

AEgis preparing for busy future

By PHIL TAYLOR
Times Staff Writer

When William Waite and Steven Hill were searching for a name for their defense contracting company, they wanted one that not only would be recognized instantly but would also describe their work.

They agreed on AEGis — from the Greek meaning shield or impregnable defense — which went right along with the contract work they do for MICOM, several weapon systems and the Strategic Defense Initiative.

One of the first business difficulties was figuring out how to run the A and E of AEGis together in the logo.

"It's a diphthong, you know, where the letters run together," said Waite, president of AEGis Research. "But I couldn't figure out how to run the letters together so I just blocked both of them."

Perhaps that's why the name of their company with the two vowels competing for attention stands out. The two engineering entrepreneurs agree the name has been effective, so much so that they sometimes receive resumes from people thinking their firm is an advertising firm or creative agency.

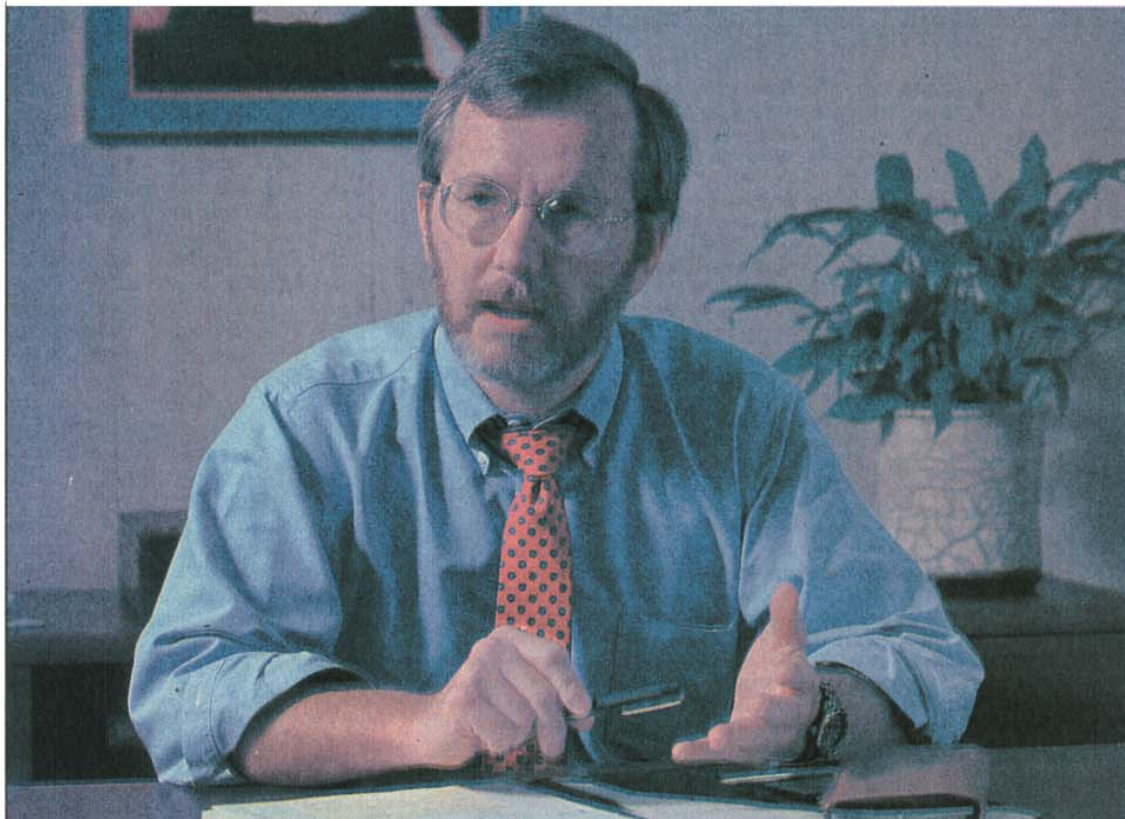
Actually it is a small, local business performing research and development for military and aerospace systems. AEGis specializes in simulation, placing models of systems into hypothetical situations to see if the system would work in reality.

In addition to actually designing and developing computer simulations, AEGis' program includes help with analyzing the system, showing how to use the simulation and reviewing simulation tests. The company also offers consulting work.

Despite only being incorporated since Sept. 1988, AEGis has assembled an impressive array of clients. The company has done work on the Avenger, Chaparral and SA-DARM missile systems and the Extended Air Defense Test Bed.

"Every client we have worked for so far we have gotten repeat business from," Hill said. "They have been satisfied and have told us so and have come back."

Waite and Hill's relationships with many of their clients began well before the creation of AEGis, back when the two worked for the Riverside Research Institute, a de-



Stuart Siniard/Huntsville Times

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fense contractor that has since left Huntsville.

Waite, a veteran engineer with degrees from Penn State, the University of Alabama in Huntsville and Union College in New York, first came to Huntsville in 1971 with the SKYLAB program. He began his work in simulation at MICOM and joined Riverside in 1985.

Hill joined Riverside in 1987 after graduating with honors from UAH. At Riverside, he worked for Waite on several weapons programs, including SDI.

But in time, the duo started to get restless. Talk about the company closing its Huntsville office only made them think more seriously about leaving Riverside to stake their own claim to the defense market.

"We wanted to do business in a way that we could take the initiative and look for work that we wanted to do and felt we could do

well," Hill said. "Basically we wanted to be more in control of how we did the work and what kind of product we provided the customer."

The logo and name were the least of their worries when they started up. But while the A and the E in the logo appeared to clash, Waite and Hill tried to blend their talents to work as a company, not as individuals.

Waite took charge of getting the company's first clients together while Hill, who serves as secretary/treasurer of the firm, put administrative and business structures into place.

"I think of it as a regular company with the structures, employees, and with history of relationships with customers," Waite said. "The company has done business with these people, and they think that the company did a good job. It's not just Steve they know or me

they know. It's the company they recognize."

Five employees, including Waite and Hill, work for AEGis Research. Besides its main office located at 3225 Bob Wallace Ave., the company also has a small office at Redstone Arsenal.

Hill said the company's future can easily extend into fields other than defense. He foresees doing safety tests and road analyses for the U.S. Department of Transportation or traffic control and radar tests for the Federal Aviation Administration.

Waite agreed, saying they have made an effort to insure that AEGis Research has room to grow.

"We have badges, a regular facility, regular accounting — everything's in good order," Waite said. "If we're lucky and we get work and we have a chance to grow, all the resources and structures will be there. We just have to find the opportunities to let that happen."