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STEPS DOWNWARD FOR US CIVIL LIBERTIES
Dick Bennett

Sheldon Wolin in Democracy Inc. answers two perplexing questions about the U. S.: Has the U.S. become a dictatorship, and if it has why has the public been so acquiescent? I will
focus incompletely only on the Constitutional side of the questions. A fuller analysis must include militarism/imperialism and corporate power.

Wolin describes the United States as an “inverted totalitarianism.” The Hitlers and Mussolinis turned everything upside down by trying to force all segments of society to support the purposes of their regimes. And they were noisily obvious about breaking with the constitutional system of the past. Total, unified, top-down power was the exultingly public aim.

In contrast, inverted totalitarianism emerges gradually, imperceptibly, seemingly in unbroken continuity with political tradition. But while the leaders celebrate, for example, the rule of law, in fact they are changing the laws to reduce due process, permit torture, and manage the electoral process. It is not a linear process; it is slow and rapid; occasionally citizen rights gain; but overall we see the trajectory. Many of the public, alas, by not perceiving it, maintain business and play as usual, as democracy deteriorates.

This process is illustrated emphatically by the deletions of democratic Bill of Rights protections in the Constitution since the end of WWII, all of which I’ll label “McCarthyism” (for early examples, the 1950 Internal Security Act, the 1951 Supreme Court Dennis decision, the 1964 Communist Control Act). But given space constraints, let’s look only at the past thirty years, beginning with President Reagan

**Reagan, McCarthyism Extended:** the gag rule for public officials, Executive Order 12356 increasing the secrecy classification, increased use of the Foreign Agents Registration Act, and the McCarran-Walter Act, to mention only the most infamous.

**Clinton’s 1996 Anti-Terrorism “Patriot Act I”**: a special court for secret evidence to deport noncitizens accused of association with groups listed as “terrorist”; Executive Branch power to criminalize fundraising for lawful activities conducted by organizations labeled “terrorist”; repealing the Edwards amendment, which prohibited the FBI from opening investigations based on First Amendment activities; resurrecting the discredited ideological visa denial provisions of the McCarran-Walter Act to bar aliens based on their associations rather than their acts; and especially: creating a new federal crime of “terrorism”; carving further exceptions in the time-honored posse comitatus law barring the U.S. military from civilian law enforcement; expanding use of pre-trial detention; and loosening the rules governing federal wiretaps.

As we see, the “War on Communism and Socialism” and the “War on Terrorism” caused and continues to cause enormous deformations of our democracy. I will assume your familiarity with the Patriot Act and other intensifications of all of these past restrictions on our freedom that occurred under Bush II administration’s post-9/11 repressions which continue under Obama—such as reauthorization and extension of the Patriot Act (for example, the deletion of Posse Comitatus and Habeas Corpus protections).

References
GOOD AND BAD NEWS FROM BORDC, BILL OF RIGHTS DEFENSE COMMITTEE
April 2012, Vol. 10 No. 4 : http://www.bordc.org/newsletter/2012/04/

Albany, NY: Legislators issue proclamation against NDAA
Last month, a majority of Albany County Legislators supported a proclamation opposing the detention provisions of the National Defense Authorization Act. Following that victory, local organizers are now raising awareness about the issue to educate and inform others in their community.

Washington, DC: A rising tide of grassroots activism:
Several upcoming events in and around our nation’s capital will reinforce concerns about the erosion of constitutional rights.

Santa Cruz, CA: City council rejects indefinite detention
On Tuesday, April 10, the City Council of Santa Cruz unanimously passed the "Resolution to Restore Due Process and the Right to Trial," which stands against the indefinite detention provisions of the National Defense Authorization Act. In doing so, Santa Cruz became one of at least a dozen cities across the United States that have passed similar resolutions.

Los Angeles, CA: Diverse voices defend constitutional rights
The Tenth Amendment Center and the LA County Republican Liberty Caucus will host “Nullify the NDAA: Los Angeles,” an evening of speakers, education, and activism about indefinite detention. Meanwhile, a diverse coalition of community groups is mobilizing to restore Fourth Amendment protections limiting domestic spying by the LAPD.

Berkeley, CA: Police Review Commission approves coalition’s civil rights recommendations
The Coalition for a Safe Berkeley secured the commission’s support for recommendations that would curb the Berkeley Police Department’s participation in programs that violate civil rights and liberties.

San Francisco, CA: Community groups work with mayor to achieve surveillance reforms
On April 11, the Coalition for a Safe San Francisco (of which BORDC is a part) announced a compromise measure, endorsed by Mayor Ed Lee, to help restore local privacy laws violated by the San Francisco Police Department’s collaboration with the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force.

Law and policy

Bills to address NDAA and prevent domestic military detention introduced in Congress:
Since the rushed passage of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) in December, several bills have been introduced in Congress to amend, and in some cases repeal, the indefinite military detention provisions of the NDAA. Four bills have been introduced, but most of them leave some portions of the National Defense Authorization Act’s indefinite detention provisions intact.

NSA building massive surveillance facility
You might not have known about a mammoth compound being built deep in the desert of Utah. But when construction is complete in 2013, this data center will know everything about you. Under control by the National Security Agency, this $2 billion complex will have a copy of every piece of your daily communication—from personal emails to parking receipts to entire cell phone calls.

Warrantless cell phone tracking becoming routine for police
Local law enforcement officials are tracking cell phones with little or no judicial oversight. The
ACLU obtained 5,500 pages of internal records from 205 police departments across the nation, providing some of the first data about this disturbing—and widespread—violation of individual privacy.

US falls behind Europe in seeking accountability for torture
Just as the European Parliament pledged to investigate and report on war crimes committed by the Bush administration, the US has learned of the Bush administration's attempts to cover up a six-year-old State Department memo declaring so-called "enhanced interrogation techniques" to be war crimes.

New resources and opportunities
BORDC to host convening for civil liberties organizers May 4-6 in Chicago
This May 4-6, the Bill of Rights Defense Committee will host a convening in Chicago, IL, bringing together a diverse group of local civil rights activists from across the country. The convening is open to organizers engaged in BORDC's Local Civil Rights Restoration campaigns.

April 16-20: National End Racial Profiling Advocacy Week
The week of April 16-20 is National End Racial Profiling Advocacy Week, which will bring together communities across the country for a week of advocacy and activism to end the discriminatory practice of racial profiling.

June is Torture Awareness Month
June 26 is United Nations International Day in Support of Torture Victims. Several years ago, religious and human rights organizations in the United States declared the month of June to be Torture Awareness Month as a way to provide greater visibility to this issue and provide an opportunity for coordinated efforts across the country

The Shredding of Our Fundamental Rights  Part I

By Noam Chomsky, AlterNet  19 July 2012

_The Magna Carta - the charter of every self-respecting man - is being dismantled in front of our eyes._

This column is adapted from an address by Noam Chomsky on June 19 at the University of St. Andrews in Fife, Scotland, as part of its 600th anniversary celebration.

Recent events trace a threatening trajectory, sufficiently so that it may be worthwhile to look ahead a few generations to the millennium anniversary of one of the great events in the establishment of civil and human rights: the issuance of Magna Carta, the charter of English liberties imposed on King John in 1215.

What we do right now, or fail to do, will determine what kind of world will greet that anniversary. It is not an attractive prospect - not least because the Great Charter is being shredded before our eyes.

The first scholarly edition of the Magna Carta was published in 1759 by the English jurist William Blackstone, whose work was a source for U.S. constitutional law. It was entitled "The Great Charter and the Charter of the Forest," following earlier practice. Both charters are highly significant today.
The first, the Charter of Liberties, is widely recognized to be the cornerstone of the fundamental rights of the English-speaking peoples - or as Winston Churchill put it more expansively, "the charter of every self-respecting man at any time in any land."

In 1679 the Charter was enriched by the **Habeas Corpus Act**, formally titled "an Act for the better securing the liberty of the subject, and for prevention of imprisonment beyond the seas." The modern harsher version is called "rendition" - imprisonment for the purpose of torture.

Along with much of English law, the Act was incorporated into the U.S. Constitution, which affirms that "the writ of habeas corpus shall not be suspended" except in case of rebellion or invasion. In 1961, the U.S. Supreme Court held that the rights guaranteed by this Act were "(c)onsidered by the Founders as the highest safeguard of liberty."

More specifically, the Constitution provides that no "person (shall) be deprived of life, liberty or property, without due process of law (and) a speedy and public trial" by peers.

The Department of Justice has recently explained that these guarantees are satisfied by internal deliberations in the executive branch, as Jo Becker and Scott Shane reported in *The New York Times* on May 29. **Barack Obama**, the constitutional lawyer in the White House, agreed. King John would have nodded with satisfaction.

The underlying principle of "**presumption of innocence**" has also been given an original interpretation. In the calculus of the president’s "kill list" of terrorists, "all military-age males in a strike zone" are in effect counted as combatants "unless there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving them innocent," Becker and Shane summarized. Thus post-assassination determination of innocence now suffices to maintain the sacred principle.

This is the merest sample of the dismantling of "the charter of every self-respecting man."

**The companion Charter of the Forest** is perhaps even more pertinent today. It demanded protection of the commons from external power. The commons were the source of sustenance for the general population - their fuel, their food, their construction materials. The Forest was no wilderness. It was carefully nurtured, maintained in common, its riches available to all, and preserved for future generations.

By the 17th century, the Charter of the Forest had fallen victim to the commodity economy and capitalist practice and morality. No longer protected for cooperative care and use, the commons were restricted to what could not be privatized - a category that continues to shrink before our eyes.

Last month the World Bank ruled that the mining multinational Pacific Rim can proceed with its case against El Salvador for trying to preserve lands and communities from highly destructive gold mining. Environmental protection would deprive the company of future profits, a crime under the rules of the investor rights regime mislabeled as "free trade."
This is only one example of struggles under way over much of the world, some with extreme violence, as in resource-rich eastern Congo, where millions have been killed in recent years to ensure an ample supply of minerals for cellphones and other uses, and of course ample profits.

The dismantling of the Charter of the Forest brought with it a radical revision of how the commons are conceived, captured by Garrett Hardin’s influential thesis in 1968 that "Freedom in a commons brings ruin to us all," the famous "tragedy of the commons": What is not privately owned will be destroyed by individual avarice.

The doctrine is not without challenge. Elinor Olstrom won the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 2009 for her work showing the superiority of user-managed commons.

But the doctrine has force if we accept its unstated premise: that humans are blindly driven by what American workers, at the dawn of the industrial revolution, called "the New Spirit of the Age, Gain Wealth forgetting all but Self" - a doctrine they bitterly condemned as demeaning and destructive, an assault on the very nature of free people.

Huge efforts have been devoted since to inculcating the New Spirit of the Age. Major industries are dedicated to what political economist Thorstein Veblen called "fabricating wants" - directing people to "the superficial things" of life, like "fashionable consumption," in the words of Columbia University marketing professor Paul Nystrom.

That way people can be atomized, seeking personal gain alone and diverted from dangerous efforts to think for themselves, act in concert and challenge authority.

It’s unnecessary to dwell on the extreme dangers posed by one central element of the destruction of the commons: the reliance on fossil fuels, which courts global disaster. Details may be debated, but there is little serious doubt that the problems are all too real and that the longer we delay in addressing them, the more awful will be the legacy left to generations to come. The recent Rio+20 Conference is the latest effort. Its aspirations were meager, its outcome derisory.

In the lead in confronting the crisis, throughout the world, are indigenous communities. The strongest stand has been taken by the one country they govern, Bolivia, the poorest country in South America and for centuries a victim of Western destruction of its rich resources.

After the ignominious collapse of the Copenhagen global climate change summit in 2009, Bolivia organized a People’s Summit with 35,000 participants from 140 countries. The summit called for very sharp reduction in emissions, and a Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth. That is a key demand of indigenous communities all over the world.

The demand is ridiculed by sophisticated Westerners, but unless we can acquire some of the sensibility of the indigenous communities, they are likely to have the last laugh - a laugh of grim despair.
Noam Chomsky | How the Magna Carta Became a Minor Carta, Part 2
Noam Chomsky, Tom Dispatch, RSN, July 25, 2012
Chomsky writes: "The post-civil war 14th amendment granted the rights of persons to former slaves, though mostly in theory. At the same time, it created a new category of persons with rights: corporations."

world
AlterNet / By Rania Khalek
164 COMMENTS
6 Creepy New Weapons the Police and Military Use To Subdue Unarmed People
From microwave energy blasters and blinding laser beams to chemical agents and deafening sonic blasters, these weapons are at the cutting edge of crowd control.
August 1, 2011 |

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This article has been updated.

The US is at the forefront of an international arms development effort that includes a remarkable assortment of technologies, which look and sound like they belong in a Hollywood science fiction thriller. From microwave energy blasters and blinding laser beams, to chemical agents and deafening sonic blasters, these weapons are at the cutting edge of crowd control. The Pentagon's approved term for these weapons is "non-lethal" or "less-lethal" and they are intended for use against the unarmed. Designed to "control crowds, clear streets, subdue and restrain individuals and secure borders," they are the 21st century's version of the police baton, pepper spray and tear gas. As journalist Ando Arike puts it, "The result is what appears to be the first arms race in which the opponent is the general population."
The demand for non-lethal weapons (NLW) is rooted in the rise of television. In the 1960s and '70s the medium let everyday Americans witness the violent tactics used to suppress the civil rights and anti-war movements.
Today's rapid advancements in media and telecommunications technologies allow people to record and publicize images and video of undue force more than ever before. Authorities are
well aware of how images of violence play out publicly. In 1997, a joint report from the
Pentagon and the Justice Department warned:
"A further consideration that affects how the military and law enforcement apply force is the
greater presence of members of the media or other civilians who are observing, if not
recording, the situation. Even the lawful application of force can be misrepresented to or
misunderstood by the public. More than ever, the police and the military must be highly
discreet when applying force."
The global economic collapse coupled with the unpredictable and increasingly catastrophic
consequences of climate change and resource scarcity, along with a new era of austerity
defined by rising unemployment and glaring inequality have already led to massive protests in
Spain, Greece, Egypt, and even Madison, Wisconsin. From the progressive era to the Great
Depression to the civil rights movement, Americans have a rich history of taking to the streets
to demand greater equality.
Meanwhile, tens of millions of dollars have been invested in the research and development of
more "media-friendly" weapons for everyday policing and crowd control. This has lead to a
trade-in of old school weapons for more exotic and controversial technologies. The following
are six of the most outrageous "non-lethal" weapons that will define the future of crowd
control.

1. The Invisible Pain Ray: The 'Holy Grail of Crowd Control'

Source: Pasadena Star News

It sounds like a weapon out of Star Wars. The Active Denial System, or ADS, works like an
open-air microwave oven, projecting a focused beam of electromagnetic radiation to heat the
skin of its targets to 130 degrees. This creates an intolerable burning sensation forcing those
in its path to instinctively flee (a response the Air Force dubs the "goodbye effect").
The Pentagon's Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Program (JNLWP) says, "This capability will add
to the ability to stop, deter and turn back an advancing adversary, providing an alternative to
lethal force." Although ADS is described as non-lethal, a 2008 report by physicist and less-
lethal weapons expert Dr. Jürgen Altmann suggests otherwise:
"... the ADS provides the technical possibility to produce burns of second and third degree.
Because the beam of diameter 2 m and above is wider than human size, such burns would
occur over considerable parts of the body, up to 50% of its surface. Second- and third-degree
burns covering more than 20% of the body surface are potentially life-threatening – due to
toxic sensitivity to infection – and require intensive care in a specialized unit. Without a
technical device that reliably prevents re-triggering on the same target subject, the ADS has a
potential to produce permanent injury or death."
The weapon was initially tested in Afghanistan, but later recalled due to a combination of
technical difficulties and political concerns, including the fear that ADS would be used as a
torture tool making it "not politically tenable," according to a Defense Science Board report.
The tens of millions of dollars spent to develop the ADS did not necessarily go to waste,
however.
While the weapon may be too controversial for use on the battlefield, it appears that nothing is
too sadistic for use on US prisoners, so the ADS has since been modified into a smaller
version by Raytheon, for use in law enforcement. Last year, the renamed Assault Intervention
System (AIS) was installed at the Pitchess Detention Center's North County Correction
Facility at the behest of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD). Former LASD
Commander, Charles "Sid" Heal had been lobbying for the pain ray for years, calling it the "
Holy Grail of Crowd Control," due to "its ability to make people scatter, almost instantly."
The device is operated by a jail officer with a joystick, and is intended to break up prison riots,
inmate brawls and prevent assaults on officers. Sheriff Lee Baca added that it would allow officers to "quickly intervene" without having to physically enter the area to incapacitate prisoners.
The ACLU claims that use of such a device on American prisoners is "tantamount to torture." The organization even sent a letter to the sheriff in charge, demanding he never use the energy weapon against inmates. "The idea that a military weapon designed to cause intolerable pain should be used against county jail inmates is staggeringly wrongheaded," said Margaret Winter, associate director of the ACLU National Prison Project. "Unnecessarily inflicting severe pain and taking such unnecessary risks with people’s lives is a clear violation of the Eighth Amendment and due process clause of the U.S. Constitution."
The pain ray’s use in the Pitchess Detention Center is a pilot program. If successful, the weapon could find its way into other prisons around the country. The National Institute of Justice has also expressed interest in a hand-held, rifle-sized, short-range weapon "that could be effective at tens of feet for law enforcement officials."

2. The Laser Blinding 'Dazzler'

The Personal Halting and Stimulation Response rifle, or PHaSR, is a massive laser shooter. PHaSR technology is being co-funded by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Program (JNLWP), and the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and is being developed by the Air Force Research Laboratory. While JNLWP is interested in the technology for military applications, NIJ is focusing on its law enforcement use.
So what is the purpose of this light-shooting toy? Well, it won't kill you, but it will temporarily blind you — or as the NIJ prefers to say, it will "dazzle" you into disorientation — by shooting you with two low-power diode-pumped lasers.
Protocol IV, the Blinding Laser Protocol of the United Nations Convention on Conventional Weapons, states that, "The use of laser weapons that are specifically designed, as their sole combat function or as one of their combat functions, to cause permanent blindness to unenhanced vision is prohibited."
After the US agreed to the Blinding Laser Protocol in 1995 under President Clinton, the Pentagon was forced to cancel several blinding laser weapon programs that were in the works.

According to a U.S. Air Force fact sheet, "The laser light from PHaSR temporarily impairs aggressors by dazzling them with one wavelength. The second wavelength causes a repel effect that discourages advancing aggressors." The JNLWP website says that "a significant amount of research and experimentation is still required to gain a full understanding of the safety, military effectiveness, and limitations of these future capabilities."

3. The Taser on Steroids

The Albuquerque Police Department now has Taser shotguns in its arsenal. Most of us are familiar with hand-held Tasers and understand that they only work if the police are standing pretty close to you (about 20 feet).
But Taser has developed the Taser X12, a 12-gauge shotgun that instead of firing lethal bullet rounds, is designed to fire Taser projectile rounds. Known as Extended Range Electronic Projectiles (XREP), the XREP cartridge, as defined by the Taser website, is a "self-contained, wireless projectile that delivers the same neuro-muscular incapacitation bio-effect [a fancy way of saying electric shock] as the handheld Taser, but up to 100 feet."
According to a July 21 press release, Taser International has taken the XREP to the next level, teaming up with the Australian electronic gun company Metal Storm to enhance the 12-gauge Multi-Shot Accessory Under-Barrel Launcher (MAUL).
The two companies will combine Metal Storm's MAUL stacked projectile technology to "provide semi-automatic fire as fast as the operator can squeeze the trigger," which boasts a full weapon reload of up to five rounds in less than two seconds. Picture five rounds of Taser XREP cartridges flying out in less than two seconds up to 30 yards away -- that is the plan. In September 2010 Raw Story reported that the rate of Taser-related deaths were on the rise. The story cited an Amnesty International report from 2008 that found "351 Taser-related deaths in the US between June 2001 and August 2008, a rate of just slightly above four deaths per month." About 90 percent of the victims were unarmed and did not appear to pose any serious threat, according to an article in the Boston Review. The Amnesty report points out that Tasers are "inherently open to abuse as they are easy to carry and easy to use and they can inflict severe pain at the push of a button without leaving substantial marks." In Amnesty's US 2010 report, the Taser-related death toll had increased to 390. If the MAUL-Taser combined shooter find its way into police departments around the country, it may not bode well for the rate of Taser-related deaths.

Another project of Taser International described by Ando Arike is the Shockwave Area-Denial System, "which blankets a large area with electrified darts, and a wireless Taser projectile with a 100-meter range, helpful for picking off "ringleaders" in unruly crowds," In 2007, Taser's French distributor announced plans for a stun-gun-equipped flying saucer that shoots stun darts at "criminal suspects or rioting crowds"; however, it has yet to be unveiled. Clearly there is no limit to Taser International's capacity for creativity.

4. Calmative Agents for Riot Control

The Sunshine Project, a transparency and accountability organization, defines calmatives as "chemical or biological agents with sedative, sleep-inducing or similar psychoactive effects." Although the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention prohibits the use of riot control agents in warfare, JNWLP and NIJ have long considered calmatives for both military and law enforcement applications, such as dispersing a crowd, controlling a riot or calming a noncompliant offender.

The most well-known and widely used riot-control agents are tear gas (CS) and chloroacetophenone (CN), also known as mace. A few ways that more advanced non-lethal calmatives might be administered, depending on the law enforcement environment, would include "a topical or transdermal skin application, an aerosol spray, an intramuscular dart, or a rubber bullet filled with an inhalable agent," according to NIJ research.

In the March 2010 issue of Harper's magazine, Ando Arike gives an extensive overview of riot control technology in his article "The Soft Kill: New Frontiers in Pain Compliance." He wrote: Pentagon interest in "advanced riot-control agents" has long been an open secret, but just how close we are to seeing these agents in action was revealed in 2002, when the Sunshine Project, an arms-control group based in Austin, Texas, posted on the Internet a trove of Pentagon documents uncovered through the Freedom of Information Act. Among these was a fifty-page study titled "The Advantages and Limitations of Calmatives for Use as a Non-Lethal Technique," conducted by Penn State's Applied Research Laboratory, home of the JLNLD-sponsored Institute for Non-Lethal Defense Technologies.

Penn State's College of Medicine researchers agreed, contrary to accepted principles of medical ethics, that "the development and use of non-lethal calmative techniques is both achievable and desirable," and identified a large number of promising drug candidates, including benzodiazepines like Valium, serotonin-reuptake inhibitors like Prozac, and opiate derivatives like morphine, fentanyl, and carfentanil, the last commonly used by veterinarians to sedate large animals. The only problems they saw were in developing effective delivery vehicles and regulating dosages, but these problems could be solved readily, they recommended, through strategic partnerships with the pharmaceutical industry.
Little more was heard about the Pentagon’s “advanced riot-control agent” program until July 2008, when the Army announced that production was scheduled for its XM1063 “non-lethal personal suppression projectile,” an artillery shell that bursts in midair over its target, scattering 152 canisters over a 100,000-square-foot area, each dispersing a chemical agent as it parachutes down. There are many indications that a calmative, such as fentanyl, is the intended payload—a literal opiate of the masses.

5. Screaming Microwaves That Pierce the Skull

Source: Wired

Researchers are in the process of developing the Mob Excess Deterrent Using Silent Audio or MEDUSA (that's right, from Greek mythology), which uses "a beam of microwaves to induce uncomfortable auditory sensations in the skull." The device "exploits the microwave audio effect, in which short microwave pulses rapidly heat tissue, causing a shockwave inside the skull that can be detected by the ears," explains David Hambling in the New Scientist. MEDUSA's audio effect is loud enough to cause discomfort or even incapacitation. It may also cause a little brain damage from the high-intensity shockwave created by the microwave pulse.

MEDUSA's intended purpose is deterring crowds from entering a protected perimeter, like a nuclear site, and temporarily incapacitating unruly individuals. So far the weapon remains in development and is funded by the Navy.

6. Ear-Splitting Siren

Source: Associated Press

The Long Range Acoustic Device, or LRAD, developed by American Technology Corporation, "focuses and broadcasts sound over ranges of up to hundreds of yards," according to David Axe in Wired’s Danger Room. LRAD has been around for years, but Americans first took notice when police used it in Pittsburgh to ward off protesters at the 2009 G-20 summit. David Hambling says it is generally used in two ways: "as a megaphone to order protesters to disperse; or, if they disobey, as an “ear-splitting siren” to drive them away." While LRAD may not be deadly, it can cause permanent damage. Similar sonic blasters have proven deadly. One is the Thunder Generator, an Israeli-developed shock wave cannon that farmers commonly use to scare away crop destroying birds. According to a Defense News report last year, Israel’s Ministry of Defense licensed ArmyTec to market the Thunder Generator in military and security versions.

In a brief overview, Hambling explains that it works using "gas from a cylinder of domestic liquid petroleum," which is mixed with air. When detonated it produces "a series of high-intensity blasts," at a range of 50 meters. While the makers insist it doesn't cause permanent damage, they warn that people within 10 meters could suffer lasting injuries or possibly death.

The Impact

The application of pain to control to coerce people into submission helps achieve the desired aims of perception management, while sheltering the public from the brutality of such devices.

Perhaps these less-lethal tactics for crowd control do result in fewer injuries. But they also severely weaken our capacity to enact political change. Authorities have ever more creative ways to manage dissent, at a time when the need for change by popular demand is vital to the future of our society and the planet.
EDITOR'S NOTE: This article has been corrected since its original publication for more accurate attribution to original sources.

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