Abstract
This paper explores the early history of non-lethal weapons development covering the period from the 1960s, when several diverse weapons were first grouped together in one category and described as non-lethal by law enforcement end-users and policymakers, until 1989, just before the hugely increased interest in the field that developed during the 1990s amongst both police and military organisations. It describes the origins and emergence of new weapons, examining this process with reference to technological advances, wider socio-political context, legal developments, and evolution of associated institutional structures. Developments in both the policing and military spheres are considered as well as the interconnections between them. Necessarily this paper focuses on events in the US, in part because it led the way in this field but also because sources of information on US activities are more readily available.

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The Bradford Non-Lethal Weapons Research Project (BNLWRP) was established in 1995 at the Centre for Conflict Resolution, Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, United Kingdom. The project's key objectives are to: Review and describe non-lethal weapons (NLWs), which are being developed and deployed. Identify and track defence and related research institutes involved in the development and manufacture of NLWs. Follow doctrine and policy debates related to the use of NLWs.

Non-lethal weapons (NLWs) are explicitly designed and primarily employed to incapacitate personnel or material whilst minimising collateral damage to property and the environment. Existing NLWs include rubber and plastic bullets, entangling nets, chemical sprays such as OC and CS gas, and electrical stunning devices such as the 'Taser' gun. For over 25 years, there has been 'little to no' scientific research into their mechanism of action. According to the report: A carefully structured scientific program is underway for some relevant targets.

Non-lethal weapons (NLWs) are often understood that unintended or incidental casualties are risked wherever force is applied, but non-lethal weapons try to minimise the risk as much as possible. Non-lethal weapons may be used by military in a range of missions across the force continuum. They may also be used by police, by United Nations forces. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Non-Lethality Policy Review Group at U.S., the U.S. Congress and other governments agreed and began an organized development of non-lethal weapons to provide a range of options between talking and shooting.