



Tuesday, January 22, 2002  
Page 6A

## Public Safety Air Tasers ensure a safer campus

During Winter Break, the state of Iowa Board of Regents made it permissible for UI Public Safety to carry Air Tasers. While the issue has raised the concern of some, the *DI* Editorial Board views the regents' decision as a positive step toward preventing crime and protecting UI officers and the community as a whole.

The Air Tasers, which shoot two probes up to a distance of 21 feet, are capable of disabling a person from a few seconds to a few minutes. Air Tasers are non-lethal, and campus police at the University of Northern Iowa and Iowa State University have also been granted permission to carry them. However, not all officers will be allowed to arm themselves with Tasers immediately. An officer must undergo 16 hours of training before he or she may carry the weapon. In addition, the Tasers come equipped with a data port that will keep track of the number of times the weapon is used.

Equipping UI Public Safety officers with Tasers will help make the community safer in a number of ways. The non-lethal devices will help protect officers when dealing with intoxicated or unruly individuals, especially in the case of physical altercations. The Tasers will provide officers with a way to quickly and safely immobilize people in such situations.

To prevent excessive use of the weapons, each Taser counts the number of uses, and each use must be accounted for in reports to Public Safety administrators -- that is, the weapons fall under the rules and regulations in place for any and all other types of altercations between Public Safety officers and the people. In addition, officials from all three state universities must convene annually to report to the regents on the number and circumstances of situations in which the devices have been used. This requirement provides the regents with a way to monitor the use of the Tasers.

Finally, an armed Public Safety force is not unusual. Most campuses equip their officers with guns rather than non-lethal Tasers. The Tasers are more appropriate for Iowa City, given the relatively low crime rate and general absence of violent crime.

The arming of Public Safety officers with Air Tasers should not cause alarm. The devices will work to protect the officers charged with protecting the UI students, faculty, and staff, thus increasing safety on the campus in general.