

## **4<sup>th</sup> European Symposium on Non-Lethal Weapons, 21-23 May 2007**

### ***Final remarks by the Chairman of the Symposium Dr. Klaus-Dieter Thiel***

Dear ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues in the non-lethal weapons community,

Before we reach the end of this 4<sup>th</sup> European Symposium on Non-Lethal Weapons, I would like to say a few words.

The topic of this symposium, the question "Non-Lethal Weapons: Promise fulfilled?" is deliberately provocative.

If I tried to answer this question now, the answer would be both Yes and No. You might say, that's an answer you'd expect from a politician. But that's not the way I mean it.

When non-lethal weapons are deployed the aim is to preserve life and not to kill. But the result can sometimes be fatal, as we are all aware.

There are no wonder weapons, no "silver" or "magic" bullets. Sometimes expectations of non-lethal weapons seem too high and too unrealistic. Non-lethal weapons are not a panacea.

In individual cases, that is, when non-lethal weapons are employed against an individual, there is a good chance that this criterion will be met, however, nothing is certain, as there are many different kinds of non-lethal weapons with different characteristics and effects, ....

For this reason, it makes more sense to look at the statistics. In general there is a positive answer to the question.

Non-lethal weapons would be viewed in an even more positive light if they were employed more often, as more innocent lives would be saved.

There's a saying that cats have nine lives but people only have two.

There is a James Bond film called `You only live twice`.

However, sadly, that's not true. People have only one life and they should keep it.

Non-lethal weapons are more than a technical issue - they can't be reduced to technology. Many further aspects must be considered - in other words, research into non-lethal weapons should be carried out with a holistic approach. Non-lethal weapons form part of a wider context.

Working with non-lethal weapons sometimes seems to me like negotiating an obstacle course - full of stumbling blocks. There are so many restrictions as to what one can and can't do.

On the one hand that's a good thing, in the sense that this work should be carried out responsibly, but on the other hand, of course, it takes time; time in which many human lives could be saved.

But in summary, I think it is sometimes more helpful to have patience and not to dive in with both feet.

At this point I would like to say a few words about non-lethal weapons from my personal perspective. When I first began to work with non-lethal weapons, everything seemed comparatively easy. Saving human lives was and is a worthy aim - and that's true! However, with time I came to realise how difficult and complex this topic is, with so much that you need to consider and take into account.

Sometimes it's not as simple as you imagine, for example when I founded the Virtual Non-Lethal Weapons Platform. To be brief, that was not the success I'd hoped for. There were some good suggestions, but not enough of them. For this reason I decided to adopt a new approach. I wouldn't use the internet but rather would start a new group myself - a non-technical group - and in the next few months I will speak personally to the relevant people.

To finish with, there is one thing left to say: we're on the way to achieving our aim, but there is still a lot of work to be done. Let's go out there and do it!

Thank you.