



AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF UTAH FOUNDATION, INC
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April 26, 2006

Mayor Rocky Anderson
451 South State Street, Room 306
Salt Lake City, UT 84111

Chief Chris Burbank
Salt Lake City Police Department
315 East 200 South
Salt Lake City, UT 84111

Re: SLCPD Policy Regarding the Use of Tasers

Dear Mayor Anderson and Chief Burbank,

On behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Utah, I am writing to urge you to revise the current SLCPD Taser Policy to allow for the use of Tasers only in those situations in which deadly force would otherwise be authorized or where there is an imminent threat to human life.

The death of Alvin Itula last Friday is, unfortunately, not an isolated event. It is an event that must be seen in the context of the over one hundred deaths nationwide that have occurred after a person was stunned by a Taser. As noted in the materials we submitted to you last summer, there is a troubling lack of objective, scientific medical studies regarding the effects of Tasers, and the number of people who have died after being stunned raises serious questions about the weapon's safety.

As we indicated last summer, the ACLU of Utah is not opposed to Tasers per se. We would support their use in life-threatening situations as a less-lethal use of force option. However, until more is known about the effects of Tasers, we oppose their use in situations that do not justify lethal force. The recent death of Mr. Itula reinforces the reasoning behind our position.

In establishing the panel to review the SLCPD's Taser Policy last summer, you both demonstrated a commitment to an open, public process and a willingness to seriously consider concerns that were expressed about the weapon. We hope you will continue with this commitment as you evaluate the policy in action.

Sincerely,

Margaret Plane
Legal Director