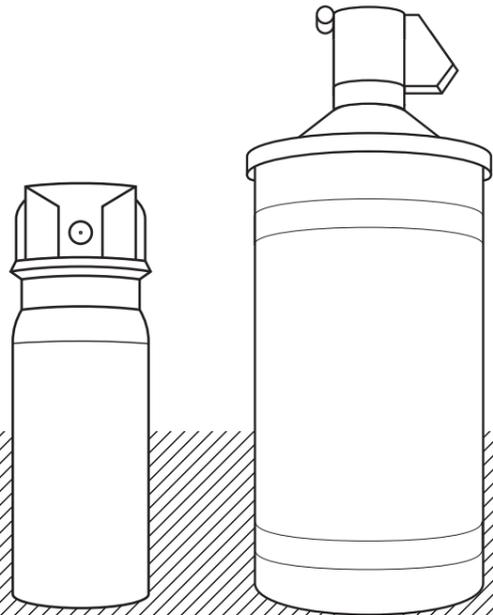


RIOT ID: TEAR GAS AND PEPPER SPRAY



INTRODUCTION

From Brazil to Brussels, Thailand to the Occupied Territories of Palestine, police use tear gas and pepper spray on civilians.

Banned from war but permitted for use by the police, these so-called 'less lethal' weapons are marketed as safe and humane. However, they can be very dangerous and their use often violates human rights.

Published by RiotID: A civic media project helping people identify, monitor and record the use of riot control against civilians.

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Design by Minute Works

TEAR GAS

The scientific term for tear gas is a lachrymatory agent because the chemicals it contains trigger tears. But even small amounts of tear gas do much more than make people cry. This makes the term 'tear gas' misleading as it masks the many other harms that these weapons can cause.



Once exposed to tear gas, the eye responds to the resulting irritation by trying to wash out the chemicals with tears.



Despite its name, tear gas is not a gas at all. The chemicals are actually solids, usually dispersed within a thick fog.



In policy and international law, tear gas and pepper spray are collectively referred to as Riot Control Agents, or RCAs.

PEPPER SPRAY

Pepper sprays contain the organic chemical capsaicin, which occurs naturally in chili peppers. It causes burning and stinging. Some sprays contain synthetic alternatives. Like tear gas, this weapon has led to injuries and deaths.



A person who encounters pepper spray may experience inflammation and severe pain in the eyes, nose, and mouth.



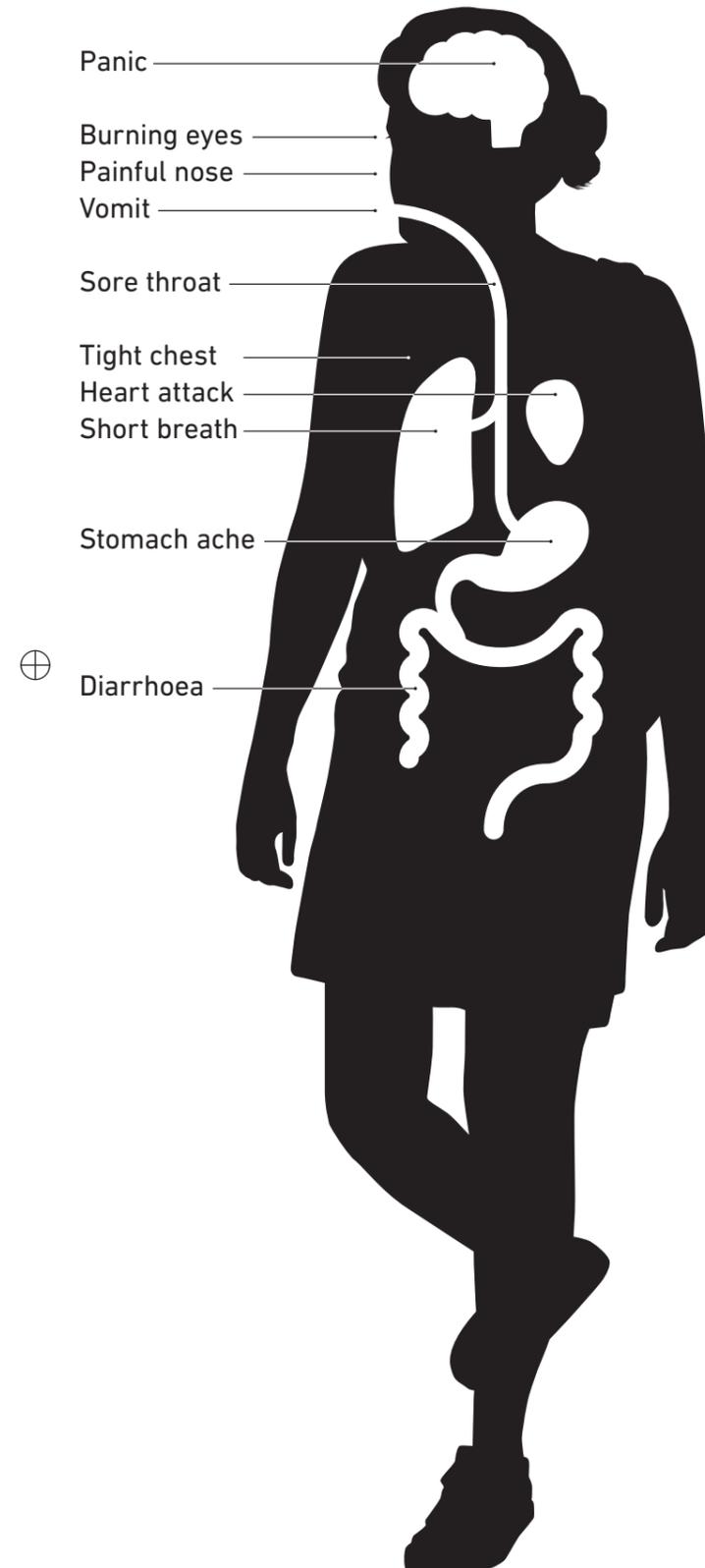
Pepper Spray is 40 times hotter than habanero peppers, and ranks higher on the Scoville scale than the hottest peppers in the world.



Manufacturers promote pepper spray as 'safe' because it contains natural peppers, but often these are mixed with alcohol and anti-freeze.

EFFECTS

Anyone can be hurt by tear gas or pepper spray. People at greater risk of injury or death include the young and old, anyone with asthma, epilepsy, a weak heart or lung problems.



TIMELINE

1914 | Battle of the Frontiers, France

Soldiers fighting in World War One are the first to fire tear gas grenades into German trenches.

1928 | Middlebury College, USA

Chemists Ben Corson and Roger Stoughton discover a new type of tear gas. It's named CS after their initials.

1936 | The British Empire

Government officially grants the police permission to use tear gas on civilians.

1950s | Porton Down, Britain

Government secretly test tear gas on animals, and also on soldiers without their permission.

1971 | Derry, Northern Ireland

In a review of the use of CS tear gas in Northern Ireland, the Himsworth Committee test the weapon as if it was a drug, and publish a report declaring CS as safe for use on civilians.

1987 | Washington, USA

The FBI starts to use pepper spray. International police forces follow their example.

1993 | International

The Chemical Weapons Convention states that soldiers can't use tear gas and pepper spray during war. The rule doesn't apply to the police, who are allowed to continue use on civilians.

2011 | International

Police use large amounts of tear gas and pepper spray during 'Arab Spring' uprisings and Occupy protests.

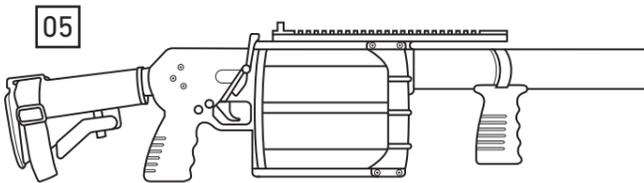
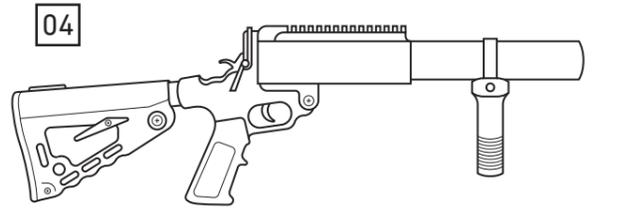
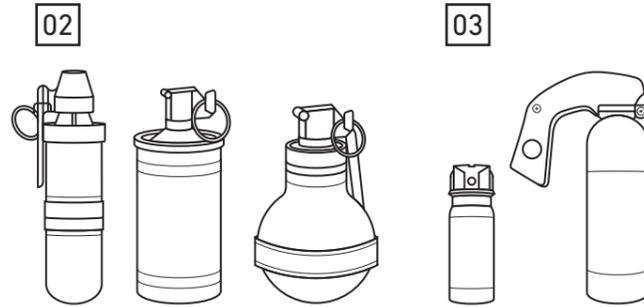
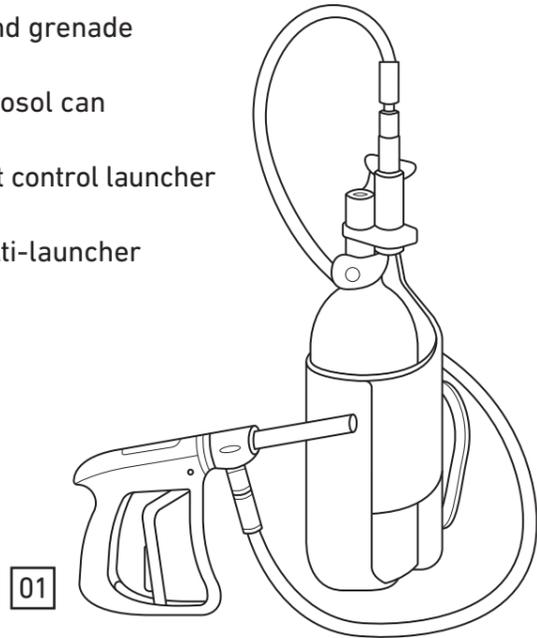
2017 | International

Tear gas and pepper spray use continues to rise.

DISPERSAL

Tear gas and pepper spray can be dispersed in a lot of different ways. It can be fired, hand thrown or sprayed from:

- 01. Backpack sprayer
- 02. Hand grenade
- 03. Aerosol can
- 04. Riot control launcher
- 05. Multi-launcher



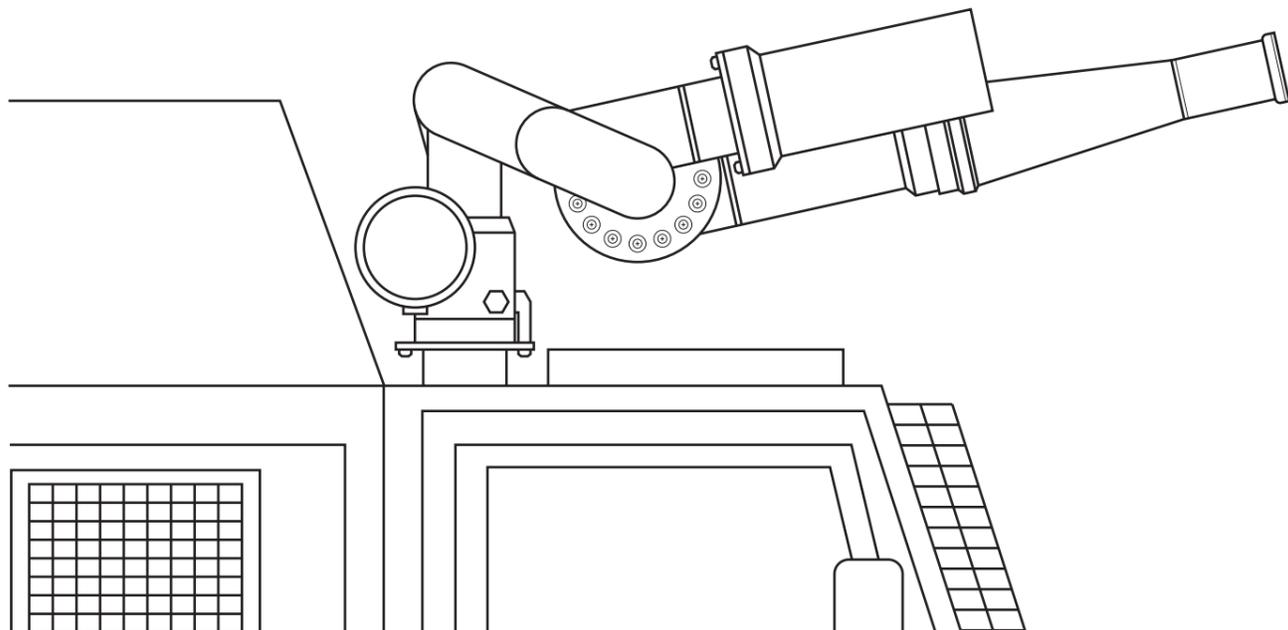
Special types include:

Hard plastic Pepper-balls filled with powder or liquid chemicals for firing directly at people.

Bouncing grenades that jump around on the ground so people can't catch them.

Grenades that split apart in separate sections.

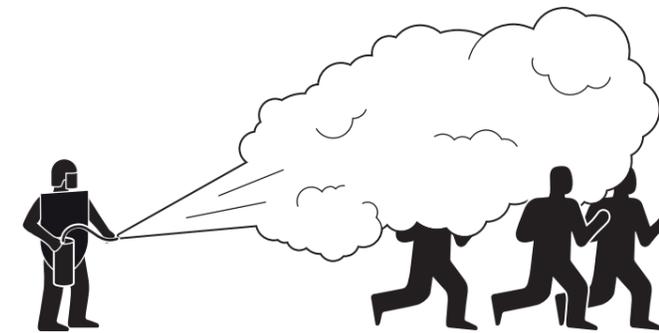
Water Cannons with high-pressure sprayers that fire water with added chemicals, often from on top of armoured police vehicles.



VARIABLES

When tear gas and pepper spray are released, they spread quickly. Their effects depend on the:

	Amount of chemicals released into the air		Weather conditions
	Proximity of people to the chemicals		Level of access to open spaces



Tear gas and pepper spray should not be used:

	In closed rooms		Inside vehicles
	On people who have been locked-up		On people who can't get to fresh air
	On people who have been restrained		Once the use-by date has passed

After the use-by date has expired, tear gas and pepper spray become hazardous waste and must be safely destroyed.

DANGERS

Tear gas and pepper spray can be fatal. The risk becomes more likely when:

	Too much is used in a confined space		It's used against babies or the elderly
	Panic results in accidental harm		Canisters/grenades explode in the hand
	A canister/grenade is fired at a person		Exploding canisters/grenades start a fire

Read more about the health effects of riot control weapons: www.aclu.org/report/lethal-disguise-health-consequences-crowd-control-weapons

ENVIRONMENT

Tear gas and pepper spray causes harm to animals and agriculture:

	Birds		Cats
	Dogs		Crops

When police use large amounts of chemicals in an area, animals and environments can be harmed.

For many animals exposure is fatal at lower doses than for humans, and because tear gas is toxic it also causes damage to surrounding crops and soil.