



An Introduction to Laser Weapon Systems

Glen P. Perram

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This course arises from an almost 40-year history of graduate studies in high-energy lasers and optics at the Air Force Institute of Technology. In particular, a series of short courses for scientists and engineers new to the field of directed energy have been developed as summaries of graduate courses in lasers, optics, spectroscopy, atmospheric, systems engineering, and electro-optics. More recently, the Directed Energy Professional Society, with funding from the High Energy Laser Joint Technology Office sponsored the development of a 32-hour short course entitled Laser Weapons Systems. This textbook parallels the material presented in the course. This text is primarily intended for scientists and engineers with a bachelor of science degree. However, many undergraduate students and non-degreed technicians often find the more conceptual material valuable. The course emphasizes concepts, terminology, current technology capabilities, and systems concepts. The course does not develop key relationships from first principles. Limitations on the effectiveness of HEL weapons and key performance trade-offs are addressed. Applications of these concepts to current systems include the historical Airborne Laser Laboratory, Airborne Laser, Tactical High-Energy Laser, Advanced Tactical Laser, and Space-Based Laser programs. The course includes a number of extended worked problems, including simplified calculations of weapon effectiveness for a high altitude, long-range, air-to-air engagement and a short-range tactical scenario. The text covers a broad range of technical disciplines, some at considerable depth, making a reasonable course for graduate students. In a few chapters, the prerequisites in spectroscopy, chemical kinetics, optics, or laser physics may be challenging to the casual reader.

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