



HUNTINGTON BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT

To: **Eric Parra, Chief of Police**
From: **Julio Mendez, Lieutenant**
Date: **July 1, 2025**
Subject: **Implementation of Aerial Flashbangs and Blast Ball (Inert Noise Makers)**

Purpose:

This memo proposes the implementation of aerial flashbangs and inert blast balls as additional tools for effective crowd management and de-escalation during critical incidents. The objective is to enhance public and officer safety by providing non-lethal options that minimize the risk of injury while restoring order.

Background:

Recent incidents have underscored the need for improved methods to safely and effectively disperse crowds, particularly in volatile situations where traditional verbal commands or existing less-lethal options may be insufficient. Aerial flashbangs and inert blast balls produce high-decibel noise and light intended to temporarily disorient groups, creating an opportunity for peaceful dispersal without causing lasting harm.

The Huntington Beach Police Department (HBPD) maintains various specialized tools, including military equipment as defined by AB 481, to support its mission of providing the highest level of service to our community. Possession of this equipment does not mean it will be used indiscriminately; instead, HBPD recognizes that critical incidents are often unpredictable and dynamic, requiring flexible options to resolve situations safely. The deployment of military equipment is strictly controlled, limited to authorized personnel, and used only when necessary, based on the totality of circumstances, public safety considerations, officer safety, and compliance with state and federal law.

Training:

On May 14, 2025, HBPD's Mobile Field Force and Mounted Enforcement Unit officers participated in joint training at the George Ingalls Equestrian Event Center in Norco, California. This collaborative training was conducted in partnership with the Mobile Field Force Geographic Team (MFFGT) and the Orange County Regional Mounted Enforcement Unit (OCRMEU), the training focused on coordinated crowd control tactics, integration exercises, and deployment of less-lethal munitions.

Certification training, led by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Sheriff's Response Team (LASD-SRT), covered preparation, tactics, and deployment of two specialized devices: the Aerial Burst 40mm Flashbang and the Rubber Blast Ball (inert). The aerial flashbang is launched via 40mm launcher, while the rubber blast ball is hand deployed. Both are area-deployed tools used to produce loud noise to distract and encourage crowd compliance without direct targeting of individuals. These devices are not considered a "use of force" since they are designed for area effect rather than individual impact.

Implementation Overview:

To successfully integrate these new tools for crowd control, the following implementation procedures are recommended.

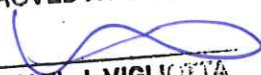
1. **Policy Development:**
 - Draft comprehensive guidelines defining authorized use, prioritizing de-escalation and public safety.
 - Establish clear criteria for deployment, including instances of violent crowd behavior, significant property damage, or situations involving a declared unlawful assembly.
 - Require supervisor approval prior to deployment, except in exigent circumstances.
2. **Training:**
 - Mandate training for all personnel involved in crowd management, covering safe handling, tactical deployment, effects on crowds, and medical considerations.
 - Use scenario-based exercises to reinforce sound decision-making under stress.
3. **Equipment Accountability:**
 - Assign devices to designated Mobile Field Force supervisors or specialized teams.
 - Maintain detailed inventory and deployment records.
 - Require documentation of every deployment through standardized after-action reports.
4. **Operational Deployment:**
 - Store devices securely in response vehicles assigned to pre-planned and spontaneous crowd control operations.
 - Limit deployment to trained personnel operating under supervision.
 - Prioritize de-escalation, including issuing clear verbal warnings when feasible.
5. **Community Outreach and Transparency:**
 - Uphold transparency by sharing information about equipment, deployment policies, and training efforts with the community.
 - Engage residents at community events, including open houses, citizens' academies, Coffee with a Cop, and other outreach opportunities.
 - Display the department's inventory of military equipment in compliance with AB 481 requirements.
6. **Oversight and Reporting:**
 - Conduct command-level reviews of all deployments to ensure compliance and identify training or policy improvements.
 - Include data on deployments, circumstances, and outcomes in annual Military Equipment Reports submitted to the City Council.
 - Ensure adherence to all applicable laws, departmental policies, and accountability measures.
7. **Benefits:**
 - Reduces reliance on physical force by allowing officers to safely create distance and disperse aggressive or non-compliant crowds.
 - Decreases the risk of injury to community members and officers compared to impact-based less-lethal tools.
 - Enhance overall safety with controlled, non-impact alternatives that help restore order while minimizing harm.

Next Steps:

Request City Council approval to adopt this implementation plan and authorize the deployment of these devices.

Conclusion:

This implementation plan provides a safe, effective, and accountable approach for managing critical incidents involving large or aggressive crowds. By adopting these tools and policies, the City of Huntington Beach can better protect the safety of the public, officers, and property, while maintaining transparency and community trust.

APPROVED AS TO FORM
By: 
MICHAEL J. VIGLIOTTA
CITY ATTORNEY
CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH