

# **A&S TV**

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*By John G. Peters, Jr., Ph.D., CLS*

The broad range of topics covered at the recent TASER Master Instructor Program and Conference provided a valuable learning opportunity for those fortunate enough to attend.

**T**he 2006 TASER Master Instructor Program and TASER National Conference were held at the Monte Carlo Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada, from May 2-5, and May 6-7, respectively. Well over 200 law enforcement officers from around the world attended the Master Instructor Program, while even more officers and others arrived for the Annual Conference.

#### **Several Studies Conducted**

All were welcomed to the Master Instructor Program by Vice President of Training, Rick Guilbault, and Chief Instructor, Hans Marrero, GySgt. U.S.M.C. (Ret.). After outlining the myriad of training topics for the next several days, Mark Johnson, Director

of Technical Services, announced several scientific studies which would take place during the week. These included a multiple TASER device discharge study, an exertional study, an alcohol study, a pain study, and a wound and temperature study. A rapid and loud enthusiastic response resounded for the drinking study, however, when the crowd heard that the intent was to test people who were under the influence of alcohol with a TASER Electronic Control Device (ECD), the enthusiastic buzz throughout the room was abruptly quelled. Mark went on to tell everyone it would require a 15 second TASER application – that’s right, 15 continuous seconds.

Directing the scientific studies was Dr. Jeffrey D. Ho, M.D., an emergency room and tactical physician from Minneapolis, MN. Dr. Ho and his colleagues (all board certified M.D.s) would oversee the studies; take volunteer medical histories; do multiple blood draws; supervise ultrasounds; and monitor EKGs. For the drinking study, the amount of alcohol would be controlled, and each participant was assigned a “sober buddy” who would help closely monitor the person so (s)he did not wander outside the testing area and did not leave unsupervised until it was determined the person was sober.

Hans Marrero next explained to the Master Instructor candidates the requirements and what was expected of them. All Master Instructor candidates had to submit a detailed application and resumé; had to be a certified instructor; had presented at least 12 TASER training programs, etc. Rick Guilbault explained TASER International’s training philosophy, and then Lieutenant Don Kester, a trainer for the Pima County (AZ) Sheriff’s Office, discussed “Trainers as Leaders.” The first day concluded with a discussion of the human body’s Central Nervous System override by TASER ECDs.

#### **On the Second Day**

Day two of the program was solely devoted to Version 13 (actually the 16th version of TASER Training programs) of the TASER ECD lesson plan. The latest warnings about TASER ECDs were



*Both the instructor program and conference were well attended this year.*



*This year's keynote speaker was Commander Sid Heal, a well-known name to those concerned with less-lethal technology.*

reviewed, as well as updates and changes in the training program. Specifically, the use of “spotters” was discussed – when officers volunteer for TASER ECD applications. Preexisting injuries, wound injury and care, flammable materials, and breathing impairment were also discussed.

Regarding breathing impairment, it was highlighted that limited scientific research indicates that breathing intake was doubled during a TASER ECD application. The new medical research findings will be published in the near future, confirming what some officers intuitively reasoned: that a person continues breathing when a TASER ECD is applied.

#### **Tactics Practice**

The following two days were invested on TASER ECD tactics and applications, with a series of hands-on drills and tactical exercises supervised by members of the TASER Training Board, the Senior Master Instructors; all overseen by Chief Instructor Marrero. A special emphasis was how the use of a “drive stun” (a.k.a. touch stun) can be used in close quarter combat, particularly when one probe may not make full contact with the individual from an earlier deployment.

Rick and Tom Smith, cofounders of TASER International, Inc., spoke to the newly minted Master Instructors on the final day of the training program, congratulating them and also thanking them for their dedication to reducing injuries and saving lives. Chris Myers, Tom Burns, and Rick Wyant, all from the Seattle, WA, area, discussed the limited scientific comparative study they did between Stinger® Stun Systems ECD and a TASER ECD. They also discussed TASER ECD use and pepper sprays, identifying those sprays which are flammable. These two topics will be discussed later.

Public Information Officer training issues and data tracking were discussed by Steve Tuttle, Vice President of Communications at TASER International, Inc. Instructor quality control checks were discussed by Chief Instructor Marrero and administrative issues were discussed, as well. After a short presentation about sudden and in-custody deaths by staff from the Institute for the Prevention of In-Custody Deaths, Inc., Rick Guilbault and Hans Marrero closed the Master Instructor Program and invited those staying for the Conference to join them upstairs for refreshments as the annual TASER Conference got underway.

#### **The 2006 TASER Conference**

Saturday morning was filled with meeting and making friends in the expanded ballroom at the Monte Carlo. Warmly and enthusiastically welcoming the group to Las Vegas was Undersheriff Doug Gillespie of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, a devout believer in TASER device effectiveness, risk management, and accountability.

The keynote speaker for the TASER Conference was Commander Sid Heal of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) and the United States Marine Corps (ret.). Commander Heal, who has traveled the world to offer various lethal and non-lethal training programs, told this international audience that he noticed a growing use of science in law enforcement, particularly with training, tactics, and weaponry. Noting that law enforcement weaponry had come a long way from the “knee knockers” of the 1960s (broom handles fired from shotguns), he showed an historical timeline of weaponry development which included contemporary less-lethal technology which began in the latter 20th century.

The experienced law enforcement administrator, trainer, officer, and author identified five options of nonlethal weaponry: antipersonnel, antimobility (i.e., stop the person, which is the most sought after), area denial, antimaterial, and antiinfrastructure (e.g., communications systems). “Law enforcement is not allowed to flee which means we must engage in risk reduction which includes diminishing the odds (the responsibility of the developer of the weapon) and exposure reduction (the responsibility of law enforcement).” Improving a law enforcement officer's chances for survival, while simultaneously reducing his (or her) exposure is through the use of scientifically-based training, tactics, and weaponry.

Citing the success of the LASD TASER ECD program, he gave the following statistics: a 94% success rate with TASER ECDs and 85% with pepper spray. A solid believer in TASER ECDs, he concluded that it is nearly impossible to accidentally cause permanent injury with TASER ECDs.



***TASER® recently began shipment of its first TASER Cam™ production units.***

**Wireless TASER Round**

Rick and Tom Smith energetically spoke about the present and future of TASER International and how the new XREP shotgun round is progressing. They discussed how it can be fired from a standard shotgun and, currently, it has an effective range of about 100 feet. Did I mention it was wireless!! The XREP round is totally self-contained within the round's payload and it is carefully tuned to avoid serious impact trauma – thus, the current 100 foot range. They also mentioned that, when a person is hit with a round, he usually grabs that part of the body, pushing the XREP probes deeper into the skin or clothing, thus helping to insure solid contact and electronic control effects. They also showed a video of numerous TASER International employees experiencing the XREP's electrical effects – most of the female volunteers did not scream as loud as most of the men!

**New Recording System**

Of great interest was the TASER Cam™, an audio and video battery replacement recording system for the TASER X26 which is presently completing beta testing. It has been announced that the Maricopa (AZ) County Sheriff's Office plans to deploy 1,900 TASER Cam units to its 2,200 deputies armed with the TASER X26. The TASER CAM will record the suspect's actions pre-, during, and post-TASER ECD application (over a one hour recording time). All were warned to watch what they say to the suspect, as the TASER Cam also records audio. So much thought has gone into the development of the TASER Cam that it also flashes LED

lights at the rear of the X26 if the camera's lens is blocked by the deploying officer's hand!

Dr. James Cairns, Deputy Chief Coroner, Province of Ontario, Canada, discussed what Canada has seen regarding TASER ECD use and sudden deaths. Dr. Cairns graphically emphasized that law enforcement involved sudden death is nothing new and that none of the numerous in-custody death cases which he has been intimately involved with were caused by the deployment of TASER devices.

**Litigation Issues**

Michael Brave, National Litigation Counsel for TASER International, spoke about the categories of litigation filed against TASER International and gave specific insights into some of the cases. He began his presentation by showing excerpts from a deposition of one plaintiff which graphically demonstrated how shallow the person's knowledge was about TASER ECDs. The individual based his city's lawsuit against TASER International on one or two negative media reports from some other part of the country; had not done any ECD research; and had not heard anything bad about the TASER ECD from the officers in his city. As the mayor of a Midwestern city, he appoints the police chief, but could not recall his name when asked, more than once, by defense counsel. Noting that most of the complaints filed against TASER International are based upon negative media, Mike explained that TASER International aggressively responds to all litigation filed against it and that it was time to move beyond myths, rumors, and sensationalized media hype.

Sgt. Greg Bingham of the Oakland (CA) Police Department discussed and highlighted, through the use of PowerPoint® slides, how he gathered officer injury reports, worker compensation claim reports, etc. and conducted a very conservative cost-benefit analysis of how TASER ECDs would lower these incidents and, more importantly, the costs associated with officer injuries while fighting suspects. Sgt. Bingham's presentation looked more like a Harvard Business School case analysis which was superbly done and very persuasive.

**Comparison Study**

Back to the Stinger Stun Systems and TASER ECDs. Recall that CRT Consulting (Chris Myers, Tom Burns, and Rick Wyant) did a scientific comparative study of these two devices. Although their data are limited due to an inability to get more than four or five Stinger cartridges, their comparison was very fairly and evenly conducted – and persuasive. Stinger's system is gunpowder driven and, through the use of slow-motion video, they documented the flame extension coming out the front of a Stinger ECD. Aside from potential injury if a person is too close to the flame at the front of the device, the residue from the gunpowder is a concern because it was found on the probes and, hence, may be injected into the target of the ECD. As the presenters emphasized, more scientific testing needs to be done on this issue.

The study found the spread of the Stinger ECD probes to be inconsistent, and it was also discovered that the top of the Stinger probes have a needle-like piece of metal extending upward which could puncture an officer's hand during grappling or restraining a suspect. For more information about their study, visit [www.crtlesslethal.com](http://www.crtlesslethal.com).

**OC Sprays**

A flammability study of pepper sprays, when used with a TASER ECD, was also conducted. After sharing how a Wisconsin

suspect caught fire when a TASER ECD was used after the man had been sprayed with a flammable pepper spray, the audience members were taking notes. Through the use of thermal imaging and videotape, the trio tested several pepper spray products and found several to be flammable. Again, for more information about this study, visit their Web site.

#### **Additional Speakers**

Other speakers included Sgt. Richard Groulx of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) who spoke about the RCMP's developed ECD training program and ECD usage by his agency in Canada. One goal of the RCMP is to outfit all of its officers with a TASER ECD. As a senior TASER ECD instructor for the RCMP, Richard travels across Canada training and certifying instructors in the RCMP's ECD training program and emphasized the need to concentrate on scenario-based training. For more information about the specialized RCMP program, please contact him via E-mail at [Richard.groulx@remp-grc.gc.ca](mailto:Richard.groulx@remp-grc.gc.ca).

Terry Fleck discussed his experience with K-9s and TASER ECDs. One concern is that a police dog which gets shocked by a TASER ECD might need to be retrained – this being a very costly outcome. If you have experience about police dogs and ECD usage, please contact Terry at [www.k9fleck.org](http://www.k9fleck.org).

Rick Prior, London, England, Metropolitan Police Service and Graham Dean, Technical Expert, discussed their research and experience with TASER ECDs in England. They noted that TASER ECDs are presently only authorized to be carried and used by those officers who are authorized to carry firearms – about five percent of the police service. They shared many statistics, including that, 45% of the time, the incident was resolved with only one TASER ECD discharge; 26% were successful with greater than one discharge; 11% were resolved with multi-TASER ECD usage; and 18% were resolved following the use of additional tactics. Regarding the types of scenarios when TASER ECDs were used, 14% involved self-harm; 45% involved bladed weapons; and 14% involved firearms which were seen in the hand of the suspect.

#### **My Own Contribution**

As the final speaker, I gave a short presentation on causation. Correlation, cause and effect, and association were distinguished, and the discussion focused on how the media and many plaintiffs have confused correlation with cause and effect. For example, we know that a rooster crows before the sun rises. The sun does not rise because the rooster crows, nor does it not rise if the rooster fails to crow. If either of these two situations were true, these would be an example of cause and effect. In contrast, the rooster and the sun are an example of correlation (the relationship strength of two variables, the crowing and the sunrise). Hence, if a sudden death occurs after a TASER ECD has been used, this is *not* cause and effect. For information about the Institute for the Prevention of In-Custody Deaths, Inc., please visit [www.ipicd.com](http://www.ipicd.com).

#### **Looking Ahead**

At the close of the TASER Conference, Rick and Tom Smith wished everyone safe travels, and many talked about planning for next year's return trip. By then, the TASER Cam should provide lots of videoclips for viewer teaching points, and the research findings from Dr. Ho's scientific studies should be peer reviewed and published in medical literature – ready for public sharing. For specific information about TASER ECD warning changes, Version 13 training, the TASER Cam, the XREP, etc., please visit [www.taser.com](http://www.taser.com). Also, TASER International records its annual conferences and makes them available on DVDs. If you would like to view the conference, simply contact TASER International and request a copy of the 2006 Conference DVD. 

*About the Author: John G. Peters, Jr., M.B.A., Ph.D., CLS, is President of both the Institute for the Prevention of In-Custody Deaths, Inc. and the Defensive Tactics Institute, Inc., both of Henderson, Nevada. An internationally known trainer and judicially qualified expert witness, he first wrote about sudden death concerns in 1988. He may be contacted through the IPICD Web site at [www.ipicd.com](http://www.ipicd.com).*