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Tuesday, December 5, 2006

Air Force weapon makes your face feel like it's melting

The US Air Force is ready to deploy a non-lethal weapon called the "Active Denial System" that makes your face feel like it is melting, but (usually) produces no lasting harm. People hit with the beam turn around and run away -- something the military calls the "Goodbye Effect."

Of course, if you were tied up in Abu Ghraib and being zapped with one of these things, you *couldn't* run away. And once the US military has it, you can be sure that it'll start showing up in the hands of, say, neo-nazi gangs, local phonebook-and-club cops, and the world's waterboarders.

The ADS shoots a beam of millimeters waves, which are longer in wavelength than x-rays but shorter than microwaves -- 94 GHz (= 3 mm wavelength) compared to 2.45 GHz (= 12 cm wavelength) in a standard microwave oven...

The beam produces what experimenters call the "Goodbye effect," or "prompt and highly motivated escape behavior." In human tests, most subjects reached their pain threshold within 3 seconds, and none of the subjects could endure more than 5 seconds...

In more than 10,000 exposures, there were six cases of blistering and one instance of second-degree burns in a laboratory accident, the documents claim.

The ADS was developed in complete secrecy for 10 years at a cost of \$40 million. Its existence was revealed in 2001 by news reports, but most details of ADS human testing remain classified. There has been no independent checking of the military's claims.

The ADS technology is ready to deploy, and the Army requested ADS-armed Strykers for Iraq last year. But the military is well aware that any adverse publicity could finish the program, and it does not want to risk distressed victims wailing about evil new weapons on CNN.

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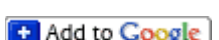
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