

NON-LETHAL WEAPONS

As previously noted, non-lethal weapons⁸⁰ have been around for many years. Armies, particularly Western ones, have historically been reluctant to establish a non-deadly force capability. The reasons for this are many: psychological and technical conflicts in training; a reluctance to become involved in domestic security (the purview of the police); and the desire to emphasize that once the armed forces are involved the gloves are off and the rules of engagement have changed. However, in the past few years the potential military applicability of non-lethal weapons have been increasingly discussed. In 1997 and again in 1998 Jane's Information Group⁸¹ hosted a conference on the subject of non-lethal weapons; individuals from numerous organizations including a number of military officials were in attendance. Such topics as the use of non-lethal weapons in peacekeeping, military doctrine and non-lethal weapons, and various moral and ethical issues relevant to the use of such weapons were discussed. A NATO Defence Research conference also held a seminar on non-lethal weapons, during which the operational and technical aspects of this concept were examined, albeit mostly within the context of peacekeeping and peace support operations.⁸²

This increased attention has come about for a variety of reasons. The primary rationale for this development is the increased tendency in recent years for multinational or even unilateral intervention in an internal conflict situation where the warring parties are still engaged in hostile activities. In such cases, hostilities frequently take place within an environment which makes it difficult to separate combatants from non-combatants. In some cases, combatants may deliberately use civilians to thwart the efforts of peace enforcement and peacekeeping forces, either directly through the encouragement of hostile demonstrations using unarmed civilians or indirectly by using civilians as a cover or diversion for armed aggression. Mandated restrictive rules of engagement with regard to deadly force (the only force normally available to armies) frequently make it difficult for intervening forces to impose or otherwise create an atmosphere conducive to peacebuilding efforts. Furthermore, humanitarian concerns coupled with close media attention tends to constrain more aggressive approaches to enforcement – a situation that can certainly be taken advantage of by non-cooperative parties.⁸³

⁸⁰ Sometimes such things as electronic warfare and propaganda are included in the definition of non-lethal weapons. This synopsis will only deal with non-lethal weapons designed to physically restrain or otherwise affect the physical well being of a human target.

⁸¹ See advertisements in *Jane's International Defence Review* (1998).

⁸² NATO Review No 6 (November 1996), p. 18. According to a *Jane's New Brief* of 3 February 1999 France has reversed its long standing policy on denying non-lethal weapons to its Armed Forces. The source claims that France will now use them on peacekeeping missions and for deterring trespassing on defence installations.

⁸³ For a military perspective see: Martin N. Stanton (LCol), "Riot Control for the 1990s," *Infantry* (January-February 1996), pp. 22-29, and R.A. Dallaire (Mgen) and H.A. Culliton (Lt[N]), "Broadening the Spectrum of Response: Less-Lethal Weapons in Canadian Operational Deployments?" *Vanguard* 3(3), pp. 16-17.