

A Visual Guide to Military, Security & Police Equipment

Omega Research Foundation



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WARNING:

Certain types of MSP equipment can be dangerous.

- Always assume that weapons are loaded and that ammunition and ordnance is 'live' and could cause injury.
- Do not take unnecessary risks trying to handle equipment.
- Unless you know what you are doing, leave the items alone and simply observe from a distance
- If possible take photographs or write detailed descriptions or make drawings of the equipment found.

Recording and identifying military, security and police (MSP) equipment used in human rights violations, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (CIDTP) often constitutes critical evidence for proving such incidences and identifying the perpetrators. However, there is a lack of specific documentation within human rights reporting on the “tools” used during human rights violations, torture or other CIDTP.

This glossary is designed as a visual resource for human rights monitors, researchers, campaigners and journalists, amongst others, to help them recognise different types of equipment and accurately report on equipment used during human rights violations.

This glossary can be used in conjunction with Mispo.org (www.mispo.org), an image database which contains more information about the equipment featured in this glossary and Amnesty International’s *Monitoring and Investigating Equipment Used in Human Rights Abuses* (http://www.amnesty.nl/sites/default/files/public/booklet_eng_equipment_0.pdf).

What is Military, Security and Police (MSP) Equipment?

Military, security and police (MSP) equipment are the goods and services including weapons, technology, personnel or training, as well as direct logistical or financial support that enable MSP forces to function. It includes small and heavy arms and their ammunition, riot control equipment, vehicles, surveillance equipment, communications equipment and also any training those forces receive from their own governments, outside agencies, overseas governments, police forces or private companies. MSP equipment can be locally made or assembled, made overseas, imported or exported.

MSP equipment is used by governments and their agents, non-State actors, armed opposition groups, insurgents, militias and criminals.

Certain types of equipment may only ever be used exclusively by military forces. Increasingly however, police and security forces are using ‘military’ equipment such as submachine guns, assault rifles or armoured personnel carriers.

What is equipment that could be used for torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (CIDTP)?

It is possible to use almost anything to torture someone. Torture can be carried out using everyday objects (e.g. a cigarette, pliers), legitimate security equipment (e.g. a police baton, handcuffs), or by equipment that is especially designed to inflict pain (e.g. thumb cuffs, electric shock stun guns/batons, spiked metal batons).

Why is it important to monitor and investigate the use of MSP equipment and MSP transfers?

Monitoring, investigating and documenting MSP equipment can help:

1. To obtain background information on the types of MSP equipment in use by the various security forces in your area of interest.
2. To obtain information on the use of MSP equipment in committing human rights violations or abuses in order to find ways to prevent future violations and abuses, or to provide evidence when bringing those responsible to justice.
3. To obtain information about imports and exports (transfers) of MSP equipment to human rights violators in order to prevent further transfers. In the context of armed conflict, information about MSP equipment can contribute to assessing how arms flows circulate and whether embargoes are violated.

Electric Shock Equipment

Electric shock equipment is designed to temporarily disable an individual by delivering a high voltage electric shock.

Commonly used and sold equipment includes “direct contact” stun guns and stun batons, projectile electric shock devices (such as the Taser brand), body-worn electric shock equipment (such as stun belts / cuffs), and electric shock shields. Some electric shock devices also include built-in chemical irritant sprays.

Projectile electric shock equipment is designed to temporarily incapacitate suspects. Other equipment such as stun guns, stun batons, body-worn electric shock equipment and projectile electric shock weapons set to “drive stun” mode (which allows the weapon to also be used as a “direct contact” stun gun) are designed to cause compliance through pain. Omega and Mispo believe that such direct contact electric shock weapons have no legitimate law enforcement use.

Alternative terms used when referring to electric shock equipment includes: electroshock equipment, electric stun devices, electrical discharge weapons (EDW), conducted energy devices, conducted electrical weapons (CEW), and electronic control devices.

How electric shock equipment can affect the body:

In addition to causing pain, some types of electric shock equipment uses high voltage-low amperage electrical signals which, when administered, cause the subject to lose neuro-muscular control. Muscles contract involuntarily, rendering the subject immobile.

Physical effects of electric shock equipment can include:

- Burns
- Puncture wounds
- Scars / Welts

In some circumstances an individual subjected to an electric shock from such equipment may fall. This can lead to “secondary” injuries such as cuts, bruises, broken bones, concussion etc.

Advocates of the use of electric shock equipment (especially projectile electric shock devices) maintain that the products are safe; with only a temporary effect on the body and no long term effects. However, human rights organisations are concerned about the lack of research into the effects of electric shock equipment as there have been a number of deaths after the use of such weapons. There is currently a lack of research into how the use of electric shock equipment affects those with underlying health issues or who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of use. The adequacy of training given to officers using the devices and the misuse of such devices for torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, is also of concern.

Things to look out for:

Remember to note / photograph / sketch key features of the equipment found including:

– Markings –

Are there any markings on the equipment? Any logos or serial numbers? If so photograph or transcribe them in full. Markings are essential as they can lead to irrefutable identifications of equipment. They can provide concrete evidence of the product name or the manufacturer

or supplier of the equipment, or allow us to determine the date of manufacture. Markings can be found on almost any part of the equipment so look carefully if you have time.



– Shape / Composition –

Shape is very important in determining what a piece of equipment is, what it can be used for, or even who made it, for example, in relation to stun guns, you should record: its overall shape – is it straight, curved or pistol-shaped? What is it made out of? How many electrodes you can see – and whether they are straight or curved. Etc.

– Colours –

Colours can also be useful indicators of what equipment is, for example, some projectile electric shock manufacturers produce different cartridges for their projectile stun devices, each with a different colour marking. This makes it easy to distinguish between cartridges.



– Dimensions / Scale –

It is useful to be able to roughly determine the size of equipment when looking at photographs. An easy way to enable this is for the photographer to place a universally recognisable object next to the equipment when photographing it such as a pen or a ruler. Forensic scales are also available online at a reasonable price.



– Packaging –

In certain situations, such as visiting places of detention, it is worth looking out for pieces of packaging as well as the equipment itself. Equipment may be stored in its original packaging which could give vital information about what a piece of equipment is and what it is used for as well as who made it or sold it.



Restraints

Restraints are items of equipment applied to the body to restrict the movement of an individual. In some extreme cases they are used to prevent movement altogether.

Commonly used equipment includes: handcuffs and leg cuffs, and combinations of the two, belly chains / transport chains and gang chains. Less common but still present are: thumb cuffs, finger cuffs, neck collars, weighted leg cuffs, restraint chairs and shackle boards.

How restraints can affect the body:

Whilst it is sometimes necessary for restraints and restraint methods to be used to detain subjects, prevent escape or to control dangerous individuals, many human rights organisations are concerned about the misuse of such equipment. It is at times of misuse (such as over-tightening of cuffs, holding subjects in “stress positions”, prolonged or long-term application of cuffs, etc.) that the physical effects of the misuse of such equipment occurs.

Physical / medical effects of the misuse of restraints can include:

- Bruising / cutting into the skin under the cuffs i.e. wrists or ankles
- Dislocation of limbs
- Nerve damage
- Suffocation e.g. if restrained lying face-down with hands behind the back, “hog-tied”, in restraint chairs etc.

In some incidents, the use of restraints can lead directly to “secondary injuries” such as broken bones due to falls. The risk of physical injury, suffocation and (in some cases) death can increase when restraints are used in addition to another type of equipment, such as electric shock equipment or pepper spray.

Things to look out for:

Remember to always note / photograph / sketch key features of the equipment found including:

– Markings –

Are there any markings on the equipment? Any logos or serial numbers? If so photograph or transcribe in full. Markings are essential as they can lead us to make an irrefutable identification of equipment. They can lead us to determining the product name or the manufacturer or supplier of the equipment, or allow us to determine the date of manufacture. Markings can be found on almost any part of the equipment so look carefully if you have time.



– Shape / Composition –

Shape is very important in determining what a piece of equipment is, what it can be used for, or even who made it, for example, in relation to restraints, we may ask: what shape are the

cuffs? How many are there? Are they round or oval? How are they linked together – is it by a chain or a hinge or a solid bar? What are they made out of? Etc. For example, some manufacturers of restraints have very distinctively shaped cuffs:



– Colours –

The majority of metal restraints on the market are silver / grey. Some manufacturers add colour to their products and this is therefore worth noting. Fabric restraints and disposable nylon / plastic restraints are most commonly black or white; however, they are occasionally made of coloured material.



– Dimensions / Scale –

It is useful to be able to roughly determine the size of equipment when looking at photographs. An easy way to enable this is for the photographer to place a universally recognisable object next to the equipment when photographing it such as a pen or a ruler. Forensic scales are also available online at a reasonable price.



– Packaging –

In certain situations, such as visiting places of detention, it is worth looking out for pieces of packaging as well as the equipment itself. Equipment may be stored in its original packaging which could give vital information about what a piece of equipment is and what it is used for as well as who made it or sold it.



Launchers for Chemical Irritants, Kinetic Impact and Other Munitions

Launchers for chemical irritants, kinetic impact and other munitions are weapons designed to fire munitions such as the kinetic impact munitions featured in Section 5 of this glossary or a selection of the chemical irritants featured in Section 4. These launchers come in many different shapes, sizes and calibres. They can be adaptors to fit conventional small arms such as assault rifles or shotguns, specially designed to fire only specific ammunition, or of a generic design which can fire a wide variety of ammunition of the same calibre. Common calibres include: 37/38mm, 40mm, 56mm, 12 gauge (shotguns).

These launchers are often referred to as riot guns, anti-riot guns, and less lethal / less than lethal launchers. ***Please note that although these weapons are often referred to as “less lethal” or “less than lethal”, they can still cause serious injuries and death, even when used as the manufacturer intended.***

Things to look out for:

Remember to always note / photograph / sketch key features of the equipment found including:

– Markings –

Are there any markings on the equipment? Any logos? All weapons should have serial numbers so look hard for a series of numbers/letters stamped on the equipment. If you find any markings photograph or transcribe in full. They are essential as they can lead us to make an irrefutable identification of equipment. They can lead us to determining the product name or the manufacturer or supplier of the equipment, or allow us to determine the date of manufacture. Markings can be found on almost any part of the equipment so look carefully if you have time.

– Shape / Composition –

Shape is very important in determining what a piece of equipment is, what it can be used for, or even who made it, for example, in relation to less than lethal launchers, we may ask: what shape is the barrel? Is it ribbed or smooth? How many barrels are there? How do you load the ammunition? Is there a magazine? If so, is it straight or curved? Is there a compressed gas tank? Is it the shape of a conventional weapon such as a shotgun or a pistol etc.? What is it made out of? Etc.



– Colours –

Colours can also be useful indicators of what equipment is. There are only a few manufacturers who add colours to their products so this is therefore worth noting.



Chemical Irritants & Other Compounds

Chemical irritants are designed to temporarily deter or disable an individual by producing sensory irritation. They are commonly defined as locally acting chemical agents that rapidly produce “disabling physical effects” through sensory irritation of the eyes and upper respiratory tract which disappear within a short time following termination of exposure.

A number of chemicals are used, most commonly: CN, CR, CS, OC/Pepper and PAVA. MPK/MPA is used as an irritant agent in self-defence / law enforcement sprays manufactured in Russia and Ukraine.

In some products, the types of chemical irritants listed above are mixed with a dye marking chemical which leaves a semi-permanent stain on a subject for later identification by law enforcement officials.

Chemical irritants are commonly delivered through hand-held sprays, hand thrown grenades or launched from weapons.

Chemical irritants such as those listed above are often referred to as “tear gas”. This is a generic, non-specific name for such equipment.

Under some national & international laws, for example in the Chemical Weapons Convention, these types of chemical irritants are also known as “riot control agents (RCAs)”.

How chemical irritants can affect the body:

Physical effects of chemical irritants can include:

- Tearing of the eyes
- Breathing difficulties / coughing / choking sensation
- Chemical burns
- Vomiting
- Suffocation
- Severe allergic reaction / blistering of the skin

In some instances, chemical irritants launched from the types of weapons set out in Section 3 can lead to concussions and other head injuries, as well as in severe instances, death. The risk of physical injury, suffocation and (in some cases) death can increase when chemical irritants are used on alongside other equipment, such as on an already restrained (e.g. handcuffed) individual.

Human rights organisations are concerned by the use of chemical irritants and other compounds at mass public gatherings as they may spread panic and cause further injuries due to stampedes.

Things to look out for:

Remember to always note / photograph / sketch key features of the equipment found including:

– Markings –

Are there any markings on the equipment? Any logos or serial numbers? Any instructions for use or warnings? If so photograph or transcribe in full. Markings are essential as they can lead us to make an irrefutable identification of equipment. They can lead us to determining the product name or the manufacturer or supplier of the equipment, or allow us to determine the date of manufacture. Markings can be found on almost any part of the equipment so look carefully if you have time.



– Shape / Composition –

Shape is very important in determining what a piece of equipment is, what it can be used for, or even who made it, for example, in relation to chemical irritants, we may ask: is it a canister or a spray? Does it have a nozzle? If yes, are there any distinguishing shapes to it? Is it spherical or cylindrical? What is it made out of? Etc.



– Colours –

Colours can also be useful indicators of what equipment is, for example, some manufacturers mark their products with different colours depending on the content. For example, the grenades / cartridges grouped in each image below are made by the same company but each contains a different substance which is distinguished by the different colours used:



– Dimensions / Scale –

It is useful to be able to roughly determine the size of equipment when looking at photographs. An easy way to enable this is for the photographer to place a universally recognisable object next to the equipment when photographing it such as a pen or a ruler. Forensic scales are also available online at a reasonable price.



Kinetic Impact Weapons (Launched Projectiles)

Launched kinetic impact weapons, or launched projectiles, are similar to conventional ammunition but when fired, propel a range of different projectiles to the target. On impact, they are designed not to penetrate but cause “blunt trauma” (i.e. non penetrating trauma). Their desired effect has been described by some law enforcement officials as “compliance through pain”.

Launched devices include rubber, wooden, foam / sponge rounds, rubber balls, and beanbag rounds. These are fired through a number of different types of launchers such as those set out in Section 3 and vary between “direct fire” impact rounds and “indirect fire” (often known as “skip fire”) rounds.

“Direct fire” rounds are designed to be fired directly at an individual (but avoiding sensitive areas of the body such as the head / chest). “Indirect” or “skip” fire rounds are designed to be fired at the ground in front of an individual – they then rebound into them.

Launched projectiles are very inaccurate and there is a high chance that innocent bystanders can be hit. Even when used according to the manufacturer’s instructions, launched projectiles can cause severe injury or death.

How kinetic impact weapons can affect the body:

Physical / medical effects of launched kinetic impact weapons, even when used as intended, can include:

- Bruising
- Blindness
- Broken bones
- Concussion / other head injuries
- Internal organ failure / bleeding
- Death

Human rights organisations are concerned by the use of such equipment at mass public gatherings as their inaccurate nature mean a “safe shot” cannot be guaranteed. Their use may also spread panic and cause further injuries due stampedes.

Things to look out for:

Remember to always note / photograph / sketch key features of the equipment found including:

– Markings –

Are there any markings on the equipment? Any logos or serial numbers? Any instructions for use or warnings? If so photograph or transcribe in full. Markings are essential as they can lead us to make an irrefutable identification of equipment. They can lead us to determining the product name or the manufacturer or supplier of the equipment, or allow us to determine the date of manufacture. Markings can be found on almost any part of the equipment so look carefully if you have time.



– Shape / Composition –

Shape is very important in determining what a piece of equipment is, what it can be used for, or even who made it, for example, in relation to launched kinetic impact weapons, we may ask: is it round, square, oblong etc.? Does it have a finned tail? Is there a mixture of shapes? How many projectiles are there of each shape? What is it made out of? Are there a number of projectiles in a casing? Etc.

– Colours –

Colours can also be useful indicators of what equipment is, for example, some manufacturers mark their products with different colours depending on the content of the casing, or make the projectiles themselves a different colour. For example, the image on the left shows a number of different projectiles – these are all made by the same company but the differing colours of the tips mean that each grenade has a different use. The remaining images show how the projectiles themselves can be of differing colours.



– Dimensions / Scale –

It is useful to be able to roughly determine the size of equipment when looking at photographs. An easy way to enable this is for the photographer to place a universally recognisable object next to the equipment when photographing it such as a pen or a ruler. Forensic scales are also available online at a reasonable price.



Kinetic Impact Weapons (Hand-held)

Hand-held devices such as batons, truncheons, sticks and clubs are some of the oldest weapons available to law enforcement officials. They are used to strike, or beat, an individual to cause or threaten physical pain and injury. Their desired effect has been described by some law enforcement officials as “compliance through pain”.

How kinetic impact weapons can affect the body:

Physical / medical effects of hand-held kinetic impact weapons can include:

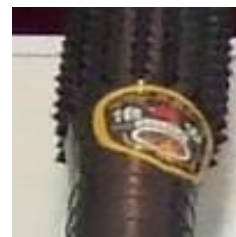
- Bruising
- Broken bones
- Concussion / other head injuries
- Internal organ failure / bleeding
- Death

Things to look out for:

Remember to always note / photograph / sketch key features of the equipment found including:

– Markings –

Are there any markings on the equipment? Any logos or serial numbers? If so photograph or transcribe in full. Markings are essential as they can lead us to make an irrefutable identification of equipment. They can lead us to determining the product name or the manufacturer or supplier of the equipment, or allow us to determine the date of manufacture. Markings can be found on almost any part of the equipment so look carefully if you have time.



– Shape / Composition –

Shape is very important in determining what a piece of equipment is, what it can be used for, or even who made it, for example, in relation to hand-held kinetic impact weapons, we may ask: is it cylindrical? Does it have a handle, or two? How wide is it? How long is it? Does it have any spikes? What material is it made out of? Etc.



– Colours –

Colours can also be useful indicators of what equipment is or who makes it. Few manufacturers of hand-held kinetic impact weapons add colour to their products so this is therefore worth noting.

– Dimensions / Scale –

It is useful to be able to roughly determine the size of equipment when looking at photographs. An easy way to enable this is for the photographer to place a universally recognisable object next to the equipment when photographing it such as a pen or a ruler. Forensic scales are also available online at a reasonable price.

