

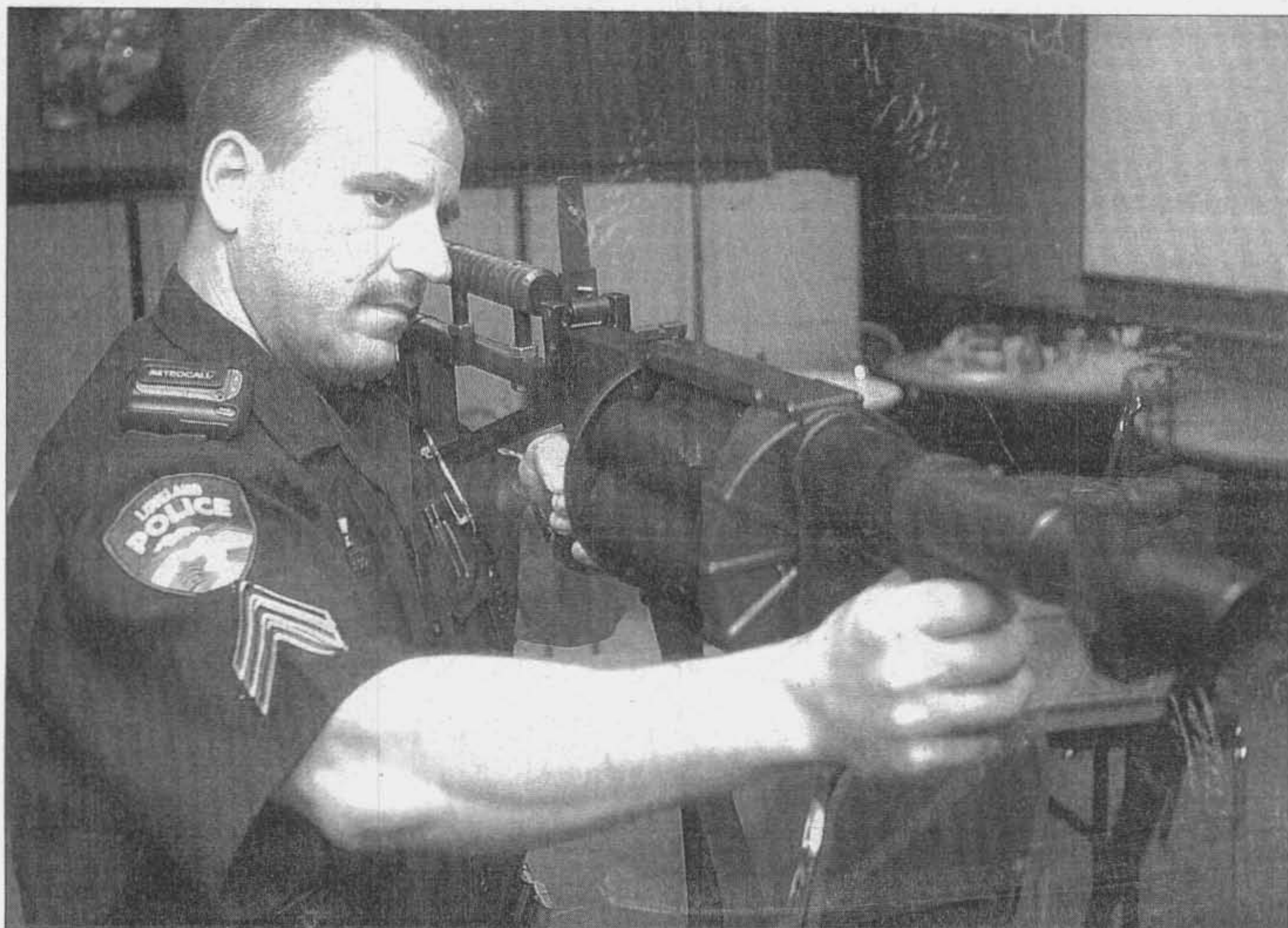
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SHOOT — not to kill



Above, Loveland Police Sgt. John Manago demonstrates a nonlethal weapon that shoots batons to help officers contain a suspect. Top, a taser gun with a laser points out where it is being aimed.

Police arm in nondeadly weapons armory

Police amp up nondeadly weapons armory

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Police rely on training, wits and the available tools to handle different situations.

Loveland police officers have two new tools to add to that kit.

Within the last year, police officials bought two taser guns for \$400 each and a \$1,200 Sage gun, which shoots rubber batons. Both are aimed to be nonlethal methods of controlling a situation or arresting a resistant person.

The weapons do not replace current options such as batons, pepper spray or even guns if a certain situation called for one of those options, Sgt. John Manago explained. They do, however, increase the number of options police have for stopping a situation before someone gets hurt, he said.

"We're trying to layer our less lethal tools, so we have options available at all levels in all instances," Officer Phil Metzler said.

The taser gun uses an electrical current to cause a person's muscles to contract, tumbling the person and allowing other officers to arrest that person without resistance. The voltage can be fired from a distance — wires connected with metal probes that resemble a needle connect with the subject or the person's clothing to administer the current for as long as five seconds.

The subject will not have any lasting injuries and the voltage — 50,000 volts at 26 watts — is far below the dan-



Loveland Police Officers Phil Metzler, left, and Steve Friedle, right, spot Officer Aaron Belk, middle, while demonstrating what happens when shot with a taser gun. The taser sends a current of electricity through probes attached to wires into the body to make the muscles contract, causing a suspect to fall so officers can detain him or her.

ger level, said Officer Steve Friedle, who is certified to teach other officers how to use the weapon. Once the officer takes his or her hand off the trigger controlling the current, the effect subsides, Friedle said.

"You get the incapacitation, and they drop to the ground," he said. "After the five seconds are over, it's like a light switch."

Friedle, Metzler and Manago demonstrated the effect on Officer Aaron Belk on Sunday. In less than one second, Belk, a large man, started to sink to the ground.

After the current stopped, he was able to stand up and display only a small blemish, which resembled a bee sting.

"Basically, it just tightened everything up to where I was

just sinking into myself," Belk said.

Police have used the taser weapons five times, and no one has had lasting injuries, Friedle said. The guns rotate on the different shifts among officers certified to use them, with a goal of having them available at all times.

Friedle spoke of one incident in which officers used the taser. A man was coming at police with a large tool brandished as a weapon. The situation could have escalated to physical violence and possible injury to police or the man if the taser had not been used, he said.

The taser is used in low-risk situations, perhaps if a person will not comply with police orders, while the baton gun comes into use in more seri-

ous instances, Metzler said. Loveland police have not used the baton gun yet.

It could be used to disarm someone or to arrest someone with a weapon, he said. Manago gave the examples of someone with a gun in his or her waistband or in his or her hand but not pointed at anyone.

However, the baton gun will not replace traditional guns in a situation in which a person has a weapon drawn and is threatening others, Manago said.

"It's not a substitute for deadly force" where such force is necessary to prevent a dire result, he said.

Police already have beanbag rounds they can fire from their shotguns, but the new baton gun is more accurate and can be fired from a farther distance and result in more force, Metzler said. The 37 mm gun can shoot a rubber baton 80 yards accurately, Metzler said. The revolving cylinder allows police to fire as many as six rounds without reloading.

Three Loveland police officers, all members of the SWAT team, are certified to use the gun.

The baton flies at about 400 feet per second. Metzler has heard the impact described as "like being hit by a fastball."

It can knock over a person, leaving bruises and in some situations even broken bones, Metzler said. Although there will be some injury, it could stop a situation from escalating to where deadly force is used, he said.