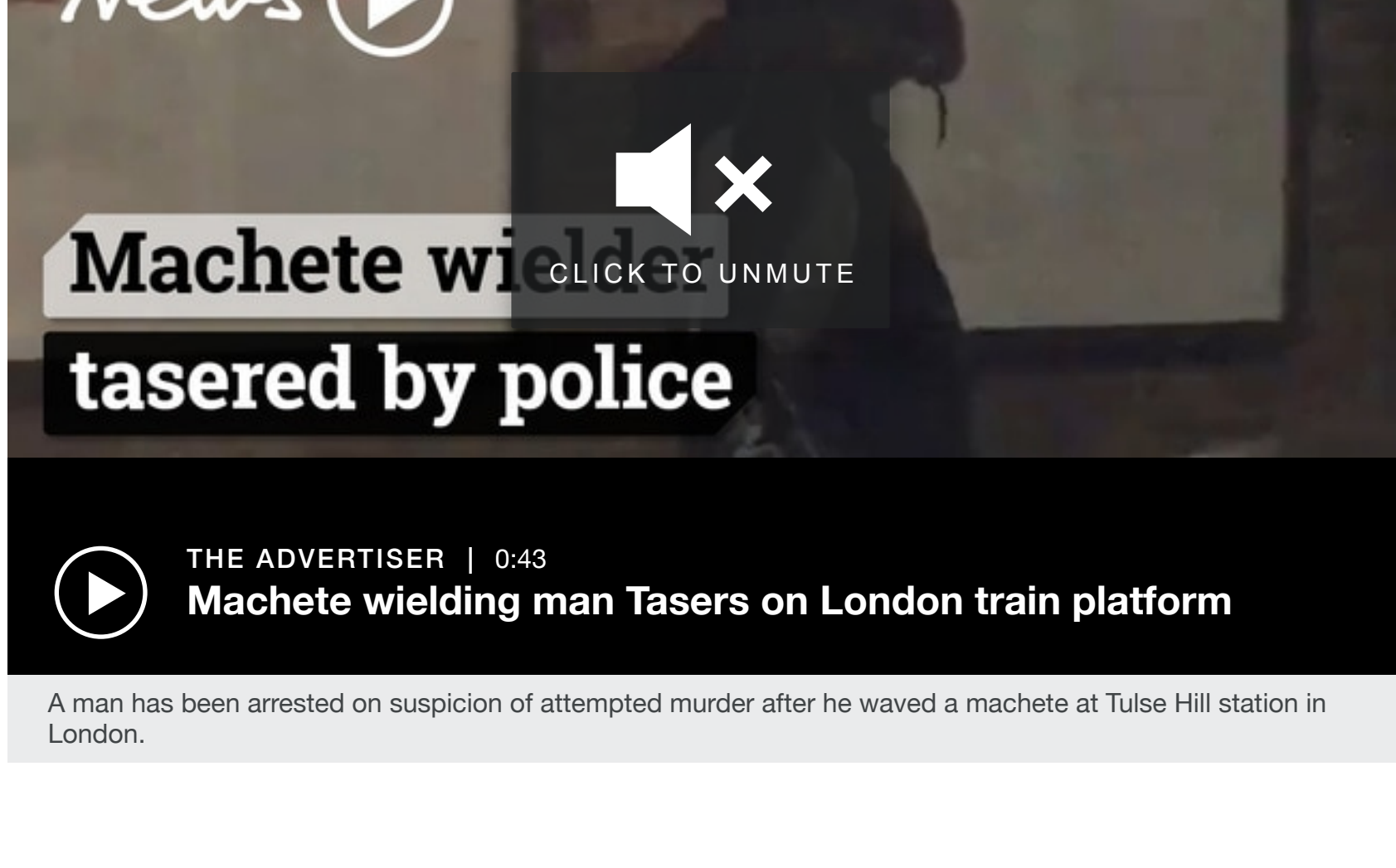


Police less likely to use their firearms as Tasers become the weapon of choice in subduing crooks

SA Police have become less trigger happy and more Taser happy over the past five years as figures reveal officers are less likely to use their firearm to subdue crooks.

Mitch Mott

@MitchMottTiser August 9, 2019 - 6:58PM The Advertiser 5 comments



A man has been arrested on suspicion of attempted murder after he waved a machete at Tulse Hill station in London.

Violent offenders are less likely to have a gun pointed at them by police since the widespread introduction of Tasers, new figures show.

For the first time in five years the number of times officers have brandished their firearms in the line of duty has fallen.

The number peaked in 2017 when officers pulled their hand guns 82 times.

The next year that number fell to 65.

Meanwhile the number of times police have either brandished or fired a Taser is on the rise as more frontline officers are equipped with the devices.

In 2018 officers either raised or used Tasers 151 times, more than three times the total for 2014.

Police Association president Mark Carroll said the organisation had lobbied to ensure all front line officers were equipped with Tasers.

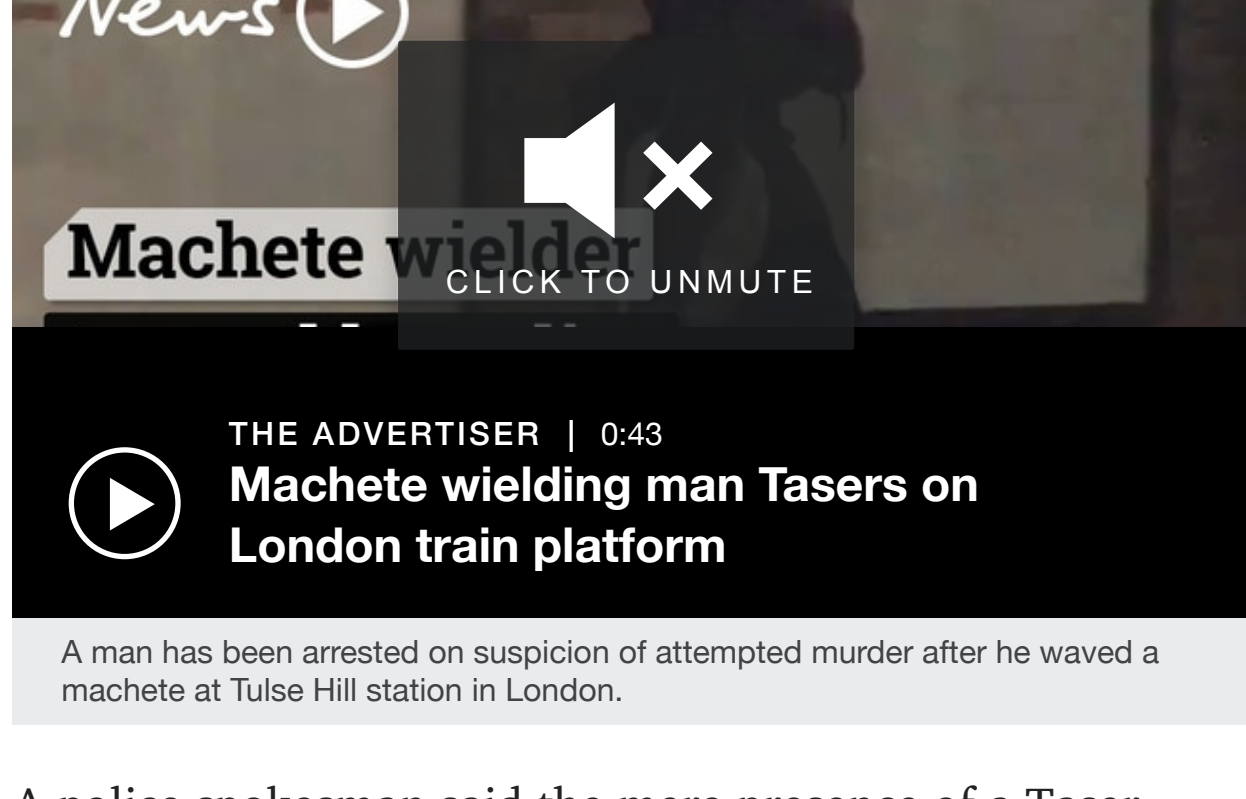
"We believe in the technology and we believe the device has the potential to save lives," he said.

"It is impossible for police to anticipate when a critical incident is going to occur, which is why the provision of Tasers on accoutrement belts is so vital.

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"It gives police another tactical option, however it is important to note that its use is by no means a substitute for a firearm.

"Police encounter a wide range of unpredictable, critical incidents which warrant the carriage of both a Taser and a firearm."



A man has been arrested on suspicion of attempted murder after he waved a machete at Tulse Hill station in London.

A police spokesman said the mere presence of a Taser along with voice commands from an officer was enough to resolve a situation.

"In the vast majority of cases, actual deployment of the Taser to physically incapacitate a person is not required," he said.

"South Australia Police have expanded the number of Tasers in operational use by including issue to Traffic members, as well as solo members.

"Police also introduced a new model of the Taser, with an 'Arc-Warn' function deliberately designed with a highly visible and audible sparking function which alerts persons to the presence of the Taser and is used with verbal communication by police officers."

In 2014 police changed their policy on the use of Tasers, allowing for them to be used against unarmed people.

A revised District Policing model introduced in July 2018 included additional tasers to ensure all operational police officers had access to the equipment.

"This resulted in an increased use of Tasers, but a reduction in the risk of injury to police officers and the public (including persons being apprehended)," the spokesman said.

"South Australian Police consider Tasers as a nonlethal force option with a proven and significant capacity to safely resolve incident without the need for more lethal options such as firearms."

Police officers are required to report the use of a Taser immediately to their supervisor and later in writing to an internal ethics board.

Each report is reviewed to ensure it meets internal standard.

Since 2014 there have been 55 accidental misfirings of Tasers and 46 of defensive spray.

There were only two accidental firearms discharges, both in Kapunda on August 9, 2016.

POLICE FORCED TO PRODUCE THEIR SIDE-ARM:

- 2014 — 49
- 2015 — 70
- 2016 — 80
- 2017 — 82
- 2018 — 65
- 2019 (up to March) — 17

POLICE PRODUCING/USING TASERS

- 2014 — 47
- 2015 — 91
- 2016 — 98
- 2017 — 125
- 2018 — 151
- 2019 (since March) — 36



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