

Voodoo Science, Pseudo-Science and Nonlethal Weapons

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with

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Much controversy exists about the development and employment of nonlethal weapons, especially from organizations and civil libertarians who are ill-informed or have private agendas and view the burgeoning field of nonlethal weapons with mixed-feelings at best, and suspicion or distrust at worst. Particularly troublesome is that many of their misgivings are based upon poor science or shoddy reporting and have resulted in increased apprehension by the general public and poor policies and practices from misguided politicians and administrators.

The Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department has been collecting information electronically on the uses of force by their deputies for more than a decade and has accumulated a database exceeding 65,000 incidents, each of which provides detailed information on such things as type of force used, size, age and sex of suspects, as well as many other critical factors. Because the data extends over years of practice, trends have become conspicuous as one method or weapon became popular and another fell from favor.

In attempting to exploit this data and make it available to the public, they have undertaken three studies in the last four years and are preparing a series of reports describing their findings to be released in the near future. The largest and most comprehensive study is being conducted with researchers at Pennsylvania State University and the University of Virginia Medical Center and evaluates a number of factors that have until now been largely accepted without proof, and consequently viewed with skepticism and mistrust by opponents, especially regarding TASERs.

This presentation is intended to present some of the most significant, verifiable, and clear and compelling findings from these and other studies currently being undertaken in the United States, and once and for all putting some of the more contentious issues involving the development and employment of nonlethal options to rest.

Key Words:

- Nonlethal
- Study
- Science
- TASER
- Findings