Policy Study: Non-lethal Technologies

Analysis of National Security Policy Implications of Non-lethal Weapons

September 19, 1994

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Agenda

- Possible Employment of Non-lethal Technologies
- Policy Implications of Non-lethal Technology Employment

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Study Flow Chart

Task 1
Identify Possible Employment of Non-lethal Technologies in Counterproliferation and Other Forms of Military Intervention

Task 2
Compose a Set of Non-lethal Technology Concepts

Task 3
Assess the Policy Implications of Non-lethal Technology Employment

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Possible Employment of Non-lethal Technologies

Missions
- Low Intensity Conflict
- Special Operations
- Counterproliferation

Operational Tasks
- Traditional
- Emerging
- Technology-enabled

Operational Needs for Non-lethal Technologies

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Possible Employment of Non-lethal Technologies

Key Findings

- Operational Needs for NLWs Exist
- “Top 10” Needs for Non-lethal Technologies
- Technology-enabled Operational Tasks

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Possible Employment of Non-lethal Technologies

"Top 10" Needs for Non-lethal Technologies

- Disable Personnel
- Disable Weaponry
- Disable Vehicles, Machinery, and Other Equipment
- Disable, Disrupt, or Manipulate C4I Systems
- Destroy or Disable Facilities/Structures
- Influence or Manipulate Enemy Behavior and Decisions
- Disable Radar
- Mark Personnel for Identification
- Erect Barriers to Personnel and Transportation
- Disrupt Logistics Systems

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Possible Employment of Non-lethal Technologies

Technology-enabled Operational Tasks

- Climate Control Operations
- Electronic Deception for Strategic Deployments
- Electronic Deception for Tactical Special Operations
- Facility Denial
- Financial Disruption Operations
- Behavior Modification
- PSYOP Sky Holograms
- Subversive Mimicry

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Policy Implications of Non-lethal Technology Employment

- Foreign Policy Implications
- Strategic Implications
- Domestic Implications
- Conclusions

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Foreign Policy Implications

Potential Contributions of Non-lethal Technologies to Implementation of Foreign Policy

- **Military**
  - Enhanced discriminate use of force
  - Early intervention potential
  - More credible deterrence
  - Military support to OOTW
  - Demonstrate unique U.S. military capabilities

- **Political**
  - Enhance other instruments of policy (e.g., embargoes)
  - Provide critical, unique support to allies and coalitions
  - Demonstrate effectiveness of limited use of force
  - Support for broad arms control objectives

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Foreign Policy Implications

Potential Foreign Policy Constraints on Use of Non-lethal Technologies

• Military
  - Credibility of traditional deterrence means and methods
  - Availability of lethal force, when needed
  - Vulnerabilities (own forces to hostile non-lethals and own non-lethal force to hostile lethal force)
  - Uncertainty of effects

• Political
  - Ability to deliver what we promise
  - International agreements
  - Technology transfer and export controls
  - Wrong political message

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Foreign Policy Implications

Implications of Non-lethal Force for Foreign Policy

- U.S. gains flexibility to define use of force spectrum
  - In OOTW
  - In regional conflict
- Multiple thresholds are possible
- Broader potential for coercion/persuasion as instruments of foreign policy
- Policy challenge is to project force options in an environment of intensifying arms control
- Provides for negative and positive security guarantees
- Political basis for early/preemptive action will need to be established

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Strategic Implications

Implications of Non-lethal Technologies for Military Operations

- **Tactical level of war**
  - Relaxation of tight rules of engagement for OOTWs
  - Requirement for new BDA indicators and definition of “defeated targets”
  - Fewer complications caused by collateral effects of lethal force

- **Operational level of war**
  - Ability to act early and continuously, including better opportunities for preemption
  - Ability to “strike” otherwise protected targets and non-traditional targets
  - Requirement for improved intelligence and targeting

- **Strategic level of war**
  - Broadened U.S. freedom of action
  - Counter to negative deterrent of our capabilities
  - Expansion of options across range of future missions

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Strategic Implications

Critical Strategic Issues in the Use of Non-lethal Technologies

• The mix of lethal and non-lethal force on the battlefield
• Protection of own forces from effects of friendly and adversary NLWs
• Firebreaks
• Casualties
• BDA/“Kill Assessment”
• Security of non-lethal technologies and potential for technology transfer

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Domestic Implications

- Public Opinion Regarding NLWs
- American Political Culture
- Cultural Preconceptions
- Media Coverage of NLWs
- Influential Interest Groups
- Legal and Ethical Considerations
- Domestic Impact

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American Political Culture

- **Insularity**: Americans generally exhibit little knowledge of or concern about the rest of the world unless their interests are directly engaged.

- **Ethnocentrism**: Knowing little about the rest of the world, Americans tend to project their own values and experiences onto other peoples.

- **Moralism**: Americans tend to feel that their motives are morally superior to those of other nations, and that the U.S. should set an example for others.

- **Purpose**: Americans resist involvement in foreign conflicts unless their actions can be seen as serving a higher purpose, rather than self-interest; wars thus tend to become moral crusades.

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Domestic Implications

American Political Culture (Cont’d)

• **Casualties:** Because wars are moral crusades, Americans can accept high enemy casualties; but they have great difficulty accepting the need for U.S. casualties

• **Tactics:** Once involved in war, Americans prefer decisive action; they are uncomfortable with limited warfare and constraints on the use of weapons

• **Technology:** Americans like high-tech solutions to political problems, seeing them as evidence of U.S. ingenuity

• **Charity:** Americans usually help vanquished adversaries to recover from wars

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Domestic Implications

Public Opinion Re NLWs

• Except for firmly-rooted cultural values, mass and elite opinion in the U.S. concerning national security and foreign affairs seems uncertain and impressionable.

• In the absence of a coherent framework for ordering perceptions, circumstantial factors play a major role in shaping public reaction to specific security challenges.

• Success in using one type of NLW will tend to elevate the perceived value and visibility of all NLWs; failure in using one type will tend to discredit all types.

• Therefore, the response of elites and the mass public to NLWs will be heavily influenced by (1) cultural preconceptions and (2) the particular circumstances in which they are first used.

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Domestic Implications

Cultural Preconceptions

- Americans will reject NLWs if they appear to be inconsistent with key values, setting a moral example, or minimizing U.S. casualties
- Americans will embrace NLWs if they provide a high-tech solution to a pressing problem
- Americans will embrace NLWs if they produce decisive results; Americans will resist NLWs if they appear to prolong conflict or impede clear-cut victory
- Americans will tend to be unimpressed with the unique suitability of NLWs to particular political challenges, since they are not conversant with the subtleties of foreign politics

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Media Coverage of NLWs

- Liberalism of leading journalists and media outlets means perceived ethical and environmental concerns may dominate public discussion of NLWs prior to operational employment.
- Once employment occurs, discussion will tend to shift to more focused issues such as operational effectiveness and budgetary impact—unless the initial employment is a spectacular failure or success.
- Television will tend to focus its coverage on visual effects and the feelings of participants, rather than empirical or abstract factual content.
- Print media will tend to focus upon controversies such as the cost of the weapons and their efficacy on the battlefield.
- Pejorative labelling, e.g., the “Star Wars” mindset, is very much in evidence.

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Influential Interest Groups: A Left-wing Critique

- NLWs violate international treaties banning chemical and biological warfare
- NLWs damage the environment
- NLWs make war more likely by reducing its destructive consequences
- NLWs are unethical and inhumane (noncombatant injuries, collateral effects, combatant maiming, etc.)
- NLWs cost too much and/or don’t work
- NLWs are part of a military-industrial conspiracy to preserve influence in the post-Cold War world

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Domestic Implications

Influential Interest Groups: A Right-wing Critique

- NLWs reflect a sentimental and naive view of war
- NLWs reflect a lack of resolve to defend U.S. interests
- NLWs put the lives of U.S. soldiers at risk
- NLWs compromise the operational effectiveness of U.S. forces
- NLWs do not produce the psychological effects necessary to deter potential aggressors
- NLWs do not produce the physical effects necessary to punish actual aggressors
- NLWs encourage micromanagement of the military by politicians
- NLWs are politically correct but militarily irrelevant

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Domestic Implications

Legal and Ethical Considerations

- Technological change introduces legal and ethical questions in many fields of human endeavor

- U.S. procedure
  - All new weapons reviewed for compliance with laws of war and other legal obligations
  - Use of NLWs subject to same legal constraints as lethal force

- Just War Tradition (right conduct in use of force)
  - Military necessity
  - Proportionality
  - Discrimination
  - Humanity

- Some of most difficult questions concerning compliance with the law of armed conflict and general ethical considerations may arise not from the use of NLWs but by election not to use them

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Domestic Implications

Domestic Impact of NLWs

- The concept of non-lethality needs to be carefully explained to avoid misunderstandings and unrealistic expectations.
- Emphasis on lethality leads many observers to think of NLWs in purely anti-personnel terms.
- The public has little information about NLWs and therefore will tend to respond to them based on (1) cultural and (2) circumstantial considerations.
- Grouping of diverse systems under a common rubric encourages singular generalized reactions.
- NLWs seem tailor-made to aggravate tensions in U.S. political culture; they invite both praise and derision.
- The media will play a key role in shaping public perceptions of NLWs, and journalists are generally excited about the news potential.

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Conclusions

Effective employment of NLWs will:

- Offer to policy-makers more options for:
  - Early and/or preemptive intervention in conflicts
  - Discriminate use of force, especially in OOTW
  - Limiting conflict escalation

- Require addressing such critical strategic and military issues as:
  - Integration of lethal and non-lethal weapons in conflicts
  - Vulnerability of friendly forces employing NLWs
  - Rules of engagement
  - Effective intelligence support and BDA for NLW use

- Have to be consistent with American political culture and will require American public support—support shaped by:
  - Government leadership
  - Key media
  - Influential interest groups

- Have to comply with the standards of:
  - Just War tradition
  - International and domestic law
  - Ethical norms