

Maricopa County Sheriff's Office

Joe Arpaio, Sheriff



Date: May 23, 2006

SHERIFF ARPAIO ORDERS TASERS TO REDUCE JAILHOUSE VIOLENCE

DETENTION OFFICERS TO BE ARMED WITH TASERS, TASER CAMS

(Phoenix, AZ) In what is likely to be a controversial move, Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio today will announce his decision to have approximately 1900 detention officers working in the third largest jail system in the United States armed with TASER brand devices, electronic stun weapons that are gaining popularity in U.S. law enforcement circles as excellent tools to gain control of combative individuals by means of a less lethal jolt of electricity.

Sheriff Joe Arpaio says he has decided to purchase the technology from the Scottsdale, Arizona based weapons manufacturer. Eventually the Sheriff's Office will have a total of 1168 TASER X26s, many of which will also be equipped with a camera attachment to record the circumstances of each and every deployment of the weapon.

Training for detention officers is currently underway to include instruction on proper deployment, policy, procedure and weapons retention.

"You cannot put a price on officer and inmate safety," says Arpaio. "We must do all we can within reason to keep our employees and inmates safe from harm. TASERS for our detention officers will go a long way toward that goal."

According to the Sheriff, 865 detention officers have been attacked by inmates since 2000. Additionally there have been 2765 inmate-on-inmate assaults in that same time period. While outbreaks of violence are always a concern, it is exacerbated by an increase in jailhouse population - up 28% in the last six years. The inmate population recently hit an all time high of 10,715 men, women and juveniles.

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News Release

"Today we also have over 250 closed custody inmates," says Sheriff Arpaio. "They are the most violent inmates who require a minimum of two officers just too safely move them from their jail cells. We're also transporting over 700 inmates a day from jail to court, many of whom are dangerous, violent escape risks. My officers need every tool available to maintain public safety," Arpaio added.

Arpaio admits that TASER has been widely criticized in the national media, but is quick to add that much of it is unfair.

While the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office will be the first jail system in the United States to issue TASERS to all trained detention officers, Arpaio says he is confident that the product will prove to be a safe means of inmate control. He points to the fact that the Scottsdale company has won every wrongful death suit brought against it in courtrooms around the country.

Rick Smith, CEO of TASER International Inc., says, "Having toured these jails myself, I can speak first hand about the need for our TASER technology in this jail system. Sheriff Arpaio's cutting edge decision to issue TASERS and TASER cams to his detention staff will not only enhance security for everyone there, it will also provide an effective system of accountability regarding deployment."

Arpaio adds that that while more officers with TASERS may mean more actual uses of the device, the mere idea of being stung by a TASER usually is enough to thwart violent behavior by inmates.

"That laser sight in the middle of an inmate's chest has a way of quickly calming a person down. Detering impending violence in jail is a wonderful thing when it works," Arpaio says.

The policy change and announcement of the purchase of the new TASER technology will be made on Tuesday, May 23, 2006 at 2:30PM at the Sheriff Training Academy, 2627 South 35 the Avenue, during an actual detention weapons training class. Sheriff Arpaio and TASER International CEO Rick Smith will be present to discuss the weapons deployment with interested media at that time. Page the on call Media Relations Officer for more information at 602 238 8097.

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