

## **Less-Lethal Weapons in the War Against Terrorism**

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In the post-9/11 era many people have questioned the need for non-lethal/less lethal weapons. Certainly Enduring Freedom, the mission in Afghanistan, proved the capability of traditional lethal weapons as well as new hyper-lethal systems such as the cave-busting, thermobaric bombs. This form of stand-off destruction, combining special operations forces on the ground directing the delivery of precision guided munitions, is now touted as the new form of warfare that will dominate the War on Terrorism.

However, there will be an urgent need for non-lethal/less lethal weapons as these conflicts move into advanced phases. While the Taliban and al Qaeda forces initially fought from relatively isolated areas, many of them have now moved into densely populated urban areas.

But open conflict with al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations will prove to be quite limited. The future of most of the conflicts will not be remote mountains or jungles; it will be in urban areas around the world.

Even in urban areas there are varying amounts of damage we are willing to inflict. Iraq offers an example in which only moderate control would be exercised, especially if friendly casualties mounted. However, the battles with terrorists will not be restricted to cities that we are willing to bomb. While they may strike and run, there will be times in which terrorists are surrounded in major metropolitan areas.

Therefore, the development and deployment of non-lethal/less lethal weapons are even more important than prior to 9/11. Non-lethal weapons will be needed to separate terrorists from their victims. Required are new area weapons that can physically cut off small geographic areas. We also need incapacitating agents that have area effects. Non-Lethal/less-lethal weapons can provide help in the War on Terrorism. While these weapons are necessary, many of them will be controversial.