

Gunning for History



Photo courtesy, C. V. Glines

Today it's a 30-mm GAU-8/A gun on an A-10 Thunderbolt II, capable of knocking out a tank. On June 7, 1912, it was a hand-held Lewis machine gun on a Wright Model B. At College Park, Md., Capt. Charles deForest Chandler (left) became the first to fire an automatic weapon from an airplane. (Lt. Roy C. Kirtland, namesake of

Kirtland AFB, N. M., is shown at the controls.) Captain Chandler's success in hitting a ground target from 250 feet in the air prompted newspaper reporters to write that one day airmen would fire machine guns at enemy flyers. The War Department, however, would concede only that airplanes were good for reconnaissance.