



FORCE SCIENCE[®] NEWS

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Editor-in-Chief

In This Edition:

***We'd like to hear your opinion on this development:

For decades, warning shots have been strongly discouraged if not outright prohibited in the training and policies of American law enforcement agencies.

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WARNING SHOTS: LE leaders open the door. Good or bad? Sound off!

But now 11 prestigious professional policing organizations, including the International Assn. of Chiefs of Police, the Fraternal Order of Police, and the National Tactical Officers Assn., have recommended that this once-scorned use of force be permitted under certain circumstances.

That U-turn is reflected in the "National Consensus Policy on Use of Force" issued earlier this year, which, according to its creators, represents "the best thinking" some of "the most significant law enforcement leadership and labor organizations in the United States." You can read this "model document" in full by: clicking [here](#).



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In a section devoted to deadly force, the Consensus acknowledges that warning shots are “inherently dangerous.” But the guidelines suggest that they be permitted when:

- “1. the use of deadly force is justified;
- “2. the warning shot will not pose a substantial risk of injury or death to the officer or others; and
- 3. “the officer reasonably believes that the warning shot will reduce the possibility that deadly force will have to be used.”

In a recent radio interview, the IACP’s deputy executive director, Terrence Cunningham, said “a lot of discussion” preceded this recommendation and that the intent is to give officers more leeway when faced with a threat. He referenced “this new environment in use of force where everybody is trying to learn how to better de-escalate.”

And he asked, “Why not give officers more tools? I think it’s the right thing to do.”

Some trainers, however, have expressed concern that adopting this policy will create a public expectation that warning shots should be fired before every use of force—or that this will open the door to officially urging officers to shoot to wound as the next logical step.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Please email us your views on warning-shot policies and your experiences in practice to:

editor@forcescience.org

We’ll print a representative sampling of responses.

Our thanks to Lt. Glen Mills, president of the Massachusetts Assn. of Crime Analysts, for proposing this question.

Written by Force Science Institute
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