

**Use of Force Reform Memo to Chief of Police:  
Adding the BolaWrap to the Honolulu Police Department's Force Continuum**

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Each day, our officers professionally navigate the delicate balance between the sanctity of human life and their responsibility to maintain law and order. My analysis of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD) records management system for 2017-2019 shows that officers documented 672,783 written reports over three years, including having made 123,596 arrests. The total number of incidents involving any use of force beyond routine handcuffing was 6,212. That represents force being used in just over 5% of the total number of arrests (and less than 0.1% of all written reports).

The HPD's policy on using force states that "Police officers may use reasonable force to effectively bring an incident under control while protecting the lives of officers and others" (HPD, 2020). While the number of use of force incidents seems small compared to the total workload of our officers, there is no doubt that these incidents can disproportionately affect the lives of the subjects and officers alike.

Officers are being sent more and more frequently to "Attempted Suicide" calls for service. So far this year, HPD officers have documented 171 attempted suicide cases. This represents a nearly 10% increase from the same period in 2019. In addition, HPD officers generated 2,348 cases where subjects were taken into custody as a danger to themselves or others and transported for mental health observation. The trend is nationwide. As stated by a recent article published in Medical Xpress, "The National Alliance on Mental Illness Help Line has seen a 65% increase in calls and emails since March, according to the organization, though it is not a crisis hotline" (Raman, 2020).

According to a study published by the Treatment Advocacy Center, "numbering somewhat fewer than 4 in every 100 adults in America, individuals with severe mental illness generate no less than 1 in 10 calls for police service." The study continues, "By

all accounts – official and unofficial – a minimum of 1 in 4 fatal police encounters ends the life of an individual with severe mental illness. At this rate, the risk of being killed during a police incident is 16 times greater for individuals with untreated mental illness than for other civilians approached or stopped by officers" (Fuller, Lamb, Biasotti, & Snook, 2015).

Yet another incredibly worrying concern for our front-line officers is suicide by cop. "Suicide by cop (SBC) is a situation where individuals deliberately place themselves or others at grave risk in a manner that compels the use of deadly force by police officers" (Salatore, 2014). Officers responding to these calls are limited to the force options currently in their vehicles and on their equipment belts.

With the number of cases involving mentally ill persons escalating, the HPD has wisely invested in Crisis Intervention Training and De-escalation Training. Despite this, our front-line officers still face a technology gap when choosing from force options to employ. The addition of a Taser - Conducted Energy Weapon (CEW) several years ago has proven successful. However, adding a new device, the BolaWrap, would give officers a new force option to address armed and/or aggressive subjects quickly and safely and reduce foot pursuits from fleeing suspects.

The BolaWrap, made by Wrap Technologies, consists of a small, portable, hand-held device that deploys an eight-foot Kevlar tether horizontally, at approximately 500 feet per second. The tether is designed to wrap around a subject and immobilize them. On either end of the restraint is a four-pronged anchor that helps it remain in place while the subject is taken into custody. According to their website, an officer can fire the device again by replacing a cartridge, a process that can take as little as 3 seconds.

The device is intended to be used on subjects at a range of 10-25 feet (WRAP Technologies, 2020).

Earlier this year, when the United Kingdom was considering implementing the BolaWrap, the SWC Expert Group reviewed the product and wrote an overwhelmingly positive report of their findings. Regarding the potential risk of injury to the subject, the group ranked BolaWrap as the third-lowest risk option (between primary control skills (e.g., escorting) and routine handcuffing). When considering the potential risk of injury to the officer, the group ranked BolaWrap as the second-lowest risk option (CEW / Taser was the lowest). (Baskind, Bleetman, & Turner, 2020)

Departments across the country have begun investing in the BolaWrap, with Los Angeles Police Department Chief Michael Moore even being used as a test subject in a recent demonstration for the media. Placing the use of the device relatively low on their version of the use of force continuum, LAPD intends to use the devices to restrain subjects before situations escalate into violence (Cain, 2019). This would be consistent with other force options available to HPD officers facing subjects exhibiting defensive resistance or physical actions intended to prevent control but not harm the officer.

United States Supreme Court Chief Justice Rehnquist, writing for the majority, said, "the question is whether the officers' actions are 'objectively reasonable' in light of the facts and circumstances confronting them, without regard to their underlying intent or motivation" (Graham v. Conner, 1989). Using a BolaWrap device to securely hold a violent suspect to prevent him from fleeing or harming himself or others would clearly be an 'objectively reasonable' use of force as defined by the court.

The National Consensus Policy on Use of Force provides cross-jurisdictional guidance to law enforcement agencies. In its 2020 publication, it recommended, "when de-escalation techniques are not effective or appropriate, an officer may consider the use of less-lethal force to control a non-compliant or actively resistant individual" (National Consensus Documents on the Use of Force, 2020). The use of a BolaWrap would be another such less less-lethal force option in our officers' toolkits.

In the wake of recent violence and anti-law enforcement sentiment across the mainland United States, the time is suitable for the HPD to remind our local community that we continue, as we always have, to hold dear the lives of those whom we are sworn to protect. This includes the lives and safety of those we must take into custody to safeguard our community. Implementing the BolaWrap would be yet another indication that we are constantly honing our profession and using technology to reduce the risk of injury and death to our officers and the public.

Based on this evidence, I respectfully request that Policy 1.04, Use of Force, be amended to allow for the use of the BolaWrap at the "Defensive Resistance" level. Further, I request that the Information Technology Division be authorized to study the equipment and training costs involved in a department-wide implementation of the BolaWrap device for all patrol officers. Despite possible public perception to the contrary, none of our officers goes to line-up at the start of their shifts wanting to use force, let alone injure or even kill a member of the public. Implementation of the BolaWrap would create an additional force option that would allow officers to more safely protect the people of Oahu and protect the City & County of Honolulu from future litigation regarding excessive use of force.

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