

KINETIC IMPACT MUNITIONS AND TASER GUNS:

TWO LESS LETHAL WEAPONS OPTIONS
FOR THE
WAYNE COUNTY
AIRPORT POLICE DEPARTMENT

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ABSTRACT

An evaluative research study examined two less-than-lethal weapons, kinetic impact weapons (beanbag shots) and Taser guns (specifically the Advanced Taser) for adoption by the Wayne County Airport Police Department to aid in maintaining security and order at the Detroit Metropolitan Airport in Romulus, Michigan. The purpose of this study was to additional weapons options to accomplish this goal. The research explored the question: Which less-than-lethal weapons would be be most effective and provide for the safest outcomes for police officers and subjects? Research methods included examining current articles obtained from the World Wide Web, professional journals and newspaper articles. It was found that both of these less-than-lethal weapons, particularly the Advanced Taser gun, would greatly benefit the officers of the Wayne County Airport police department as they work to maintain a safe and secure airport. Recommendations included the formation of detailed policies and procedures regarding the use of these weapons, as well as a quality officer training program.

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INTRODUCTION

Law enforcement officials are faced with several challenges, one being apprehending, subduing and taking individuals suspected of criminal behaviors into police custody. In addition, a police officer may be faced with the task of controlling potentially violent crowd or riot situations. The procedures regarding these scenarios may seem straightforward, but these tasks are actually multifaceted and involve many different variables for the police officer to think about and monitor, such as gaining control or order without inflicting lethal harm to the suspects, innocent bystanders or becoming victims themselves.

In recent years less-than-lethal weapon technology has been, and continues to be, researched, developed and improved upon. In the pursuit to prevent situations resulting in lethal force that possibly could have been avoided, many different less-than-lethal weapons have been developed. The term less lethal force applies to any force used to gain control over an individual or individuals while avoiding the use of weapons which would likely result in death, such as a firearm. Examples of non lethal weapons include impact weapons, such as the expandable baton, chemical agents, such as tear gas, electrical weapons such as Taser guns, and kinetic impact munitions, such as beanbag shots.

In this evaluative research study, which is aimed to aid in the policy development and implementation of the use non lethal weapons by officers of the Wayne County Airport Police Department, this question will be explored: Which less-than-lethal weapons are most effective for Wayne County Airport Police personnel and which provide the safest outcomes for the users and its subjects? Since the Wayne County Airport police officers are presently outfitted with impact weapons and chemical agents, this investigation will focus on kinetic impact weapons and electrical weapons. Detailed descriptions of beanbag munitions and Taser guns will be presented, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of these weapons in relation to implementation at the Detroit Metropolitan Airport. Incidents and case studies involving these less-than-lethal weapons will be described, and the importance of consistent policies regarding the

use of less-than-lethal weaponry and quality training programs for officers will be stressed.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

As professionals, law enforcement officials are trusted and permitted to use the degree of force that is reasonably necessary to accomplish their lawful objectives and to overcome any unlawful resistance (Aele Alert, Issue 3). Usually the first tactic an officer will take is verbal persuasion, but at times a higher degree of force may be warranted. Traditionally, impact weapons such as riot batons, nightsticks, or even saps would be the next step when attempting to subdue unruly or violent suspects or control a hostile crowd. However, when officers are forced into hand-to-hand combat with extremely agitated or psychotic individuals, the possibility for a fatal outcome exists. If this happens, an unfortunate situation is created for the officer or officers involved and since litigation usually follows, the police department with which the officer is affiliated. Less lethal weapons do not force an officer to engage in hand-to-hand combat with a suspect and provide an alternative to using deadly force.

In addition, less than lethal force can be a viable option when officers are faced with a situation where the actual intent is “suicide by cop”. This is “an intentional escalation of a situation by suicidal individuals in an attempt to provoke the law enforcement official into using deadly force (Heck, 2002).” Subduing the suicidal individual with the use of a less-than-lethal weapon could spare the life of the individual as well as prevent potential negative psychological effects that may inflict the officer who uses deadly force to control the situation.

In a contained and densely populated setting such as the Detroit Metropolitan Airport, there are not only countless scenarios in which a police officer may need to use force to control a situation, there is the issue of implementing security measures mandated by the federal government. Therefore, less-than-lethal weapons would not only serve to control potentially violent situations such as an irate or intoxicated passenger, but would also serve to maintain the integrity of the security checkpoints, something crucial after the events that took place on September 11, 2001. Perhaps it

would be beneficial for officers working at Detroit Metropolitan Airport to have a wider range of weapons at their disposal when ensuring the safety of not only the passengers on the aircraft's, but possibly the entire country from potential terrorist activity.

Literature Review

The movement toward the use of less than lethal force by police personnel as an option for self-defense, crowd control, or subduing suspects has prompted much research and debate about what are the most effective less-than-lethal weapons. Law enforcement agencies must consider many variables before adopting a less-than-lethal weapon program. In this literature review, in-depth descriptions as well as advantages and disadvantages and the cost of specialty impact munitions (beanbag shots) and electrical weapons (Advanced Taser) will be presented.

Specialty Impact Munitions: Beanbag Rounds

Description

Specialty Impact Munitions, sometimes called Kinetic Impact Munitions, are projectile impact weapons that have been used for decades in situations warranting criminal or suspect control. The purpose of these less lethal weapons is to temporarily incapacitate a subject through the principles of surprise and pain (Heck, 2002) thus aiding in the apprehension of the individual by officers.

Specialty Impact Munitions are “propelled from a launcher which delivers kinetic energy to incapacitate an offender through pain compliance (Whitson, 2002)”. Most commonly, a 12-gauge shotgun is used to launch the munitions. The types of projectiles available for this less-than-lethal weapon consist of non-flexible hard rubber balls or pellets, foam rubber or wood batons or flexible beanbags. The twelve gauge lead-filled flexible beanbag is the ammunition of choice among law enforcement officials today and has a mass of forty grams and travels approximately 280 feet per second, carrying 109 ft-lbs. of energy (Heck, 2002). This force is equivalent to a smaller caliber handgun bullet, but because the force is spread over a larger surface area, the usual result is

“blunt trauma without penetration (Heck, 2002).” Single-use beanbags have streamers and look like kites with tails. The recommended firing range is a minimum of twenty-five feet. A kinetic impact weapon using mesh beanbag munitions fired upon an individual less than twenty-five feet away could be deadly. Recommended target areas include the front or back of the forearm, the leg below the knee, buttocks and thighs. These munitions may also be “skip-fired” (fired in a ricochet fashion off of the ground). This tactic is most useful for crowd control (Heck, 2002). In any situation, beanbag shots should not be used without backup firepower.

In recent years improvements have been made regarding the safety and lethal probability when these “beanbag bullets” are utilized. A flexible, mesh bag has replaced the original flat, square-shaped bag. There have been instances in which the square-shaped bags would spin when launched and create a slicing effect upon impact with an individual, as opposed to delivering the blow as intended, resulting serious harm or a fatal outcome. The flexible, mesh beanbag used today by law enforcement officials is designed to conform to the bodily shape upon impact, thereby reducing the chance of serious injury to the individual fired upon.

Advantages

Major advantages to using Kinetic Impact Weapons is that they are very effective in situations in which the subject is at a distance and in situations involving mentally ill suspects or suspects threatening to commit suicide. The beanbag projectiles can be fired up to 100 feet away with exceptional accuracy and the bags strike with enough force to render an individual or individuals helpless so the officer can apprehend a suspect or control a crowd situation.

A major advantage to implementing these weapons at Detroit Metropolitan Airport is that beanbag rounds fired from a shotgun do not emit any spark. If the need arises to subdue an individual or control a situation in a setting where there are flammable liquids, such as jet fuel, officers will have a safe option since firearms and electrical weapons such as Taser guns will emit a spark and possibly ignite flammable material.

Disadvantages

Although Kinetic Impact Munitions are considered less-than-lethal weapons, the possibility of serious or fatal injuries is present. If these munitions are not fired from the safe distance of 25 feet, blunt-force type injuries can occur, some resulting in fatal outcomes. Accuracy of aim is also crucial; strikes to the head, neck and throat dramatically increase the risk of death (Heck, 2002). In addition, the preexisting health of the subject can contribute to a fatal outcome when struck with a beanbag round. One study has shown that a possibility exists that impact from kinetic impact munitions can result in cardiac dysrhythmia or traumatic apnea, resulting in death (Heck, 2002).

A second disadvantage to utilizing beanbag munitions at the Detroit Metropolitan Airport is the possibility for the general public to mistake the shotgun intended for beanbag rounds for a loaded shotgun. Seeing an officer brandishing what appears to be a loaded shotgun in an active pursuit of a suspect through a crowded airport could potentially cause a panic situation and also negatively affect the image of the airport police. Also, the shotgun and beanbag rounds would have to be kept at a different locale than on the officer's body, making emergency use potentially difficult.

Extreme care must be taken by law enforcement officials and departments to properly label these weapons, as they can be easily mistaken for a traditional shotgun and ammunition. Proper labeling, such as color-coded system is recommended to aid in the avoidance of unintended lethal situations--an obvious disadvantage.

Case Studies

The following incident involving the use of a Kinetic Energy Impact Projectile was obtained from the the *Roanoke Time & World News* (Roanoke, VA), August 1, 2003. On a Sunday at midnight, Cpl. R.W. Fletcher and deputies R.B. Stewart and S.M. Gathje were called to a motel, where a 235 lb., 53 year-old male was brandishing a pistol and threatening suicide. When attempts at trying to talk the man into putting down his weapon were futile, Sgt. D.P. Blessarad ordered the use of the beanbag ammunition. Deputy Stewart fired a single shot from about 25 feet away, knocking down the suicidal

man and causing him to drop his weapon. The impact of the beanbag on the 235 lb. man's abdomen temporarily knocked the wind out of him, but he was soon on his feet and taken to the hospital for medical and mental evaluations. "We wanted to disarm the suspect with the least amount of injury to him," Sheriff Ronnie Sprinkle said. Major Delbert Dudding added that the beanbag shots "are never used without firepower backup".

The following incident was obtained from the *Florida Sun-Sentinel* and dated August 18, 2003.

In Coconut Creek Florida at 1:30 a.m. on a Saturday night, police are called to a residence after shots are heard fired inside the house. After attempting to make contact with the man via telephone, a 37 year-old man exits the house and walks toward the officers with the sledgehammer in a threatening manner, then threatens to commit suicide with the tool. After refusing to put down the sledgehammer, the man is shot with a non lethal 1.43 ounce beanbag from a 12 gauge shotgun. He was struck on the side of the abdomen, knocked to the ground, disarmed and handcuffed. After initial medical treatment at the scene, the suspect was taken to the hospital where he was given medical clearance within hours.

Electronic Weapons: The Advanced Taser

Description:

As a result of the new technology developed to provide law enforcement officials with more options for using less than lethal force, the Advanced Taser has been adopted by over 1000 police departments as a viable means of subduing suspects. The Advanced Taser, produced by Taser International in Arizona, can be fired from up to 21 feet away and is unaffected by wind or other environmental factors.

The design of the weapon allows it to function exactly like a firearm; it looks very similar to a semiautomatic handgun and is fired in the exact same manner. Upon firing, compressed nitrogen projects two Advanced Taser probes from a replaceable cartridge. The weapon can be fired from as far as 15 or 21 feet (depending on the

cartridge) at a speed of 180 feet per second. The probes are connected by thin insulated wire to the back of the weapon (Aele Alert, 2003). An electrical signal transmits throughout the region where the probes make contact with the body and can travel through two inches of clothing. The pulsating electrical output interferes with the communication between the brain and the nervous system and the result is an instant loss of the individual's neuromuscular control and the ability to perform any coordinated movement. The pulsating electrical output also causes involuntary muscle contractions and a resulting sense of vertigo. The less-than-lethal weapon is automatically programmed to apply the electrical charge for 5 seconds (Laur, 2002). After effects consist of the individual feeling dazed for several seconds. The effects of the Advanced Taser cease as soon as the weapon shuts off.

The Advanced Taser will still have the same effect on a suspect even if both probes do not make contact with the individual's body. If one probe hits a human and one probe falls on grass or dirt, the power will ground and the electrical impulse will still travel through the person's body. However, if one probe falls on cement or asphalt, the effects diminish greatly. In this case, the law enforcement official can utilize the back-up cartridge stored below the hand grip. If this is not successful, the Advanced Taser can be used in stun-touch mode and act as a powerful touch-stun device. Therefore, there are two back up alternatives for an officer if both probes do not hit the subject.

This weapon does not depend upon impact or penetration into the body to be successful and the chances of a person dying from being shot with an Advanced Taser are minimal. The output generated by the Advanced Taser is nondestructive to nerves, muscles and other body systems. No deaths have ever been directly attributed to the Taser (Laur, 2002). The electrical output is well below the level established as "safe" by the sector of federal government that approves electrical devices like electrified cattle fences.

The Advanced Taser has been tested on many police personnel, as well as volunteers from SWAT teams and military special forces. In a study outlined in the article *Less than Lethal Options and the Advanced Taser*, it was noted that "over 60 volunteers from SWAT teams, military special forces and police agencies were hit with

the M26 Advanced Taser with a 100 percent incapacitation rate and each individual was immobilized in less than half a second”.

The Advanced Taser has additional features, one being that the weapon can be outfitted with a Dataport Kit. This feature can record the time and date of 585 firings inside a EEPROM computer chip. The Dataport also can recharge the batteries used by the Advanced Taser. The second feature unique to the Advanced Taser are “AFIDs”. When an air cartridge is fired, up to 40 small, confetti-like identification tags called AFIDs are released. Each AFID is printed with the serial number of the cartridge fired, allowing for the determination of which officer fired the weapon (Laur, 2002). Lastly, yellow coloration kits are available so that each officer’s Advanced Taser weapon can be brightly colored to differentiate it from a traditional firearm.

The price of an Advanced Taser with a range of 15 feet with no laser is about \$330.00 per weapon. The Advanced Taser including the laser feature is \$500.00 per weapon (Aele Alert, 2003). In a conversation with Capt. Douglas Molinar from the Oakland County Sheriff’s Department (who adopted the use of Taser weapons January, 2003) revealed that the training course for officers learning to operate this weapon is usually one eight hour training course. The cost of training is minimal since the manufacturers of Advanced Taser weapons offer a free training program to police departments purchasing large amounts of the weapon for their officers.

Advantages

The advantages of providing Wayne County Airport Police personnel with an Advanced Taser as a less than lethal option are numerous. One major advantage is that several studies have shown that Advanced Tasers are extremely effective and decrease the use of force by police personnel dramatically. In a study of data collected from the Orange County Sheriff’s Office (Florida) and presented in the Orlando Sentinel (July 29, 2002), it was attested that:

deputies found the Advanced Taser so highly effective, it quickly became the most prevalent force option, accounting for over 68% of all use of force incidents by its second year in the field. Over the same time period, uses of firearms and impact weapons dropped by

approximately 80%, reducing injuries and saving lives.

The advantage of officers having to use a lesser amount of force is twofold, for it also reduces liability of police departments and saves money in litigation costs, as well as in medical claims. In 1981 the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department adopted two less lethal weapon options, Tasers and chemical irritant spray. Recently, the LAPD conducted a study indicating that the department had likely avoided \$2.5 million in use of force liability during the first year of its Advanced Taser adoption (Laur, 2002). In addition, when using the Advanced Taser, the data from the Dataport feature protects officers from claims of excessive use of force by providing complete and accurate documentation of the time and date of each firing and has the potential to disprove allegations of misuse.

A study of the LAPD illustrates another powerful advantage regarding the use of Tasers and other less lethal weapons--reduced injuries in confrontations between police officers and suspects. The study examined a stratified sample of 502 of the 1,160 incident reports involving police use of force from the LAPD during the first half of 1989. The research revealed overwhelming data to support the hypothesis that Tasers are effective devices which cause no significant injuries (Meyer-Greg, 1991).

The results of another study of deputy injuries in Orange County, Florida supports the assertion that the adoption of the Advanced Taser by police departments decreased the number of force related injuries. The results of this study showed that the number of injured deputies decreased by 80% from 1999 (when Advanced Tasers were adopted) to 2002 despite a 72% increase in use of force over the same time period. In fact, the rate of injury per use of force dropped by over 88% from 29.27 injuries per 100 force incidents in 1999 to 3.38 injuries per 100 force incidents in 2002 (Laur, 2002).

Not only do the officers using Advanced Taser experience less injuries in use of force situations, this weapon truly seems to act as a less-than-lethal weapon, as there have been no reported deaths directly linked to its use. Even individuals with pacemakers can withstand the electrical output from Advanced Tasers. Sgt. Derrick Laur references a medical study by Dr. Robert Stratbucker at the University of Missouri.

He writes:

...the T-wave does not interrupt the heartbeat or damage a pacemaker. Any modern pacemaker is designed to withstand electrical defibrillator pulses that are hundreds of times stronger than the Advanced Taser's output.

Still another advantage when utilizing the Advanced Taser is the fact that an individual's pain tolerance or mental state is not a factor in the weapon's effectiveness. The effects of the Advanced Taser do not rely upon psychological impact to achieve the desired results. Sgt. Darren Laur writes, "Whether its the pain from a chemical spray, the impact of a kinetic round, or the stun effect from a Taser (handheld), none of the current technology actually debilitates a subject 100% of the time (2002)". In fact, pain inflicted from the above mentioned weapons, as well as a nonfatal shot from a firearm, can actually make a suspect more aggressive and increase the chance that the officer or officers on the scene are hurt and have no option other than to utilize lethal force to control the situation. One must also remember the mind-altering effects of drugs like PCP that can actually allow an individual's pain tolerance to increase dramatically. Even in these situations involving a drug-induced state, the Taser will debilitate a suspect.

Not only do other methods of force fail to control certain individuals suffering from certain types of emotional and psychological instabilities, it has been shown that the Advanced Taser can be more effective than even firearms in these situations. According to Dr. Alexis Artwohl, a police psychologist referencing the book entitled "Deadly Force Encounters", "an individual who sustains a fatal shot directly to the heart or aorta may have enough oxygen in their brain and skeletal muscles to continue aggressive behavior for approximately 14 seconds. Sgt. Derrick Laur (2002) sums this up by writing:

A bullet shot from an Advanced Taser to the central nervous system will eliminate the command and control of the individual's body within a 1/2 second, thereby making retaliation practically impossible and making a takedown situation safer for officers involved. Therefore, even if a suspect is shot or stabbed in the heart, an extremely goal-

orientated, aggressive and combative individual can still inflict a significant amount of physical damage on a law enforcement official.

Disadvantages

Although the advantages to adopting the Advanced Taser as a less than lethal weapon are numerous, there are some disadvantages to consider. One such disadvantage being that the spark from an Advanced Taser can ignite flammable liquids or vapors, such as jet fuel, a flammable liquid found in abundance at a major airport. The weapon should also never be used on a person that has been sprayed with alcohol-based pepper sprays.

Another disadvantage regarding the Advanced Taser is that it looks so similar to a lethal firearm. Although the Advanced Taser would most likely be brightly colored to distinguish it from a firearm, it is possible that a suspect could mistake it for a gun, resulting an unnecessary force escalation.

Case Studies

The following incident was taken from an article from *PoliceOne.com*:

In July of 2003 in Muncie, Indiana, Muncie police engaged in an hour-long standoff with a man on a third-floor balcony of his apartment. The man was threatening to harm his children, ages 3 and 1. The man would not talk to the police so one officer stood outside the apartment building and tried to distract the man while two other officers sneaked into the apartment and shot the suspect with a Taser. The children were not hurt and the man was taken to a psychiatric hospital to be treated for schizophrenia. The children's mother, who was at work during the incident, was grateful that the situation ended quickly. She said, "It's better than the days before TASER guns...when they would have come in and shot him". "God only know if my kids would be in the crossfire". Sgt. Jay Turner added that they were able to end the situation quickly because of the option of using the Taser. He said, "If we didn't have a Taser we would had to have called the SWAT team, a hostage negotiator and several more police

officers. We wanted to end this quickly. All of us out there were parents.”

The August 26, 2003 edition of the Detroit News reports this incident:

A 25-year-old suspected car thief was subdued with the use of a Taser. During a struggle with a deputy the suspect attempted to disarm the officer and the man was stunned by an electrical shock from the gun.

PROCEDURES

Research for this evaluative study of kinetic impact weapons and Tasers was done between the months of January and March, 2003 and involved several sources including: articles from criminal justice periodicals obtained from the Bruce T. Halle Library database, numerous current articles obtained from searches on the World Wide Web, with Google being the main search engine, and newspaper articles. Information was also gleaned from informative CD Roms and conversations with officers from police departments whose repertoire of weapons already contain at least one of these less-than-lethal weapons (see References for detailed list of sources).

Since there is high interest by police agencies to adopt less than lethal weapons and policies at this time, there was a wide variety of available information. However, since this is such a current issue, there was limited selection of books pertaining to this subject; any books reviewed were obviously outdated.

Much of the information reviewed was related to the United States' military operations in using less than lethal force, which was interesting and informative, but not for this particular research project. Care also had to be taken to make sure the information was objective, since many sources of information were published by manufacturers of the weapons or written by authors with strong opinions regarding the issues surrounding the use of less than lethal weapons.

The primary objective of this research was to evaluate two less-than-lethal weapons that Wayne County Airport Police officials are considering adopting for the officers serving on this force--kinetic impact munitions and Taser guns. An in-depth description of each weapon was presented, along with advantages and disadvantages and how they

would relate to their use at Detroit Metropolitan Airport.

This research is a beginning point, by no means is it meant to form policy or act as a source of officer training. But with the background knowledge that this paper provides, further considerations can be made regarding the necessity of these weapons for officers securing the safety of the airport.

RESULTS

In this section, the best answer will be given to the question exploring the issue of: Which less-than-lethal weapons are most effective for Wayne County Airport Police personnel and which provide the safest outcomes for its users and its subjects?

It is evident that after examining these two less-than-lethal weapons--beanbag rounds and Taser guns--that both of these weapon would benefit the officers in the Wayne County Airport Police. At this time officers working to ensure the safety of passengers boarding the airplanes, as well as keeping the entire airport in an orderly state, are equipped with mace spray, batons and firearms.

Additional options, especially a Taser gun, would offer the officers more leverage when confronted with a situation that may only be controlled with force. Every advantage outlined in the Literature Review would apply to the Wayne County Airport Police, including a reduction in costs of medical claims, a reduction in the use of force and less officer and suspect injuries due to the use of the Taser gun (see Table and Graph below summarizing data from other police departments). Beanbag rounds would provide an additional less-than-lethal alternative if a situation arose in a locale where flammable material was present. Therefore, less-than-lethal weapons, specifically beanbag rounds and Taser guns would be beneficial to officers at Detroit Metropolitan Airport. Upon reviewing the data contained in the table and graph below, one would assume that Detroit Metropolitan Airport would benefit from the same advantages that the LAPD and Orange County Police Department do regarding the use of less-than-lethal weapons.

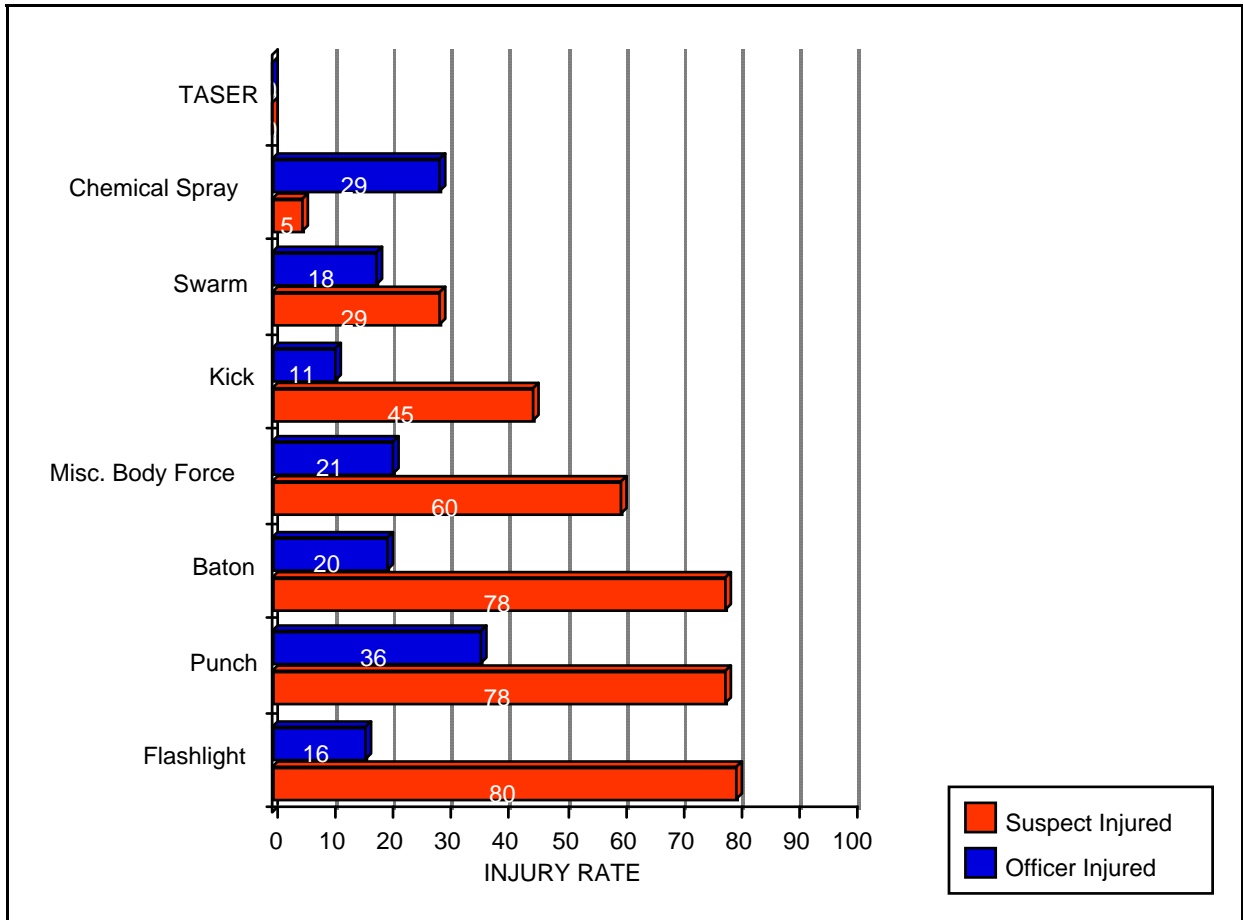
Use-Of-Force Breakdown for the Orange County Sheriff's Office

	1999	2000	2001	2002*	
Chemical Force	300	263	221	64	Down 79%
Physical Force	78	75	52	29	Down 63%
Firearms	5	13	4	0	Down 78%
K9	27	21	13	5	Down 53%
Impact Weapons	0	1	2	0	Down 81%
Impact Rounds	0	1	2	0	-----
TASER	0	3	228	201	68% of All Force
Total	410	383	527	295	

*Date through May, 2002. Source: *Orlando Sentinel*, July 29, 2002

Comparison Results Comparing Advanced Taser to other Use-of-Force Methods: Results of 1,640 Field Uses of the Advanced Taser, LAPD, 2002

*Source: Advanced Taser: Safety Every Officer Deserves (2002)



DISCUSSION

“There is no such thing as a lethal or non lethal weapon,
the detriment is the application”

--anonymous source (Borin, 2002)

The above quote sums up why, in this paper, the weapons researched are consistently referred to as “less-than-lethal” as opposed to “non lethal”. There really is no such thing as a “non lethal” weapon; any weapon, applied with enough force, can be potentially lethal. The key to evaluating less-than-lethal weapons is to remember that every situation has different dynamics, and every decision made to use any weapon is a judgment call of the officer on the scene and is completely situational. Therefore, law enforcement personnel have to be trusted as professionals to assess a potentially violent situation within a matter of seconds and choose the best method of force to control it. The argument for having less-than-lethal weapons available to officers is based on the premise that a police department policy would desire the least amount, or safest use of force impacting both the officer as well as the subject.

In addition, it must be mentioned that the officer would be spared of any possible negative psychological ramifications if forced to use lethal force in a situation. Still another positive aspect of adopting additional less-than-lethal weapons is the potential for an increased positive image that is presented to the public and community.

Although most of the research finding presented in this paper are based on regular police departments, one must remember that Detroit Metropolitan Airport is a unique setting in that the officers not only must maintain order among citizens, airline workers and passengers, but also bear the enormous responsibility of preventing a breach in a security checkpoint--as mandated by the federal government. Although not an everyday occurrence, a crowd or riot situation is possible in such a crowded and confined area. When these variables are added to the potential scenarios that may require use of force are increased greatly. It only seems logical that the Wayne County Airport Police carry Taser guns and have access to kinetic munitions to control these situations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As previously mentioned, this paper is a beginning point for the adoption of beanbag shots and Taser guns into the Wayne County Airport Police Department's repertoire of weapons. After thoroughly researching and evaluating each of these less-than-lethal weapons, the extensive task of forming policy and procedures to direct and guide the use of these weapons must be completed before they can be utilized. A committee would be formed to write and implement this use-of-force policy and procedure involving the beanbag shots and Tasers at Detroit Metropolitan Airport. Also, the policy should include a definition of conditions under which less-than-lethal weapons are applicable. After these policies are in place, the activity of these weapons should be carefully monitored and those in charge should not hesitate to reexamine or alter any policy if need be.

It is crucial that adequate training be provided to the officers as well as practice sessions with these weapons. There would also have to be a separate, mandatory, reporting mechanism for each situation in which a less-than-lethal weapon was used so the department could track outcomes such injuries, number of times used, and the officers using the weapons.

Additionally, it would be prudent to require the manufactures and vendors of the purchased weapons to provide a summary of any lawsuits or claims and litigation against the products, including the status of each claim (Aele Alert, Issue #3).

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