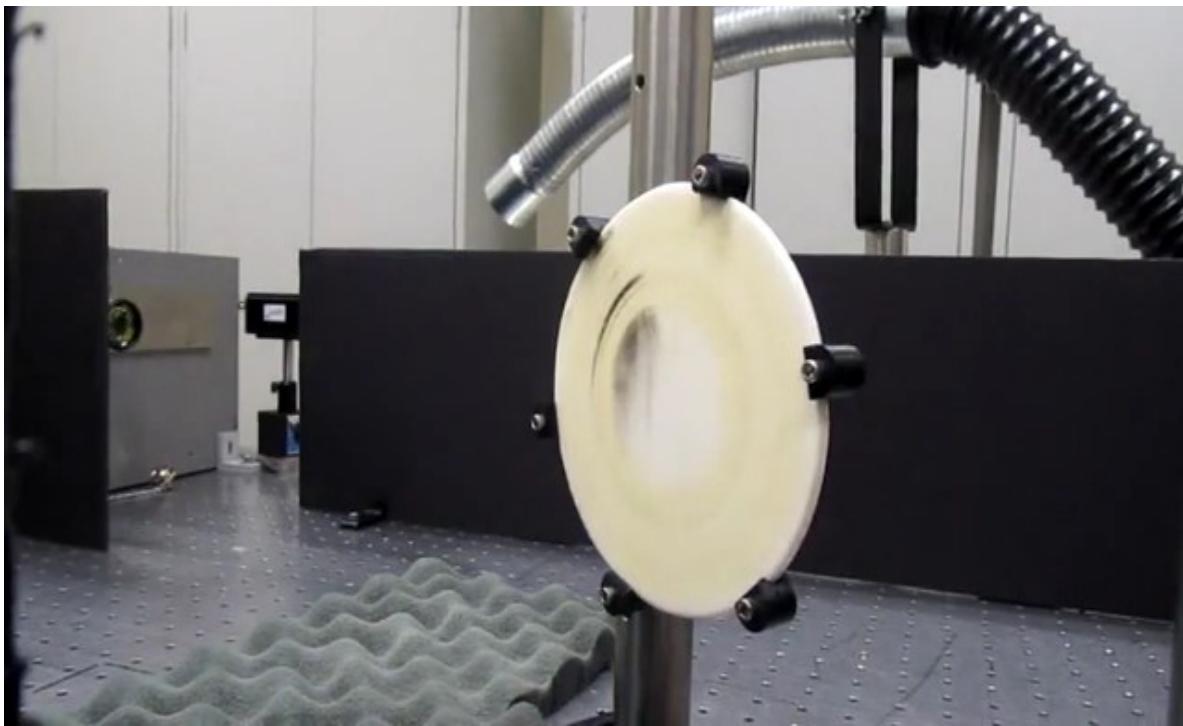


Menu

EMERGING TECH

# U.S. military is developing a sound weapon that sounds like a retro modem

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If you're a technology fan of a certain age (in your late 20s or beyond), the distinctively abrasive [dial-up tone of an old modem](#) may fill you with a warm sense of nostalgia. If the U.S. military has its way, however, it could soon have a totally different association for a large number of people: As an ear-splitting non-lethal weapon designed to annoy or even frighten enemies. And not just because of the promise of really slow download speeds!

The screeching sound is the result of [something called the Laser-Induced Plasma Effect](#). This involves firing a femtosecond [laser](#) to create a ball of plasma, which is then oscillated by a second nanolaser, causing it to produce sounds. It's the work of the Department of Defense's Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Development Program (JNLWD) and is intended as a directed energy weapon that could be used in a range of different conflict scenarios. (We like to think of it like a way more high-tech version of the [Rat Pack-blasting yacht](#) that Tony Soprano utilizes to intimidate an unscrupulous attorney in the "[Whitecaps](#)" episode of *The Sopranos*.)

Right now, the Laser-Induced Plasma Effect still mainly produces vintage modem-esque sounds like the one in the video above. However, long-term the team that developed it hopes to be able to manipulate it finely enough that it could be used to create human-sounding voices. The idea of using lasers to create voices out of thin air sounds crazy, but that is exactly what the Pentagon may be capable of within just a few years.

Depending on the mirror that is used to achieve the effect, the weapon's range could be extended to tens of kilometers. In fact, longer range applications may even turn out to be easier than short-range ones. That is because the [Kerr effect](#) — which refers to tiny changes in the refractive index thanks to electromagnetic field changes — is easier to create at a distance than it is at short range.

In addition to making sound, the Laser-Induced Plasma Effect technology could also be employed for assorted other laser applications, including producing both light and heat.

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## Awesome Tech You Can't Buy Yet: Tennis ball bots, eco-straws, smart swear jars

Check out our roundup of the best new crowdfunding projects and product announcements that hit the Web this week. You can't buy this stuff yet, but it sure is fun to gawk!

Posted 1 day ago — By [Drew Prindle](#)

## This robot eel glides through saltwater without making a sound

Engineers and marine biologists from the University of California, San Diego, have created an eel robot that swims silently through saltwater. It could one day be used for underwater exploration.

3 days ago — By [Luke Dormehl](#)

## Only newer Sonos models will get AirPlay 2, but that isn't as bad as it sounds

After previously announced it would bring AirPlay 2 to its speakers, Sonos has clarified that while newer and future models will get support, older models don't have the horsepower necessary to use it.

3 days ago — By [Kris Wouk](#)

## Snapchatters, how do you like the sound of unskippable video ads?

Snapchat will start testing unskippable six-second video ads from next month, as the platform continues to look for ways to turn a profit. Current data shows that most users skip through the app's video ads.

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### **Yamaha ditches the wires with new MusicCast Surround receivers and speakers**

Yamaha has announced three new A/V receivers, two new speakers, and a new subwoofer, all of which use its MusicCast Surround technology to wrap you in sound without the need for so many wires.

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