Chapter 4

Marcus Lab
On April 19, seven student protesters were arrested at a University of Massachusetts at the Amherst weapons research laboratory. Putting aside for a moment the moral issue of electronic and biological weapons research at the university, I would like to discuss the issue of police conduct.

When the student protestors occupied the weapons research laboratory, they stated to the police their intent to commit an act of strictly nonviolent and civil disobedience that would be non-destructive of property. By their physical presence, the student protestors were halting weapons research.

At about 2:00 p.m., Director of Public Safety Arthur Hilson announced to the approximately 30 protestors and reporters that arrest was imminent and that all reporters and protestors who didn't want to be arrested must leave. After the room had been cleared of all but nine protestors and nine policemen, Mr. Hilson told the protestors that they would have to wait for someone from the Dean of Students office to arrive and recite relevant passages from the University Code of Conduct prior to arrest.

30 minutes later, when this was finally accomplished, Mr. Hilson ordered a mock arrest. Police surrounded the group as a police video camera was swiftly moved into position. Mr. Hilson then stepped into the middle of the anxious group of protestors and reporters that arrest was imminent and that all reporters and protestors who didn't want to be arrested must leave. After the room had been cleared of all but nine protestors and nine policemen, Mr. Hilson told the protestors that they would have to wait for someone from the Dean of Students office to arrive and recite relevant passages from the University Code of Conduct prior to arrest.

Inside, the students were confined by police to a small area of the lab. They were not permitted to use a toilet, and men and women alike were forced to urinate in a wastebasket while the all male contingent of police were present. A police officer told one protester that he hoped that he would make a false move, so that he would have an opportunity to beat him. Mr. Hilson returned at 6:00 p.m and said that the Chancellor had changed his mind and that the students were to be arrested immediately. He finally allowed water to be delivered, which had been provided by other protestors and not by Mr. Hilson. As some reports read, Mr. Hilson's announcement of probable disciplinary suspension from the university convinced one more protestors to leave, and the arrests began.

While none of the protestors offered any active resistance to being removed, those who did not offer to walk out voluntarily were intentionally subjected to the severe pain of being dragged by their wrists, which were handcuffed behind their backs and forcefully twisted. One man was targeted for special treatment by a device that is specifically designed to cause one's handcuffs to imbed in the ulnar nerve, inflicting excruciating pain.

As he was being dragged out of the building, that protestor's screams were not of indignation or anger, but of physical agony. At least one newspaper reported that protestors received medical care for "soreness." The young woman who was carried by one arm while both were handcuffed behind her back, and who now has one of her arms splinted and one in a sling, would use other words to describe her injuries.

After the protestors who were treated at the University Health Services were returned to the University Police Station, all seven were released.

The university is an institution of higher learning, and not a seething inner-city district. While I met several University police who acted regularly and with decorum, many were blatantly cruel. Physical and psychological torture by police, as well as research on developing a more efficient technology of death by scientists, has no place at the University of Massachusetts, and should be actively challenged by all who are blessed with a conscience.

Andrew Sirulnik is a UMass student who was involved in Wednesday's demonstration. All of the protestors contributed to this column.