

Sound-Light Rays To Control Mobs

London

British scientists are testing an antiriot weapon that uses sound and light waves to induce nausea and epileptic fits to break up mobs, the New Scientist magazine reported yesterday.

The magazine said in its description of the weapon: "A large group of protesters reaches police lines. Suddenly 5 per cent of the group has epileptic fits. Although they see and hear nothing strange, the rest feel a throbbing in the ears and a flashing in their eyes, and possibly one-quarter become sick. The group panics and disperses."

The New Scientist said the weapon is a modification of the technique of flashing strobe lights used in discotheques, but using invisible infra-red light rays instead.

These are combined with ultrasonic sound waves almost inaudible to the human ear.

"It has been known for many years that rapidly flashing lights will trigger attacks not only in known epileptics but in about 4 per cent of apparently normal people as well," New Scientist said. "Studies have also shown that strobes make about one-quarter of the population feel 'strange', with experiences including giddiness, nausea, speed difficulties and even fainting."

The light wave aspect of the weapon, known as a photic driver, can be used only at night. It is the brainchild of Charles Bovill, chief engineer of a company producing security and anti-burglary devices. Bovill claims it is a "non-violent" weapon less dangerous than night sticks or riot gas.

Associated Press