

Military develops a Star Trek-like phaser

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First comic strip hero Dick Tracy's wrist radio moved from science fiction to everyday fact and now Capt. Kirk's phaser is headed to the Air Force arsenal.

Air Force researchers say they've developed a non-lethal laser ray gun called the "PHaSR" -- for Personnel Halting and Stimulation Response. The intense laser beam produced by the rifle-sized weapon temporarily disorients its target.

"We picked the PHaSR name to help sell the program," program manager Capt. Thomas Wegner of the Air Force Research Laboratory's Directed Energy Directorate at Kirkland Air Force Base in New Mexico told the New York Daily News. "It's an obvious homage to 'Star Trek.'"

In the famed original 1960s Star Trek television series, the crew of the starship Enterprise carried hand-held "phaser" weapons that could vaporize or stun an opponent.

But the 21st century version of the weapon is designed to only "dazzle" people with its intense laser beam.

Asked by the Daily News what Capt. James T. Kirk might have thought of the new weapon, Wegner replied: "He would think it's rather primitive. But for us, it's pretty high tech."

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