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| News & Information



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NEWS SUMMARY:

- Navy sailors conducted non-lethal weapons training in the Philippine Sea.
- A South Dakota bill aims to restore concealed carry, pepper spray, and stun gun rights on college campuses.
- The Seattle City Council passed a bill allowing police officers — in limited cases — to use weapons like tear gas, pepper spray and blast balls to control crowd movement during protest.
- Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents used armored vehicles and gas during the arrest of an undocumented immigrant in San Antonio during a deportation action.
- Bangladeshi police used tear gas, water cannons, and batons to disperse protesters in Dhaka city demanding the reinstatement of canceled recruitment for government primary school assistant teachers.
- Interest in direct-energy weapons is rising in the Gulf region, a technology in which Israel has proclaimed itself a leader with the fielding of the Iron Beam.

- A Canadian police watchdog has cleared local police of wrongdoing after a range of non-lethal weapons and devices were used on a knife-wielding man in Courtenay during an hours-long standoff that left him seriously injured.
- Opinion: In a radio episode, Dr Peter Layton, retired RAAF Group Captain and Visiting Fellow at the Griffith Asia Institute, discussed China's "gray zone" tactics and ways Australia should respond.

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GRAY ZONE COMPETITION:

Navy sailors from Rockwall and Denton conduct non-lethal weapons training in the Philippine Sea

(My Texas Daily, February 16)

Sailors aboard the USS Ralph Johnson participated in non-lethal weapons training while underway in the Philippine Sea on February 7, 2025. The training involved Chief Cryptologic Technician (Technical) Trevor Feinburg, of Oak Harbor, Washington, Culinary Specialist 3rd Class Jacob McCallum, of Rockwall, Texas, and Master-at-Arms 1st Class Derek Hollmuller, of Denton, Texas.

The exercise took place amidships of the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer, which is forward deployed and assigned to Destroyer Squadron 15, the Navy's largest destroyer

squadron and the U.S. 7th Fleet's principal surface force, according to a press release from the Commander, Task Force 71/Destroyer Squadron 15.

The training session was captured in a photograph by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Hannah Fry.

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DOMESTIC:

South Dakota Bill Aims to Restore Concealed Carry, Pepper Spray, and Stun Gun Rights on College Campuses

(USA Carry, February 13)

A major step toward campus self-defense rights is underway in South Dakota as Senate Bill 100 moves through the legislature with strong support. This bill, introduced by Senator Voita, aims to prevent public colleges and technical institutions from prohibiting concealed carry by permit holders and ensures students and faculty have access to basic self-defense tools like pepper spray and stun guns.

The bill has gained significant traction, passing the Senate in a 33-2 vote on February 12, 2025, after amendments. It now heads to the House, where Second Amendment supporters hope it will continue to advance.

What SB 100 Does

If passed, the bill would prohibit public colleges and technical institutions from restricting the lawful carry of:

- Concealed firearms by those with a South Dakota enhanced permit or a recognized reciprocal permit.
- Stun guns for self-defense.
- Pepper spray and other chemical irritants for personal protection.

Limited Restrictions for Safety Reasons

While the bill broadly protects the right to carry on campus, limited exceptions exist. Schools may restrict weapons in specific areas that contain:

- Large quantities of hazardous materials.
- Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or nuclear magnetic resonance equipment.
- Rooms used for controlled scientific research.
- Secure locations requiring federal security clearance.

Additionally, special events can temporarily restrict carry if metal detectors and armed security personnel are present at all public entrances.

Why This Bill Matters

This legislation is a critical step in protecting students, faculty, and staff from the ever-present risk of violent crime on college campuses. Colleges often restrict firearms and even non-lethal self-defense tools, leaving students—particularly young women—completely defenseless against threats like assault, robbery, and active shooter situations.

By allowing concealed carry permit holders to lawfully carry on campus, SB 100 ensures that responsible adults retain the ability to protect themselves and others. Additionally, permitting pepper spray and stun guns provides options for those who may not carry firearms but still want a means of self-defense.

The Path Forward

With strong backing in the Senate, SB 100 now moves to the South Dakota House of Representatives, where supporters hope for swift passage. If signed into law, this bill will make South Dakota one of the most pro-self-defense states in the nation, ensuring that students and faculty are no longer forced to be easy targets in “gun-free” zones.

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Seattle council passes bill letting police use certain weapons on crowds

(The Seattle Times, February 11)

The Seattle City Council passed a bill Tuesday allowing police officers — in limited cases — to use weapons like tear gas, pepper spray and blast balls to control crowd movement during protest.

Past councils greatly restricted the use of such weapons in the wake of the Seattle Police Department’s violent response to racial justice protests following the May 2020 murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer. The weapons are designed to incapacitate or deter people without killing them, but can cause serious injury or even death if improperly deployed. Previous legislation, passed as a result of public outcry over police violence and lawsuits, had all but barred the use of the weapons.

The 6-3 vote draws Seattle closer to the end of more than a dozen years of federal oversight for the city’s Police Department.

With the ordinance’s passage, the city has said it will file a joint motion with the Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division seeking to formally dissolve a settlement agreement that the two sides entered in 2012. The settlement was the result of a DOJ investigation that concluded Seattle officers used excessive force in one of every five arrests, that they frequently escalated situations and that they used force while making arrests for minor crimes, particularly against people who were intoxicated or in crisis. The DOJ also found evidence of biased policing.

After more than \$200 million in expenditures that have funded a top-to-bottom overhaul of the department’s use-of-force policies, training regimens and data-gathering capabilities —

including the advent of body cameras — enactment of a crowd-control ordinance that passes constitutional muster is the final requirement of U.S. District Judge James Robart and his court-appointed monitor.

Under the new ordinance, Seattle police officers can only use these tools if circumstances “are occurring or about to occur” that present an imminent risk of physical injury or significant property damage. The incident commander, who is in charge of a scene, would have to approve the use of the weapons. In the case of tear gas and blast balls, the mayor would have to declare a state of civil emergency.

State law already restricts the use of tear gas, saying it can only be used to alleviate risk in a riot, a hostage situation or a situation where someone has barricaded themselves.

Tuesday’s bill was amended to require the chief of police to authorize the deployment of blast balls after the mayor declares a civil emergency, and that blast balls must be thrown underhand and away from people. If there is an immediate threat to life safety, a blast ball can be thrown overhand or near a person, according to one of the adopted amendments.

A previous council essentially banned less lethal weapons despite strong pushback from the department’s leadership at the time, who warned it would result in more dangerous weapons being used. Tuesday’s bill repeals that ban.

During public comment, several people who spoke in opposition to the ordinance said they took part in the 2020 protests and saw firsthand how police deployed the weapons.

“No matter what policies and safeguards you write, council members ... people will get hurt,” said Matthew Offenbacher, a Capitol Hill resident who was at a climate protest against Amazon when a Seattle police captain drove into the protest. “The only way to make sure people are safe is to deny SPD access to these weapons.”

Gabriel Jones, who opposed the ordinance during public comment, shouted upon its passage: “Ladies and gentlemen, give it up for your City Council that has just voted to kill more Seattleites!”

In practice, the weapons had never actually been banned. A revised law got caught in the legal labyrinth of court oversight over the department. In that time, the Police Department relied on its own internal policies regulating their use. The department has not used blast balls since October 2020, according to Chief Operating Officer Brian Maxey.

An amendment that would have required mutual aid officers from other jurisdictions to comply with policy if they’re going to play a role in crowd management failed to pass, with Councilmember Bob Kettle expressing concern that other officers would not come to the aid of Seattle police.

“I don’t think that we should be inviting people to manage our crowds if they are unwilling to fully comply with SPD policy,” said Councilmember Cathy Moore, who introduced the failed amendment.

Councilmembers Alexis Mercedes Rinck, Joy Hollingsworth and Moore voted against Tuesday's bill, citing concerns about lacking accountability measures and what Moore described as a "rushed" process to get the bill passed, which she said might hurt Seattle's ability to get out of the federal consent decree.

"There hasn't been enough time for the community to be engaged," Moore said. "... We haven't really come that far from 2020."

With Tuesday's stumbling block out of the way, the city is expected to submit the passed ordinance to the federal monitor for judicial review. The ordinance also requires the Police Department to create an annual report on the use of force in crowd management situations and submit it to the city by the end of the next year's first quarter.

"Ultimately, this is about ... capstoning the reforms that have been completed over the last dozen years," said Kettle. "This is crucial to cement the reforms."

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ICE used gas, armored vehicle to arrest immigrant in San Antonio

(San Antonio Current, February 10)

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents used armored vehicles and gas during the arrest of an undocumented immigrant in San Antonio during a deportation action, News4SA reports.

ICE officer Michael Dryja confirmed details of the arrest during testimony at a Feb. 5 probable cause hearing in federal court, according to the NBC affiliate. The station also reported that officers used the tactics even though they saw a woman and child enter the house.

The Current reached out to Department of Homeland Security officials for comment on the arrest but received no response.

Juan Ramon Hernandez-Limon was sweeping the front porch of his West Side home on in late January, when ICE agents approached him, according to court testimony reported on by News4. Dryja testified that Hernandez-Limon said he'd done nothing wrong and went inside.

Federal, state and local law enforcement personnel then surrounded the house for hours while Dryja obtained a warrant for the man's arrest, the officer reportedly said in testimony.

Authorities sought Hernandez-Limon's arrest because he was wanted for illegal reentry, according to a Jan. 28 statement from the U.S. Justice Department. He'd also been convicted in 2021 on charges of illegal reentry and alien in possession of a firearm and in 2024 of illegal reentry, department officials said.

Hernandez-Limon had called the United States home since he was 6 months old, News4 reports, citing court testimony. He was a DACA recipient until that status expired in 2015, according to the station.

Once authorities obtained the warrant, they used a police intercom to tell Hernandez-Limon they planned to arrest him, the ICE officer reportedly testified. When Hernandez-Limon failed to exit the home, agents used an armored vehicle to bust down the front and back doors, according to News4.

Hernandez-Limon made an easy target for authorities newly emboldened by the Trump administration's executive orders, according to News4. The man had reportedly been deported in 2018 after an arrest for pot possession and eventually returned to San Antonio where his family lives.

In testimony, Dryja said federal agents conducted surveillance on Hernandez-Limon's home over the past month to verify that he was back in the States illegally before striking as part of the nationwide deportation push.

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OTHER FOREIGN COUNTRIES:

Police break up teacher recruitment protest with tear gas, water cannons

(The Financial Express, February 15)

Police used tear gas, water cannons, and batons to disperse protesters in Dhaka city demanding the reinstatement of canceled recruitment for government primary school assistant teachers.

The incident occurred as they marched toward the High Court shrine from Shahbagh around 4:00 pm on Sunday.

The protesters have been demonstrating for 11 days, arguing that candidates from earlier recruitment phases were appointed while theirs was scrapped following a High Court ruling.

The third-phase recruitment began on June 14, 2023, with 6,531 candidates passing written and oral exams.

It was put on hold after unsuccessful candidates filed a writ petition, and on February 6, the High Court canceled the process, triggering protests.

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As Israel fields Iron Beam, Gulf states are pining for the technology

(Defense News, February 14)

Interest in direct-energy weapons is rising in the Gulf region, a technology in which Israel has proclaimed itself a leader with the fielding of the Iron Beam.

Absent the breakthrough capability, militaries in the region are stuck with the costly proposition of shooting interceptor missiles at incoming threats, an economic calculus untenable for some.

Sasha Bruchmann, a research fellow at the Bahrain office of the International Institute for Strategic Studies think tank, explained that while there is a common allure among Gulf states to directed-energy weapons, there is no joint initiative in place dedicated to researching or developing such systems.

“There has been a shared interest in so far as most would want to have them, they are high on the priority list of most regional states – however, there is no common Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) approach or umbrella that I am aware of to foster this cooperatively or even bilateral cooperation,” he said.

The expert noted that Saudi Arabia is reported to have already purchased a Chinese-made smaller laser counter-drone system and that the United Arab Emirates appears to want to develop these types of weapons through independent initiatives. Janes reported on Saudi efforts to that effect last month.

Mastering the technology of disabling missiles, drones and smaller projectiles with lasers has long been the holy grail of air defense. Few nations have succeeded so far, with Israel and the United States among the ones closest to this pursuit.

Israeli defense company Rafael has been working for over a decade on the Iron Beam – which it is expected to deploy before the end of this year.

The intention is to integrate the system into the Iron Dome, which relies on kinetic interceptors, to render the package more effective. In the setup, Iron Beam would direct a large amount of small beams on the most vulnerable spot of incoming threats, incapacitating them.

At the 2023 edition of the IDEX trade show in Abu Dhabi, Rafael exhibited a mock-up of the Iron Beam, signaling an interest in possibly exporting the system to regional customers in the future.

A company representative confirmed to Defense News that the company will be showcasing additional laser-based capabilities at this year’s event running Feb. 17-21.

Bruchmann views a sale as unlikely right now, given the high political stakes a purchase like this would entail. Gulf states have condemned Israel’s offensive in Gaza, unleashed in response to a cross-border incursion of Hamas fighters.

“There are other hard-kill options that are already in the region that may be less costly politically rather than buying Israeli right now – Gaza is still on everyone’s mind in the Middle East,” he said.

Bruchmann suggested waiting to see how Iron Beam performs once deployed, warning that the range of each laser is as of now limited to a few kilometers. The defensive system “would have to be produced and exported at scale,” to provide sufficient protection for vast areas, he added.

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IIO clears police of wrongdoing after man seriously injured by non-lethal weapons in Courtenay standoff

(Check news, February 11)

B.C.'s police watchdog has cleared the RCMP of wrongdoing after a range of non-lethal weapons and devices were used on a knife-wielding man in Courtenay during an hours-long standoff that left him seriously injured.

Mounties were called to the man's home along Morello Place in Courtenay on April 7, 2024 after neighbors reported that he was yelling and causing a disturbance outside their yard around 1:45 p.m., according to a report released by the Independent Investigations Office (IIO) of B.C. on Feb. 6.

At the time, the man – a former military member with post-traumatic stress disorder – was on bail conditions which restricted him to house arrest except for two periods, from noon to 3 p.m. on Sundays and Wednesdays – or if he had prior written permission from his bail supervisor.

The caller told police that the man was shouting “obscenities and threats” at them after arriving back at his home on a bicycle at 1:38 p.m.

Since it was a Sunday, the man was allowed to be out between noon and 3 p.m. However, when police were called, they were incorrectly told by a dispatcher that his bail conditions meant that he could only be out during these hours if he had received prior written consent.

When Mounties arrived, they told the man that he was under arrest for breaching his bail condition.

The man “responded angrily” and said he was “allowed to be out,” at which point he locked his front door and shouted threats and insults at the officers.

The Mounties then sought an arrest warrant that would allow them to enter the man's house.

Neighbours at the time told CHEK News that the police had arrested the man at his home before, and that he had previously made threats, saying he was “gonna kill the pigs and kill the people on Morello.”

Police deploy non-lethal force

The standoff lasted more than eight hours, after the man told police that he had a knife and that he would kill any officers that entered his home.

After that, police modified their warrant request to include the charges of uttering threats and assault with a weapon

RCMP Emergency Response Team (ERT) members were called in, as well as crisis negotiators.

While negotiations were underway, police said the man could be seen putting on a gas mask.

Around 5:15 p.m., Mounties deployed a ram to try to shut the man's garage door and prevent him from driving away. The man reached out to grab the ram, at which point police fired pepper ball rounds at his hand.

“In response, the [man] appeared at a window showing that a pepper ball impact had not affected him and saying that police would have to use lethal rounds,” reads the IIO report.

Gas, Tasers, rubber bullets and hoses deployed

Mounties received a warrant to enter the man's home around 7:15 p.m., and began by inserting chemical gas into his home in an effort to get him to leave.

Police reported that they heard some coughing from a crawl space, and inserted more gas into that area.

By 8 p.m., police used an infrared camera and saw a large heat signature in the crawl space. Mounties say more pepper balls were fired in this area "with no apparent effect."

Another hour later, police say they cleared most of the house and inserted a camera through a crawl space hatch that showed the man in a corner "wearing a gas mask and mostly covered in what appeared to be a large blanket or sleeping bag."

"He was seen to be holding a large knife in his right hand," the IIO report reads.

The IIO says the man continued to ignore police instructions, including to drop the knife and come out, so RCMP officers began cutting holes in the floor to try to access the crawl space.

Mounties tried firing Tasers at the man, but they seemed to be blocked by the sleeping bag. They also tried to pull the sleeping bag away with a hook but were unsuccessful, the IIO says.

"The ERT team leader concluded that it was too dangerous to send members into the crawl space, as the [man] was still protected by the gas mask and sleeping bag and was still armed with a large knife," reads the IIO report.

At one point, he also slashed at an officer with the knife who was entering the crawl space hatch, "narrowly missing him."

Mounties then tried to use a hose on the man, who at first blocked the stream with a section of wall insulation.

A second hose was then used from an opposite direction, striking the man, and several non-lethal rubber bullets were also fired. However, the man managed to hold onto the knife.

More gas was pumped into the room, and later more non-lethal rounds were fired at the man's hands to drop the knife, however he managed to hold onto it.

Just after 10:45 p.m., the man finally told Mounties that he was ready to come out.

IIO conclusion

When the man dropped the knife and made his way out of the crawl space, "he was observed to be wet and shivering, and had a badly swollen hand," reads the IIO report.

He was looked over by an ERT medic before being transported to hospital in an ambulance.

As he was being taken to the ambulance, he was heard telling officers, "well, that was fun, guys, we should do it again."

“Aren’t you guys proud of me? I stayed in there for a long time,” he added.

The man suffered a broken right forearm, injuries to both his hands – including fractured finger bones – and a puncture wound to his thigh.

“Interviewed later by IIO investigators, the [man] stated that when officers came to his front door, he was aware he had not breached his conditions and did not want police to enter his home,” the IIO wrote.

“He recalled being ‘Tasered’ 16 times in the course of the incident, being shot repeatedly with 40 mm rounds, and that the police had ‘tried to drown me’ in the crawl space.”

He added that he didn’t intend to kill anyone and that he was only “taking up defensive positions.”

The IIO agrees that it’s unfortunate police were given incorrect information about the man’s bail conditions.

However, the police watchdog says that because the man was yelling threats at his neighbour and causing a disturbance there were still grounds for his arrest initially.

Once he grabbed a knife and told police he would kill them, the IIO says RCMP responded reasonably.

The IIO adds that police tried for more than eight hours to de-escalate the situation, noting that the man’s refusal to do so – and his “remarkable ability to withstand the repeated deployment of non-lethal force” – contributed to the drawn out, violent standoff.

“It cannot be said that the ERT members used force beyond what was necessary and justified in the circumstances,” wrote the IIO.

The IIO’s report was made based on statements from the man, five witness police officers, four civilian witnesses, as well as video records from nearby security cameras, fire department dash cameras, audio records of police radio transmission, and crisis negotiation team documents.

The IIO also noted that while the man “displayed bravado upon his eventual apprehension, it is clear from his interview with the IIO that the incident caused him continuing physical and psychological distress.”

Ultimately, IIO Chief Civilian Director Jessica Berglund says she does not believe there’s any grounds to believe that an RCMP officer committed any offence.

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COMMENTARY:

Radio Episode: Responding to China's 'grey zone' tactics

(ABC Australia, February 13)

The Federal Government has called a Chinese fighter jet's release of flares 30 metres in front of an Australian military plane in the South China Sea this week "unsafe and unprofessional", while Beijing called it a "deliberate intrusion" into China's airspace. Are China's so-called "grey zone" tactics on the rise and how should Australia respond?

Featured: Dr Peter Layton, retired RAAF Group Captain and Visiting Fellow at the Griffith Asia Institute.

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