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## Less deadly police weapons arrive

Posted by Knuckles - 2008/06/09 03:02

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The plan to remove M16 rifles from the hands of local police and replace them with the less powerful MP5 sub-machine guns moved closer to reality last week when 1,000 of the new weapons arrived in the island.

Well placed sources on Friday confirmed that the new guns were here, but said the distribution of the weapons would not begin for some time. Training in the use of the MP5s will begin within the next week or two, the sources added.

According to the sources, the signature of each weapon is now being recorded in the Integrated Ballistic Identification System (IBIS). The IBIS allows investigators to track and analyse firearms and bullets gathered at scenes, and should put the investigators in a position to determine which weapon was fired in cases of police shootings.

### Effort to curtail

The decision to replace the M16s with MP5s was announced three months ago by Police Commissioner Hardley Lewin as part of what he described as an effort to curtail the use of deadly force by members of the force.

At that time, Lewin said the move would reduce collateral damage caused by the high-powered nature of the M16s. He also announced that only members of the Mobile Reserve - the special squad formed to deal with civil unrest or national emergencies - would be allowed to continue using the M16 rifles.

The announcement was greeted with loud applause from local human rights groups and other sections of civil society which have repeatedly expressed concern about the level of police shootings, which average 150 per annum.

### Benefits

The move was also welcomed by the Jamaica Police Federation, which represents rank-and-file members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force. The federation argued that the benefits of using the less-powerful MP5 far outweigh the disadvantages.

But several members of the police force have quietly expressed their displeasure at the change, arguing that they will be facing criminals better armed and willing to shoot. The cops have also complained that they were not consulted before the decision.

Well aware of the complaints, the police chief urged members of the force not to be daunted nor agitated by the decision. He claimed that no policeman was going to be asked to go out and put his/her life in danger, and urged the police to adopt a more intellectual approach to bringing down criminal elements.

### MP5 facts

Calibre - 9mm

Weight - 2.88kg (6.34lb)

Modes of fire - Single shot/three-round burst

Maximum effective range - 75 metres

Muzzle velocity (speed of travel) - 1,312 feet per second

Length - 325mm (12.8 in)

Barrel - 115mm (4.53 in)

Magazine capacity - 30 rounds

Make - German design - Heckler Koch (HK)

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