

To be blunt, Amnesty International has a bad track record for mis-statements of fact in this area in order to pursue a political agenda against less-lethal weapons. This information may have misled the groups in South Africa and we've seen it happen in Turkey and the UK as well. Generally, once we get factual information, most human rights and civil liberties advocates support the use of less-lethals in the interest of maintaining public order with minimal infringements on subject's rights.

Attached are two articles that ran in Pomona, CA in the past. You will notice in both cases, Amnesty Int'l puts forth that the TASER caused two deaths. I have highlighted some of the articles where these allegations are made. Note in the article title, "Even U.S. violates basic human rights," Amnesty Int'l asserts that "police in Pomona, Calif. killed Kimberly Lashon Watkins with a TASER." I have attached the front page and conclusion from the autopsy of Kimberly Watkins, which were obtained from the coroner's office.

You will notice the cause of death is listed as "acute cocaine intoxication." In summary of the autopsy, "Cocaine is capable of causing fatal cardiac arrhythmia. The taser, restraining procedures and Desipramine in my opinion played no role in the decedent's death. The manner of death is accidental."

In the other autopsy, the cause of death is similarly listed as "excited delirium associated with cocaine abuse."

I understand that certain organizations have asserted that the TASER has caused a specified number of deaths. Given the past track record of politically motivated organizations which mis-state the cause of death for political purpose, I think this assertion should be given zero credibility by the independent reader or media unless it can be backed up with substantiated medical documentation. I am confident such documentation does not exist.

I have been in this industry for seven years. I have never seen an instance where a TASER is causally linked to a fatality. Perhaps the strongest evidence that an individual has never died while being hit with a TASER. If electricity were to stop the human heart, it would be immediate. I know of no theory that supports that a TASER would cause cardiac arrest minutes, hours or days after the event. The Journal of Forensic Sciences published an excellent report on exactly this topic and found that there was no causal effect between the use of the TASER and a fatality. The fact that many people on whom the TASER is used have overdosed on narcotics (hence the need to restrain them) and have later died as a result of the overdose should have zero impact on the use of the TASER.

From a global perspective, this is exactly why there is a trend toward the term "less-lethal" -- so that this debate can be put in perspective. Even if Amnesty International was correct in their assertion that 20 people died as a result from the TASER -- out of tens of thousands of people subjected to the TASER technology over the past 25 plus years, this would be an extremely low rate. The concept of less-lethal weapons is to save as

many human lives as possible and to mitigate the number of injuries caused by impact weapons such as fists, kicks, flashlights, batons and even some of the bean bag rounds fired at too close of range.

In the recent past, Gary Busch died in New York when he attacked police with a hammer (considered a deadly weapon). He was mentally disturbed – the police used pepper spray (another less-weapon, but unfortunately it did not work effectively on Mr. Busch) and the police had to resort to lethal force. Then there are the two suicidal subjects in one of the first incidents where our ADVANCED TASER was used in Victoria, BC, Canada, whose lives were unequivocally saved by the TASER. The number of American lives saved by this technology far outweighs the risk – even if you take Amnesty International's inflated and false figures at face value – with the overall dramatic net effect of saving thousands of lives.

I will also attach the comparison of injuries between the TASER and batons (which are the de facto police weapon worldwide where TASERs and pepper sprays are not used). Compared to every other use of force option, the TASER has the lowest injury rate to suspects. I am perplexed by Amnesty International's stance – they are proponents of suspects' rights – yet come out against technology that is proven to reduce injuries to suspects and inmates. We believe that social and governmental policy should be geared to protect public safety with minimal injuries to both police officers and suspects – a goal that can only be obtained through an expanded use of less-lethal techniques and technologies.

It is easy to criticize the world we live in – it's much harder to solve the problems we face. If someone is against the use of less-lethal weapons, I think the next logical question is, "If not less-lethal weapons, then what are we supposed to use?" I asked this question to Amnesty International officials in their headquarters in London and there was only a protracted silence.

We live in an imperfect world, and police officers are charged with protecting us from the dangers that lurk in society, and even within ourselves (suicide by cop). Less-lethal tools provide the most humane means of accomplishing the goals of protecting our communities in the safest manner possible.

I would be happy to talk with reporters as well as representatives of the civil liberties union on this subject to provide a perspective on this technology and to respond to any questions or issues. I can be contacted at 480-905-2004.

Also, I have attached further information on reducing violence to assist you.

Sincerely,  
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