



DANGER ROOM WHAT'S NEXT IN NATIONAL SECURITY

TUESDAY, MAY 08, 2007

Sonic Blaster Nails Me



Outside at the annual Mock Riot at an old state pen in Moundsville, West Virginia, police squads are fighting simulated battles with college kids portraying rebellious inmates. Inside, vendors are showing off the latest in weapons – both lethal and nonlethal – body armor and robots.

One of the most impressive pieces of kit is also the most nondescript. It looks like a thick, tan-colored stop sign mounted to a metal stand. The Long-Range Acoustic Device, built by American Technology Corporation, focuses and broadcasts sound over ranges of up to hundreds of yards.

There's a lot you can do with this. Record a message in whatever language you want and you can shoot bulletins to flood survivors or refugees to advise them where to find help. Switch to an annoying whine and dial it up a notch and you can use the LRAD as a weapon.

Cruise-ship crews have even used the device to ward off pirates. The Army and Marine Corps in Iraq use it to disperse crowds and, in a mounted version, to protect convoys. Corrections and police departments armed with LRAD can put down riots without firing a shot.

Sound (ahem) implausible? Look at the picture at right of test subjects getting the LRAD treatment. And take it from me: today at the Mock Riot, Scott Stuckey from American Technology Corp dialed the LRAD down to one of its lowest settings and swept it past me. It was like having a hundred nagging girlfriends in my brain screaming at me. Very unpleasant.

