

Submission – Mr. R. Weston

I have read the JHRG Taser submission. It is generally logical and reads well. However, one very important observation appears to be missing, namely:

A Taser is NOT a gun or a replacement for a gun. It can never, and will never, replace the police officer's option of being armed with a "real" gun, when faced with an angry and determined wrongdoer, who is also armed with a "real" gun of any sort.

In this imaginary scenario, a police officer might as well be armed with a banana:

A wrongdoer points a "real" gun at a police officer. The police officer warns the wrongdoer: "Stop pointing that gun at me or I will draw my Taser and give you an electric shock".

On the one hand, the wrongdoer could reply "Yes, of course officer. Please wait a moment whilst I put my gun down". In which event, the officer would never need to draw or use his Taser (or his banana) at all.

Alternatively, the wrongdoer could ignore the warning and, as soon as he sees the officer drawing his Taser (or his banana), he could shoot the officer dead, just like in the days of the Wild West – not much protection for the officer then.

Either way, the Taser can never be a match for a gun. So any argument, which suggests that a Taser would be a somehow less lethal way of controlling a wrongdoer brandishing a firearm, is a totally unsustainable argument. A police officer would have a materially better chance of disarming a wrongdoer with a gun by simply speaking to him in a kindly and sympathetic manner and seeking to talk him into disarming himself. If that doesn't work, then the only realistic alternative is to deploy another firearm with the intention of disabling (or killing) the wrongdoer. Only another gun can ever realistically be considered a match for a gun in the hands of a criminal, who is determined to use it.

So, in practical terms, a Taser can only be considered as an alternative response to those forms of violence that **DO NOT** involve a wrongdoer armed with a gun (or other explosive device, such as a grenade or bomb). Acceptance of this common-sense proposition, brings the debate back to its proper and realistic level; namely to ask whether using a Taser is better than using physical restraint in the form of man-handling (either with or without the help of a truncheon, handcuffs, CS-gas, etc) or simply by using verbal persuasion.

If Jersey's political decision is to permit the use of Tasers as an alternative form of controlling "**non-explosive**" forms of violence, then they must always be deployed as a last resort, after having first tried everything else to control a potentially violent situation – and certainly **NOT** as an "**easy alternative**" to trying everything else to control that potentially violent situation.

Best wishes

Robert Weston