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COMPUTERIZED DEFENSE -- USS Ticonderoga, first of a new class of guided missile cruisers equipped with the AEGIS combat system, fires a missile from her forward launcher (top) during sea trials in the Gulf of Mexico. The 171-meter-long vessel is called the U.S. Navy's most extensively armed surface combatant. Its weapons, which include anti-air and anti-surface missiles, rapid firing deck guns, anti-submarine torpedos and rockets, and close-in weapons, are directed and fired from the AEGIS computer-controlled combat information center (bottom). The system can detect, track and engage hundreds of aircraft and missiles while continuously watching for new targets.

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