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**U.S. Department of Justice**

Civil Rights Division

*Special Litigation Section - PHB  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530*

August 20, 2008

**Via FedEx and U.S. Mail**

Sheriff Kevin Beary  
Orange County Sheriff's Office  
2500 West Colonial Drive  
Orlando, FL 32804

Re: United States Department of Justice Investigation of  
the Orange County Sheriff's Office Use of Conducted  
Energy Devices

Dear Sheriff Beary:

As you know, the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice has been conducting an investigation of the Orange County Sheriff's Office ("OCSO"), pursuant to the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, 42 U.S.C. § 14141. We would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the cooperation we have received thus far from the OCSO.

At the beginning of our investigation, we committed to provide the OCSO with technical assistance, where appropriate, to improve OCSO practices and procedures and ensure compliance with constitutional rights. In this letter, we convey our recommendations regarding OCSO's written policies, training, and accountability processes pertaining to the use of conducted energy devices ("CEDs").<sup>1</sup> We view the technical assistance provided below as recommendations and not mandates. These recommendations were developed in close consultation with our police practices consultants and follow the productive dialogue we had with deputies under your command. We strongly urge the OCSO to closely review and consider these technical assistance recommendations in revising its policies and procedures. We hope this letter will assist in our mutual goal of ensuring that OCSO

<sup>1</sup> We note that OSCO policies use the term electronic control weapons ("ECWs") to describes CEDs.

provides the best possible law enforcement services to the people of Orange County. We look forward to continued cooperation toward this goal.

To date, we have reviewed relevant OCSO policies, audited OCSO training classes, participated in ride-alongs, and conducted interviews with a cross-section of OCSO command staff, supervisors, and deputies. We also spoke with a local community representative and the chairman of the Orange County Citizens' Review Board.

Important aspects of our fact-gathering process remain outstanding, most notably reviewing documents related to specific use of force incidents. This process is ongoing and we hope to conclude our review shortly. Therefore, this letter is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather focuses on recommendations we can provide at this stage of our investigation.

#### **I. Constitutional Standard of Review**

Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 14141, the United States is authorized to initiate a civil investigation into allegations regarding systemic violations of the Constitution by law enforcement agencies. As stated above, the investigation of OCSO is focused solely on an alleged pattern or practice of excessive force in OCSO's ECW use.

In Graham v. Connor, 490 U.S. 386, 394-95 (1989), the Supreme Court held that claims of excessive force are to be judged by Fourth Amendment standards.<sup>2</sup> See also Kesinger v. Herrington, 381 F.3d 1243, 1248 (11th Cir. 2004); Garrett v. Athens-Clarke County, 378 F.3d 1274, 1279

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<sup>2</sup> The Fourth Amendment of the United States Constitution states:

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or Affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the person or things to be seized.

(11th Cir. 2004); McCormick v. City of Fort Lauderdale, 333 F.3d 1234, 1244 (11th Cir. 2003); Vinyard v. Wilson, 311 F.3d 1340, 1347 (11th Cir. 2002); Lee v. Ferraro, 284 F.3d 1188, 1197 (11th Cir. 2002). Applying Fourth Amendment standards to claims of excessive force requires a court to determine whether the force employed to effect a particular seizure was "reasonable." Graham, 490 U.S. at 396.

In determining whether the use of force was reasonable, a court must carefully balance the nature and quality of the intrusion on the suspect's Fourth Amendment guarantees against that of the countervailing governmental interests at stake. Id.; Kesinger, 381 F.3d at 1248 n.3; Vinyard, 311 F.3d at 1347; Lee, 284 F.3d at 1197. The Graham Court specified three factors for a court to consider when balancing these competing interests: (1) "the severity of the crime at issue;" (2) "whether the suspect poses an immediate threat to the safety of the officers or others;" and (3) "whether he is actively resisting arrest or attempting to evade arrest by flight." Graham, 490 U.S. at 396; see also Kesinger, 381 F.3d at 1248 n.3; Garrett, 378 F.3d at 1279; Vinyard, 311 F.3d at 1347; Lee, 284 F.3d at 1197-98.

The Court in Graham noted that the reasonableness of a seizure "must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight." Graham, 490 U.S. at 396; see also Kesinger, 381 F.3d at 1248; Garrett, 378 F.3d 1279; McCormick, 333 F.3d at 1244. Moreover, the "reasonableness" analysis is an objective one. The inquiry is whether the officers acted objectively reasonable "in light of the facts and circumstances confronting them, without regard to their underlying intent or motive." Graham, 490 U.S. at 397; see also Kesinger, 381 F.3d at 1248; Garrett, 378 F.3d 1279; Vinyard, 311 F.3d at 1347; Lee, 284 F.3d at 1198 n.7. That is to say, "[a]n officer's evil intentions will not make a Fourth Amendment violation out of an objectively reasonable use of force; nor will an officer's good intentions make an objectively unreasonable use of force constitutional." Graham, 490 U.S. at 397; Lee, 284 F.3d at 1198 n.7 (quoting Graham).

Additionally, a claimant in the Eleventh Circuit is required to prove that the officer employed greater than de minimis force in effecting the seizure. "The application of de minimis force, without more, will not support a claim for excessive force in violation of the Fourth Amendment." Nolin v. Isbell, 207 F.3d 1253, 1257-58 (11th Cir. 2000) ("[A] minimal amount of force and injury. . . will not defeat an officer's qualified immunity in an excessive force case."). At a minimum, this will require a

showing of greater force and injury than should be expected in a typical arrest. Nolin, 207 F.3d at 1258 n.4.

## **II. Policies and Procedures**

Written policies are the primary means by which law enforcement agencies communicate their standards and expectations to their officers. Accordingly, it is essential that the OCSO's policies be comprehensive, up-to-date, and consistent with relevant legal standards and contemporary law enforcement practices. While OCSO's current ECW policies<sup>3</sup> contain accurate information, we recommend that OCSO provide additional guidance on three stages of ECW use: pre-deployment; deployment; and post-deployment. We also recommend that OCSO review its ECW policy annually, and update the policy as necessary.

### **A. Pre-Deployment Stage**

In the pre-deployment stage, a sound ECW policy should provide deputies with the information necessary to make appropriate decisions regarding ECW deployment. Such information should include clearly stated factors to aid the deputy in determining whether the circumstances are appropriate for ECW deployment, as well as precise rules regarding circumstances under which the ECW deployment is inappropriate. The following twelve ECW policy recommendations will assist in providing OCSO deputies with the information necessary to make appropriate decisions regarding the deployment of the ECW:

#### **1. Reference to Applicable Constitutional Standards**

While both OCSO's ECW and use-of-force policies currently state that "personnel only use that level of force objectively reasonable to perform their official duties," see OCSO G.O. 8.1.6 (2); 8.1.8 (2), the policies do not refer to, nor explain, constitutional standards regarding uses of force under the Fourth Amendment. We recommend that the OCSO include reference to the Fourth Amendment, which mandates that ECW deployment be reasonable in light of the facts and circumstances surrounding the deployment. Such a determination requires a balancing of the physical force exerted upon the subject through the deployment of

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<sup>3</sup> It is our understanding that OCSO's policy regarding ECW comprises two OCSO General Orders: General Order 8.1.6 (OCSO's general use-of-force policy) effective date February 8, 2008, and General Order 8.1.8 (OCSO's specific policy on the use of ECWs) effective date March 4, 2008.

the ECW against such factors as the severity of the crime, the immediate threat to the safety of the deputy and others posed by the subject, and the level of resistance demonstrated by the subject. See Graham v. Connor, 490 U.S. 386, 394-96 (1989); Appendix C.

## **2. Verbal Warnings Prior to ECW Deployment**

We recommend that OCSO policy require a verbal warning prior to ECW deployment, unless exigent circumstances exist or the verbal warning would place an individual at risk. Such warnings, recommended by our expert consultants and in accordance with recognized best available practices in this emerging field, will alert surrounding deputies of the impending ECW deployment and may achieve suspect compliance, eliminating the need to deploy the ECW. This procedure will allow the deputies to take proper safety precautions to "secure [the subject] under power"<sup>4</sup> or upon conclusion of the ECW cycle.

## **3. Flight as Justification for ECW Deployment**

While a subject's flight may be considered "active physical resistance" leading an deputy to deploy an ECW, we recommend that OCSO clarify its policies to make clear that a subject's flight should not be the sole justification for deploying the ECW.

Prior to deploying the ECW against a fleeing subject, the deputy should consider such factors as:

- (a) the severity of the offense;
- (b) any immediate threat to the safety of the deputy or others posed by the subject; and,
- (c) the ability of the deputy to safely effectuate the arrest without ECW deployment.

While OCSO's current ECW policy<sup>5</sup> contains "subject factors" to be considered by the deputy in making the decision to deploy the ECW such as "seriousness of crime committed by subject," and "whether the subject can be recaptured at a later time," it does not,

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<sup>4</sup> OCSO policy defines "secure under power" as "a technique used to secure a subject during the activation cycle." OCSO G.O. 8.1.8 (3)(D).

<sup>5</sup> See OCSO G.O. 8.1.8 (4)(C)(1)(a)(2)(a.1) and (a.8).

however, expressly instruct deputies that a subject's flight should not be the sole justification for ECW deployment.

Although the deployment of the ECW against a fleeing subject may be reasonable under certain circumstances, the mere act of fleeing the presence of law enforcement, without more, does not create circumstances under which a deputy's deployment of the ECW would be considered a reasonable use of force. We recommend that in accordance with the recognized best available practices and the recommendations of our expert consultants, OCSO revise its policies to clarify this distinction to prevent potential unlawful ECW use.

#### **4. Prohibiting ECW Deployment Against "Passive" Subjects**

While the OCSO's use-of-force matrix appropriately classifies ECW deployment at Level 4, requiring "active physical resistance,"<sup>6</sup> OCSO policy should expressly state that ECW deployment is appropriate only when encountering Level 4 or higher resistance and that ECW deployment is inappropriate when deputies encounter passive resistance as defined in Levels 1 through 3. We also recommend that OCSO policy define "passive subjects" to include those persons who question a deputy's commands in a non-violent and non-threatening manner and persons who are non-violently participating in public protest.

#### **5. ECW use against handcuffed subjects**

OCSO policy allows ECW deployment "on handcuffed, or otherwise secured subjects who present a Level 4 active physical resistance." OCSO G.O. 8.1.8 (4)(C)(5). This policy authorizes identical force responses against both restrained and unrestrained individuals despite the reduced risk of danger posed to the deputy or other persons by a subject who is restrained by handcuffs or other means. Therefore, we recommend that OCSO revise its ECW policy to prohibit ECW deployment against handcuffed or otherwise restrained subjects unless the subject is exhibiting Level 5 or higher resistance.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>7</sup> In addition, OCSO should train deputies to consider use of force options other than the ECW, such as a ripp restraint (a strong velcro cloth) that can be used to secure a subject's ankles, when encountering a restrained subject engaging in Level 4 resistance or higher.

**6. ECW Deployments Resulting in Collateral Injury**

Current OCSO ECW policy states that the ECW should not be deployed "in any environment where potentially flammable, volatile, or explosive material (gasoline, natural gas, propane, flammable chemical sprays, etc.) are present." OCSO G.O. 8.1.8 (4)(C)(6). In addition, OCSO ECW policy should generally prohibit deployment of the ECW in an environment where the subject's fall may cause substantial injury or death. The policy should list several examples of such environments (e.g., an elevated location such as rooftop or building ledge; standing in or near water or other drowning hazards; or climbing a fence or wall).

**7. ECW Deployment Against Suspects Operating Vehicles**

We recommend that OCSO ECW policy specifically prohibit the deployment of the ECW against a subject in physical control of a vehicle in motion, absent exigent circumstances. In such situations, successful ECW deployment would incapacitate the driver, making it impossible for him to maintain control of a vehicle and increasing the likelihood of injury to the deputy, subject, or other persons.

**8. Disciplinary Action Resulting from Inappropriate ECW Use**

While current OCSO ECW policy prohibits its use for "extracting evidence or contraband" or in any type of "punitive or reckless manner," OCSO G.O. 8.1.8 (4)(C)(3) and (4), we recommend that OCSO supplement these prohibitions with several other specific examples, including but not limited to:

- (a) needless display of the ECW;
- (b) careless or haphazard muzzle control<sup>8</sup> of the ECW;
- (c) using the ECW or threatening to use the ECW during an interrogation;
- (d) using the ECW to awaken a person;
- (e) using the ECW as a "prod";

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<sup>8</sup> The term "muzzle" refers to the portion of the ECW where the air cartridge connects to the weapon's barrel.

- (f) using the ECW on a helpless person or an individual with a severe disability;
- (g) careless storage of the ECW;
- (h) failing to report damage of the ECW; and,
- (i) failing to log out an ECW or ECW cartridge in accordance with OCSO policy.

We note that the current OCSO ECW policy states: "Deputies shall evaluate other options (e.g., verbal commands, hands on techniques, OC spray) and use caution before deploying an ECW in elementary schools, on young children, the elderly, females reasonably believed to be pregnant, and individuals with apparent physical disabilities impairing their mobility." OCSO G.O. 8.1.8 (4)(C)(1)(a.1). We recommend that OCSO amend its ECW policy to state expressly that the use of the ECW on such subjects is inappropriate absent exigent circumstances. We further recommend that OCSO ECW policy expressly warn deputies that such inappropriate uses of the ECW may result in disciplinary action.

## **9. Spark Tests**

Testing ECWs allows deputies to identify malfunctions prior to deployment in the field, allows supervisors to observe the deputies' control over the weapon and provide instruction as necessary, and provides an additional measure of accountability over a department-issued weapon. While OCSO deputies are trained to test their ECWs before each shift, the OCSO ECW policy does not currently require such testing. We recommend that OCSO ECW policy require deputies to conduct a pre-operation check (or "spark test") of the ECW prior to each shift and in the presence of a supervisor (at the conclusion of shift briefing, for example).<sup>9</sup>

In addition, OCSO policy should: (1) set forth procedures for addressing ECWs that fail to fire or fire slowly; (2) prohibit deputies from testing the ECW a second time without a supervisor's approval; (3) require deputies to report all

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<sup>9</sup> Spark Tests should include removing the cartridge of the ECW; pointing the ECW in a safe direction; and running a full five-second cycle.



accidental ECW discharges to a supervisor (to ensure accurate auditing of the ECW downloaded data).<sup>10</sup>

#### **10. Warning Regarding ECW Use Under Extreme Heat**

During training, the OCSO warns deputies that exposure of ECW cartridges to extreme heat or cold may cause malfunctions. We recommend that the OCSO include such warnings in its ECW policies, instructing deputies not to store the ECW or ECW cartridges in vehicles for extended periods of time.

#### **11. ECW Use and "Excited Delirium"**

Studies sponsored by the National Institute of Justice<sup>11</sup> suggest that ECW deployment on subjects under the influence of drugs or presenting behaviors associated with the condition of "excited delirium"<sup>12</sup> may lead to sudden death. As we learn more about the effects of ECW deployment on the human body, risks of such deployment may be eliminated, refined, or supplemented. Nevertheless, we recommend that OCSO's policy inform deputies of the findings of these studies, instruct deputies how to identify behaviors associated with the influence of drugs or the condition of "excited delirium," and suggest precautions to be taken to minimize the risks involved.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> We address ECW data downloading in Section III. A. 4 of this letter.

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix B for a listing of ECW studies.

<sup>12</sup> A subject said to be in a state of "excited delirium" will exhibit extreme agitation, bizarre and/or violent behavior, imperviousness to pain, exceptional strength and endurance, inappropriate nudity, extreme paranoia, and/or incoherent shouting.

<sup>13</sup> Some precautions that may minimize risk are:  
(1) deploying an arrest team with a larger number of deputies;  
(2) staging medical personnel to respond to the scene prior to the deployment of the ECW when practicable; or (3) ceasing ECW deployment and moving to a different means of force if it becomes clear that several ECW cycles have not effected the subject's aggressive behavior.

## **12. Notification of Emergency Medical Personnel**

While the deployment of the ECW rarely results in death or serious bodily injury, because such incidents can and do occur OCSO should take proper medical precautions whenever practicable. Therefore, we recommend that OCSO's ECW policy instruct deputies to notify emergency medical personnel when it is anticipated that the deputy will deploy the ECW against a subject.

While we recognize that many law enforcement encounters involving the ECW occur rapidly and unexpectedly, in some cases ECW deployment is predictable. Notification of emergency medical personnel is particularly important when ECW use is anticipated involving a subject: (1) under the influence of drugs; (2) exhibiting behaviors associated with "excited delirium;" (3) apparently suffering from a mental illness; or (4) posing a threat to him or herself, but not to others, as in some cases of attempted suicide.

### **B. Deployment Stage**

In the deployment stage, OCSO policy should provide deputies with the technical instruction necessary for successful ECW deployment and apprehension of the subject with minimal risk to both the deputy and subject. The following four recommendations will assist in providing OCSO deputies with the technical instruction necessary for such deployments:

#### **1. Multiple Deputies Deploying ECWs**

When properly deployed, a single cycle of a single ECW deployment should be sufficient to overcome a suspect's resistance and allow the deputy and accompanying deputies to safely effectuate an arrest. Absent exigent circumstances, simultaneous ECW deployment by multiple deputies increases the risk of excessive force against the subject. Moreover, it is more effective to have one deputy deploy the ECW and have the other deputies arrest the subject, than to have multiple deputies deploying the ECWs against the subject. Therefore, we recommend that OCSO policy state that, absent exigent circumstances, no more than one deputy at a time should deploy an ECW against a person.

## **2. Providing Cover and Arresting Under Force<sup>14</sup>**

While many arrests are often made by a single deputy, when practicable, each ECW deployment should include a "cover deputy" and an "arrest deputy" (or "arrest deputies") to secure the subject under force. While circumstances do not always allow for multiple deputies on the scene, OCSO ECW policy should nevertheless instruct that the standard operating ECW procedure is to include a cover deputy to provide lethal cover to the ECW operator. Cover deputies should be armed with OCSO-approved firearms appropriate for the situation. A cover deputy is necessary to protect the ECW operator who may not be in a position to respond effectively to escalating levels of resistance.

Furthermore, OCSO ECW policy should instruct deputies on arresting the subject under force. We recommend that OCSO ECW policy specifically instruct deputies to effectuate the arrest on the command of the ECW operator and that the arresting deputies follow standard procedures for effectuating an arrest, which include securing their weapons in their holsters prior to approaching the subject.

## **3. Multiple ECW Deployment Cycles**

Currently, OCSO ECW policy states: "Deputies shall attempt to secure the subject under power as soon as practical, when submission/ compliance cannot be achieved through a minimal number of activation cycles." OCSO G.O. (4)(C)(8). We recommend the following revisions to this portion of the ECW policy.

First, the policy should expressly state that deputies should deploy the ECW for no more than one standard cycle before stopping to evaluate the situation. During the assessment period, deputies should clearly give commands to the subject to achieve compliance. As subjects are often unable to hear or respond to commands during the cycling of the ECW, it is ineffective to give commands while deploying the ECW, as deputies may mistakenly interpret the subject's failure to respond to commands as active physical resistance.

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<sup>14</sup> The term, "under force" means to control or secure the subject and to effectuate an arrest of the subject upon deployment of the ECW, which does not necessarily conclude with the termination of the ECW cycle.

Second, the policy should also clearly state that one standard cycle (a full five seconds) is often unnecessary to achieve compliance. Compliance can often be achieved two to three seconds into the deployment cycle, especially with an arrest team prepared to secure the subject under force. In the same manner, if (after assessing the situation) the deputy determines that a second cycle is necessary, the deputy should restrict the duration of the second cycle to only the time necessary for the subject to comply and be safely placed under arrest. If a second cycle has no effect on the subject's aggressive behavior, the deputy should consider whether the ECW is functioning properly, whether the subject is exhibiting behaviors associated with "excited delirium," and whether other use-of-force options may be appropriate.

#### **4. Proper Use of "Probe Mode" and "Drive Stun Mode"**

Current OCSO policy currently allows ECW use in a "touch stun" or "drive stun mode" in which, the deputy removes the cartridge and presses the unit against the subject's body. OCSO G.O. 8.1.8 (4)(C)(9). Unlike the ECW's "probe mode" or "dart mode," which force compliance through an involuntary contraction of muscles disrupting neuro-motor control, "drive-stun mode" forces the subject to comply solely through infliction of pain. As different subjects exhibit varying levels of pain tolerance, the "drive stun mode" is not as effective in controlling the subject as the "probe mode." Because the "drive stun mode" is more likely to lead to excessive force than the "probe mode," we recommend, in accordance with recognized best practices and the recommendations of our expert consultants, that deputies be instructed to use the "drive stun mode" only as a secondary option.

#### **C. Post-Deployment Stage**

In the post-deployment stage, OCSO policy should provide deputies with a set of steps to be taken after ECW deployment to enhance the safety of the deputy and subject, and to ensure accountability of proper ECW deployment. The following five recommendations will assist in providing OCSO deputies with such options:

##### **1. Proper Restraint Techniques**

Absent exigent circumstances, a deputy should not employ restraint techniques that will impair a subject's respiration. We recommend that OCSO incorporate such a provision into its post-deployment ECW policies because, while the effects of the

ECW on the human respiratory system are not fully and conclusively understood at this time, some studies have suggested that ECW use leads to death of individuals restrained in such a manner.<sup>15</sup>

## **2. Medical Evaluation and Monitoring**

While ECW deployment will rarely result in death or serious bodily injury, such risks do exist both immediately following deployment and some time after deployment. During most ECW deployment incidents, the deputy has no knowledge of the subject's health or medical history, therefore, to avoid serious bodily injury or death to the subject, we recommend that OCSO revise its ECW policy to require post-deployment medical evaluation and monitoring of the subject. The procedure for the medical evaluation and custodial monitoring should be set forth in OCSO's ECW policy, which is currently silent on medical attention to the subject but for the removal of ECW probes that have struck the subject's face, groin, or breasts.

## **3. Supervisor Response to ECW Incidents**

The presence of a supervisor at the scene following an ECW deployment ensures accountability regarding pre- and post-deployment procedures. The supervisor on the scene can also assist in the arrest-related events at the scene by conducting a first-hand review of the use-of-force. OCSO does not currently require supervisors to respond to all incident scenes as soon as practicable where a deputy deploys an ECW. We recommend that the OCSO revise its policies to include such a requirement.

## **4. Supervisor's Initial Review of ECW Deployment**

We recommend that OCSO ECW policy instruct supervisors to conduct an initial review of any ECW deployment by a deputy. This initial review should include, but not be limited to:

- (a) the supervisor interviewing the deputy, the subject, and other witnesses;
- (b) completing a use-of-force report;
- (c) photographing all relevant evidence, including impact points of the ECW probes before and after removal from the subject; and,

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<sup>15</sup> See studies listed in Appendix B.

(d) collecting a sample of the AFID confetti<sup>16</sup> from the ECW cartridge.

Furthermore, the supervisor should ensure that the deputy place the spent ECW cartridge and probes into evidence control; secure and review any in-car video if so equipped; and download the ECW deployment data to assess the time of the deployment, the number of deployments, and the duration of each deployment. If upon the supervisor's review, a violation of law or policy is suspected, the supervisor's use-of-force report should be immediately forwarded to OCSO's Professional Standards Division for investigation.

### **5. Supervisor ECW Training**

An ECW policy that requires that supervisors respond to all incident scenes where a deputy deploys an ECW, and conduct an initial review of the deployment, must also require that supervisors undertake ECW training. We recommend that OCSO ECW policy expressly state this requirement.

### **III. Training**

Effective leadership of a law enforcement agency must prioritize training as a critical component for effective and constitutional ECW use. Generally, we find that OCSO's ECW training course contains accurate information, but does not provide complete and adequate ECW training. Through proper training, deputies will learn to make appropriate decisions, and develop the skills necessary, to effectively deploy the ECW during the course of their law enforcement duties. Accordingly, we recommend that OCSO consider the following recommendations:

#### **A. General Training Course Recommendations**

##### **1. Develop OCSO ECW Training**

OCSO conducts its ECW training course almost exclusively from the training materials provided by the ECW manufacturer. While it may be appropriate to employ these materials when discussing the basic functions and operation mechanics of the

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<sup>16</sup> AFID ("Anti-Felon Identification Device") confetti is expelled from the ECW cartridge when the ECW is deployed. An alpha-numeric identifier unique to the ECW cartridge is printed on each piece of confetti. See OCSO G.O. 8.1.8 (3)(B).

ECW, the materials are inadequate for other aspects of ECW training. OCSO should create its own training materials; scenario-based deployment and arrest drills; and testing procedures to best develop the ECW knowledge and skills of its deputies as tailored for the needs of OCSO. Training materials should be distributed to the deputies during the training course, and deputies should be encouraged to take notes in the materials during the course.

## **2. Seriousness and Professionalism**

The ECW is a weapon capable of inflicting great pain, and in rare instances, contributing to death or serious bodily injury. Accordingly, OCSO deputies should be trained to respect the ECW as a weapon, and such training begins with the discipline instilled in the deputies during the ECW training course. We recommend that, unlike the ECW training we observed in November 2007, future ECW training courses be conducted with the same level of seriousness and professionalism as that of a firearms training course.

## **3. Inclusion of OCSO ECW policy**

OCSO training briefly addresses ECW policy, specifically highlighting appropriate environments for ECW use and subjects upon whom ECWs should not be deployed. OCSO ECW training instructors also briefly address the subject and deputy factors to considered prior to ECW deployment. While the emphasis on such factors is important, OCSO ECW training instructors should review every aspect of the OCSO ECW policy during the ECW training course. This recommendation includes ECW training instructors reviewing the policy issues discussed throughout this letter. For example, OCSO ECW training instructors should review such policy aspects as: prohibiting ECW deployment against passive subjects; deployment of the ECW against handcuffed or otherwise restrained subjects only when the subject is employing Level 5 resistance; the risks associated with ECW deployment, specifically against subjects under the influence of drugs or exhibiting behaviors associated with "excited delirium;" and the role of supervisors in reviewing ECW deployments. Such training may be conducted adequately through a lecture format that allows deputies to ask questions and discuss policy details.

**B. Specific OCSO ECW Training Course Recommendations**

**1. Enhanced Pre-Deployment Training**

We recommend that the OCSO enhance its ECW training regarding pre-deployment decision-making. First, OCSO should incorporate a brief legal training into the ECW training course. Training instructors should review and discuss Fourth Amendment standards and application of such standards when effectuating an arrest and using force against a subject. Second, we recommend that training instructors discuss the pre-deployment aspects of the OCSO ECW policy, as well as the policy recommendations already suggested in this letter.<sup>17</sup>

**2. Scenario-Based Training Exercises**

While we note that OCSO ECW training provides appropriate training on the functional deployment of the ECW (i.e. "aim and fire"), we recommend incorporating training exercises on other steps in the ECW deployment stage. In addition to enhancing instruction on proper pre-deployment decisions, OCSO should incorporate practical scenario-based training exercises to drill deputies on ECW deployment skills. For example, deputies should be instructed, drilled, and tested on how to:

- (a) give a verbal warning to the subject and other deputies;
- (b) work together with other deputies as a team;
- (c) provide cover, and how to arrest under force;
- (d) deploy a standard cycle and assess the situation;

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<sup>17</sup> For example, OCSO ECW training instructors should discuss what type of subject action constitutes Level 4 resistance, and what type of actions by a restrained subject will constitute Level 5 resistance. Moreover, we note that while OCSO ECW training instructors currently discuss some inappropriate uses of the ECW, OCSO should expand such discussions to include additional specific examples of inappropriate uses of the ECW, such as deploying the ECW against a subject in control of a vehicle, or fleeing from a consensual encounter. Training instructors should also provide actual examples of appropriate (as well as inappropriate) uses of the ECW provided by OCSO deputies that have properly (or improperly) deployed the ECW to effectuate an arrest.



(e) recognize symptoms of mental illness and "excited delirium"; and,

(f) stage emergency medical services in cases where ECW deployment is predictable.

### **3. Supervisor Review of ECW Use**

We recommended above that OCSO ECW policy require a supervisor to respond as soon as practicable to the scene and conduct an incident review when a deputy deploys an ECW. We further recommend that OCSO not only incorporate that recommendation into its policy, but also develop training dedicated to supervisor response and incident review. The course material should cover such aspects of supervisor response and incident review as:

(a) conducting interviews with the deputy, the subject, and other witnesses;

(b) completing a use-of-force report;

(c) photographing all relevant evidence, including impact points of the ECW probes before and after removal from the subject; and,

(d) collecting a sample of the AFID confetti from the ECW cartridge.

### **4. Risks of Deploying ECW Against a Subject**

We recommend that OCSO ECW training instructors explain the risks involved in deploying the ECW, specifically against subjects under the influence of drugs or exhibiting behaviors associated with "excited delirium." We encourage OCSO ECW training instructors to discuss recent studies regarding the ECW's effect on the human body. Currently, the OCSO ECW training course does not address such risks, but rather, instructors emphasize the relatively low rates of serious injuries caused by ECW use.

Moreover, OCSO ECW instructors spend an inordinate amount of time offering explanations for ECW-related deaths. During an OCSO ECW training, we observed instructors state, "the ECW can't hurt you, it won't hurt you," and "such a small amount of electricity has no effect on the body," and "the ECW absolutely will not hurt someone with a pacemaker." Such statements provide deputies with a misunderstanding of the potential dangers

involved in ECW deployment, and as a result, can increase the potential for injury and excessive force against a subject. Training instructors should provide examples from actual cases in which subjects received serious injuries as a direct or indirect result of an ECW deployment.

#### **IV. Accountability**

Accountability of proper ECW use is critical to maintain a high level of professionalism within a law enforcement agency and to ensure the trust and respect of the community. OCSO's Professional Standards Division ("PSD") is well-equipped to handle the accountability issues related to ECW use, and we recommend that OCSO utilize the PSD to track and address such accountability. OCSO's PSD currently employs an Early Identification System<sup>18</sup> ("EIS") to track instances of uses of force. Essentially, the EIS is a computer database designed to identify those deputies with a higher than normal record of using force in the course of their law enforcement duties. OCSO's EIS is a capable and effective tool for the PSD to manage the accountability of OCSO's ECW use. Accordingly, we propose the following recommendations related to accountability of ECW use:

##### **A. Recommendations For OCSO PSD Related to ECW Use**

###### **1. Incorporation of ECW Data into the EIS**

While OCSO PSD currently records ECW-use incidents in its EIS database, it does not track the data through EIS alert functions and, therefore, does not identify deputies with an unusually high rate of ECW deployments. As OCSO uses the EIS alert functions for all other uses-of-force, it should include ECW use in its alerts. We strongly urge OCSO to implement this recommendation to identify deputies with a high rate of ECW deployments, and take necessary actions (e.g. training, counseling, discipline) to appropriately address the conduct. Implementation of such practices will improve OCSO's ECW accountability, as well as increase the community's confidence in OCSO's professionalism.

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<sup>18</sup> The EIS is defined by OCSO as "a proactive, non-disciplinary system intended to enhance awareness by employees, supervisors and managers of potential employee problems before serious events occur." See OCSO G.O. 285 (3)(A).

## **2. Use-of-Force Form For ECW Use**

Following each ECW deployment, OCSO deputies are required complete the Use of Defensive Tactics/K-9 Form, and copies of the form must be forwarded to the PSD. See OCSO G.O. 8.1.8 (4)(E). This form was not specifically designed to address ECW deployments. A use-of-force form designed specifically for ECW use will allow OCSO to record ECW data and statistics. OCSO can then review and analyze the ECW data collected through the use-of-force forms and make informed decisions regarding ECW policy, training, and accountability.

We recommend that OCSO create an ECW use-of-force form that records information such as, but not limited to:

- (a) the serial number of the ECW and ECW cartridge;
- (b) information regarding the deployment (e.g. unholstered only, unholstered and deployed and hit or missed target);
- (c) distance from subject; environment, physical and weather conditions of the location;
- (d) number of cycles deployed;
- (e) whether a drive-stun was employed;
- (f) a description of the resistance demonstrated by the subject;
- (g) statements from the subject;
- (h) injuries; and,
- (i) names of witnesses.

## **3. Automatic PSD Review of Certain ECW Cases**

While a supervisor should conduct an incident review of every ECW deployment, certain serious circumstances should automatically trigger an independent PSD investigation. For example, in cases where the subject dies or suffers serious bodily injury after deployment of the ECW, or in cases where: a subject experiences prolonged or excessive cycling of the ECW; the ECW appears to have been used in a punitive or abusive manner; or there appears to be a substantial deviation from OCSO ECW policy.

#### **4. Download of ECW Data Following Deployment**

All OCSO ECWs are equipped to record the date and time of each deployment, as well as the duration of each deployment cycle. This data can be downloaded from the ECW into a computer for examination and analysis. Despite the existence of this technology, OCSO only downloads this valuable information once a year during the deputy's annual inventory at OCSO Material Control/Supply. Moreover, OCSO makes no use of the data it does download. We recommend that OCSO PSD download the data from an ECW after every ECW deployment. By downloading and analyzing the data after each deployment, OCSO will produce a more accurate record of the ECW incident. Moreover, supervisors and PSD can use the downloaded data to compare against the deputy's use-of-force and arrest reports to ensure accuracy and identify errors, unreporting, or false reporting. Additionally, downloading data following each deployment will clear the ECW's memory storage and prevent loss of data that is currently being erased when the ECW computer memory records over itself upon reaching its data storage capacity limit.

#### **5. Random Audits of ECW Deployment Data Downloads**

We recommend that PSD conduct random audits of the ECW deployment data. The audits should compare the downloaded data to the deputy's use-of-force reports (or a use-of-force report completed by the supervisor). Discrepancies within the audit should be addressed and appropriately investigated.

#### **6. Statistical Information Regarding ECW Deployments**

Analysis of statistical information will allow OCSO to identify trends regarding ECW use. Identification of the ECW-use trends will better equip OCSO leadership to make informed decisions to better provide law enforcement services to the community. Accordingly, we recommend that OCSO PSD collect the following statistical information:

- (a) date, time, and location of the incident;
- (b) subject compliance with or without deployment and number of deployment cycles;
- (c) descriptive information about the subject, witnesses, and the deputy;
- (d) the type and brand of ECW deployed;

- (e) the level of resistance displayed by the subject;
- (f) whether the subject possessed a weapon, and whether the deputy was aware of the subject's weapon at the time of the deployment;
- (g) the type of crime involved;
- (h) a determination of whether deadly force would have been justified;
- (i) the type of clothing worn by the subject;
- (j) the point of impact on the subject;
- (k) the distance of the deputy from the subject;
- (l) whether a cover deputy was employed;
- (m) whether a deputy or deputy team arrested the subject under force;
- (n) whether a drive stun was employed;
- (o) the environment, physical, and weather conditions of the location of the incident;
- (p) injuries to the deputy or subject;
- (q) the medical care provided to the subject; and,
- (r) whether the subject was under the influence of drugs or exhibiting behaviors associated with "excited delirium."

#### **7. Civilian Complaints Regarding ECW deployment**

We recommend that all civilian complaints regarding ECW use be forwarded to OCSO PSD, assigned a tracking number, and investigated appropriately. Currently, it appears that OCSO will process civilian complaints differently based upon how the civilian made the complaint (i.e. in writing, directly to PSD, at the scene of the incident or at the OCSO front desk). All ECW-related civilian complaints should be processed through PSD regardless of the circumstances surrounding the initial complaint.

OCSO should further consider printing a complaint form with a "tear-off postcard" and PSD's mailing address. Furthermore,

OCSO should notify the complainant in writing upon receipt of the complaint and upon resolution of the complaint. In addition, OCSO should update the complainant on progress of the investigation at regular intervals.

**V. Conclusion**

Please note that this letter is a public document. It will be posted on the Civil Rights Division's website. While we will provide a copy of this letter to any individual or entity upon request, as a matter of courtesy, we will not post the letter on the Civil Rights Division's website until 10 calendar days from the date of this letter.

As noted above, as the OCSO revises its policies and procedures, we strongly urge the OCSO to closely review and consider the technical assistance recommendations contained in this letter. We hope that these recommendations will be received in the spirit of assisting in our mutual goal of ensuring that the best possible law enforcement services are provided to the people who reside in and travel through Orange County. We look forward to continued cooperation toward this goal. Where possible, we would be happy to provide examples of policies and procedures used by other law enforcement agencies that might address some of the issues we have raised in this letter.

Sincerely,


/s/ Shanetta Y. Cutlar

Shanetta Y. Cutlar  
Chief  
Special Litigation Section

**APPENDIX A  
USE-OF-FORCE MATRIX**

The use-of-force matrix is a tool employed in both OCSO's use-of-force and ECW policies. The use-of-force matrix is used to define the various levels of resistance a deputy may encounter when confronting a subject during the course of law enforcement duties, and the corresponding levels of a deputy's response to the subject's resistance. See Table 1, below. The matrix consists of six levels of resistance and six corresponding levels of response. The highest level of resistance, for example, is Level 6 or "aggravated physical resistance," defined as "attacking movements with or without a weapon with the apparent ability to cause death or great bodily harm." The corresponding level of response for Level 6 is deadly force. On the other end of the matrix, the lowest level of resistance is Level 1 or "presence," defined as being "on the scene, with accompanying suspicious activity." The corresponding level of response for Level 1 is "command presence," which includes the deputy employing an authoritative tone of voice and body language. According to OCSO's use-of-force policy, the use-of-force matrix "is meant to be used as a guideline for a deputy to select effective, reasonable, and legal force options in a verbal or physical encounter." See OCSO G.O. 8.1.6 (4)(A)(1).

**TABLE 1: OCSO Use-Of-Force Matrix**

		<b>ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE</b> <b>USE OF FORCE MATRIX</b>														
		<b>Use of Force - Levels of Resistance</b>														
<b>Resistance Levels</b>	6 Aggravated Physical	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
	5 Aggressive Physical	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
	4 Active Physical	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
	3 Passive Physical	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
	2 Verbal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
	1 Presence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
<p>Checked areas represent suggested, acceptable, beginning response levels. Any response in an unchecked area required explanation. Refer to the definitions for each level of resistance, response and the determining factors when articulating the explanation.</p>		Presence	Interview Silence	Dialogue	Verbal Direction	Touch	Restraint Devices	Chemical Agent	Transporters	Take Downs	Pain Compliance	REACT	Counter Moves	Intermediate Weapons/ECW	Incapacitation	Deadly
		Command Presence		Communication						Physical Control						
		1		2						3				4	5	6
		<b>Response Levels</b>														

**APPENDIX A (continued)**  
**USE-OF-FORCE MATRIX**

OCSO's current ECW policy places the deployment of the ECW at Level 4 on the use-of-force matrix, authorizing ECW deployment only when the deputy encounters a minimum of "active physical resistance." Specifically, the policy states that "the ECW may be used when Level 4 (Active Physical Resistance) or higher resistance is encountered." See OCSO G.O. 8.1.8 (4)(C)(1). OCSO's use-of-force policy defines "active physical resistance" as: "Slight to moderate physical harm: a subject makes physically evasive movements to defeat a deputy's attempt at control. This may be in the form of bracing or tensing, attempts to push/pull away or not allowing the deputy to get close to him/her." Id. at (3)(c).



**APPENDIX B**  
**ECW studies commissioned**  
**by the National Institute of Justice**

1. **Deaths following electro-muscular disruption.** NIJ's foremost study on ECWs selected a panel of physicians to conduct mortality reviews on a number of deaths that followed ECW deployment. The medical panel is examining incident data from police reports. Police data are being combined with findings from an autopsy, toxicological analysis, medical records of symptoms the subjects experienced after ECW deployment, and care received afterward.
2. **Reconstructing the chain of events surrounding an incident.** NIJ is augmenting medical data by reconstructing scenarios in which an ECW was deployed. NIJ is partnering with the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) to conduct field research to support the reviews.
3. **ECW's effect on internal organ systems.** A study at the University of Wisconsin is assessing the effect of electric current as it moves through the body. The study models the effects of an ECW on internal organs, including the heart. In a related effort, the University of California in San Diego and New Jersey Medical School are studying the ECW's effect on metabolic pathways in the body, as well as the cardiac and respiratory systems.
4. **Less-lethal monitoring system.** Wake Forest University in North Carolina, is piloting a monitoring system where NIJ-funded researchers and medical personnel accompany victims of an incident where a less-lethal device was applied to a hospital. Researchers will gather data for each case attended.
5. **Examining "excited delirium."** Researchers at Wake Forest University are also examining the condition of "excited delirium."

For more information on these studies, please visit:  
<http://www.ojp.gov/nij/topics/technology/less-lethal/conducted-energy-devices.htm>.