Taser : de nouveaux risques découverts sur la santé

Kenneth Nguyen du journal australien The age rend public un certain nombre d'information sur la dangerosité du Taser à l'heure où le pays des kangourous est, lui aussi, sur le point d'équiper des policiers en Taser, armes adressant une décharge de 50 000 volts à distance.

RAIDH qui s'oppose à l'implantation généralisée de cette arme en France, prévue dans les jours à venir entend alerter le plus grand nombre quant aux dangers de cette arme.

L'article, reproduit ci-dessous indique notamment qu'une étude confidentielle de l'hôpital Alfred a observé qu'un sujet taser est exposé à “des risques [pour la santé] potentiellement mortels”, allant de fractures ou blessures à la tête quand les victimes s'évanouissent, à des blessures dues aux dards qui se plantent dans la
peau et la possibilité d'avoir des effets contrariant sur les personnes utilisant des pace-makers.

Stun guns : weapon or risk ?

Kenneth Nguyen September 23, 2006

OPPOSITION police spokesman Kim Wells clearly remembers the first time he saw a demonstration of a Taser stun gun on a human.

Metal probes plunged into the man's chest, jolting him with 50,000 volts of electricity. He was sent sprawling, screaming in pain.

"He was in just agonising pain," Mr Wells says. "A person who is hit can't think of anything else other than trying to get those barbs out of his clothing."

Welcome to what could be the latest weapon in the armoury of local police.

In Victoria, the guns have been limited to the force response unit and the special operations group. But the Opposition this week promised front-line police cars from every station would be equipped with the guns if it wins the November poll - at a cost of about $1 million.

"We want police to have all available weapons when they're confronted with a dangerous situation," Mr Wells says.

The promise would fulfill a wish of the Police Association.

Others, however, remain concerned. Legal groups, including the Mental Health Legal Centre, the Federation of Community Legal Centres, the Law Institute of Victoria and Liberty Victoria, believe that Tasers are fraught with danger. Video footage this week showed what police could do with a phone ; imagine what they could do with a stun gun : so goes the argument.

"Lots of things can be used as weapons, but Taser guns are particularly concerning," says Stella Stuthridge, co-chairwoman of the criminal law section of the Law Institute.

A confidential Alfred hospital analysis has found that Tasers expose subjects to "immediate risks and potentially fatal dangers", including fractures or head injuries when victims collapse, barb injuries and the potential to disrupt heart pacemakers. In 2004, surgeons from Adelaide's Queen Elizabeth Hospital struggled to save a man's eye after it was hit by a barb.

With Taser use in Victoria limited, assessing its record overseas and interstate is complex.

Examples of apparent abuse have emerged. Most notoriously, video footage last year showed a Florida woman screaming in agony after being shocked. Her crime ? Pulled over for speeding, she made a mobile phone call instead of immediately getting out of a car.

In Britain, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Ian Blair criticised officers' use of a stun gun to arrest a terrorism suspect. "It was an incredible risk to use a Taser on a suicide bomber because the Taser itself could set it off, and that is not the policy," he said.

RAIDH - Réseau d'Alerte et d'Intervention pour les Droits de l'Homme
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