>Maximum laser/LOS Misalignment</i>	<i>80 μrad</i>
<i>Laser PRF</i>	<i>10 or 20 Hz</i>

Since the divergence was specified at 80% of total output energy, the $1/e$ divergence required for safety calculations was obtained using the following equation:

$$\Phi_{1/e} = \Phi_{\eta} \sqrt{\frac{\ln(1-0.632)}{\ln(1-\eta)}} \quad (10.1)$$

where Φ_{η} is the given divergence ($\Phi_{\eta} = 0.13$ mrad) and η is the relative percentage of total energy (i.e., $\eta = 0.8$). For the ELOP-PLD, we obtained $\Phi_{1/e} = 0.102$ mrad. The NOHD and OHDS calculated for PRF = 10 Hz (used for LGB) and for various times of exposure (T_E), are shown in Figure 10-3.

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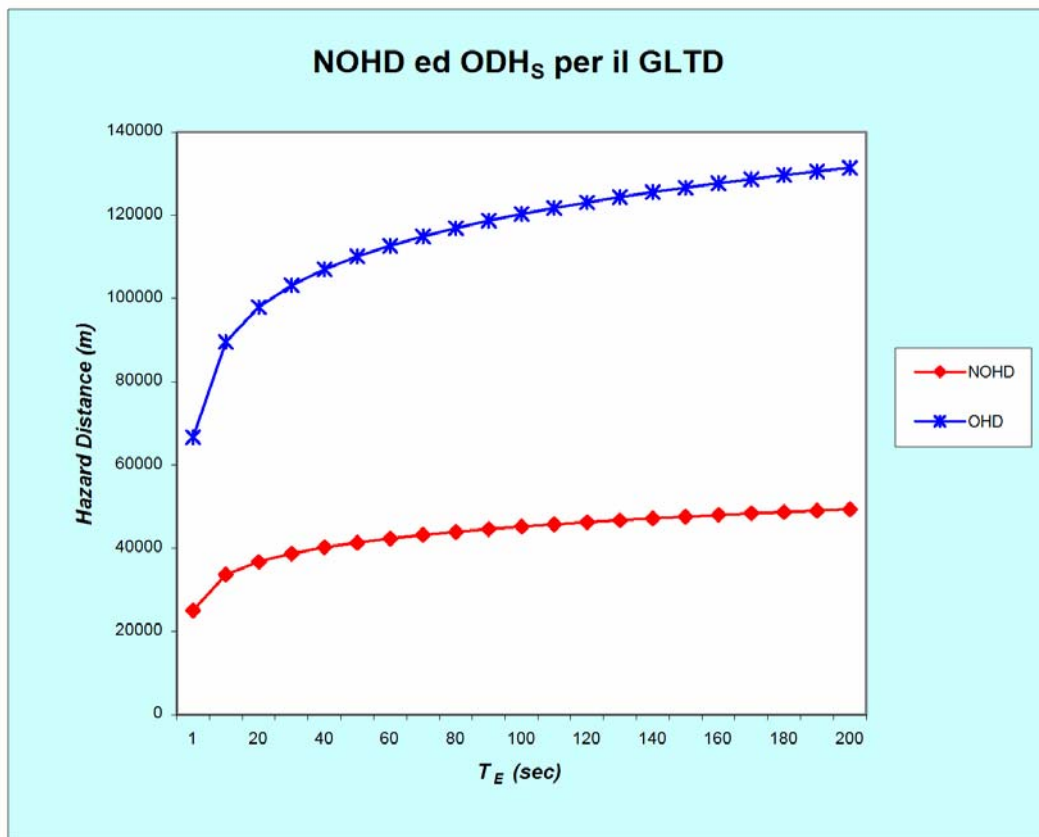


Figure 10-3: ELOP-PLD Ocular Hazard Distances.

Taking into account the experimental results obtained during the ground experimental activities performed with the ELOP-PLD, together with temporary scintillation phenomena in the presence of high turbulence (i.e., $C_n \geq 2.43 \cdot 10^{-7}$), remarkable and very frequent spreading effects were observed, especially for long LTD-to-target slant-ranges. In order to account for this in the ELOP-PLD eye safety calculations, the BZE described in Chapter 6 (and not the NOHD) was calculated considering the maximum measured laser spot divergence (calculated from spot diameter measurements) geometric divergence of the ELOP-PLD systems ($\Phi_{eff} = 0.25$ mrad) instead of the $1/e$ divergence ($\Phi_{1/e} = 0.102$ mrad).

Figure 10-4 shows the curves relative to the maximum LTD-target slant-ranges admitted (with various horizontal incidence angles), calculated in accordance with the G-LTD safety verification Procedure N° 1 described in Chapter 6, considering various target surface dimensions. Particularly, the PILASTER permanent and modular targets dimensions have been considered (i.e., 10×10 m and 9.76×7.925 m respectively), together with the PILASTER modular target square sections (i.e., dimensions of 7.32×7.32 m, 4.88×4.88 m and 2.44×2.44 m).

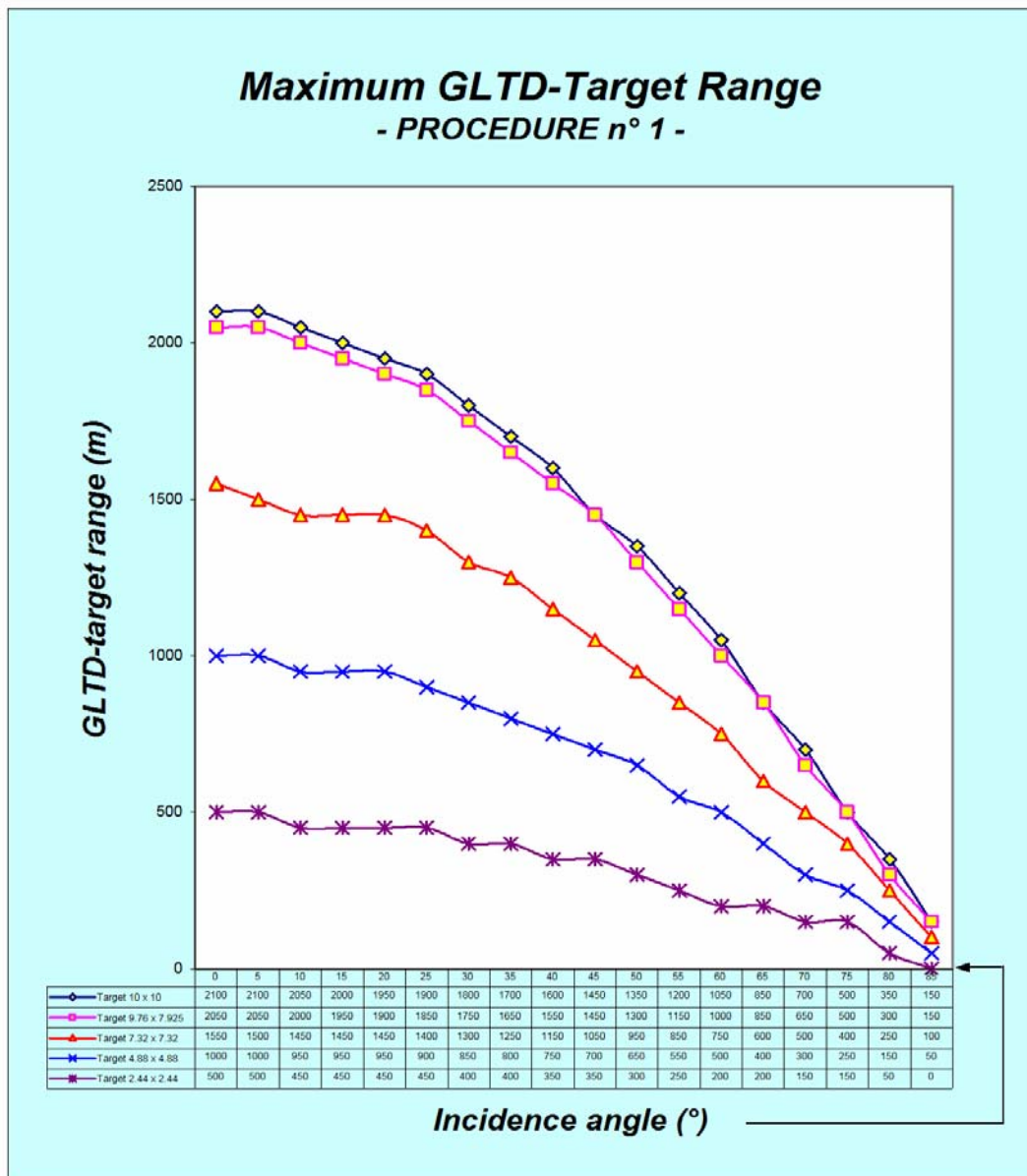


Figure 10-4: Maximum ELOP-PLD Range vs. Incidence Angle (Procedure N° 1).

Figure 10-5 shows the curves relative to the maximum LTD-target slant-ranges admitted (vs. incidence angle), calculated in accordance with the G-LTD safety verification Procedure N° 4 described in Chapter 6 (i.e., PILASTER NIR-camera real-time monitoring), considering the various PILASTER targets dimensions.

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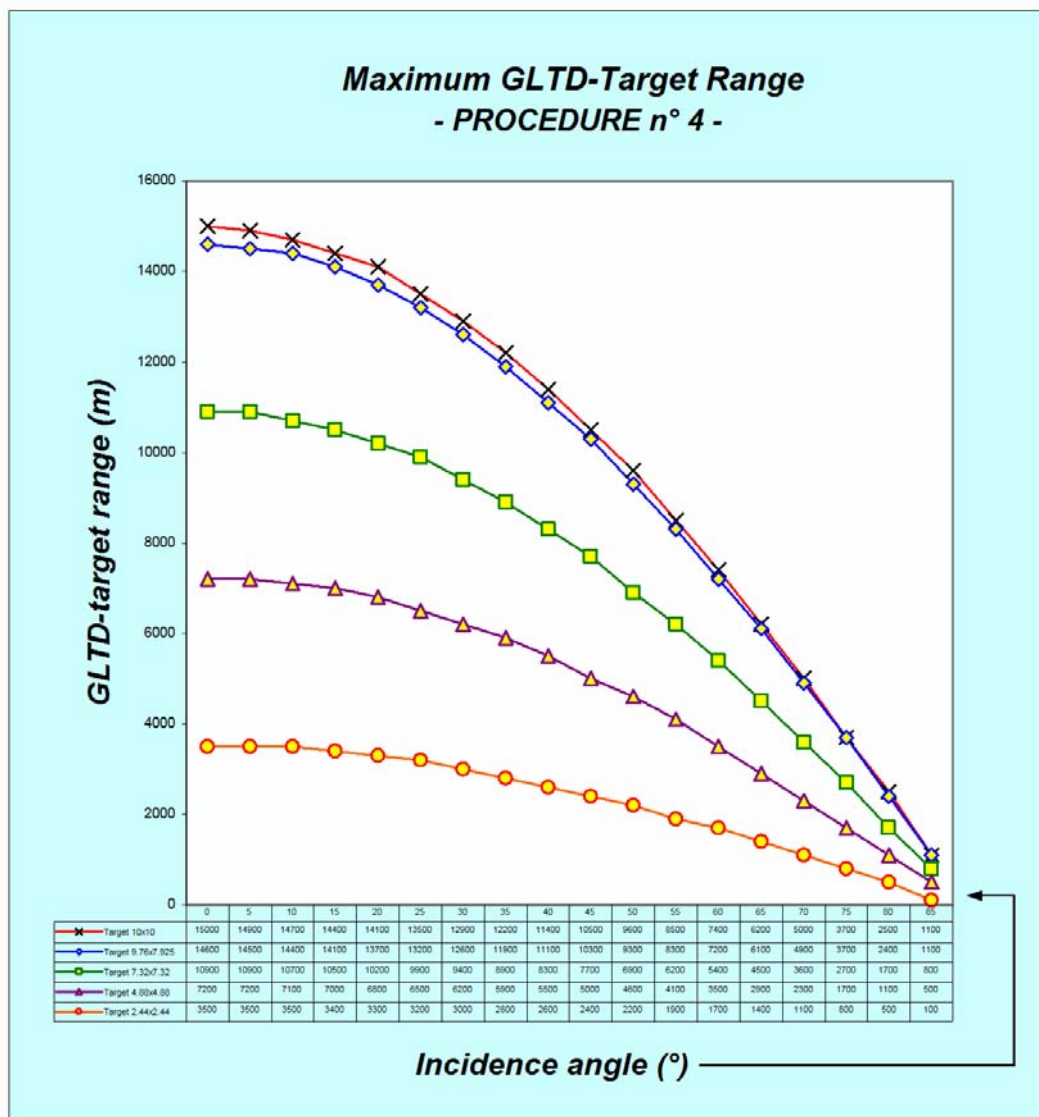
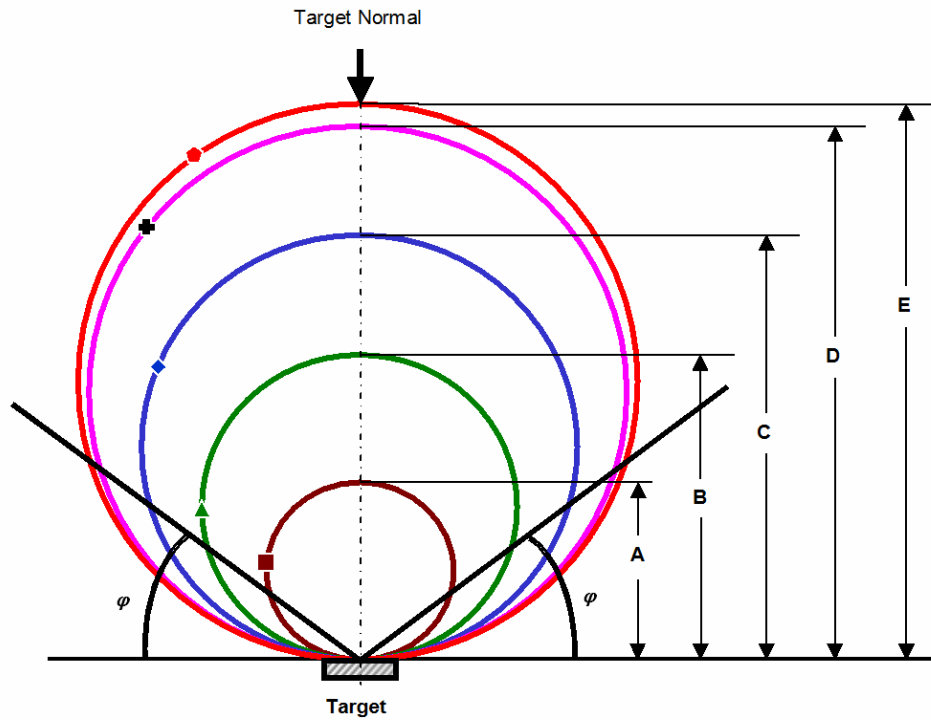


Figure 10-5: Maximum ELOP-PLD Range vs. Incidence Angle (Procedure N° 4).

Together with slant-range restrictions, G-LTD safety Procedures N° 1 and N° 4 (described in Chapter 6) also include azimuth restrictions when the G-LTD is positioned at an elevated location with respect to the target. Taking into account both slant-range and azimuth restrictions (knowing the maximum altitude difference h_{max} between the target and the G-LTD locations), the G-EVP program computed the PILASTER areas where laser firing with the ELOP-PLD was permitted. These areas, identified as Safe Positioning Areas (SPA), calculated with the G-EVP program for both Procedure N° 1 and N° 4, are summarised in Figure 10-6 and in the Table 10-4 and Table 10-5.

ELOP-PLD SAFE POSITIONING AREAS



Symbols:

- ◆— Target 10 × 10 m
- +— Target 9.76 × 7.92 m
- ◆— Target 7.32 × 7.32 m
- ▲— Target 4.88 × 4.88 m
- Target 2.44 × 2.44 m

THE ELOP-PLD SPA IS GIVEN BY THE CIRCLES (IN THE PILASTER RANGE), WITH THE RESTRICTIONS IN SYSTEM-TARGET RELATIVE ALTITUDE GIVEN BY h_{MAX} AND IN AZIMUTH GIVEN BY THE ANGLE φ

Procedure n° 1		Procedure n° 4	
A	500 m	A	3500 m
B	1000 m	B	7200 m
C	1550 m	C	10900 m
D	2050 m	D	14600 m
E	2100 m	E	15000 m

Figure 10-6: G-EVP Output – Safe Positioning Areas.

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Table 10-4: G-EVP Output – Azimuth Limitations for Procedure N° 4

d (m)	h_{MAX} (m)	<i>Procedure n° 4 - φ (°)</i>				
		$r_{MIN}=10$ m	$r_{MIN}=7.925$ m	$r_{MIN}=7.32$ m	$r_{MIN}=4.88$ m	$r_{MIN}=2.44$ m
100	50	2	3	3	3	5
200	150	4	4	4	5	10
300	250	4	6	6	8	13
400	250	7	4	4	7	12
500	250	7	5	5	6	12
600	250	8	5	5	7	14
700	250	11	5	6	8	16
800	250	9	6	6	9	16
900	250	7	6	7	10	18
1000	250	8	7	7	10	19
1500	250	8	9	10	14	28
2000	250	10	12	13	18	37
2500	250	12	14	15	22	47
3000	250	13	17	18	27	60
3500	250	15	19	21	31	81
4000	250	17	22	23	36	n.a.
4500	250	19	24	26	40	n.a.
5000	250	21	27	29	45	n.a.
5500	250	23	29	32	51	n.a.
6000	250	25	32	35	58	n.a.
7000	250	30	38	42	76	n.a.
8000	250	34	44	49	n.a.	n.a.
9000	250	39	51	57	n.a.	n.a.
10000	250	43	59	68	n.a.	n.a.

n.a. = not available

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Table 10-5: G-EVP Output – Azimuth Limitations for Procedure N° 1

<i>d (m)</i>	<i>h_{MAX} (m)</i>	<i>Procedure n° 1 - φ (°)</i>				
		<i>r_{MIN}=10 m</i>	<i>r_{MIN}=7.925 m</i>	<i>r_{MIN}=7.32 m</i>	<i>r_{MIN}=4.88 m</i>	<i>r_{MIN}=2.44 m</i>
100	50	5	5	6	9	16
200	150	10	11	13	19	38
300	250	13	15	17	24	51
400	250	15	19	20	31	79
500	250	17	20	23	33	n.a.
600	250	18	23	25	38	n.a.
700	250	21	26	28	45	n.a.
800	250	23	29	32	52	n.a.
900	250	26	33	36	60	n.a.
1000	250	28	37	40	71	n.a.
1500	250	43	59	68	n.a.	n.a.
2000	250	63	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

n.a. = not available

Some examples of ELOP-PLD safe positioning areas relative to the Procedures N° 1 and N° 4, plotted on the PILASTER ground range map area are shown in the Figure 10-7 through Figure 10-10.

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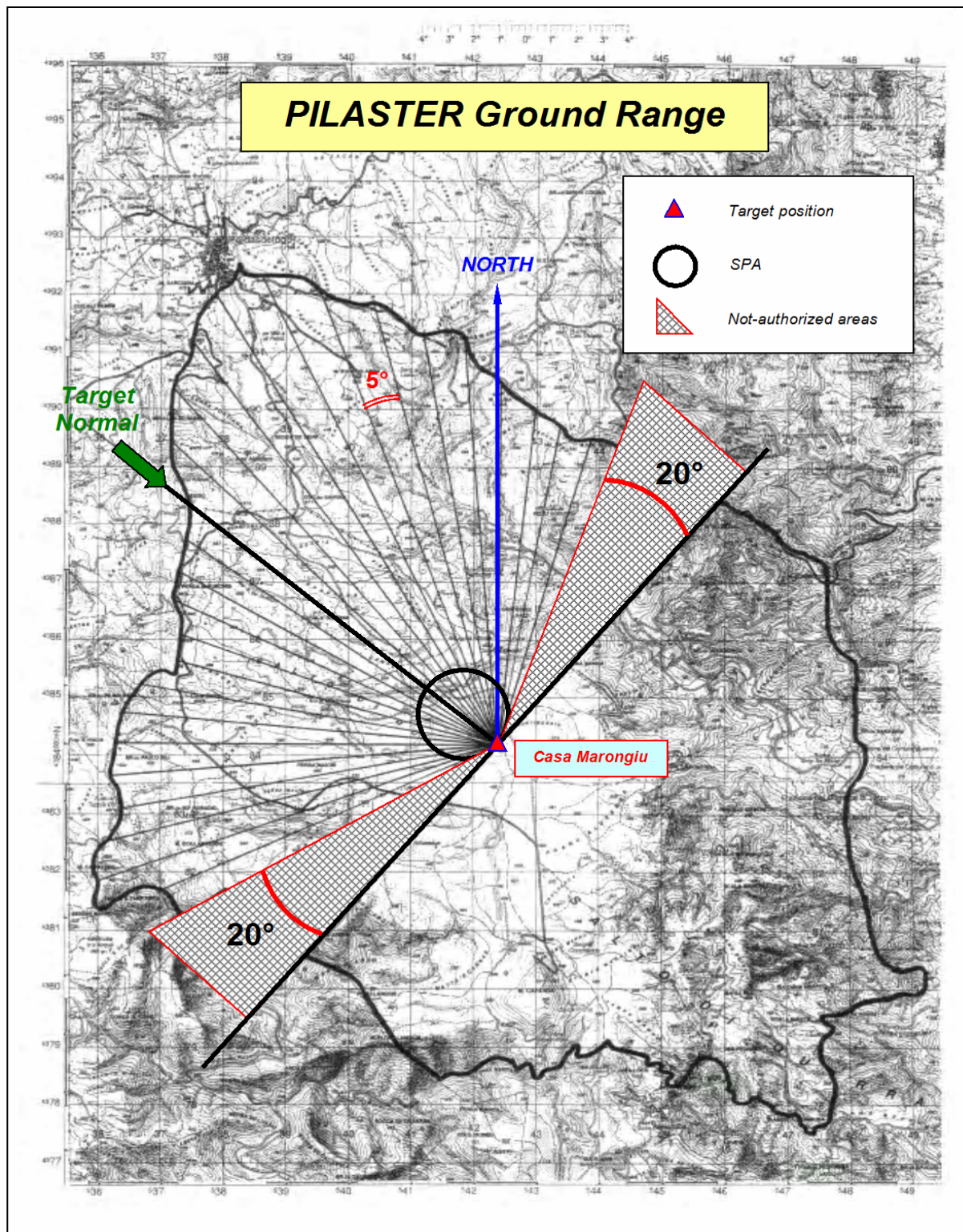


Figure 10-7: Procedure N° 1 – PILASTER SPA for $r_{\min} = 7.32$ m, Maximum PLD-Target SR = 400 m and Maximum Relative Altitude Difference $h_{\max} = 250$ m.

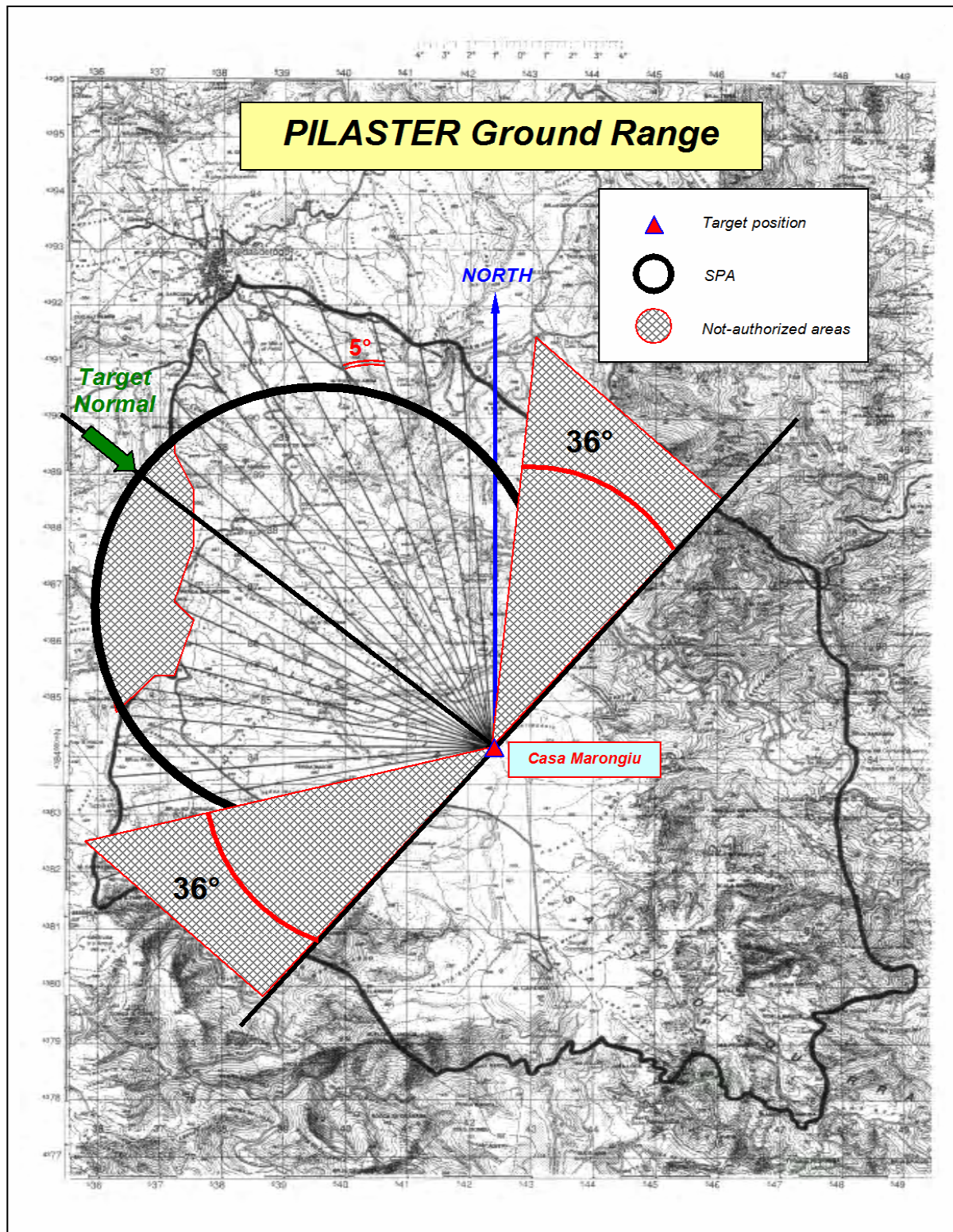


Figure 10-8: Procedure N° 4 – PILASTER SPA for $r_{\min} = 4.88$ m, Maximum PLD-Target SR = 4 km and Maximum Relative Altitude Difference $h_{\max} = 250$ m.

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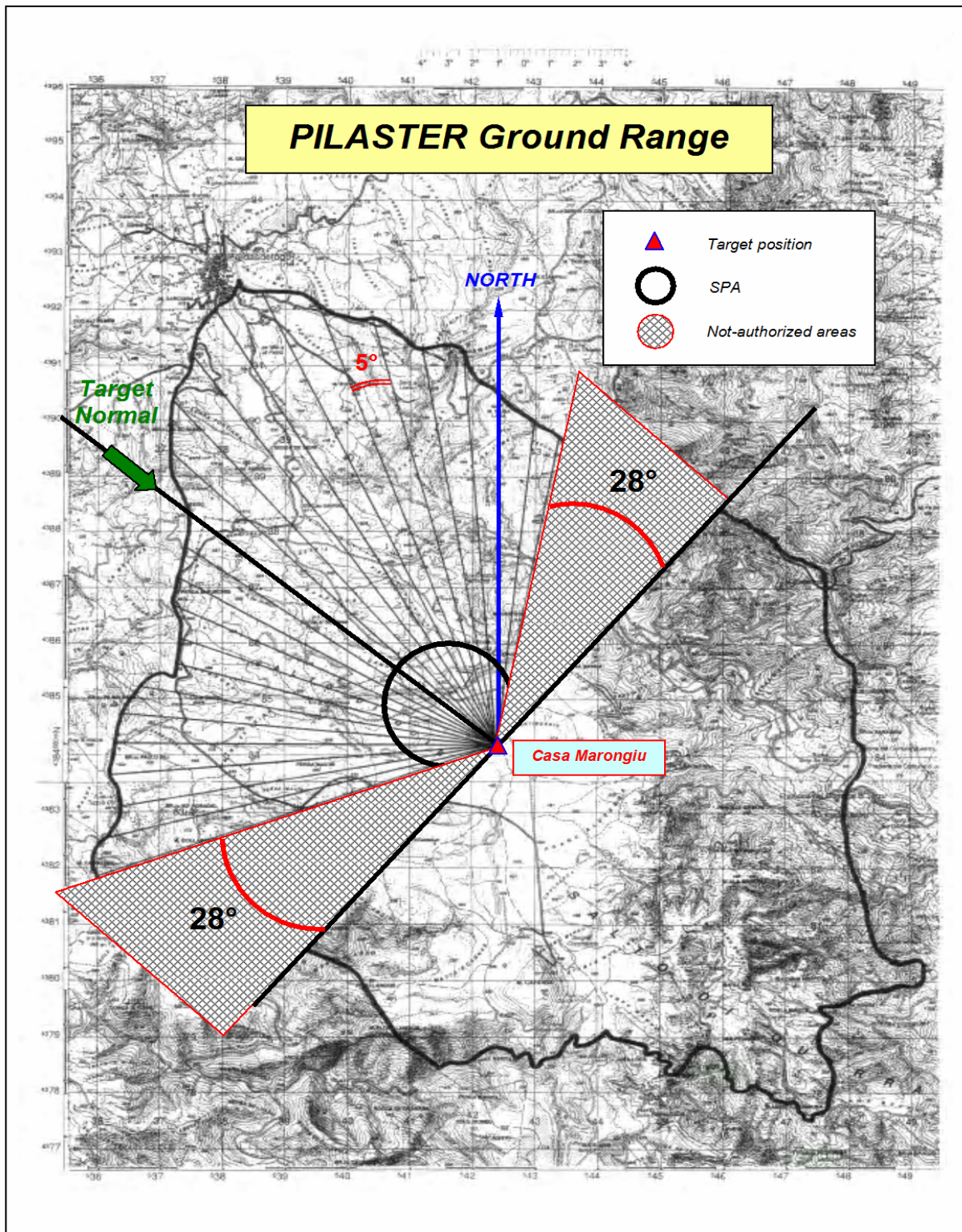


Figure 10-9: Procedure N° 1 – PILASTER SPA for $r_{\min} = 10$ m, Maximum PLD-Target SR = 1 km and Maximum Relative Altitude Difference $h_{\max} = 250$ m.

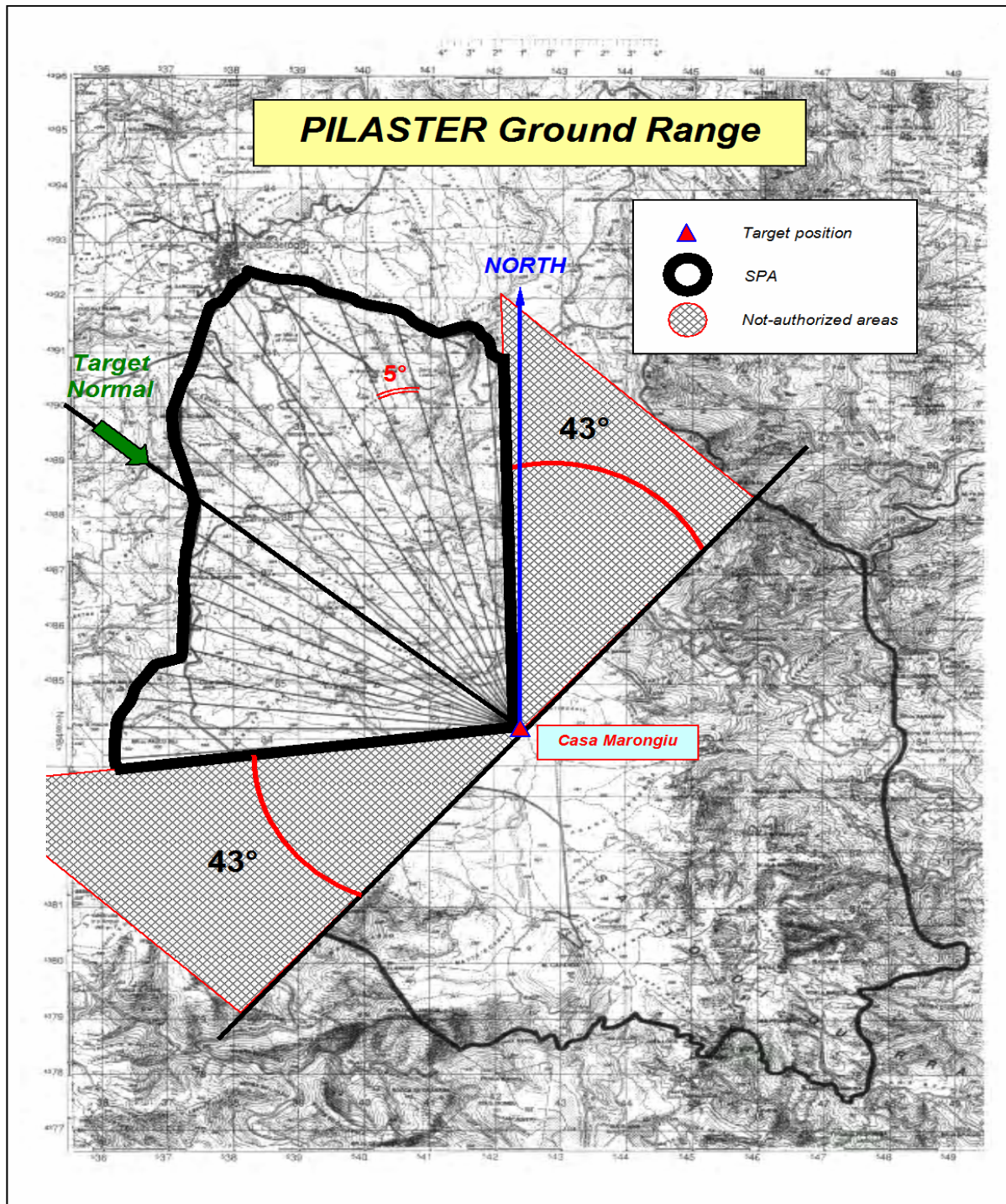


Figure 10-10: Procedure N° 4 – PILASTER SPA for $r_{\min} = 10$ m, any PLD-Target SR in the Range Area and Maximum Relative Altitude Difference $h_{\max} = 250$ m.

10.3 RANGE PERFORMANCE PREDICTION PROGRAM (RP3)

In the following paragraphs the Range Performance Prediction Program (RP3) is described. The RP3 program was implemented using the models described in Chapter 3, with the corrections to the ESLM

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propagation model presented in the Chapters 8 and 9. Future versions of the program will be refined with further experimental results (LPDB).

10.3.1 RP3 Simulation Assumptions

The following general assumptions have been adopted for implementation of the RP3 program:

- **The Elder-Strong-Langer-Middleton (ESLM) model is used** to calculate the atmospheric attenuation coefficient. Corrections are adopted according to the results presented in Chapter 8 and 9.
- **The ESLM-LOWTRAN Model is used to calculate scattering due to rain.** Corrections are adopted according to the results presented in Chapter 9.
- **The output laser beam is assumed Gaussian.** A realistic assumption for most LTD currently in service.
- **Diffraction, jitter and spreading are not considered,** assuming an average irradiance at the target also having a Gaussian distribution.
- **The target reflecting surface is assumed planar and extended:** This assumption is acceptable considering the relative dimensions of the laser beam and most targets of practical interest.

Furthermore, either the **target directional reflectivity** (diffuse and specular reflection components) computed from BRDF data or the **diffuse reflectivity component** can be used for RP3 performance calculations.

10.3.2 RP3 Simulation Results

With the assumptions described above, we calculated the range performance of a particular LTD/LGB combination, using the data given in Table 10-6. These data are referred to generic LTD and LGB systems operating at a wavelength of 1.064 μm (not a real system).

Table 10-6: LTD/LGB Combination Characteristics

LTD			
Beam Diameter	60 mm		
Beam Divergence	0.2 mrad		
Wavelength	1.064 μm		
Pick Energy	100 mJ		
Pulse Duration	10^{-8} sec		

LGB	
FOV	18°
MDPD	$3 \mu\text{W}/\text{m}^2$

Using the RP3 program, we evaluated the performance of this particular LTD/LGB combination in a certain operational scenario, with different atmospheric conditions. Furthermore, with the same atmospheric

conditions, we calculated the performance of the systems when used against target with different geometries (i.e., the maximum distance of the illuminating aircraft for an effective designation).

The curves shown in the Figure 10-11 through Figure 10-16 describe the range performance of the considered A-LTD/LGB combination, with different values of visibility (V) in the absence of rain. The RP3 input data included, together with parameters in Table 10-6, the relative humidity (RH) which was set to 100% at a temperature (T) of 30°C, and the target reflectivity which was assumed to be 10% (with a purely *Lambertian* distribution). In each graph, the range LTD-target is given as a function of the range LGB-target and a family of curves has been traced for different orientations of the target over the horizon (i.e., different values of the angles $Q_{t(MAX)}$ and $Q_{r(MAX)}$).

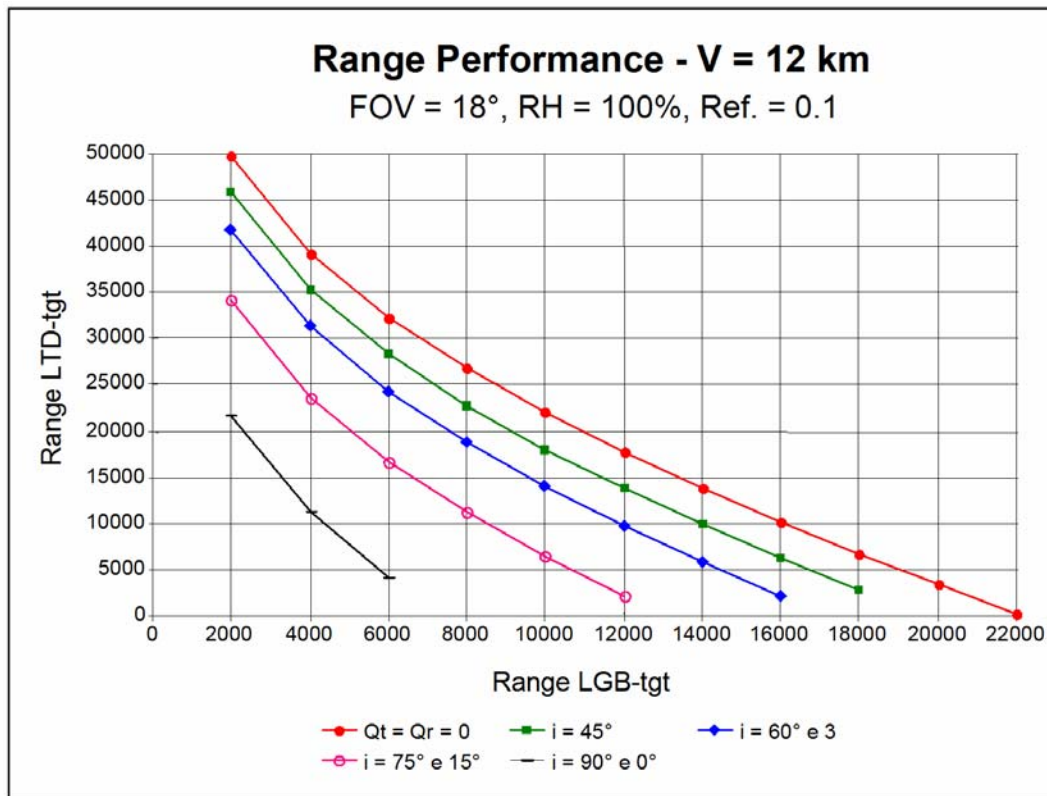


Figure 10-11: LTD/LGB Range Performance for V = 12 km.

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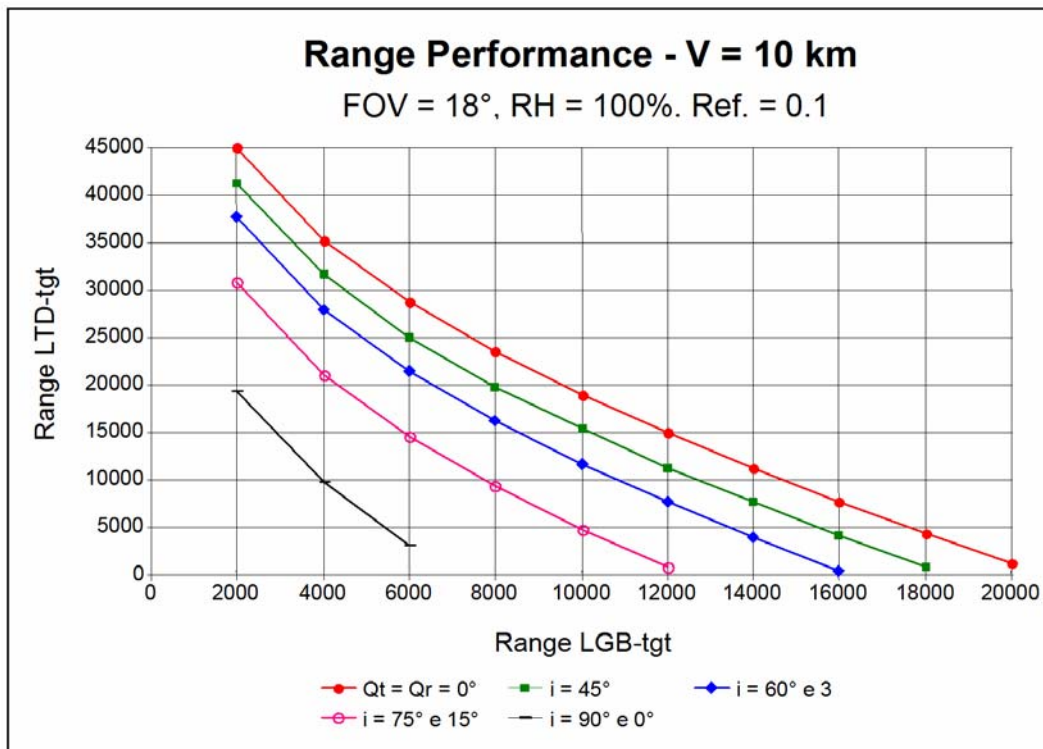


Figure 10-12: LTD/LGB Range Performance for V = 10 km.

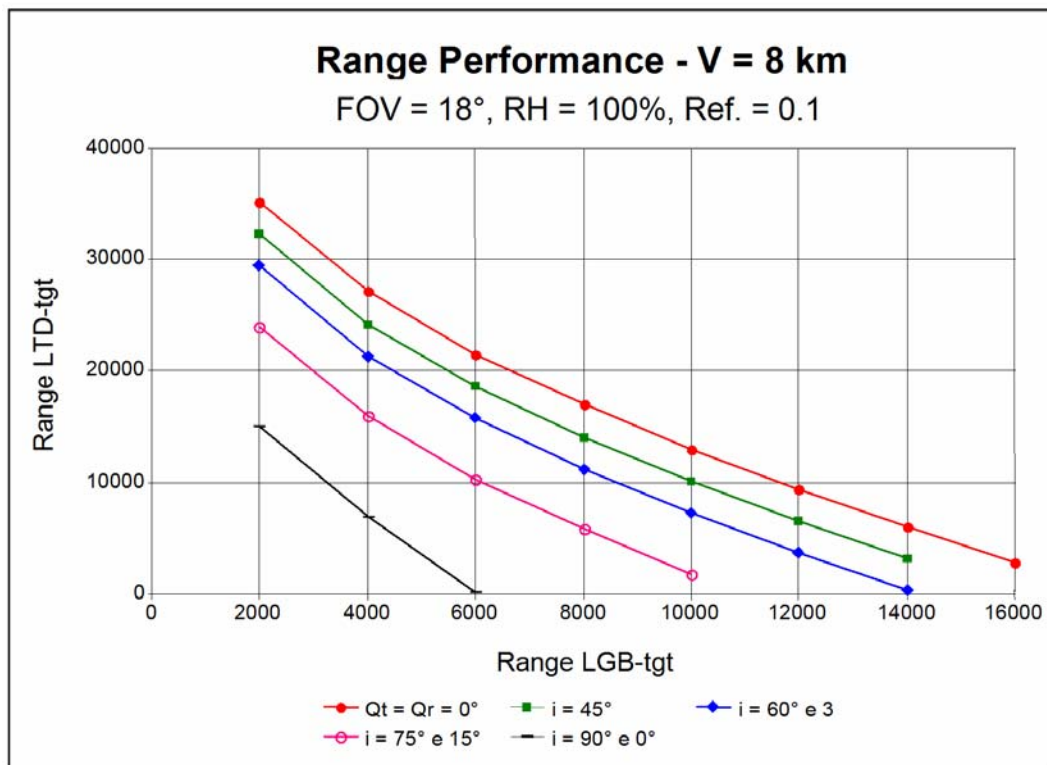


Figure 10-13: LTD/LGB Range Performance for V = 8 km.

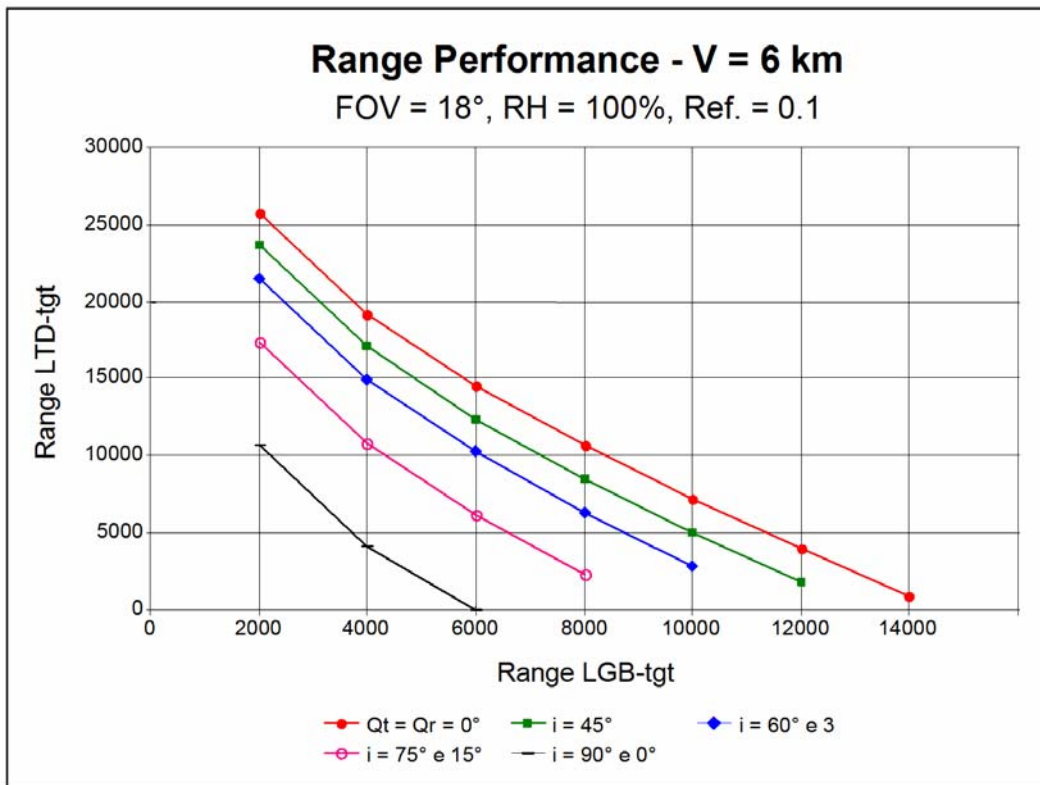


Figure 10-14: LTD/LGB Range Performance for V = 6 km.

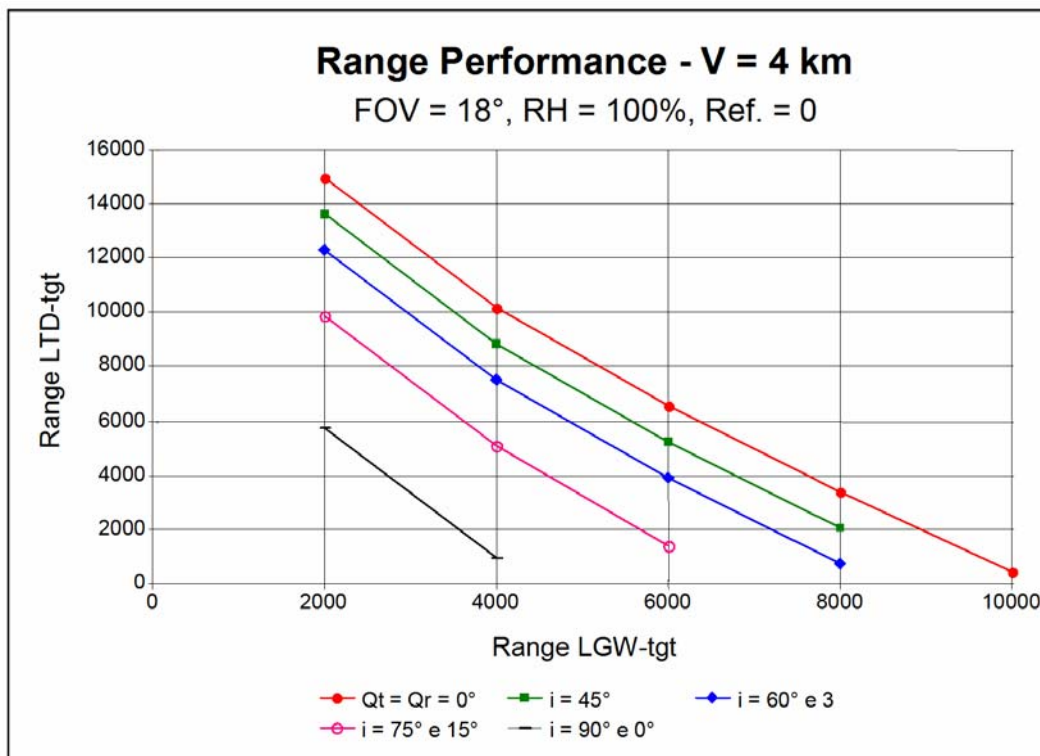


Figure 10-15: LTD/LGB Range Performance for V = 4 km.

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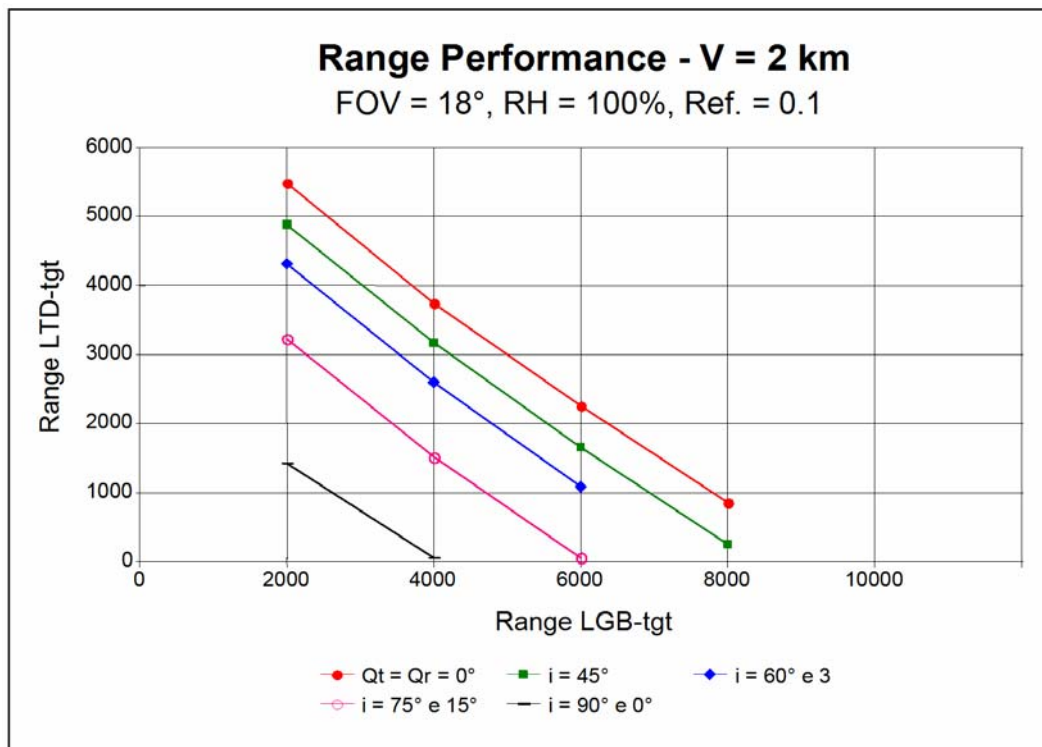


Figure 10-16: LTD/LGB Range Performance for $V = 2$ km.

Using the curves it is possible to determine whether or not the attack can be performed with a certain estimated minimum illumination time. Given the weapon initial conditions (i.e., velocity and trajectory) before designation is initiated, it is possible to estimate the designation time, taking into account the time required by the LGW from these initial conditions to stabilise towards the target (i.e., guided weapon ballistics). If the guidance algorithms are unknown it is possible to roughly estimate the designation time by assuming a straight trajectory of the bomb towards the target and a velocity in the final portion of its drop corresponding to the maximum theoretical velocity of the weapon. With these assumptions, the minimum theoretical range LGB-target before designation can be plotted in the graphs and consequently the maximum range of the aircraft at the beginning of the designation is determined. Obviously, when this range is less than the Target Lethal Range (TLR), the attack can not be performed successfully.

For instance, assuming a maximum LGB velocity of 800 ft/sec and a minimum designation time of 12 sec, the distance LGB-target before designation should not exceed 3 km, for an effective guidance. Plotting this value in Figure 10-17, we notice that in the worst geometric conditions the range LTD-target (illuminator-target) at the beginning of the designation is below the meteorological range (i.e., about 2 km for $V = 4$ km). For $V \geq 10$ km, laser illumination can be performed from a distance comparable to (or, theoretically, even greater than) the meteorological range.

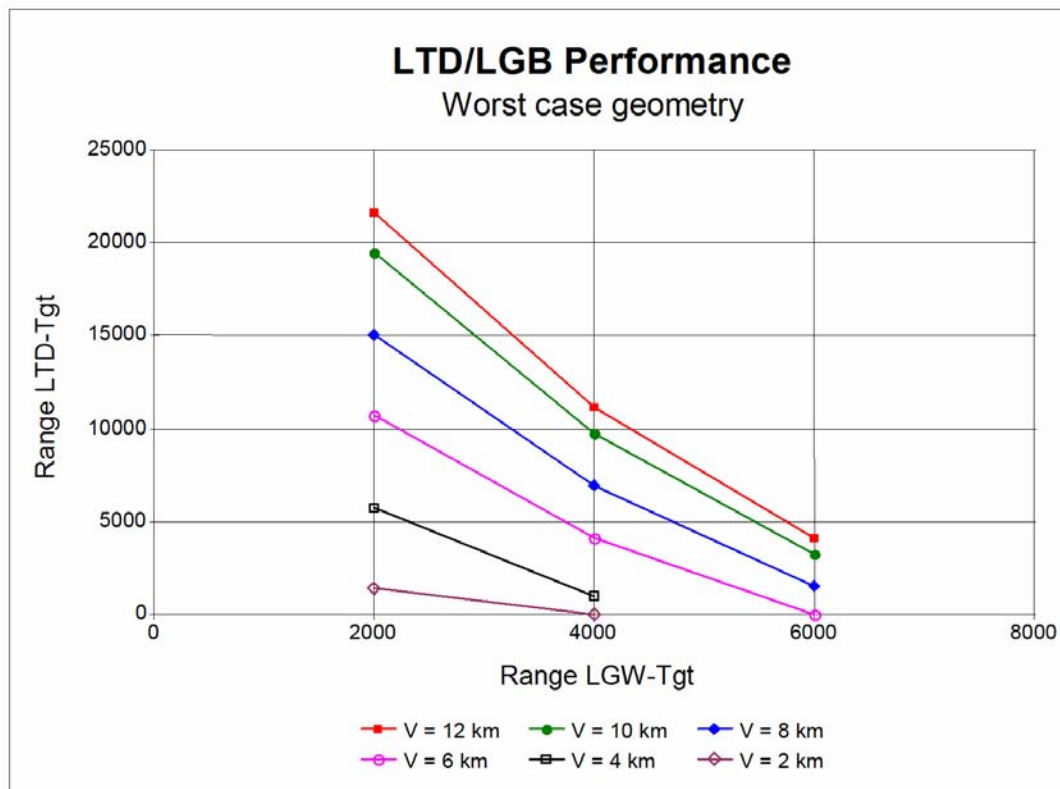


Figure 10-17: LTD/LGB Range Performance with Worst Case Geometry.

10.4 REMARKS

From the ALS/GLS eye-safety and performance analysis work described throughout this volume, and considering the results of the EVP and RP3 simulations performed, the following important conclusions were drawn:

- Both for ALS and for GLS systems, it is essential to define the maximum acceptable risk thresholds (i.e., maximum admitted probabilities of inadvertent hazardous events), before test/training missions can be performed at the ranges.
- ALS HOT attack missions are not allowed outside controlled test ranges (in which adequate personnel evacuation measures have been adopted).
- ALS Ferry Flights and DRY attack missions should be performed without electrical connection of the LDP laser system, in order to avoid any possible risk.
- For execution of Ferry Flights and DRY attach missions with an ALS system powered, it is essential to identify a (national) authority, either military or civilian, able to set the maximum acceptable risk thresholds.
- During test/training missions with ALS/GLS, cine-theodolites and other magnifying instruments can not be used at the ranges without adequate filtering.
- With typical A-LTD/LGB combinations, in dry-air conditions and visibility greater than 4 km, laser illumination can be performed successfully with the A-LTD carrying aircraft flying at a slant-range form the target not exceeding the meteorological range.

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- With rain conditions, there is a considerable reduction of the range performance, limiting the operational use of most practical LTD/LGB combinations to the cases where the meteorological range is greater than 4 km.

10.5 ALS MISSION PLANNING PROGRAM (ALS-MPP)

As discussed in the previous chapters, prediction of laser systems performance requires appropriate knowledge of target signatures (e.g., reflectivity, BRDF/LCS), background characteristics, atmospheric attenuation, hardware performance (e.g., detectors, pointing/tracking and FOV), mission geometry (e.g., masking, laser grazing angle, aircraft and target motion) and, in some cases, human operator performance (e.g., target search and acquisition with TV/FLIR aids, manual laser firing). Furthermore, for mission planning purposes, it is also important to take into account eye-safety issues (especially for test and training activities with ALS systems). The kernel of a *Java* simulation program for a complete analysis of ALS systems performance and mission planning (test/training an operational missions), were developed during the PILASTER program. Particularly, the ALS-MPP kernel is composed of various classes, divided into three main groups: classes relative to the attack geometry and range performance model, classes relative to atmospheric laser beam propagation, and classes relative to the eye-safety analysis. The various classes were designed with the aim of developing a modular, flexible, and easy to modify kernel.

10.5.1 Future Developments

The ALS-MPP input and output interfaces have not been finalised yet, although a process is currently ongoing for developing the program interfaces in accordance with operational Flight Squadrons requirements. The current status of the ALS-MPP Input Interface (I/P-I) is illustrated in the Figure 10-18 through Figure 10-23. Currently, the I/P-I is composed by various data input panels and a global menu for managing the simulation. The first panel ('Meteo'), shown in Figure 10-18, allows to input the relevant weather parameters (i.e., rain type, absolute humidity and visibility).

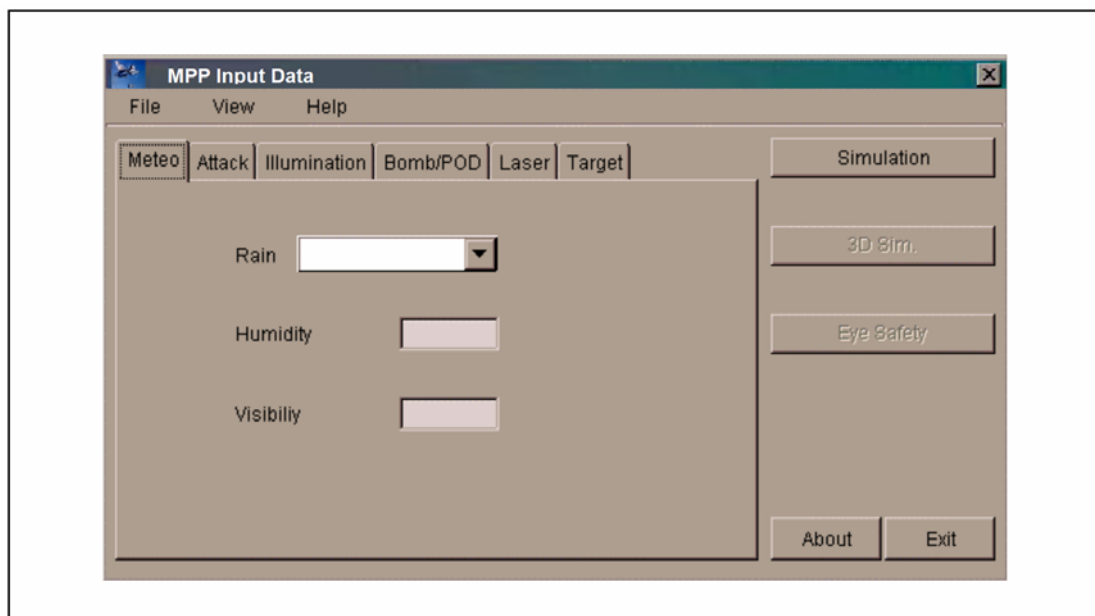


Figure 10-18: ALS-MPP I/P-I Panel 'Meteo'.

The second panel ('Attack') is relative to the attack parameters (Figure 10-19). The combined window (i.e., 'kind of attack') allows selection of 'dive', 'loft', or 'level' attack profiles. The sub-panels 'Altitude' and 'Preferred Directions' permit to input specific geometric constraints for the simulated mission.

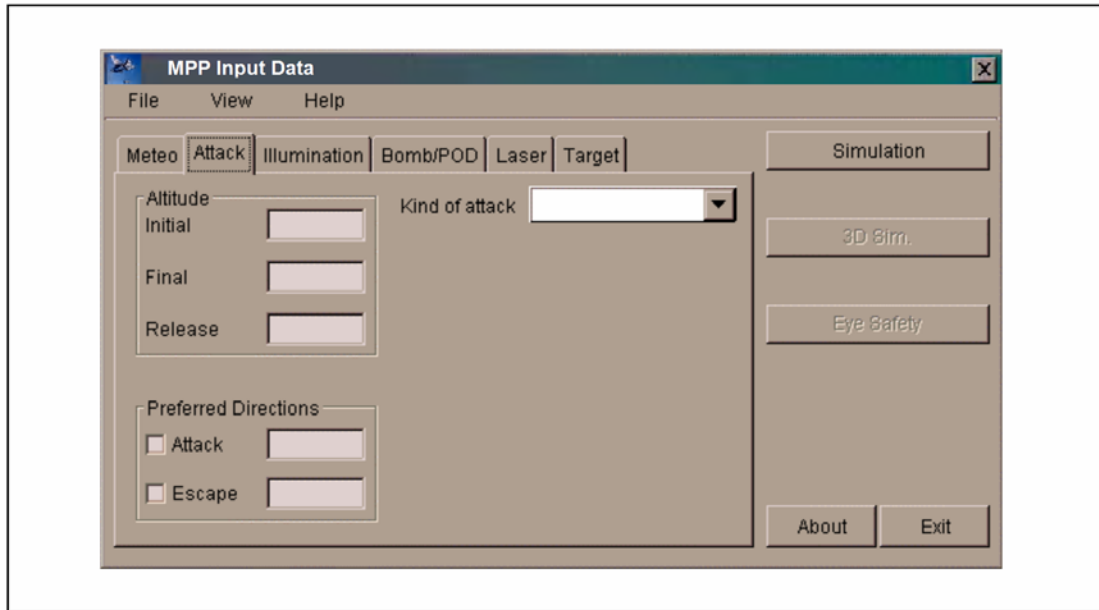


Figure 10-19: ALS-MPP I/P-I Panel 'Attack'.

The panel 'Illumination' includes selection of the type of attack (i.e., self-designation or co-operative) and, in case of a co-operative attack, the desired trajectory of the 'spiker' aircraft (Figure 10-20).

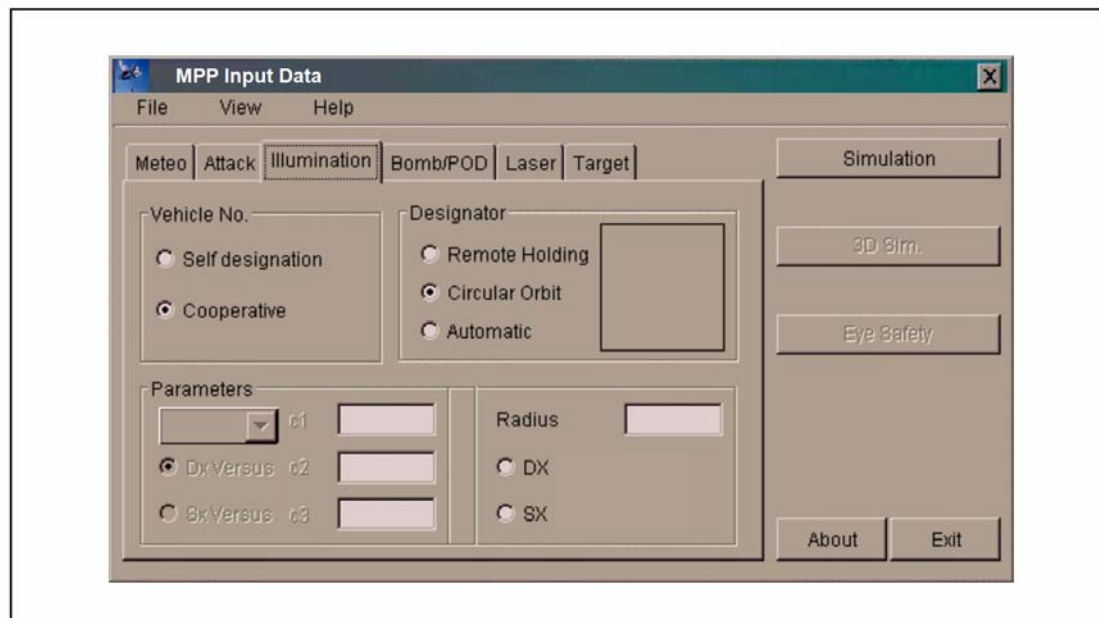


Figure 10-20: ALS-MPP I/P-I Panel 'Illumination'.

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The fourth panel ('Bomb/POD') allows definition of the LGB and A-LTD aircraft configurations, with automatic selection (from a dedicated library) of the relative masking matrixes (Figure 10-21).

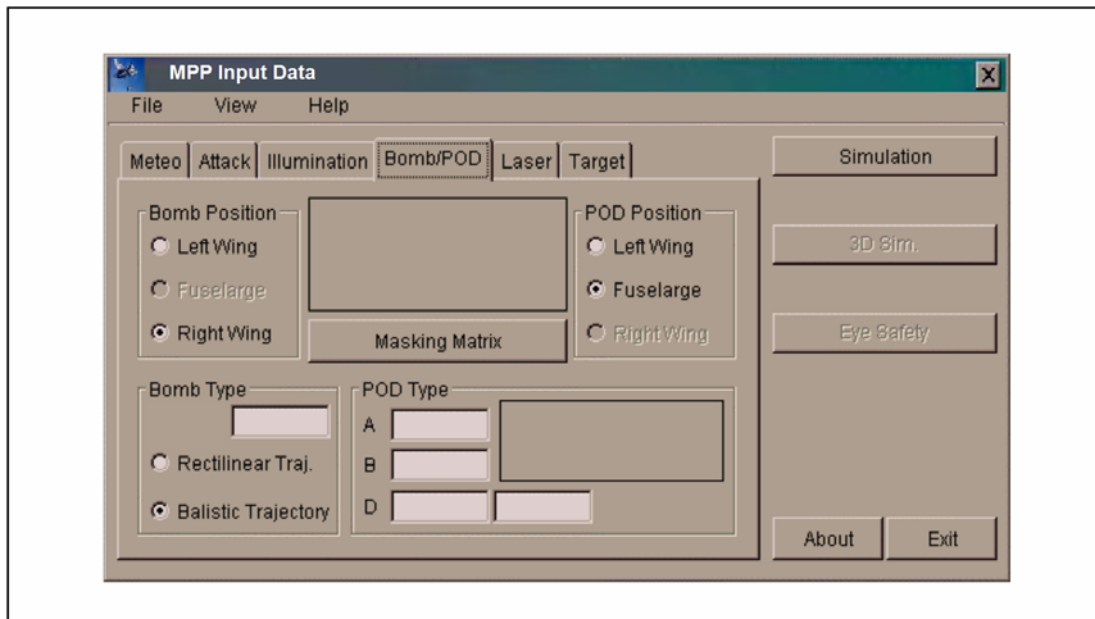


Figure 10-21: ALS-MPP I/P-I Panel 'Bomb/POD'.

The panel 'Laser' is available for input of the relevant A-LTD laser parameters (Figure 10-22).

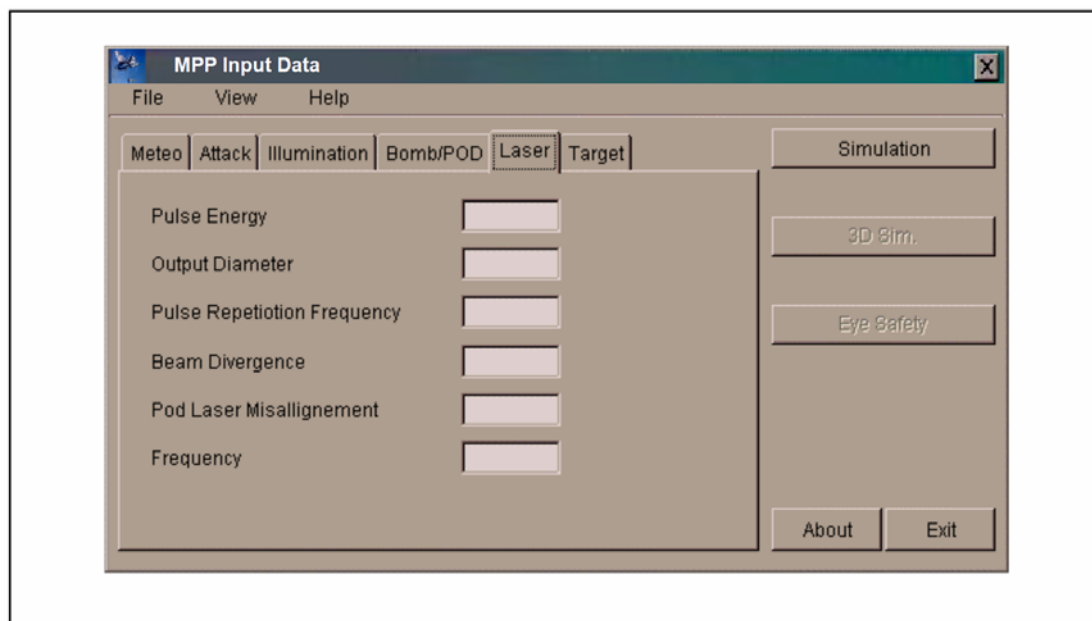


Figure 10-22: ALS-MPP I/P-I Panel 'Laser'.

The last panel is dedicated to the target description in terms of position, orientation, dimensions and material. A combined window is also available for selection of the type of co-ordinates to be used. In the

absence of accurate LCS or BRDF data, the program uses a library of diffuse reflectance data associated to the selectable target materials.

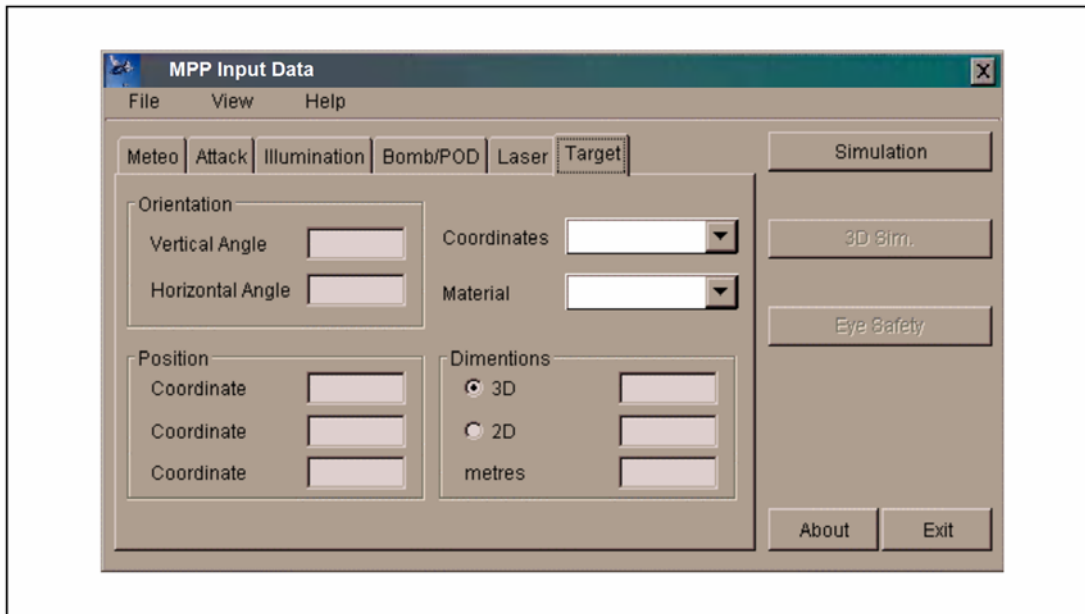


Figure 10-23: ALS-MPP I/P-I Panel 'Target'.

Examples of the current ALS-MPP Output Interfaces (O/P-I) are illustrated in Figure 10-24 through Figure 10-27.

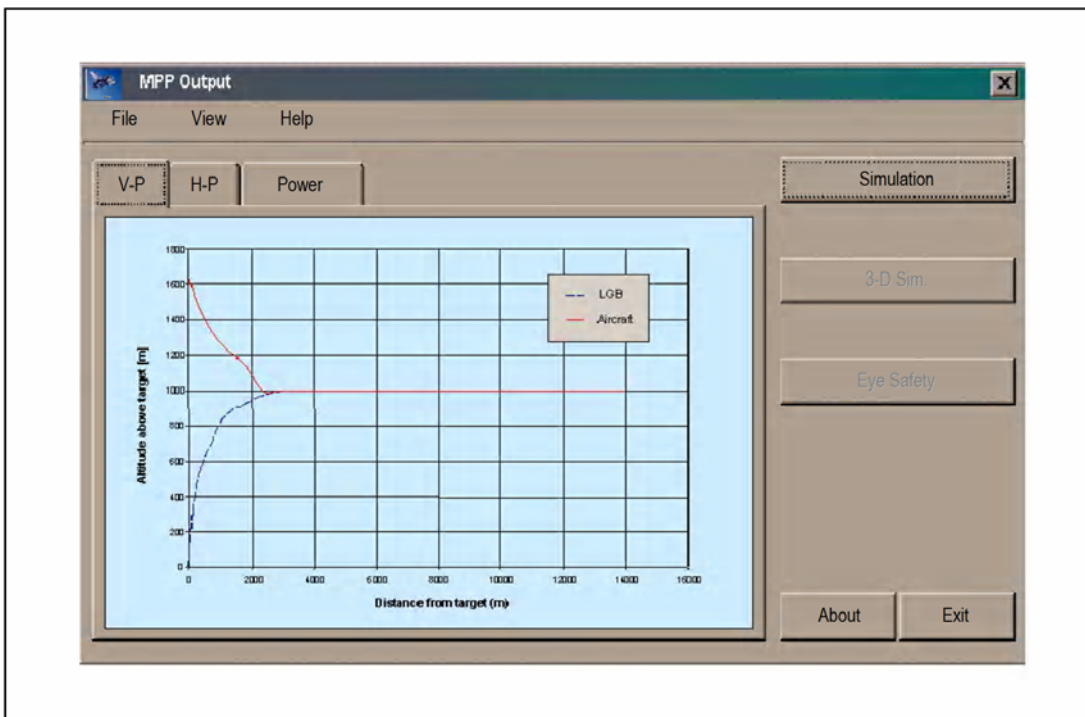


Figure 10-24: ALS-MPP Simulation O/P-I 'Vertical Profile' (V-P).

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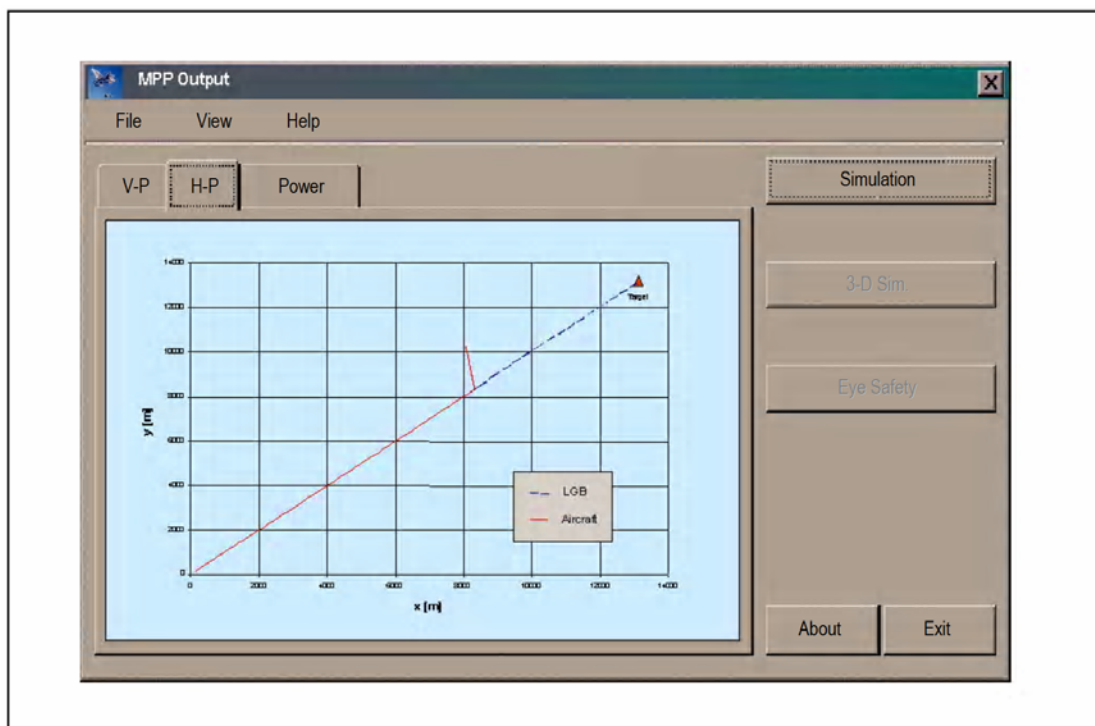


Figure 10-25: ALS-MPP Simulation O/P-I 'Horizontal Profile' (H-P).

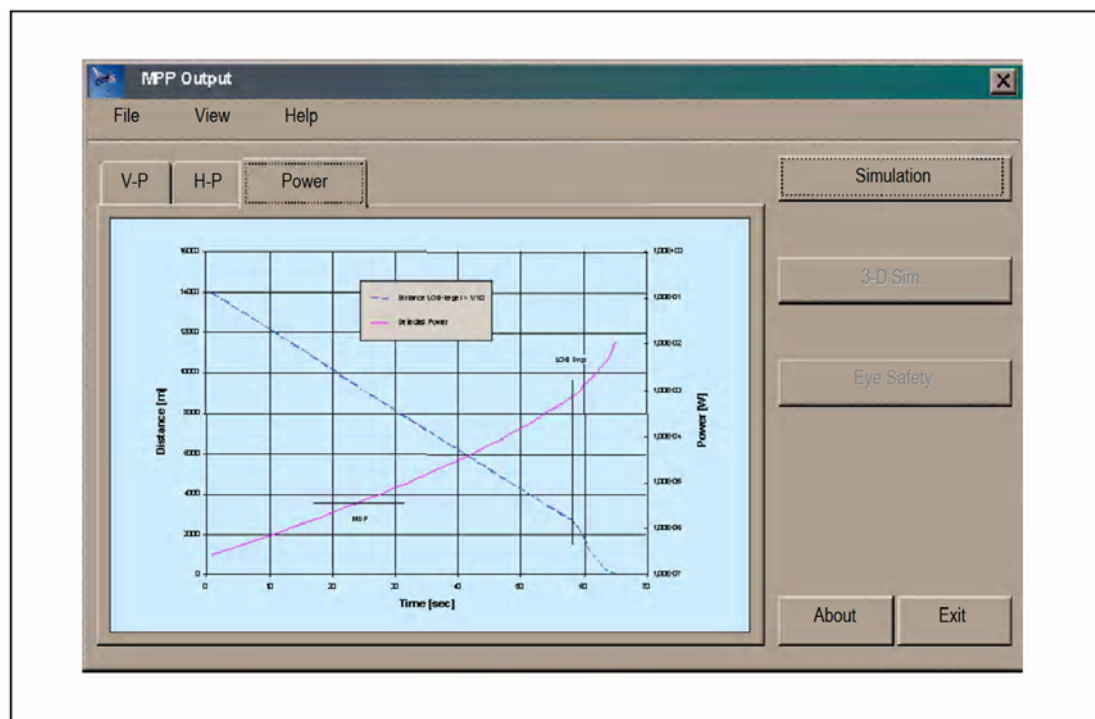


Figure 10-26: ALS-MPP O/P-I Simulation Panel 'Power'.

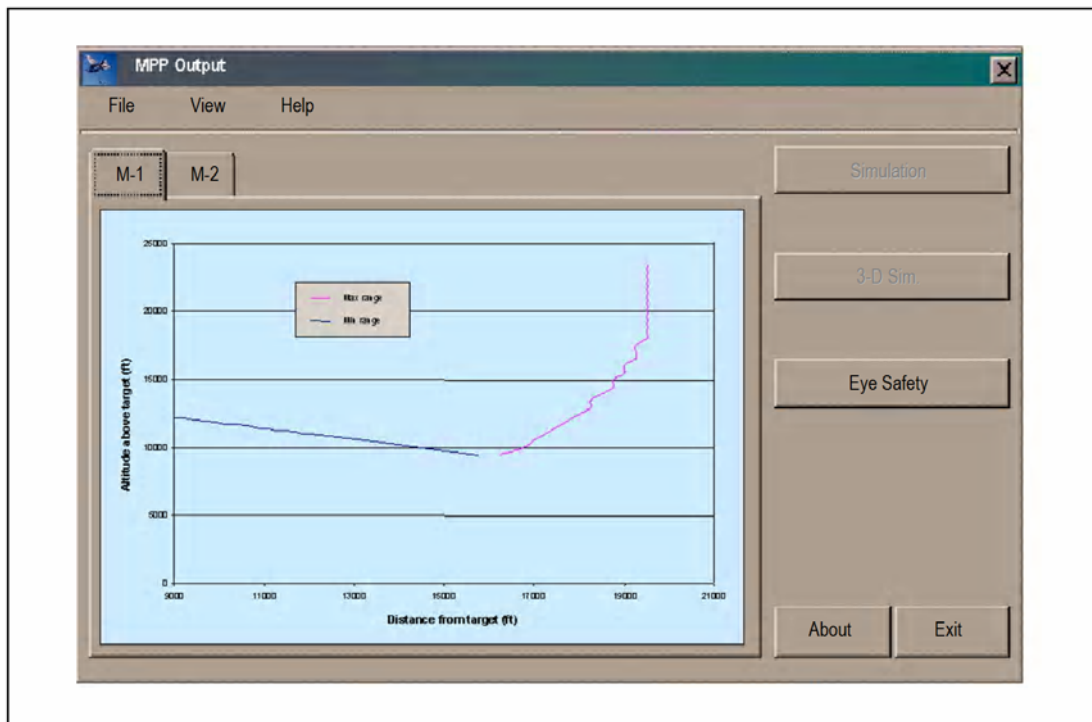


Figure 10-27: ALS-MPP Eye-Safety Analysis O/P-I for 'Mode-1' (M-1).

Figure 10-28 shows examples of the ALS-MPP 3-D visualisation tool.

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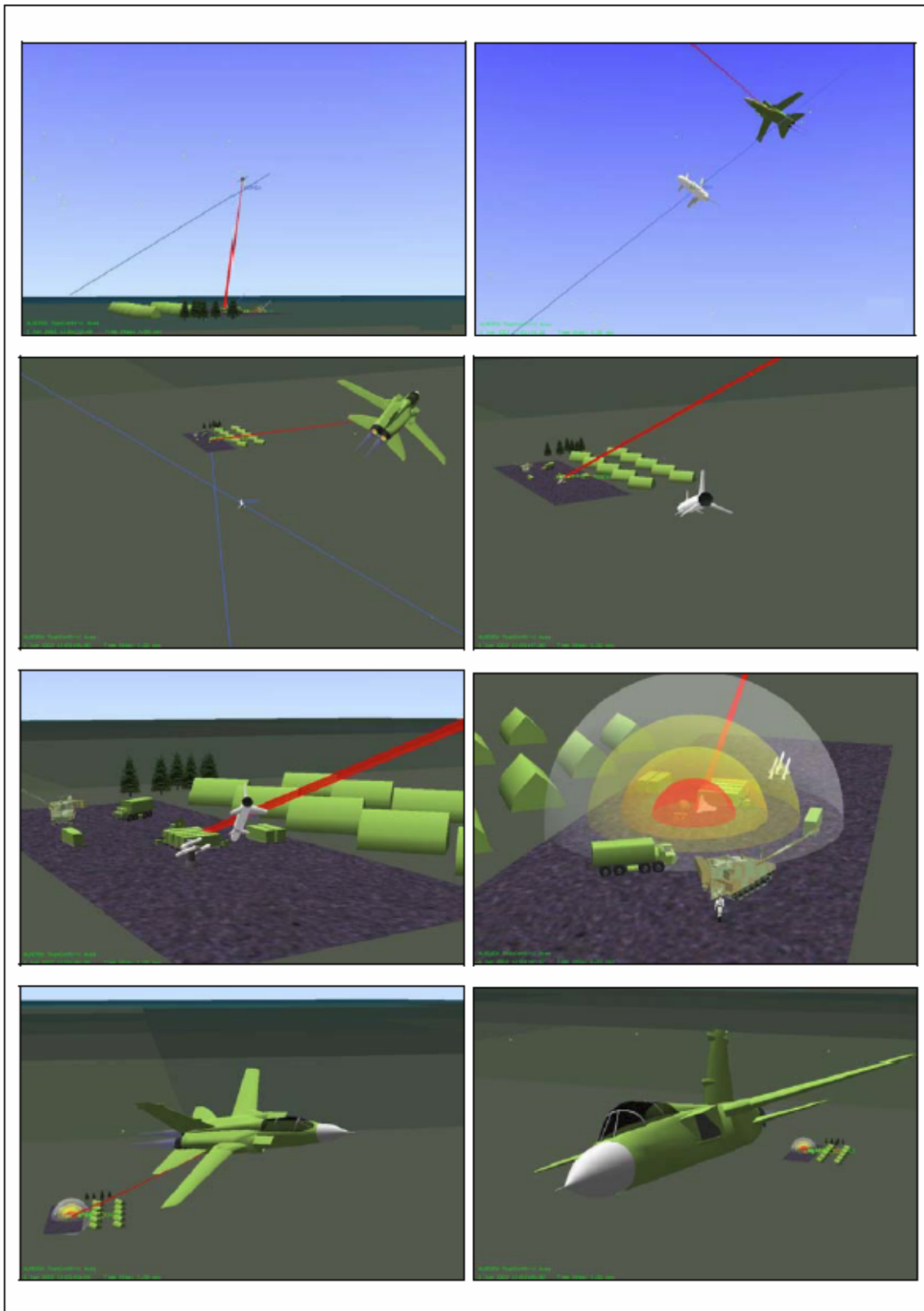


Figure 10-28: ALS-MPP 3-D Simulation O/P-I.

Annex A – INTRODUCTION TO AIRBORNE LASER SYSTEMS

A.1 LASER RANGE FINDERS

For many military applications, such as the delivery of unguided bombs and gunnery, it is essential to be able to measure range accurately. There are several ways in which this can be done. The traditional method is to use an optical rangefinder. This either measures the angle subtended at a distant point by a fixed optical baseline, or measures the angle subtended at the operator by a target of known size. In airborne systems the problem is usually complicated by the continuously changing geometry between the aircraft and a point on the target, and the implied requirement for rapid measurement techniques. By using standard sensors within the aircraft system, the range between aircraft and ground targets can be estimated by knowing the altitude of the aircraft and the depression angle between the horizontal and a line to the target, or by measuring the rate of change of this angle and knowing the aircraft velocity. All these methods have limited accuracy and most of them are not easily integrated into any automated weapon system.

A more suitable technique used in conventional radar, is to transmit a pulse of radiation. After reflection and reception, the time of flight of the pulse is then measured. This is a direct measurement of range. Unfortunately, microwave radars suffer low performance at low grazing angles, which occurs at level flight at low altitudes. In addition to this, land targets are rarely isolated from other reflectors within the radar beam and these give rise to spurious returns which can lead to ranging errors in conventional radar.

To overcome these effects conventional radar systems require sophisticated transmission and return signal processing. Lasers, on the other hand, with their narrow beams offer an immediate advantage with simpler signal processing and better target definition. They can also produce very short pulses which give excellent range resolution (ΔR). Range resolution is given by:

$$\Delta R = c\tau/2 \quad (\text{A.1})$$

where τ = pulse width. For example, a pulse width of 10 ns will give a range resolution of about 1.5 metres. A particularly demanding ranging application which has received considerable attention and which illustrates the advantages of laser ranging is the measurement of range from a high speed low-level aircraft to a ground target. Figure A-1 illustrates the obvious errors which can arise over undulating ground owing to the error in assessing the true aircraft to target height.

ANNEX A – INTRODUCTION TO AIRBORNE LASER SYSTEMS

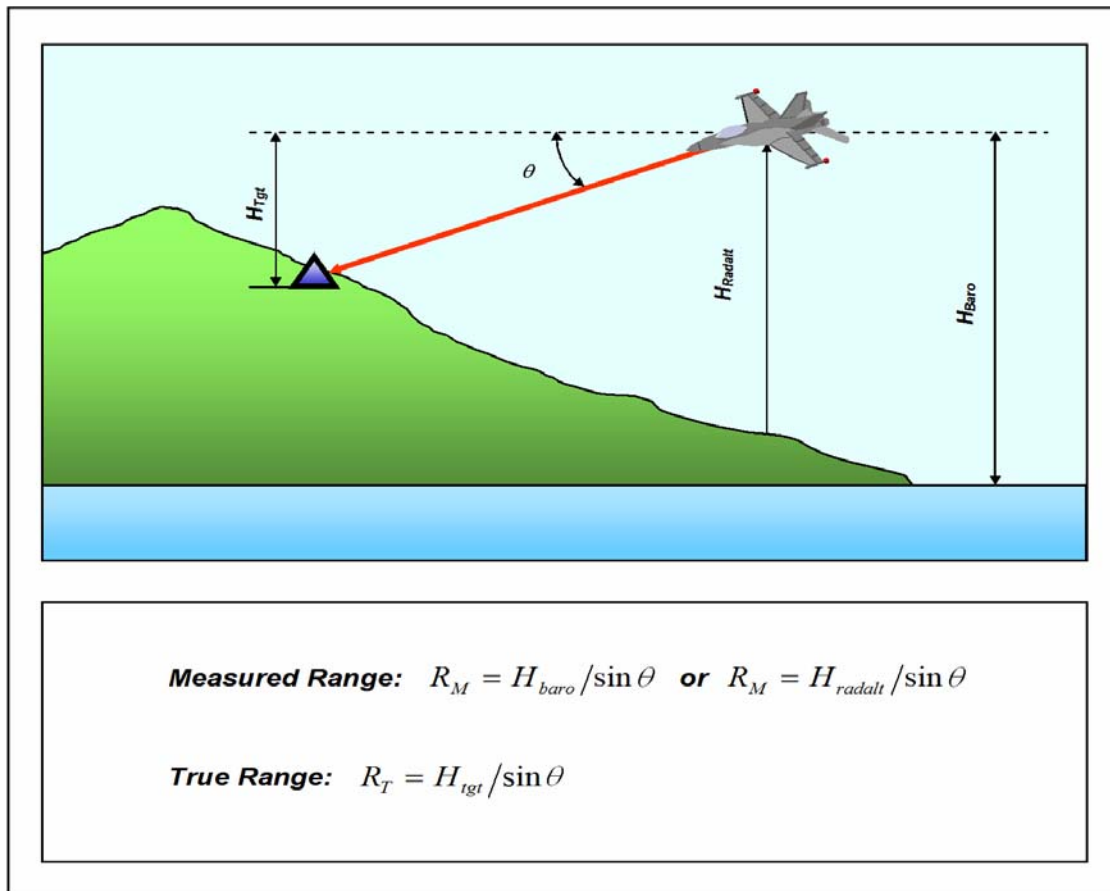


Figure A-1: Ranging Error Obtained by Scaling Aircraft Height Measurements.

The choice of laser and receiver for a system will depend, to a large extent, upon the application. Generally, for rangefinders, the most important parameter is the maximum range of operation. Laser Rangefinders (LRFs) usually operate at ranges between 7 and 15 km. A considerably large output power is required to operate much beyond this range. Early systems used ruby lasers but these have now been discontinued in favour of the higher efficiency pulsed Nd:YAG systems. With pulsed systems high output power, of the order of MW, is required since it is the peak power output of each pulse that determines the maximum range. The majority of LRFs, in operation at the present time, use an optically pumped Nd:YAG laser as the source of the transmitter power ($\lambda = 1.064 \mu\text{m}$), but eye-safe Er:glass ($\lambda = 1.550 \mu\text{m}$) and CO_2 ($\lambda = 10.6 \mu\text{m}$) laser systems are also being employed.

The architecture of a typical LRF system is shown in Figure A-2 [1]. The transmitter is shown in Figure A-2(a) and contains an electro-optically Q-switched laser.

ANNEX A – INTRODUCTION TO AIRBORNE LASER SYSTEMS

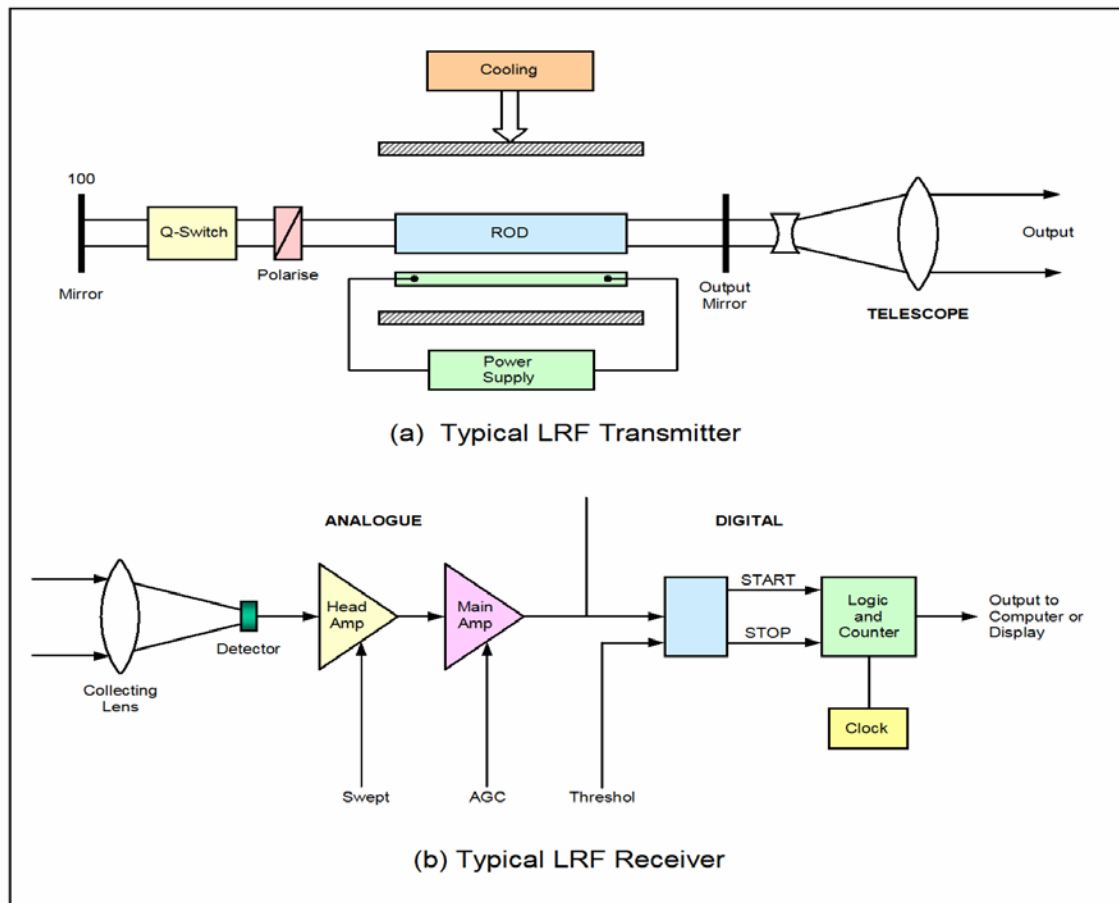


Figure A-2: Typical Laser Rangefinder Architecture.

This type of laser can operate up to 50 pps and produce output pulses with about 10 MW peak power and pulse widths of only 10 to 15 ns. The beam divergence from the laser may be several milliradians and in order to obtain accurate target definition a simple collimating telescope has been added, which would reduce this to less than 1 mrad.

Figure A-2(b) shows a typical LRF receiver system. The radiation scattered from the target is collected by the receiver which may be a conventional mirror or lens system. The field of view is restricted so that it only just encompasses the transmitted beam, in order to reduce unwanted signals from the natural illumination of the target area and also to improve the security of the overall system. The receiver could also incorporate a narrow pass-band spectral filter centred on the laser wavelength to further reduce the standing background signal which contributes to the overall system noise. The electronics for the receiver are shown in block diagram form and consist of two parts:

- An analogue section, which amplifies the return pulse whilst retaining its shape; and
- A digital section, which performs logical timing processes and calculates the range.

Multiple pulse returns are obtained, either because the beam is scattered by the atmosphere, from foliage between the transmitter and target, or from radiation “spilling” over the target and hitting the background. In order to select the correct pulse, either first pulse or last pulse logic can be used. For air-to-ground operations atmospheric backscatter and sightline obscuration are the most likely problems and last pulse logic is favoured. After selection, the correct pulse is fed to a counting circuit which determines the time of transmit, and hence the range.

ANNEX A – INTRODUCTION TO AIRBORNE LASER SYSTEMS

A.2 TARGET DESIGNATORS AND GUIDED WEAPONS

A Laser Target Designator (LTD) is an accurate pointing system which provides the pulsed laser source and the precision optics and stabilisation required to accurately shine a laser beam on a target. A Laser Guided Weapon (LGW) generates an electric signal (photons converted into electrons) when laser light is received at the wavelength and with the pulse coding of the LTD system, consequently a portion of the laser light reflecting off of the target is “visible” to the weapon. This provides signals on which the LGW can “home” toward the target by actuating its aerodynamic surfaces. Obviously, the pointing accuracy of the laser is most important, as any laser error degrades the weapon accuracy. In many instances, a slightly modified LRF (pulse coding) serves admirably as a target designator, and it has the added advantage of simultaneously providing slant-range to the target.

As already mentioned, the LGW (missile or bomb) does not follow the beam emitted by the designator (as with laser beam riders), but automatically tracks the signal reflected from the target. Currently, two different LGW guidance “strategies” are adopted:

- **Bang-Bang Guidance**, in which the LGW only senses a position error, and the control fins are driven to the limit of their travel (generally by high-pressure gas), regardless of the magnitude of the error (i.e., the control fins are either at the trail position or full deflection during guidance); and
- **Proportional Guidance**, in which the LGW seeker continuously tracks the maximum of the reflected laser energy and the LGW computer directs towards the target by actuating the weapon aerodynamic surfaces, giving commands proportional to the measured offset.

Dive, level and loft types of attacks are all possible with Laser Guided Bombs (LGB) and a variety of profiles would be available with airborne Laser Guided Missiles (LGM). In general, two main categories of attacks with LTD/LGW can be distinguished:

- **Self Designation Attacks**, in which the aircraft acts as illuminator for the own carried LGW and laser illumination is automatically controlled by the LTD, manually controlled by the Weapon System Operator (WSO), or by the aircraft computers (e.g., using a pre-planned counter to be chosen between various mutually exclusive possibilities). An example of a typical LGW Self Designation mission profile is reported in Figure A-3(a).
- **Co-operative Designation Attacks**, in which a ground Forward Air Controller (FAC) (or an aircraft) perform illumination with an LTD for the LGW carried by an(other) aircraft. Automatic steering functions are often implemented in co-operative profiles. In these cases, aircraft is forced to pass tangent to the Target Lethal Range (TLR) according to pre-planned steering laws. Also in this case, the laser can be operated by a pre-planned counter or manually. An example of a typical Co-operative mission profile is shown in Figure A-3(b).

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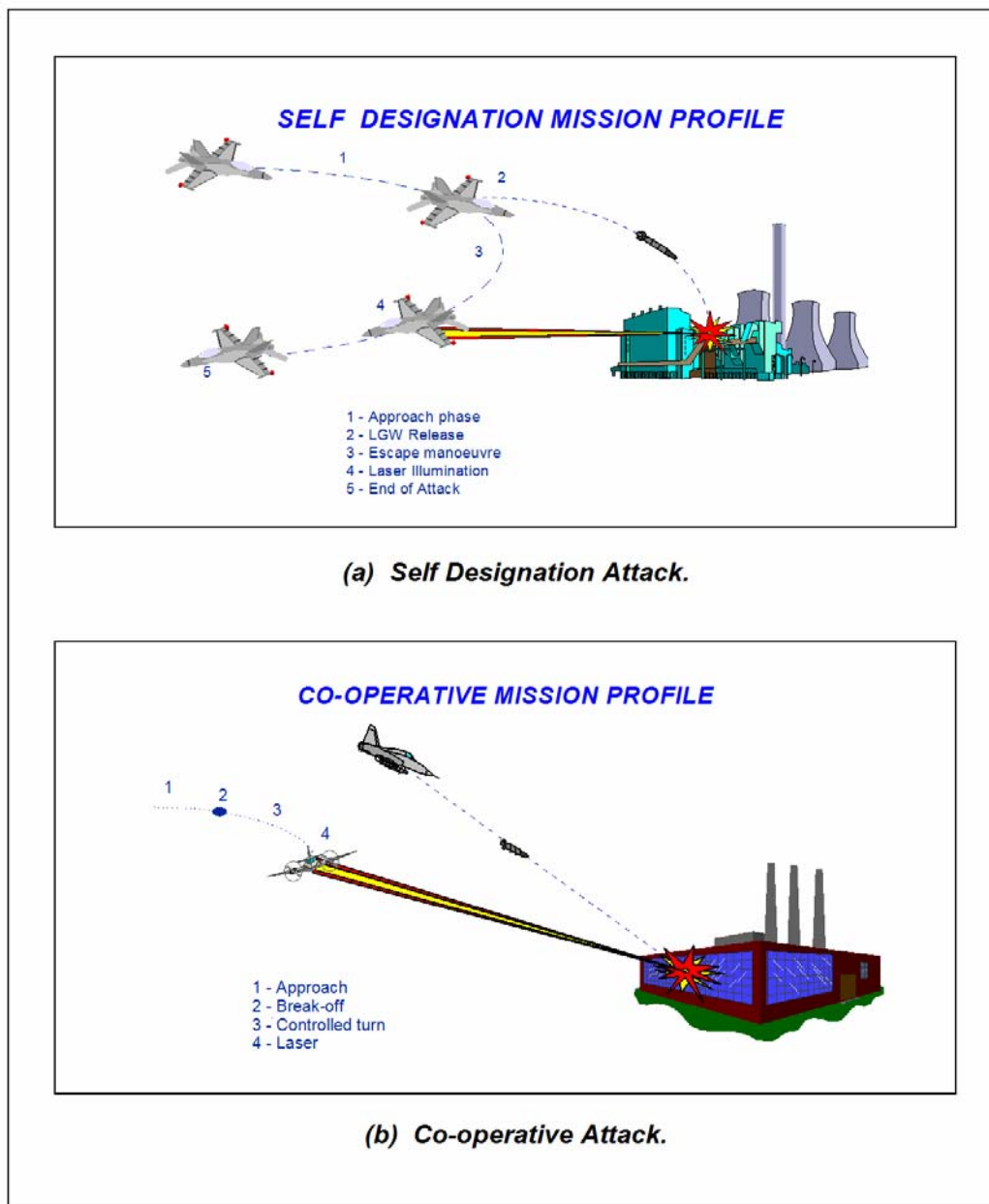


Figure A-3: LTD/LGW Mission Profiles.

A.3 LASER RADARS

Laser radars can be grouped according to the type of measurement made by the laser radar, the detection technique, the type of interferometer employed in a coherent laser radar (if appropriate), the modulation technique, the demodulation technique, the type of laser or the wavelength of operation, the function performed, the type of data collected, or the data format. In addition, laser radar can be classed as monostatic or bistatic, depending on whether it uses a single aperture to transmit and to receive or separate apertures. Some of these groupings are summarized in Table A-1 [2].

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Table A-1: Types of Laser Radars

Types of Lasers (Typical)		Carrier Wavelength
CO ₂		9.2 μm -- 11.2 μm
Er:YAG		2 μm
Raman Shifted Nd:YAG		1.54 μm
Nd:YAG		1.06 μm
GaAlAs		0.8 μm -- 0.904 μm
HeNe		0.63 μm
Frequency Doubled Nd:YAG		0.53 μm
Detection Technique	Interferometer Type	Modulation Technique
Direct Detection	Not Applicable	Pulsed Amplitude Modulation (AM)
Coherent Detection	Heterodyne Homodyne Offset Homodyne	Pulsed Amplitude Modulation (AM) Frequency Modulation (FM) Hybrid (AM/FM, Pulse Burst) None (CW)
Functions		Measurements
Tracking		Amplitude (Reflectance)
Moving Target Indication (MTI)		Range (Time delay)
Machine Vision		Velocity
Velocimetry		(Doppler Shift or differential range)
Wind Shear Detection		Angular Position
Target Identification		Vibration Spectra
Imaging		
Vibration Sensing		

The name given to a particular system is seldom sufficient to completely identify what it does and is certainly not sufficient to identify how well it performs.

As can be seen in Table A-1, there are many types of laser radars. The variety found among laser radar systems is one of the primary reasons for their versatility. Unfortunately, it can also create some confusion. For example, wavelength-dependent technological limitations frequently prevent simple parametric extrapolation of performance from one type of system to another. These limitations can make routine performance at a one laser wavelength well beyond the state of the art (and possibly beyond fundamental physical limitations) at another wavelength. Extreme care must be exercised when extrapolating the performance of one type of laser radar to another.

The use of very wavelength specific technology and components represents a significant difference from passive optical systems or conventional radar systems. The availability of laser sources makes only a finite

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(and small) number of wavelengths practical alternatives for laser radars. Passive optics and conventional radars – Radio Frequency (RF) through Millimeter-Wave (MMW) – can select the wave band to optimise performance without major changes in technology. Laser radars often must change technologies completely (e.g., electrically pumped gas lasers versus optically pumped solid-state lasers) to effect even small changes in operating wavelength.

The concept of operation of a laser radar (LADAR) is identical to that of a conventional radar. Laser radar transmits a signal that is reflected by a target and then collected by the laser radar receiver. Range to the target is determined by measuring the round-trip time of the reflected light. Radial velocity of the target is measured by either determining the Doppler shift of the reflected light or by making two (or more) range measurements and calculating the rate of change of range.

In direct detection laser radar (Figure A-4), the received optical energy is focused onto a photosensitive element that generates a voltage (or current) that is directly proportional to the optical power that strikes it. This process is identical to a conventional, passive optical receiver or to a typical laser rangefinder (described before).

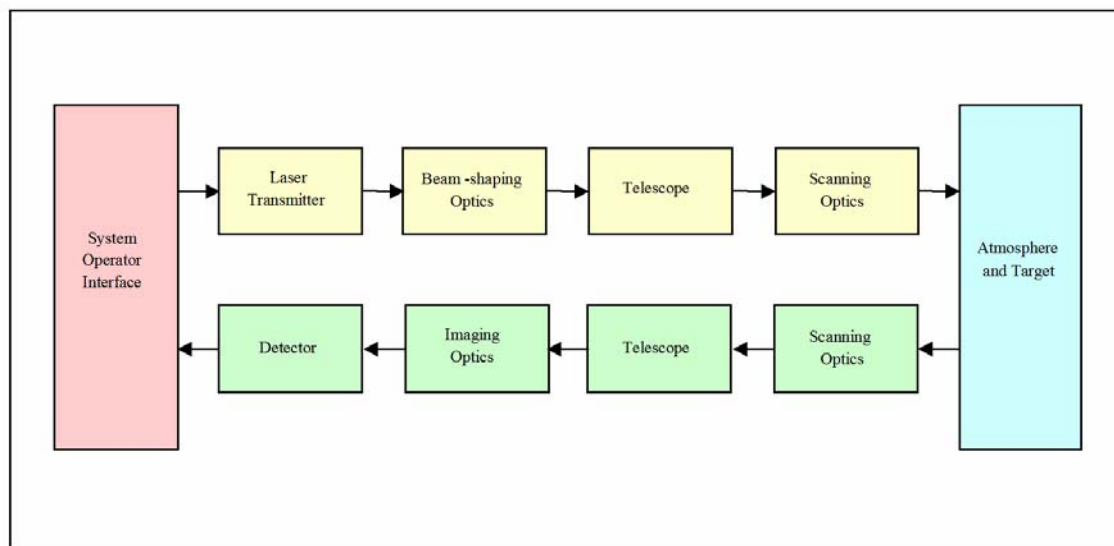


Figure A-4: Block Diagram of a Direct Detection Laser Radar.

A block diagram, of a typical heterodyne (or coherent) detection laser radar is shown in Figure A-5. An optical signal is generated by the transmitter laser. The divergence and beam diameter of this optical signal are then matched to the rest of the system by beam-shaping optics. This matching is optional because some systems are designed to operate with the unmodified transmitter laser beam. In a monostatic system, the transmitted laser signal enters a transmit-to-receive (T/R) switch. The T/R switch permits the laser radar transmitter and receiver to operate through a common optical aperture. The laser radar signal then enters the beam expander or output telescope and the scanning optics that direct the optical signal to the target.

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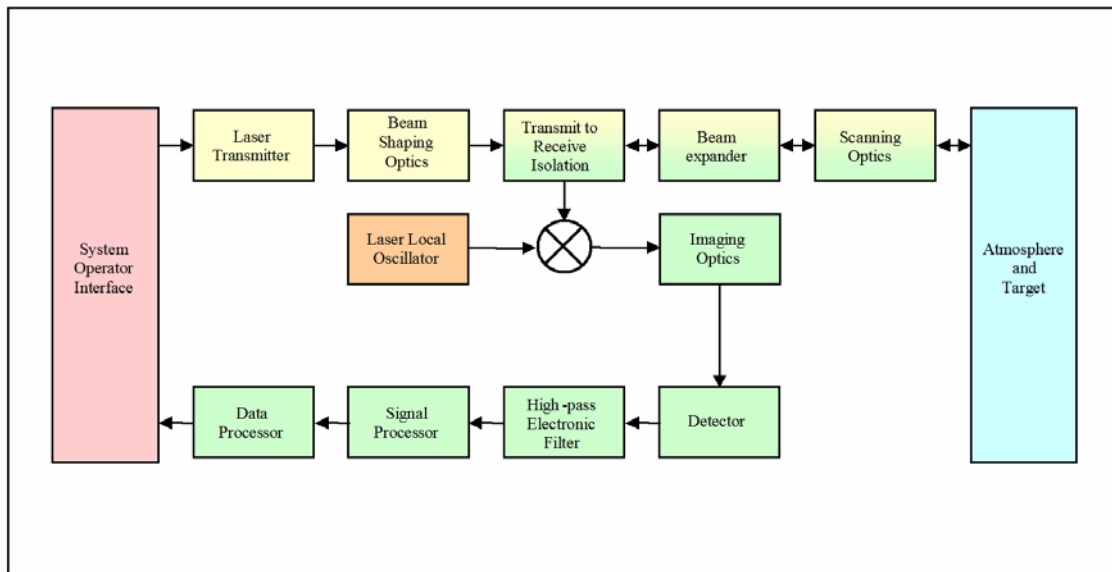


Figure A-5: Block Diagram of a Coherent Detection Laser Radar.

In a monostatic system, radiation reflected from the target is collected by the scanning optics and the beam expander, which now acts as an optical receiver. The T/R switch directs the received radiation to an optical mixer, where it is combined with an optical reference signal, which is the local oscillator. The combined signal is then focused onto a photosensitive detector by the imaging optics. The photosensitive detector generates an electrical signal in response to the received optical signal. The electrical signal is then high-pass filtered to remove any low-frequency components, such as those from background sources and from the local oscillator-induced dc signal. The high frequency components of this electrical signal contain the target information obtained by the laser radar. Metric information is then extracted from the electrical signal by signal and data processors.

In a bistatic system, the T/R switch is omitted. A separate beam expander and scanning optics are then dedicated to the receiver. The remainder is identical to a monostatic system, as previously described.

An additional distinction is between conventional heterodyne receivers – requiring a separate laser source to serve as the local oscillator – and homodyne receivers, in which part of the laser radiation from the transmitter source is also used as the local oscillator for the receiver. Furthermore, offset homodyne receivers have been constructed, in which the local oscillator beam portion is frequency shifted from the transmitter beam.

A.3.1 Airborne Laser Radar Applications

Possible airborne LADAR applications include the following:

- Aircraft guidance (obstacle avoidance and terrain following);
- Tactical imaging systems (surveillance and reconnaissance); and
- Wind velocity measurement (clear air turbulence and severe storm sensor).

Some of these potential applications are described in the following paragraphs.

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A.3.2 Airborne Surveillance and Reconnaissance

Laser systems offer several advantages over the standard photographic and microwave radar methods for airborne surveillance and reconnaissance, such as:

- The high optical resolution and small aperture associated with photographic systems can be made available during both night and day;
- Passive beacons utilizing retro-reflection are extremely light and small, of the order of millimetres in size; and
- By gating the receiver, the range to scene can be determined and foreground backscatter eliminated.

Line-scan systems use a narrow laser beam to scan the target area. The return energy is detected and then recorded in synchronism on a film or television monitor. Gated-TV systems flood the target area with a short pulse of radiation and use an image tube which can be switched on just before the arrival of the return energy. This allows a range determination and also helps to suppress false returns from haze or obstructions in the foreground. These systems can be used for night-time operation, relatively covert observations, and using a retro-reflector, for target identification, search and rescue, and landing aids.

In this section the use of lasers and their advantages in airborne surveillance and reconnaissance applications will be discussed.

A.3.2.1 Advantages of Laser Illumination

The short wavelength of laser radiation offers high resolution with extremely small size transmitting or receiving apertures. The diffraction-limited property of a laser allows concentration of the radiation in an area of diameter as small as one centimetre with a 10 cm aperture. Although this allows illumination of a very small target area, in practice one would normally use larger illumination areas. For co-operative targets, the optical wavelengths offer extremely efficient and lightweight passive beacons or retro-reflectors. Optical retro-reflectors focus the return signal into a very narrow beam and increase the target reflection. For example a triangular corner retro-reflector has a backscatter cross-section given by:

$$\sigma = \frac{4\pi a^4}{3\lambda^2} \quad (\text{A.2})$$

where a is the edge length. Thus a retro-reflector with a one centimetre edge length has an effective backscatter cross-section of approximately 400 m² at a wavelength of 10.6 μm. This is increased to approximately 4000 m² at a wavelength of 1.06 μm. This simple beacon capability is especially valuable for co-operative tracking, as a landing aid, for search and rescue operations, and in target identification.

A.3.2.2 Systems and Applications

There are two basic types of systems which utilize laser sources for obtaining images from an airborne platform. These systems implement line-scan and gated television modes. In the first method a narrow laser beam is scanned over the ground and the return radiation measured by a spectrally filtered optical detector on board the aircraft. In a gated TV system the whole scene is illuminated by a short pulse of laser radiation and the image recorded through a regular optical system except that the image tube is gated such that it only records the return optical image after a finite delay time, determined by the range to the target area.

The line-scan and gated-TV systems offer both complimentary and unique capabilities compared with normal photography or microwave radar. For example, compared to normal photography, the line-scan system can operate on a 24-hour basis since it supplies its own source of illumination. Side-looking

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microwave radar also has a full-time capability and has a much larger area of coverage. However, the limiting resolution is far superior for laser systems, which is very important in certain applications. In the case of the gated-TV system, again the night-time capability has marked advantages over photography, and in addition, the gating facility allows penetration of haze when normal visibility is poor. All these attributes offer distinct advantages for many forms of reconnaissance, although the specific gains are dependent upon the mission.

Beyond the general advantages for obtaining photographic reconnaissance as well as tactical surveillance, the use of simple lightweight passive beacons offers several advantages in certain instances, such as: search and rescue operations, where a downed pilot is supplied with a tiny retro-reflector to aid in location; target identification, where suitable beacons may be used to identify friendly targets; and landing aids, where the retro-reflectors can act as markers for landing strips.

A.3.3 Obstacle Warning Systems

Lasers have also found applications in helping to solve the problems of very low level flight by military aircraft. Military aircraft adopt this low altitude mode of flight in order to enhance their war-zone penetration capability. However, flight at very low levels greatly increases the probability of striking the terrain or man-made obstacles such as wires, poles, towers or buildings.

Conventional radar has the capability to provide a terrain following mode; however, it is inadequate for development into a reliable obstacle warning system. Although microwave systems were the first to be investigated in an attempt to develop obstacle warning systems, these investigations revealed that such radars are not suitable for this application. The nature of the inadequacy is twofold:

- The resolution of microwave wavelengths results in a very low and insufficient energy density at the target (obstacle); and
- At microwave frequencies much of the energy that is incident on the obstacle is reflected according to Snell's Law and therefore, unless the beam is incident on the obstacle at very close to 90 degrees, the energy is reflected away from the receiver.

For a laser radar to be effective as a terrain following and obstacle avoidance system it must meet certain operational criteria of performance. These criteria in turn will dictate the system design.

A.3.3.1 Operational Requirements for an OWS

In order to achieve mission effectiveness in the present threat environment, Western military aircraft operations have focused on-terrain or nap-of-the-earth flying. This is the tactic of employing the aircraft in such a manner as to utilize the terrain profile to enhance survivability by degrading the enemy's ability to visually, optically or electronically detect or locate the aircraft. The radar is required to maintain the aircraft flight at a preset altitude above the terrain. Since the adoption of this philosophy, the incidence of obstacle strike accidents has grown.

For an Obstacle Warning System (OWS) to be effective it must meet certain requirements. The first and most important requirement is reliable detection of all obstacles at almost all angles of incidence of radiation with a very high probability of detection and very low false alarm rate. By all obstacles, it is meant terrain masses, buildings, poles, towers, power cables and indeed any structure which may pose a hazard to low, fast flying aircraft.

The need for a high probability of detection is obvious since no obstacle must go undetected. A low false alarm rate is required to prevent spurious warnings that would cause the pilot to increase his altitude without real need, thus making him a better target.

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Another operational requirement is the minimum detection range. This will depend upon the aircraft speed, climb angle capability (i.e., very different for helicopter and for airplane platforms), and pilot reaction time. As an example, for an airplane flying straight and level at 300 m/sec and allowing a reasonable pilot reaction time and aircraft response time of between five to ten seconds, detection ranges of about two to three kilometres are adequate. For helicopter applications, this range is generally reduced by an order of magnitude or more.

The system should, ideally, perform all of its required functions in all weather, day and night. In practice however, laser radiation is not capable of all weather operation and the best trade-off of system characteristics must be looked at.

A.3.4 Airborne Wind Velocity Measurements

Extreme wind turbulence is known as wind-shear and the most extreme form of wind-shear is known as a microburst. These phenomena have been blamed for several aircraft accidents in the past few years. The danger is in the fact that, if an aircraft flies into wind-shear at low altitudes without warning, it lacks the height to allow the pilot to compensate for the way the change in wind speed affects the aircraft flight path. Figure A-6 [3] illustrates the way the wind direction and speed change to push an aircraft off course.

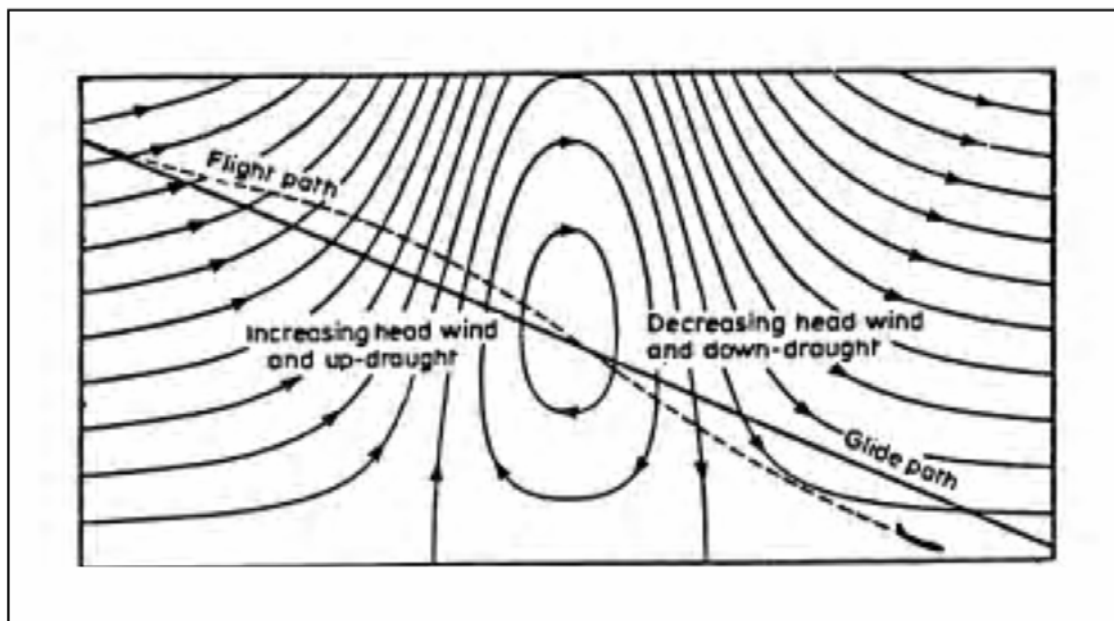


Figure A-6: The Wind-Shear Problem.

Federal Aviation Administration Advisory Circulars in the United States provide guidance for pilots on low-level wind-shear and describe it as: "A change in wind direction and/or speed in a very short distance in the atmosphere". The circulars noted that, under certain conditions, the atmosphere is capable of producing some dramatic shears very close to the ground; for example wind direction changes of 180 degrees with speed changes of 50 knots or more within 200 ft of the ground have been observed.

A microburst lasts for a short period of time, about 15 minutes, and occurs over a distance of about three to four kilometres. Typically, the downdraft in a microburst could be travelling at between 2000 to 5000 ft/min. When flying through a microburst, the aircraft initially encounters a head wind which lifts it above its correct path. The pilot's natural reaction is to bring the aircraft back onto its correct path by, for example, reducing

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engine thrust. Within a few seconds the aircraft encounters a tail wind which will take the aircraft below its flight path. Now the aircraft needs more lift but the engine thrust has already been reduced and it will take the engine several seconds to respond to provide more power and thus produce the required lift. If the pilot is aware of the wind speed in front of the aircraft and has sufficient warning of impending wind-shear, it is possible for him to take the necessary corrective action.

Conventional Doppler radars have been experimented for many years endeavouring to study such atmospheric phenomena as convective cloud dynamics, boundary layer kinematics, and turbulence properties [4]. Most meteorological radars operate at wavelengths between 3 and 10 cm, therefore they can only detect particles of the order of a few hundred microns in diameter. They are of little use for studying atmospheric dynamics in clear-air regions and are used primarily to detect severe storms. A more appropriate remote sensor for providing clear-air wind measurements is coherent laser Doppler radar.

The methods of sensing wind velocity using a laser radar are based on the assumption that aerosols are fully entrained in the air mass motion caused by the wind. The laser provides an extremely bright source with a narrow spectral width which, when focused on an object, can give sufficient scattered radiation to permit measurement of very low velocities by means of heterodyne detection methods. This process is termed Laser Doppler Velocimetry (LDV).

Laser Doppler systems have been under research for some time and the main aim initially was to provide a system to make remote measurements of the wind so that very large changes (e.g., wind-shear) could be identified. Systems are now under development that can be fitted into the nose of an aircraft and can be used to measure the wind speed in front of the aircraft where it is unaffected by the airflow around the fuselage or wings. Furthermore, laser Doppler systems that can measure wind speed and wind changes accurately could prove useful in the design of an auto-throttle system that would help to reduce the workload of the pilot. This system could be used on both military and civilian aircraft to improve safety, particularly during takeoffs and landings.

A.3.5 Multi-Sensor Systems

Laser radar, while being a powerful sensor for airborne applications, still has its limitations. As an obstacle warning or an attack sensor its range is degraded by adverse weather. When used for terrain flying, its narrow beamwidth does not allow wide coverage, as does conventional radar; consequently, it can only be used as a backup system. However, as part of a multi-sensor system, laser radar could be very powerful. An example is the combination of a laser radar with a Forward Looking Infra-Red (FLIR) sensor in a single system. This solution offers night vision using the FLIR with the terrain flying and obstacle avoidance capabilities of the laser.

Figure A-7 is an example of a combined radar and electronic surveillance system which could perform five different functions:

- Passive listening, for gathering intelligence on other radar and transmissions over a wide frequency band;
- Laser obstacle avoidance and terrain following for covert operation;
- Primary radar for use in bad weather or as a cueing system for laser radar;
- Passive detection for accurate determination of the bearing of jammers or other radars; and
- Real-time passive night vision.

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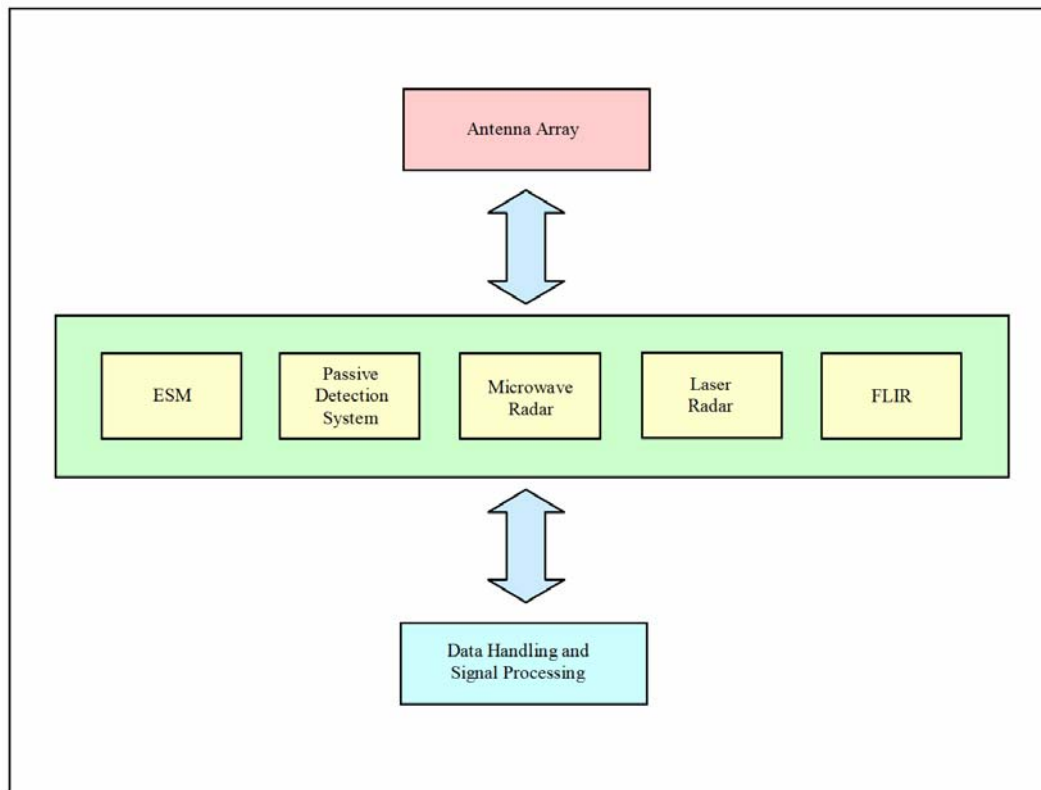


Figure A-7: Example of Multi-Sensor System.

The control of these functions would obviously involve complex computer processing which would respond to the various operational situations. Considerable research is currently underway addressing the problem of laser sensors integration in airborne integrated nav-attack, reconnaissance and electronic warfare systems.

A.4 DIRECTED ENERGY WEAPONS

The first airborne Directed Energy Weapon (DEW) was tested in the mid-1970's, under a program called the Airborne Laser Laboratory (ALL). The tested laser was a gas dynamic CO₂ system (400 kW version) developed by AVCO Everett and, later, by United Technologies in the US. The ALL system was installed on a KC-135 aircraft, along with an elaborate beam director. The program was technically successful (despite schedule slippages and an early missed shot), and the ability of the system to shoot down missiles in flight was demonstrated [5].

In the late seventies, further programs were funded by the U.S. Navy, convinced that the threat of missiles launched against a flotilla of ships could be minimised by shipborne DEWs. These efforts resulted in the MIRACL laser, developed by TRW, and the Sea Lite Beam Director developed by Hughes. However, by the time MIRACL was operational, shipborne antimissiles and guns proved to be a more attractive choice due to their lower cost and more mature technology. If DEWs were too expensive and complex for the defence of tactical assets, the logic followed that they might be used to “take out” opponent's strategic military assets, such as satellites.

Although these early airborne and non-airborne applications did not reach the final operational stage, they served to develop several different laser technologies (primarily chemical and free electron lasers), which are now being used in current military developments and in a wide diversity of commercial applications.

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An airborne laser DEW system is now being developed in the US. The system, named ABL (“Air Borne Laser”), uses a high-energy laser mounted on a modified 747-400F aircraft to shoot down heater ballistic missiles in their boost phase. Particularly, a tracking laser beam illuminates the missile, and computers measure the distance and calculate its course and direction. After acquiring and locking onto the target, a second laser (with weapons-class strength) fires a 3- to 5-second burst from a turret located in the 747 nose. The missile is then destroyed over the launch area. A pictorial representation of the ABL operation concept is shown in Figure A-8.



Figure A-8: ABL Concept of Operation.

The airborne laser fires a Chemical Oxygen Iodine Laser, or COIL, which was invented at Phillips Lab in 1977. The laser fuel consists of the same chemicals found in hair bleach and Drano (hydrogen peroxide and potassium hydroxide) which are then combined with chlorine gas and water. The laser operates at an infrared wavelength of 1.315 microns, which is invisible to the eye. By recycling chemicals, building with plastics and using a unique cooling process, the COIL team was able to make the laser lighter and more efficient while, at the same time, increasing its power by 400 percent in five years. The flight-weighted ABL module is similar in performance and power levels to the multi-hundred kilowatt class COIL Baseline Demonstration Laser (BDL-2) module demonstrated by TRW in August 1996. As its name implies, though, it is lighter and more compact than the earlier version due to the integration of advanced aerospace materials into the design of critical hardware components. For the operational ABL system, several modules have been linked together in series to achieve ABL required megawatt-class power level.

Atmospheric turbulence, which weakens and scatters the laser’s beam, is produced by fluctuations in air temperature (the same phenomenon that causes stars to twinkle). Adaptive optics relies on a deformable mirror, sometimes called a rubber mirror, to compensate for tilt and phase distortions in the atmosphere. The mirror has 341 actuators that change at a rate of about a 1,000 per second.

The Airborne Laser is a Major U.S. Defense Acquisition Program. Testing of the laser module has been completed. The Program Definition and Risk Reduction (PDRR) phase (detailed design, integration, and test) will culminate in a lethality demonstration in the year 2002. A follow-on Engineering Manufacturing and Development/Production (EMD) effort could then begin in the early 2003 time frame. A fleet of fully operational EMD systems is intended to satisfy Air Combat Command’s boost-phase Theater Air Defense requirements. If all goes as planned, a fleet of seven ABLs should be flying operational missions by 2008.

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Performance requirements for the Airborne Laser Weapons System are established by the operational scenarios and support requirements defined by the user, U.S. Air Combat Command, and by measured target vulnerability characteristics provided by the U.S. Air Force lethality and vulnerability community centred at the Phillips Laboratory. The ABL PDRR Program is supported by a robust technology insertion and risk reduction program to provide early confidence that scaling to EMD performance is feasible. The technology and concept design efforts provide key answers to the PDRR design effort in the areas of lethality, atmospheric characterization, beam control, aircraft systems integration, and environmental concerns. These efforts are the source of necessary data applied to exit criteria ensuring higher and higher levels of confidence are progressively reached at key milestones of the PDRR development.

A.5 AIRBORNE LASER DATA LINKS

Modern battlefield strategy is predicated on knowing where the enemy's (or potential enemy's) assets are located and their operational capability. This vital information is constantly being gathered and updated by various ground, space, and airborne sensors. The requirement to send ever increasing amounts of tactical military information between sensor aircraft and information processing facilities has begun to press the limits of present airborne data links, even when data compression techniques are used. Therefore, utilization of optical data links is being considered as a possible solution.

The feasibility of laser airborne data links was demonstrated in the mid-80's by the U.S. Air Force Research Laboratory HAVE LACE (Laser Airborne Communications Experiment) Program. This program developed and tested two laser communications terminals that operated at 19.2 kilobits/sec. The terminals were tested using two KC-135 aircraft that nominally flew at 20,000 to 25,000 feet (ft) altitudes with separation distances out to 160 km. The most significant result of the HAVE LACE flights was the difficulty of initial signal acquisition between the two moving platforms, since it had to be performed manually. However, once signal acquisition was accomplished, tracking proved to be robust and communications performance was consistently measured at 10^{-6} Bit Error Rate (BER) or better.

Since the HAVE LACE program, laser terminal development and data rates have improved dramatically. Therefore, various research programs have been undertaken in order to fully exploit the potentials of this technology, mainly for spaceborne and airborne applications. Another U.S. Air force program is currently ongoing to develop a wideband laser data link operating at 810 and 852 nm. In September 1995, the program successfully ground demonstrated a 1.1 gigabit/second full duplex data link over a distance of 150 km (Hawaii Islands). Successively, the system used in the ground demonstration was redesigned and installed in two jet aircraft for flight demonstration at distances up to 500 km. The demonstration flights, performed in September 1998, were successful and proved the ability of the system to communicate in the upper atmosphere to 500 km with a BER of 10^{-6} . The tests also provided data on atmospheric attenuation and beam scintillation. Furthermore, data on the effects of aircraft airflow upon beam steering were also collected. These data, and the information obtained from similar developments, are now being used for other laser communication development efforts (e.g., an air-to-space capability).

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Annex B – LASER RANGE EQUATION AND DETECTION PERFORMANCE

B.1 LASER RANGE EQUATION

Since the subject of our discussion is electromagnetic propagation, the microwave radar range equation also applies to laser systems [1]:

$$P_R = \frac{P_T G_T}{4\pi R^2} \times \frac{\sigma}{4\pi R^2} \times \frac{\pi D^2}{4} \times \tau_{atm} \tau_{sys} \quad (B.1)$$

where:

- P_R = received signal power (W);
- P_T = transmitter power (W);
- G_T = transmitter antenna gain;
- α = transmitter beamwidth;
- σ = effective target cross section (m²);
- K_a = aperture illumination constant;
- R = system range to target (m);
- λ = wavelength (m);
- D = aperture diameter (m);
- τ_{atm} = atmospheric transmission factor; and
- τ_{sys} = system transmission factor.

With laser systems [2], the transmitter antenna gain is substituted by the aperture gain, expressed by the ratio of the steradian solid angle of the transmitter beamwidth (α)² to that of the solid angle of a sphere, which is equal to the relation:

$$G_T = 4\pi/\alpha^2 \quad (B.2)$$

For laser beamwidths on the order of 1 mrad, the typical aperture gain at laser wavelengths is about 70 dB. In the far field, we may also write the transmitter beamwidth as:

$$\alpha = K_a \lambda / D \quad (B.3)$$

Substituting the above expressions for transmitter aperture gain (B.2) and beamwidth (B.3), equation (B.1) becomes:

$$P_R = \frac{P_t \sigma D^4 \tau_{atm} \tau_{sys}}{16 R^4 \lambda^2 K_a^2} \quad (\text{in the far-field}) \quad (B.4)$$

Eq. (B.4), obtained from the standard radar range equation, applies only in the far field of the aperture. At typical microwave bands of $\lambda = 1$ to 10^{-3} m, the far-field distances are quite short, as shown in Figure B-1. The far-field (*Fraunhofer*) region of an aperture is typically concerned with the distance $2D^2/\lambda$ to infinity; in this vicinity, the generalised range equation applies. In some cases, the far field distance occurs within the feed horn assembly of a microwave antenna. As illustrated by the figure, at $\lambda = 1.064 \mu\text{m}$ (Nd:YAG laser), a 10 cm aperture has a far-field distance of approximately 20 km. As a result, it is not unusual to operate in the near-field of the optical systems; thus modifications to the range equation to account for near-field operation are required. This near-field effect modifies the beamwidth such that:

ANNEX B – LASER RANGE EQUATION AND DETECTION PERFORMANCE

$$\alpha = \sqrt{\left(\frac{K_a D}{R}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{K_a \lambda}{D}\right)^2} \quad (\text{B.5})$$

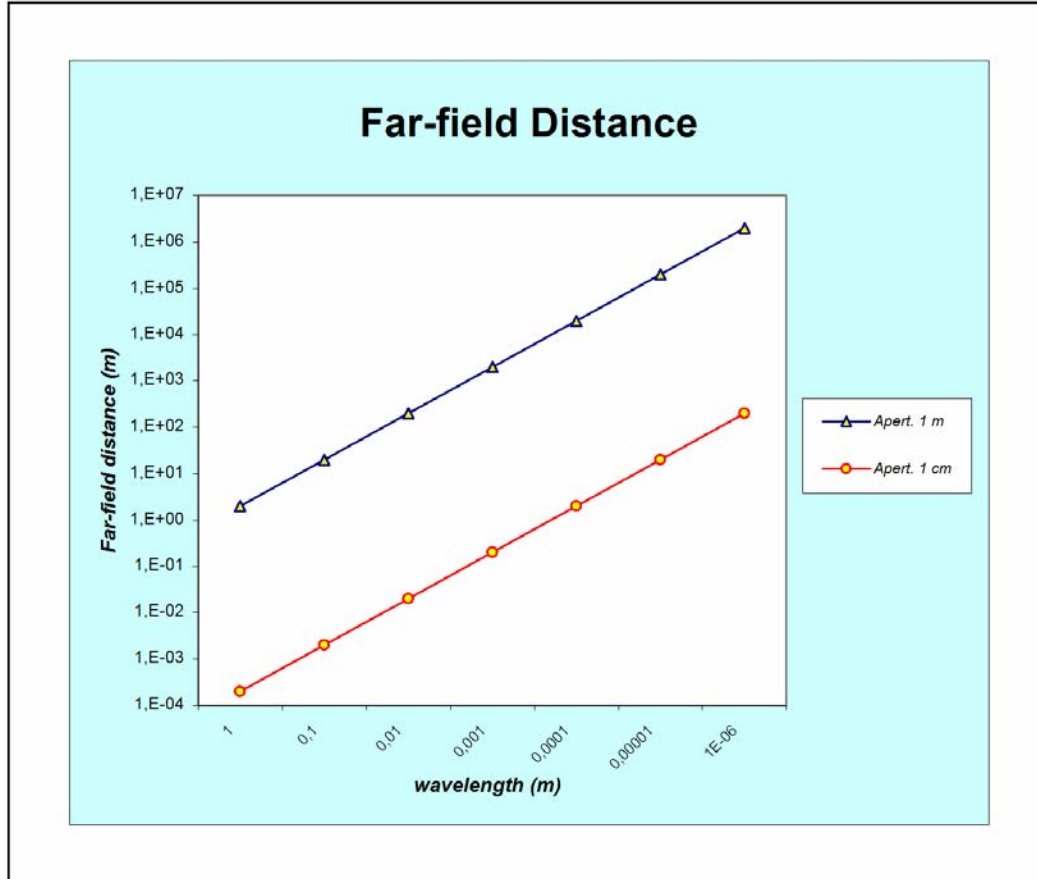


Figure B-1: Far-Field Distance versus λ for 1 m and 10 cm Apertures.

B.2 RANGE EQUATION DEPENDENCE ON TARGET AREA

The effective target cross-section is defined as:

$$\sigma = \frac{4\pi}{\Omega} \rho dA \quad (\text{B.6})$$

where:

- Ω = scattering solid angle of target (sr);
- ρ = target reflectivity; and
- dA = target area.

Both specular and diffuse reflection components may be considered. However, in practice, physicists tend to replace Ω with the value associated with the standard scattering diffuse target (*Lambertian* target) having a solid angle of π steradians. Thus, eq. (B.6) reduces to:

$$\sigma = 4\rho dA \quad (\text{B.7})$$

The cross-sectional area of a laser beam transmitted by a circular aperture from a distance R , is given by:

$$dA = \frac{\pi R^2 \theta_r^2}{4} \quad (\text{B.8})$$

Depending on the target-laser spot relative dimensions we may distinguish three different types of targets: extended, point and linear targets. The various forms of the laser range equation applicable to these three cases are given in the following paragraphs.

B.2.1 Extended Target

For an extended target (Figure B-2), all incident radiation is involved in the reflection process. Thus, for an extended *Lambertian* target we have:

$$\sigma_{ext} = \pi \rho R^2 \theta_T^2 \quad (\text{B.9})$$

Hence, using eq. (B.4), we have:

$$P_R = \frac{\pi P_T \rho D^2 \tau_{atm} \tau_{sys}}{16 R^2} \quad (\text{B.10})$$

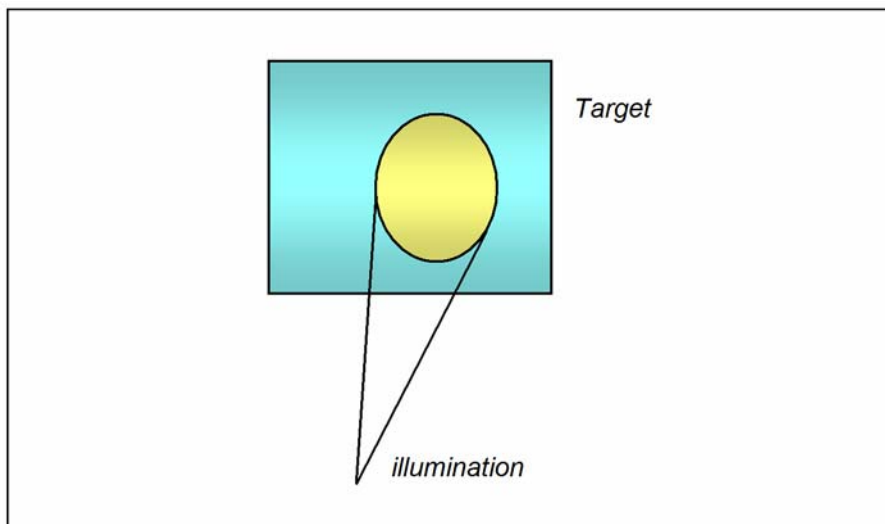


Figure B-2: Extended Target.

Therefore, with narrow laser beams, we may have an inverse range square dependency of the range performance obtained with a certain target, compared to the standard inverse fourth power of range dependency of microwave systems.

B.2.2 Linear Target

A linear target, such as a wire (Figure B-3), can have a length larger than the illuminated area but a smaller width (d). For a typical diffuse (*Lambertian*) wire target, the target cross-section may be shown to be approximately:

$$\sigma_{wire} = 4 \rho_{wire} R \theta d \quad (\text{B.11})$$

ANNEX B – LASER RANGE EQUATION AND DETECTION PERFORMANCE

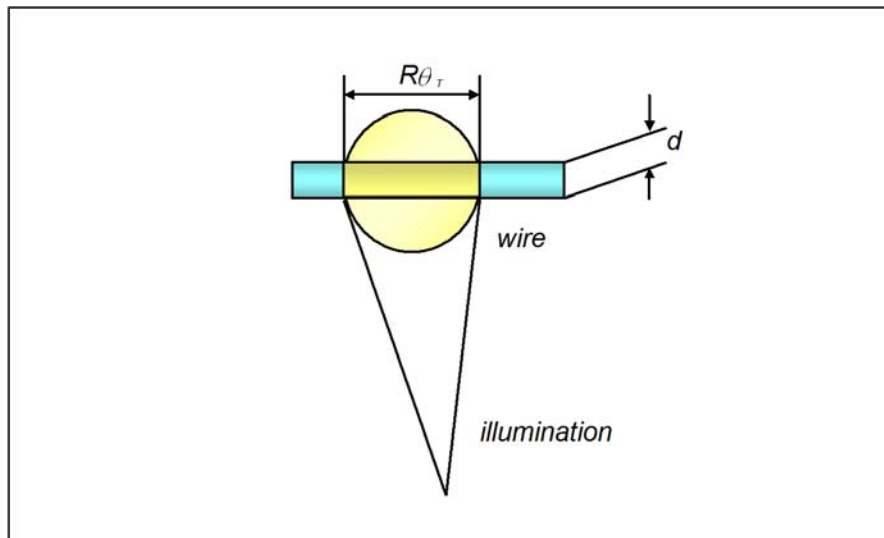


Figure B-3: Linear Target.

Therefore, the range equation becomes:

$$P_R = \frac{P_T \sigma_{wire} d D^3 \tau_{atm} \tau_{sys}}{4 R^3 \lambda K_a} \quad (B.12)$$

B.2.3 Point Target

For a *Lambertian* diffuse point target (Figure B-4), the cross section becomes:

$$\sigma_{pt} = 4 \rho \pi d A \quad (B.13)$$

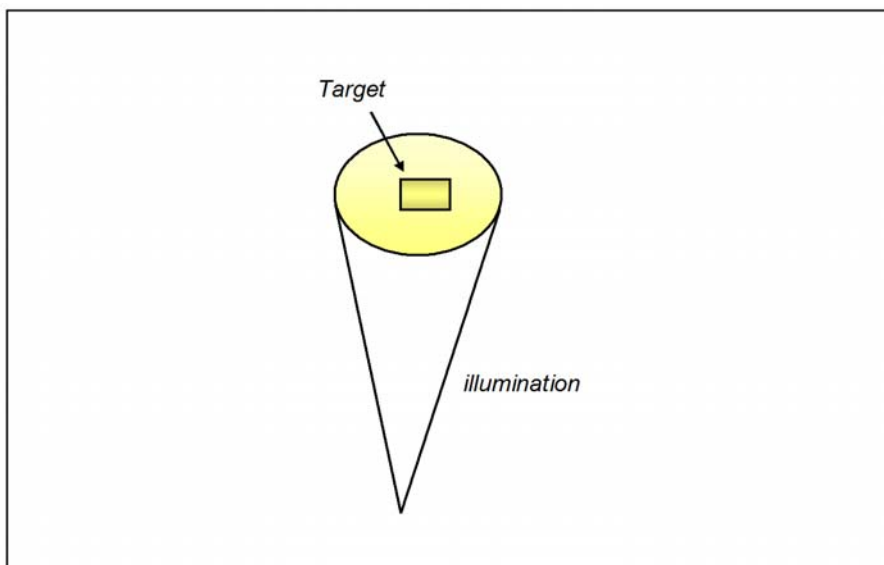


Figure B-4: Point Target.

Substituting the point target cross section in the range equation gives:

$$P_R = \frac{P_T \rho_d A D^4}{4 R^4 K_a^2 \lambda^2} \tau_{sys} \tau_{atm} \quad (B.14)$$

B.3 RECEIVER DETECTION TECHNIQUES

Figure B-5 shows diagrams relative to Incoherent Detection (ID) and Coherent Detection (CD) receivers [2]. ID receivers at optical wavelengths are similar to video radiometers receivers (i.e., envelope detectors at microwave wavelengths). However, optical receivers have an additional term besides the signal term (P_{SIG}), the optical background power (P_{BK}) which is due to undesired signals such as sunlight, cloud reflections, flares, etc. The received optical power, after suitable filtering, is applied to the optical detector. Square law detection then occurs, producing a video bandwidth electrical signal.

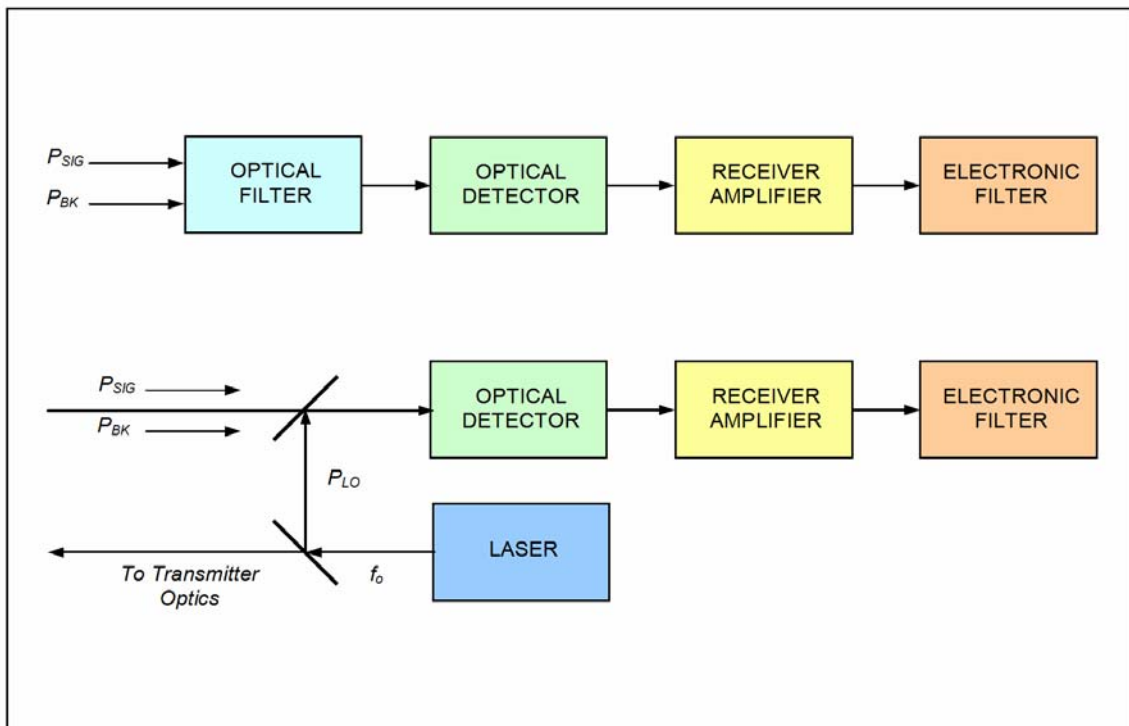


Figure B-5: Laser Receiver Systems.

The coherent detection receiver is similar to the incoherent; however, a portion of the laser signal (f_o), is coupled to the optical detector via beamsplitters. As a result, the optical detector has the local oscillator power (P_{LO}) in addition to the received signal power (P_{SIG}), and the competing background terms (P_{BK}).

B.4 BACKGROUND NOISE TERMS

Noise terms in an optical receiver are not the same considered in the microwave receivers. Particularly, background noise in optical receivers includes reflections of signals from the earth, the sun, the atmosphere, clouds, or any other source that constitutes an undesired signal to the receiver. Signal-induced noise refers to the noise caused by the receiver signal itself coming into the detector. Also the received signal causes a noise

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to be generated. This noise is called quantum noise (*Poisson*) because it is induced by the signal when the signal exists.

The following equations are those associated with calculating the amount of background radiation that may be incident upon a receiver [2]:

- *Blackbody Radiation*

$$P_{BB} = \frac{\varepsilon k T^4 \Delta\lambda \Omega_R A_R}{\pi} \eta_{SYS} \eta_{ATM} \quad (B.15)$$

- *Solar Backscatter*

$$P_{SB} = k_l S_{IRR} \Delta\lambda \Omega_R \rho \eta_{SYS} A_R \quad (B.16)$$

- *Atmospheric Solar Scatter*

$$P_{NS} = k_l S_{IRR} \Delta\lambda \Omega_R I_S \eta_{SYS} A_R \quad (B.17)$$

where:

- ε = target emissivity;
- ρ = target reflectivity;
- T = temperature (°K);
- $\Delta\lambda$ = optical bandwidth (μm);
- A_R = receiver area (m²);
- k_l = fraction of solar radiation penetrating Earth's atmosphere;
- S_{IRR} = solar irradiance (W/m²-μm);
- I_S = atmospheric scatter coefficient;
- η_{SYS} = system optical efficiency;
- Ω_R = solid angle over which energy radiates from radiating body; and
- σ_T = Stefan-Boltzmann constant (5.67×10^{-12} W cm⁻² °K⁻⁴).

B.5 SNR EXPRESSION DEVELOPMENT

In general, the signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) of a laser radar system can be expressed in the form [2]:

$$SNR = \frac{i_{SIG}^2}{i_{SN}^2 + i_{TH}^2 + i_{BK}^2 + i_{DK}^2 + i_{LO}^2} \quad (B.18)$$

where:

- i_{SIG}^2 = mean square signal current;
- i_{SN}^2 = mean square shot noise current;
- i_{TH}^2 = mean square thermal noise current;
- i_{BK}^2 = mean square background noise current;

i_{DK}^2 = mean square dark noise current; and
 i_{LO}^2 = mean square local oscillator noise current (CD systems only).

The mean squared background noise term may be expressed as:

$$i_{BK}^2 = 2qP_{BK}\rho_i B \quad (B.19)$$

where:

q = electron charge (1.602×10^{-19} Coulombs);
 P_{BK} = background power (W);
 ρ_i = current responsivity (A/W); and
 B = electronic bandwidth (Hz).

Shot noise is due to fluctuations in the detector output caused by the random arrival of signal photons. The mean square shot noise current is given by:

$$i_{SN}^2 = 2qP_{SIG}\rho_i BG^2 \quad (B.20)$$

where G is the detector gain.

In the absence of photons at the detector, there is a current flowing, termed the detector dark current (I_{DK}). The mean square dark current term in eq. (B.18) is given by:

$$i_{SN}^2 = 2qI_{DK}B \quad (B.21)$$

The thermal noise current term can be expressed as:

$$i_{TH}^2 = \frac{4kTBNF}{R_L} \quad (B.22)$$

where:

NF = receiver noise factor;
 k = Boltzmann's constant (1.39×10^{-23} J/°K); and
 R_L = detector load resistance.

For coherent detection systems, assuming that a photovoltaic detector is employed, the local oscillator induced noise is given by:

$$i_{LO}^2 = 2qP_{LO}\rho_i B \quad (B.23)$$

where P_{LO} is the local oscillator power.

For a photoconductor detector, an additional noise term, called generation-recombination noise (i_{GR}^2), can arise:

$$i_{GR}^2 = 4q\rho_i(P_{LO} + P_{SIG})B \quad (B.24)$$

The signal current, for incoherent and coherent systems, is determined as:

$$i_{SIG} = \frac{\eta_D q P_{SIG} G}{hf} \text{ incoherent} \quad (B.25)$$

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$$i_{SIG} = \frac{\eta_D q P_{SIG} G}{hf} \text{ coherent} \quad (B.26)$$

where η_D is the detector quantum efficiency.

B.6 INCOHERENT AND COHERENT DETECTION COMPARISON

Considering the various receiver noise and signal terms, two forms of the SNR equation can be obtained, for incoherent and coherent detection systems. These two equations are presented below [2].

- *Incoherent detection*

$$SNR = \frac{\eta_D P_{LO} P_{SIG}}{hf [2B(P_{SIG} + P_{BK})] + K_i(P_{DK} + P_{TH})} \quad (B.27)$$

- *Coherent detection*

$$SNR = \frac{\eta_D P_{LO} P_{SIG}}{hf B(P_{LO} + P_{SIG} + P_{BK}) + K_j(P_{DK} + P_{TH})} \quad (B.28)$$

where:

- η_D = detector quantum efficiency;
- h = Planck's constant (6.626×10^{-34});
- f = transmission frequency;
- B = electronic bandwidth;
- P_{SIG} = received signal power;
- P_{BK} = background power;
- P_{DK} = equivalent dark current power = $A_d B / (D^*)^2$;
- P_{TH} = equivalent receiver thermal noise = $\frac{4kTBNF}{R}$;
- P_{LO} = reference local oscillator power;
- k = Boltzmann's constant (1.39×10^{-23} J/°K);
- T = receiver temperature (290°K);
- NF = receiver noise figure;
- R_L = resistance;
- K_i = η_d / ρ_i^2 ;
- K_j = $hf / 2qp$;

and:

- ρ_i = detector current responsivity (A/W);
- D^* = specific detectivity (cm-Hz^{1/2}/W);
- A_d = detector area (cm²);
- q = electron charge (1.6×10^{-19} Coulombs).

The SNR for the incoherent system has the received signal power squared in its numerator, and has a summation of noise terms associated with the return signal, the background signal, the dark current, and the thermal noise of the receiver in the denominator. The returned signal power and the background power are included as noise sources in the detection process because of the random photon arrival rate

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(*Poisson* noise). In the coherent detection system, the local oscillator power is an additional source of noise (compared to the incoherent system), and the numerator is related to the product of the received signal power and the local oscillator power. The local oscillator power is very important in the detection process; here, it may be increased so that it overwhelms all of the other noise sources. As a result, the local oscillator power in the denominator cancels out the local oscillator power in the numerator; the SNR is directly proportional to the received signal power, rather than to the received signal power squared (as with the incoherent system). Additionally, because the local oscillator power becomes the predominant noise source, the coherent detection system typically is background immune, since only signals that are phase coherent with the local oscillator are efficiently detected.

For coherent detection where the local oscillator power is increased to provide shot-noise-limited operation of the receiver, the SNR expression for coherent detection reduces to:

$$SNR = \frac{i_{SIG}^2}{i_N^2} = \frac{\eta_D P_{SIG}}{hfB} \text{ or } SNR = \frac{\eta_D E_{SIG}}{hf} \quad (B.29)$$

where E_{SIG} is the received signal energy, B is the matched filter bandwidth ($B = 1/T$) and SNR represents the number of detected photons if $\eta_D = 1$.

For a background noise-limited incoherent receiver, eq. (B.27) becomes:

$$SNR = \frac{\eta_D P_{SIG}^2}{2hfBP_{BK}} \quad (B.30)$$

Figure B-6 [2], illustrates the reference transmitter power versus SNR relationship for coherent and incoherent detection laser radar systems using a 100-ns pulse width, with $\eta_D = 0.5$, $hf = 1.9 \times 10^{-20}$ Joules,

$D^* = 2 \times 10^{10} \frac{cm\sqrt{Hz}}{W}$, $\sqrt{A_d} = 0.03$ cm, $\rho_i = 4$ A/W and $R = 1$ k Ω , at $\lambda = 10.6$ μ m. It may be observed

that as the SNR requirement increases, the transmitter power of the coherent system increases linearly, and that of the incoherent system increases as the square root. In the limit, incoherent detection systems approach the sensitivity of coherent systems for very large SNRs. For a typical SNR requirement of 100 (20 dB), the coherent system is seen to have a 30-dB increased sensitivity over that of an incoherent system.

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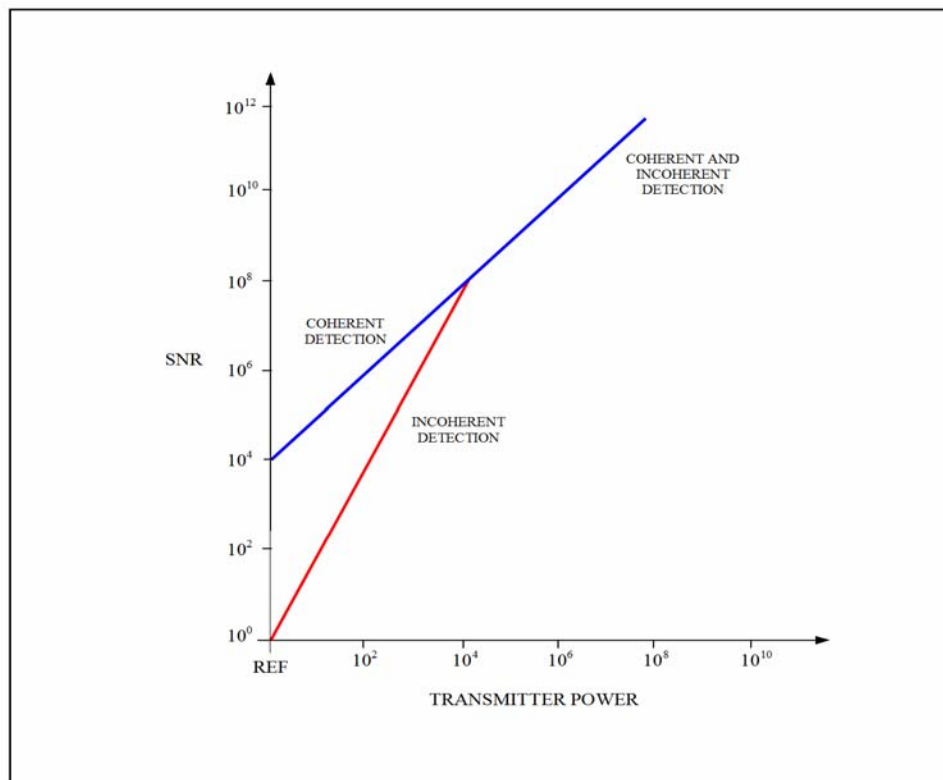


Figure B-6: Transmitter Power versus SNR for Coherent and Incoherent Detection.

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