



COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT
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Media Release

Regarding the Grass Roots Organizing TASER Press Conference of November 24, 2008

The Columbia Police Department is aware that Grass Roots Organizing held a press conference today regarding their assessment of alleged abuses they purportedly discovered as a result of reviewing our released TASER information.

Undoubtedly, the media will be seeking a response from the Columbia Police Department.

This is that response.

While I don't have their specifics, I do have complete confidence in the professionals at the Columbia Police Department, and their restraint in the use of force in the many situations that require it on a daily basis. So does the government of the city of Columbia. For that confidence and trust, we are very grateful.

While we greatly respect the right of GRO to conduct business any way it sees fit, there is a mechanism in place for the review of the use of all force at this department. It is a mandatory review. Each case is reviewed by policy. There is a complete mechanism in place for those who feel the TASER or any force was unjustly deployed against them. This is done through the Professional Standards Unit of the police department.

Our policy for the TASER has been exhaustively compared and contrasted with those of national police organizations and other police agencies. It has been exhaustively debated at the city council and at informational TASER sessions conducted by the Columbia Police Department.

Vigorous public debate to the extent the community wishes has always been welcomed by this department. However, subjective criticism by a third party with an arguable agenda that keeps bringing the topic up without any sense of closure is not something that the police department can endlessly engage in as an active participant.

Ours is a very difficult duty, policing in a city with such a diversity of opinion about the actions that our officers have seconds to decide to take. We know, however, that the overwhelming majority believe the TASER is an essential tool for the enforcement of law here.

Criticism by those with the comfort of hindsight, a microphone and a Monday morning, but little training in the complexities of modern policing is one of the essentials of democracy. However, until the majority decides otherwise, we must get on with our work.

Tom Dresner
Interim Chief of Police

Release issued: November 24, 2008 11:00 a.m.

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