



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

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PRESS RELEASE

**Commission concerned about
introduction of the TASER**

Concerns about the proposed introduction of the TASER for use by the police in Northern Ireland were expressed today by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.

The Commission was responding to a brief consultation by the Policing Board which invited views on the implications of a limited introduction of the TASER.

The Policing Board issued a consultation letter on 7 March inviting views in a two-week period by 23 March. It is proposed that the use of TASERs be introduced on a limited, pilot basis as a less-lethal alternative to the use of fire-arms in one-to-one situations.

In responding to the issue, Chief Commissioner, Professor Monica McWilliams said:

"The Commission is clear from the information provided by the Policing Board that the case for introducing TASERs to Northern Ireland, whether in a limited way or otherwise, has not been made.

"We are particularly concerned that not enough consideration has been given to the potential impact of the use of TASERs on individuals who may have mental health problems or children and young people. It is not clear from the information provided in the consultation whether or not an operational need for TASERs has been clearly identified in Northern Ireland; and

whether or not it is necessary to make the introduction at such speed. The short consultation period has not allowed for sufficient involvement of this Commission or other organisations to assess this crucial decision.

"We strongly urge the Policing Board to take more time to consider whether or not to introduce TASERs; to provide more detailed information as part of a consultation process; and ensure that it hears a wide range of views before taking a final decision."

Further information

1. For further information, please contact Nadia Downing on 028 9024 3987 (office).
2. The Policing Board for Northern Ireland is due to make its decision on the limited introduction of the TASER on 28 March.
3. In March 2003 the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission published 'Baton Rounds: A review of the Human Rights Implications of the Introduction and Use of the L21A1 Baton Round in Northern Ireland' by the Omega Foundation. The review addressed, among other matters, the use of the TASER as a less-lethal alternative. The review recommended that the PSNI not be equipped with any type of electroshock weaponry (Recommendation 20). The review is available on the Commission's website at www.nihrc.org.