

DEPARTMENT OF POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO



R. Manuel Fortes
Acting Director

May 26, 2017

Commissioner Sonia Melara
Commissioner Bill Ong Hing
Police Commission Office
San Francisco Police Headquarters
1245 3rd Street
San Francisco, CA 94158

Re: Additional Suggested Materials on Electronic Controlled Weapons (aka "Tasers")

Dear Commissioners Sonia Melara and Bill Ong Hing:

Below I have suggested four articles on the topic of Electronic Controlled Weapons (aka "Tasers") to supplement the materials our agency previously recommended in our May 18, 2017 letter to you.

1. **Washington Post Article on 2015 Deaths in Incidents Where Police Used Tasers**

On November 26, 2015, the Washington Post published an article that focused on incidents resulting in the individual's death in which police used tasers. This article is part of the Washington Posts' series in which the Post began compiling a database of all fatal shootings nationwide by officers in the line of duty.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/investigative/2015/11/26/improper-techniques-increased-risks/?utm_term=.2f689e564f84

The Washington Post's database is available at
https://www.washingtonpost.com/policeshootings/?utm_term=.880ffb8f01d1

For an analysis of why the federal statistics on police killings are incomplete and inaccurate and prompted media outlets such as the Washington Post and the Guardian to establish their own databases, see Franklin Zimring When Police Kill (2017), Chapters 1-3.

2. Baltimore Sun's Analysis of Three Years of Taser Incidents in Maryland

On March 19, 2016, the Baltimore Sun published an article about its data analysis of all taser incidents in Maryland over a three-year period. The Baltimore Sun's analysis indicated that police agencies across the state have predominantly used the devices against suspects who posed no immediate threat. The study also established that in hundreds of cases, police did not follow widely accepted safety recommendations.

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/investigations/bal-tasers-in-maryland-story.html>

3. Amnesty International Reports on Tasers

In 2007 Amnesty International issued a statement of concern about taser-related deaths to the United States Department of Justice.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr51/151/2007/en/>

In its 2015-2016 *The State of the World's Human Rights* report, Amnesty International stated that the numbers of Taser-related deaths since 2001 is at least 670 and that most victims were not armed and did not appear to pose a threat of death or serious injury when the Taser was deployed.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2016/02/annual-report-201516/>

(2007 Amnesty International statement and excerpt from 2015/2016 report are attached to this letter).

4. Chapter on the Medical Testimony Concerning Death of Mr. Dziekanski Presented to the Braidwood Commission

The Braidwood Commission's reports on the death of Robert Dziekanski at the Van Couver International Airport in which police used an electronic control weapon on him, includes summaries from 14 medical experts in forensic pathology, cardiology, electrophysiology, forensic pathology, emergency medicine, TASER research, psychiatry, addiction medicine, forensic psychiatry and epidemiology. The Braidwood Commission's Executive Summary of the incident (pp.1-16) and chapter on the cause of death that includes summaries of the medical experts' opinions (pp.273-338) are attached. (See Department of Police Accountability's letter of May 18, 2017 for summary and links to full Braidwood Commission reports.)

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/about-bc-justice-system/inquiries/braidwoodphase2report.pdf>

Thank you for the opportunity to suggest these additional materials for the ECW Working Group.

Sincerely,

R. Manuel Fortes
Acting Director



Samara Marion
Policy Attorney

attachments