

Non-Lethal Weapons

Thursday, 21 June 2007

Almost everyday on my commute from Forest Hills to NYC, I grab the free Metro paper that's handed out at various locations throughout the City. I'm really drawn to this paper, and no wonder, I'm the perfect demographic for it. Apparently it was launched some years ago with the goal of providing news to the younger generation of non-newspaper-reading public. It's basically a newspaper for people who don't like reading newspapers. That's me.

Everyday I get my national and city news during my 40-60 minute commute, in a non-violent format. In other words, I don't see too many gratuitous stories about rapes, deaths, bludgeoning, or other similar happenings. Instead most of it is intellectual, worldly, Gen-X/Y directed material with a Democratic bias: the presidential race, Iraq, global warming, etc. Today, June 21, 2007, there was a story about "Gay Bombs and Microwaved Foes ," shedding light on the Sunshine Project, a weapons-watchdog organization, which talked about non-lethal weapons.

Non-lethal weapons, for those uninitiated, are large-scale, new technology, military weapons which will not kill, or maim human beings. Instead, non-lethal weapons work by causing extreme momentary pain, disorientation, sensory overload, or some other type of very uncomfortable input to the human body. The idea is, quell the uprising, without permanently harming.

These kinds of weapons are being developed by the military for crowd control, or to put down a war-time enemy faction, without having to "clean up the mess." For example, there is a weapon which will direct energy beams at a human target and disturb the physical molecules of the body so as to make the person feel so ill that he cannot stand, and begins vomiting. Or sound waves of a specific frequency that hit you and make you dizzy and you lose balance. As a general rule, I think it's a step in the right direction.

However, some weapons outlined in the article -- the reason to take exception to non-lethal weapons usage -- are actually biological and chemical weapons. One such weapon, dubbed "Gay Bomb," was eventually not developed, but was intended to make enemy soldiers useless by replacing their will to fight with an overwhelming desire to have sex -- with each other. Another fills your nostrils with a smell so putrid that your psyche immediately flips the "fight or flight" switch to "flight" and you run away puking; the smell is that of rotting human flesh. It is not only a physically overwhelming chemical, but a it works on the psychology of the enemy, striking fear into the hearts of human beings.

Though these weapons are developed with the idea that the effects are not permanent, how do we know this? Especially with chemical or biological weapons, there is no telling how long the effects really last, and whether the substances really do leave the body. How permanent might the damage be to the mind, when the weapon of choice is uncontrollable fear? It seems like these things might be something out of a sci-fi horror movie. Actually, not too far off at all. If you saw Batman Begins, you will recall the hallucinogen used by the evil psychiatrist to disable his enemies. Do you believe the writers came up with this all by themselves? I think not.

I like the idea of non-lethal weapons. But let's just make sure that we classify all weapons in the proper divisions. Biological and chemical weapons, even tear gas, though non-lethal, are still biological and chemical weapons. And something I would pray that does not proliferate, regardless of who is using it.