The Phazzer Enforcer comes in a durable plastic case with dense foam to encapsulate and protect the unit.

STUNNING PERSUASION

Is Phazzer an affordable less lethal alternative to using a Taser?

By Richard Nance
Photos by Alfredo Rico

While on routine patrol, I was dispatched to a residence across town where a man was threatening suicide. Per the dispatcher, there was a firearm registered to the suicidal man, who was said to have barricaded himself inside his residence.

My partners and I arrived on scene and parked a few houses away to formulate a game plan. But before we had decided on a course of action, a vehicle parked in front of the residence and a young couple with an infant exited the vehicle and walked into the residence where the suicidal man was holed up.

In police work, there's a maxim, "If someone is suicidal, they are homicidal," and therefore we were compelled to hastily enter the residence to protect the people who had just gone inside from a potential deadly threat of which they were unaware.

Once inside, we realized there were several other residents present. If the suicidal man started shooting, the interior walls would offer little protection to officers and occupants. For their safety, we escorted everyone we could find outside of the residence.

We found the suicidal man standing inside a bedroom approximately 15 feet away from where I and two other officers stood in the hall. The man yelled for us to "Get the f**k out" of his house. He was clutching a double-edged knife in his left hand, and his right hand was obscured by a large piece of furniture that he had used to attempt to barricade himself in the bedroom. I commanded the man to drop the knife and put his hands up, but he did not comply.

Fearing that the suicidal man was reaching for, or possibly even holding, a firearm in his right hand in addition to holding the knife in his left hand, I fired my Taser X26 at him as my partners provided lethal cover with their firearms. The probes struck the man's torso, causing his body to stiffen and fall to the floor. He was handcuffed without incident and placed on a mental-health detention.

The man, a Vietnam veteran, later called to thank me for saving his life. He told me that, had I not "Tased" him, he would've killed himself. Thanks in part to my Taser, my partners and I were able to save that man, and possibly others, from himself that day without anyone being injured.

For the last several years, Taser has dominated the Conductive Energy Weapon (CEW) law enforcement market, but now there's a new kid on the block, the Phazzer Enforcer CEW.

Like the Taser, the Phazzer Enforcer is capable of firing electronic darts that, upon contact, result in neuromuscular incapacitation (NMI). In fact, the Enforcer is even compatible with Taser X26 and Taser M26 cartridges. However, in addition to being a CEW, the Enforcer can fire PepperBalls, rubber bullets, paint balls (for identification purposes) and pepper

Even with Conductive Energy weapons, threat identification and target acquisition are critical. The Phazzer Enforcer produces a high-intensity, 160-lumen beam of white light.

The Phazzer Enforcer's light can be activated by a switch, conveniently located on either side of the unit.

STUNNING PERSUASION

powder, making it an extremely versatile less lethal option.

As a Taser instructor, I was admittedly quite skeptical of the Phazzer, or at least I was until I picked it up and handled it. The Phazzer Enforcer didn't feel as good in the hand as the Taser X26, it actually felt better! The Enforcer's longer grip accommodates your little finger for optimal control, and the rubber sleeve provides a comfortable, nonslip gripping surface.

The Enforcer is ergonomically designed, with the power and laser-activation switch located just above the backstrap, where it is easily accessible with either thumb. The switch itself is textured to aid in turning the unit on and off. The Enforcer's 160-lumen high-intensity white light is activated by a conveniently located switch on either side of the unit. Impressed with the way the Enforcer felt, I was anxious to see how it would perform. I grabbed a cardboard backer and a B-27 target, then put the Enforcer to work at a distance of roughly 15 feet.

Initially, I loaded a nonconductive training cartridge into the cartridge socket. I slid up the power and laser-activation switch and oriented the 650NM red laser sight on the center of the X-ring. As my finger found the trigger, I noted that it appeared to be sloped at an unusual angle, as if the top portion of the trigger were set back too far. As I pressed the trigger to the rear, however, it felt fine.

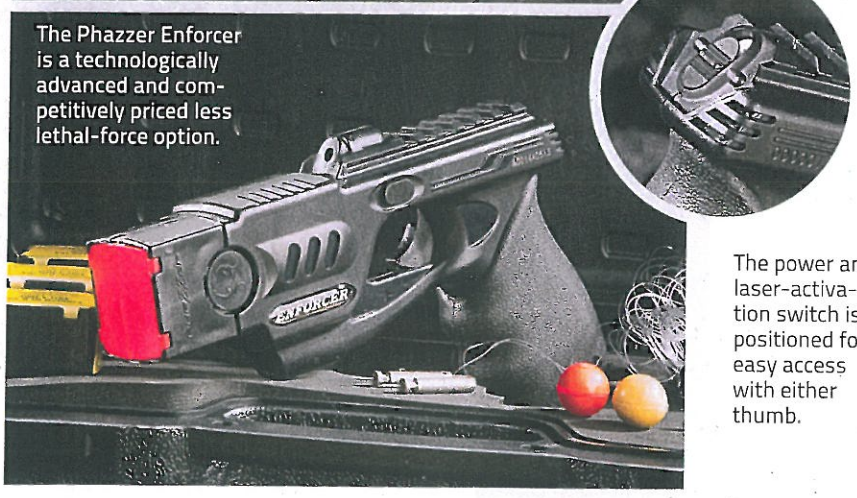
The dart dispersion from the Phazzer Enforcer is considerably different than with the Taser. With the latter, the top dart is designed to impact at the point of aim and the bottom dart to impact approximately eight degrees below. The Enforcer's darts separate, with one impacting approximately three degrees above the point of aim and the other impacting approximately three degrees below the point of aim.

Phazzer claims that at 15 feet, the expected dart separation distance is 20¼ inches. My testing corroborated this estimate. Of course, the farther you are from your target, the more the darts will spread. Per the Phazzer Enforcer's manual, "The minimum dart spread required for best performance of NMI is a six-inch spread, between the darts, according to the original designer of the Pulse Wave Technology, Mr. Jack Cover."

In order for a CEW to be effective, both darts must penetrate the assailant's skin to form a complete circuit. When this does not occur, most likely as a result of the targeted individual wearing heavy clothing or one of the darts missing its target, NMI will not occur. A telltale sign that the darts did not penetrate sufficiently is that the unit will produce a loud crackling sound, as though it were activated without a cartridge installed.

All Phazzer ammunition is propelled by compressed nitrogen, and it has been classified by the ATF as a nonfirearm. When fired from the Enforcer, darts and other projectiles travel at approximately 155 feet per second. The Dart Pro cartridge with yellow blast doors has a maximum effective range of 15 feet. The Dart Pro cartridge with the lime-green blast doors is a law enforcement-specific round, with a maximum effective range of 21 feet.

The Phazzer Enforcer CEW is a versatile tool that can fire electronic darts, rubber balls (yellow), plastic balls containing Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) (orange) and other less lethal ammunition.



The Phazzer Enforcer is a technologically advanced and competitively priced less lethal-force option.

The power and laser-activation switch is positioned for easy access with either thumb.

RUBBERBULLET

Next, I loaded a cartridge containing a RubberBullet, as indicated by the black blast doors. This round is intended to disorient or confuse an assailant and, like all Phazzer ammunition, is not intended to be aimed at an individual's eyes, face or throat.

Although the RubberBullet has a maximum effective range of 30 feet, I decided to fire it from a distance of approximately 15. When I activated the trigger, a small, yellow rubber ball impacted the target

approximately one inch to the right and one inch below my point of aim. Although the Enforcer's laser sight proved to be sufficiently accurate, the unit does not contain any type of backup sights. Should the laser fail, you would be relegated to point shooting.

My main concern with the RubberBullet was not that it would hit its mark, but rather how much effect it would have upon impact. Don't get me wrong; I don't enjoy being shot with the RubberBullet, and it may persuade an individual to desist. However, when preparing for violent encounters, you must plan for the worst-case scenario. With this in mind, I don't believe that one small rubber ball would have a telling effect on a determined adversary. If being struck with the RubberBullet prompted the bad guy to charge you, you'd be hard-pressed to load a new cartridge into the Phazzer in time to deploy it.

PEPPERBALL

Underwhelmed with the RubberBullet's performance, I loaded a PepperBall cartridge into the Enforcer. This cartridge is identified by its red blast doors. From a distance of approximately 15 feet from my target, I placed the red laser over the center X and pulled the trigger. A single, pink-colored plastic ball impacted in the same vicinity as the RubberBullet.

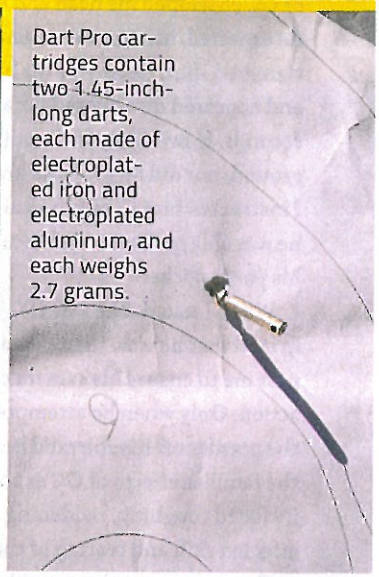
I immediately walked up to the target and retrieved the projectile. Upon examining it, I determined that one-quarter of it was missing but that the remaining portion was mostly full of powder. When I detected no odor of Oleoresin Capsicum (OC), I placed the PepperBall directly under my nose and inhaled to the point that I nearly snorted its contents. Still, not the slightest hint of OC was present.

As with the RubberBullet, the PepperBall was plenty accurate, but its ability to neutralize an attacker was also suspect. I wondered if the amount of OC contained in the PepperBall was significant enough to matter. To me, PeppperBall projectiles would only be beneficial if you had the ability to deliver rapid follow-up shots.

- Pink=Pepper Powder
- Yellow=Dart Pro 15 feet
- Blue=Dart Pro Training Cartridge 21 feet
- Red=Pepper-Ball
- Black=Rubber ball

The Phazzer Enforcer's 650-nanometer red laser sight makes for easy aiming and accurate shot placement.

Dart Pro cartridges contain two 1.45-inch-long darts, each made of electroplated iron and electroplated aluminum, and each weighs 2.7 grams.



The Phazzer Enforcer is powered by a rechargeable/replaceable lithium ion battery.

Expecting a single PepperBall to get the job done may be setting yourself up for failure.

Like the Taser, the Phazzer Enforcer can be used at contact distance by driving the cartridge socket or the front portion of an expended cartridge into the attacker and depressing the trigger. However, this deployment method is less likely to result in NMI and places you dangerously close to the assailant.

PEPPER POWDER

For the final test, I loaded the Enforcer with a pepper-powder cartridge, characterized by its distinctive pink blast doors. This cartridge is intended to be used at distances up to eight feet, so my photographer positioned himself approximately 15 feet away and photographed me firing. Emboldened by what he'd seen, my photographer volunteered to experience the

STUNNING PERSUASION

effects of the pepper-powder cartridge, and I was more than happy to oblige.

I loaded a new pepper-powder cartridge into the Enforcer and directed my friend to a spot approximately eight feet from where I intended to fire. For illustrative purposes, I had him hold a tactical folding knife in his hand.

When I fired the cartridge, a cloud of OC enveloped his head and chest. As expected, his eyes immediately slammed shut, he turned his head away and appeared disoriented for a couple of seconds. However, he did not fall to the ground, nor did he drop the knife. In fact, I instructed him to put the knife away, and he was able to close it and secure it back in his pants pocket.

When I asked if he was OK, he confirmed that he was, then casually walked past me to ensure his camera captured the action. Only when he attempted to brush the powder off his shirt did he experience the familiar effects of OC exposure, which included coughing, reddening of the affected skin and tearing of the eyes.

The pepper-powder cartridge fared better than the other less lethal options I tested, with the obvious exception of the electronic darts, but it, too, left something to be desired. The effect was not as immediate or intense as I've experienced on both the giving and receiving end of aerosol-based OC. It would have bought me a few seconds to create distance and/or draw another weapon, but it certainly wasn't a fight-stopper.

Of course, my photographer knew what was coming, so the element of surprise — so critical to the effectiveness of any less lethal tool — was negated. Then again, my photographer also wasn't a real assailant, hell-bent on thrusting the blade of his knife deep into my chest, so I guess we'll call it a wash.

TAKEAWAYS

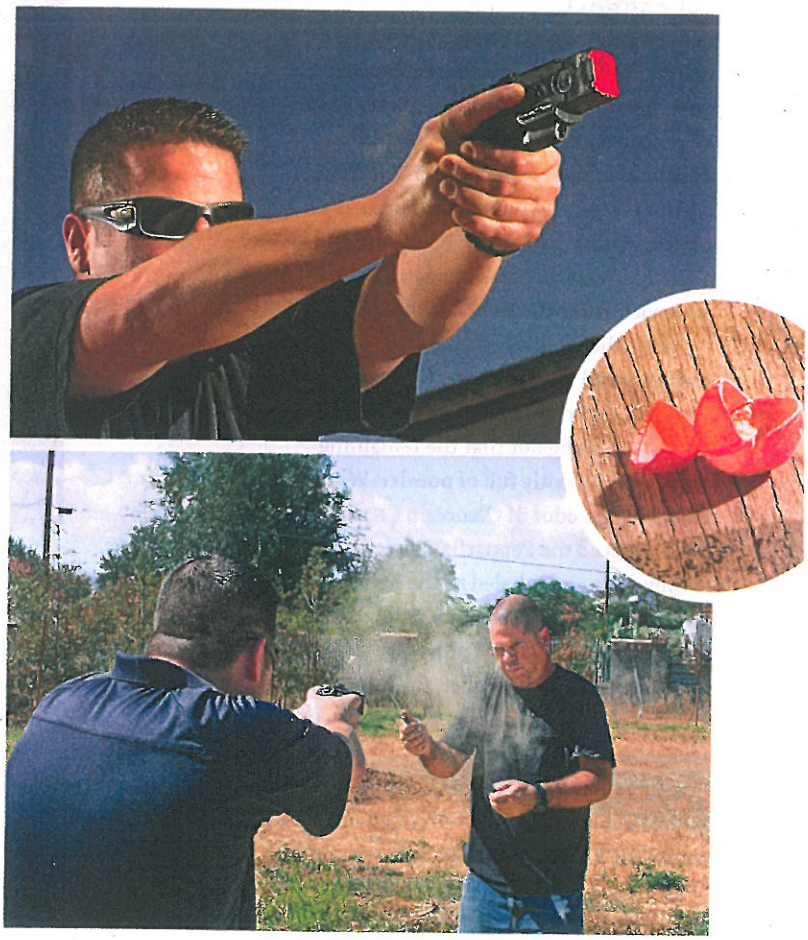
So is the Phazzer a legitimate contender to the Taser? I think so. During my evaluation, the unit functioned flawlessly. I prefer the Phazzer Enforcer's grip to the Taser X26, which tends to slide around in my hand. The Enforcer's white light is also significantly brighter than that of the Taser X26.

Of course, the Enforcer is also capable of firing a wide array of less lethal options, but since they don't appear to be substantial enough to reliably subdue a crazed attacker, that's really a moot point. The technology and versatility are impressive, but I don't have much faith in any of the less lethal options other than the electronic darts.

Perhaps the biggest benefit the Phazzer Enforcer has over the competition is a built-in circuit shut-off feature, which requires the user to reactivate the power switch in order to deliver more than three consecutive five-second applications. This feature was incorporated into the Enforcer's design in order to comply with the American Academy of Emergency Medicine's Clinical Proactive Statement, which advised physicians to consider additional evaluation and treatment for individuals who experienced a CEW application of longer than 15 seconds.

The Phazzer Enforcer has an MSRP of $630 ($710 with wireless dataport), which is a significant savings compared with the Taser X26, which starts at just under $1,000. According to Phazzer, the Enforcer's rechargeable lithium ion battery will accommodate between 50 to 75 five-second firings and multiple light applications before it needs to be recharged. This could result in significant cost savings when compared with the Taser, which requires total battery replacement after 195 five-second firings. TACOP

For more information on Phazzer products and accessories, please contact Jeffrey M. Anderson, CEO of Protective Solutions, at 248-787-4292, or visit his website, protective-solutions.com.



The red blast doors indicate PepperBall, which has a maximum effective range of 30 feet. Unfortunately, only one .68-caliber ball can be fired at a time.

This "assailant's" eyes instinctively closed upon contact with the OC powder.

This plastic ball probably doesn't contain enough Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) to thwart a determined attacker. (right)