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â€œThose sync amps sure are shooting good!â€•

Description

As Engineer Officer in a surface ship, the maintenance and operation of the ships gyroscopes fell under my purview. We were in the South Atlantic Ocean, operating with one of the South American navies for a surface gunnery exercise.

The Weapons Officer was having a bad day, as the fall of shot from our main guns (5 â€œ/54 caliber) wasnÃ¢â‚¬â„¢t landing near the towed target. The CO, being the warfighter he was, as well as being a gunnery expert, asked Weps what the problem was. Reportedly, without much hesitation, he proclaimed the signal amplifiers for the gyros werenÃ¢â‚¬â„¢t operating properly and therefore, the gun orders from the fire control system was off.

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Gee, thanks, John, is really all I could think about as Captain Maxiner chewed on me about equipment not operating to specs. I called Ensign Hale and got him to work running checks. After a few hours, Nolan came back, showing me the sync amp outputs were all within specifications. I reported this to the Captain. What I found out later that day was that while we were scratching our heads and checking the gyros, the fire control division had been madly swapping out circuit cards in the MK 86 Gunfire Control System. If my sync amps were the problem, it was odd that they would be doing this kind of work on their system, particularly if you didnÃ¢â‚¬â„¢t know where the problem was.

It turned out Weps hosed me, but I did get a dig in a few days later when we were doing another gunnery shoot. I wandered up to the bridge, and stood behind the Co and Weps, as the guns pounded out round after round and got calls back over the radio from the tug that was towing the target sled of â€œAlpha Mikeâ€• over and over. â€œAMâ€• is the report that the round hit within close enough proximity to the target sled that it would have been a direct hit on a real ship.

I waited for several of the reports of success to come over the radio, then, when there was a lull in the firing, said loudly â€œThose sync amps sure are shooting good!â€• All I got was two hard, cold stares from the Captain and the Weapons Officer. All I could do was stand there and smile.

One small victory for the Engineering Department was racked up that day.

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