

Abstract: Non-Lethal Weapons: The Training Paradox

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To view deployment of non-lethal or less-than-lethal weapons as isolates without considering the context for their use is to ignore a major "paradigm shift" that is worthy of recognition. For example, introduction of non-lethal technology has fostered consideration of the economic and environmental consequences of military and law enforcement actions. In considering "bridge denial," by using new "non-lethal" technology in the form of slippery substances, rigid foam or laser barriers, opposing forces can be deprived of access to a bridge without either risking pollution to the river below or destroying the bridge and its surrounding neighborhood. Yet, given the magnitude and significance of the change in perspective reflected in this paradigm shift, both military and law enforcement proponents of non-lethal (aka less-than-lethal) weapons call for "brief individual and unit-level training that does not seriously distract units from other training tasks."¹

Complicating this paradox, are requirements for conceptual integration of this technology into military "rules of engagement," into standard operating procedures for correctional facilities, and into law enforcement "use of force" policies and "directives."² Locating non-lethal interventions along use of force continua poses a challenge especially given adherence to existing paradigms and continuing treatment of non-lethals as an "add on" technology.

The author argues that introduction of non-lethal technology is not simply the development and deployment of a new weapon but instead is the introduction of a dramatically different perspective on "use of force." This new perspective has complicated definitions of appropriate and reasonably necessary force and the measurement of incidence of that "use of force" which is termed "excessive." As such, given the magnitude of the "paradigm shift" reflected here, the merits of "reengineering" intervention strategies coupled with extensive retraining, as a substitute for brief training, are presented.

¹ Joint Concept/Pilant

² Candela Standards