

There is another potential opportunity for the use of non-lethal weapons; this goes beyond peacekeeping and peace enforcement and falls instead within the realm of conventional combat operations. The use of certain systems to temporarily incapacitate troops for the purpose of rendering them incapable of either defending ground or mounting operations is seen in some areas as a realistic task for certain non-lethal weapons. These considerations are not indicative of any new effort to create a more "humane" way of winning battles: rather, they are being considered as a more efficient means to the desired end of prevailing in a combat situation. Furthermore, they do not rule out the simultaneous or subsequent use of lethal force. In fact, there is some evidence to indicate that during WW I such chemical weapons as chlorine gas were originally seen as a "non-lethal" means of creating gaps in enemy lines by forcing troops to withdraw from their defensive positions.

An analysis of the merits or limitations of non-lethal force in various situations will not be discussed here. There are numerous debates concerning this issue, not only among military doctrine specialists but also in the civilian arena where detractors and supporters can be found across the entire political spectrum.<sup>84</sup> The focus of this short synopsis will be on the potential for the diffusion and assimilation of these weapons on a global basis to both state and non-state actors together with what that might mean with regard to SALW issues.

Outside of the ethical and tactical concerns regarding the use of non-lethal weapons by authorities in general, of those non-lethal weapons now in common use, only one product – pepper spray – has created some controversy with regard to its use against non-state actors. Created either for civilian self defence (frequently intended for use by women) or, in the case of criminals, as a potential weapon to subdue a victim or aid in a theft, the use of this weapon has become a growing concern, primarily in developed countries. In many jurisdictions (Canada included) law enforcement agencies actively discourage the availability of pepper spray to the public and consider the use of such items on humans as equivalent to the use of a restricted weapon.<sup>85</sup> If the spray is labeled as "repellant" for use against attacking animals (such as dogs) it can sometimes be carried and used with reason on animals without proscription. Notwithstanding this, the use of pepper spray has not been a significant international issue to date. Its availability and use in less developed countries is currently a moot point considering the very real impact of SALW.

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Also see F.M. Lorenz, "Non-Lethal Force: The Slippery Slope to War?" *Parameters* (Autumn 1996), pp. 52-62.

<sup>84</sup> This issue has seen an apparent alliance between individuals and organizations of both the political left and the right against the use of such weapons. For an extensive bibliography on non-lethal weapons from this perspective see <http://jya.com/stoa-bib.htm#Inno-a>

<sup>85</sup> See: Jake Rupert. "Pepper Spray New Weapons for Criminals," *Ottawa Citizen* (10 January 1999), p. A12.