



Legislation Details (With Text)

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Title: Resolution calling on the appropriate committee of the Council of the City of New York to hold a hearing on the New York City Police Department's use of diversionary devices, including grenades, and the use of confidential informants.

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Res. No. 914

Resolution calling on the appropriate committee of the Council of the City of New York to hold a hearing on the New York City Police Department's use of diversionary devices, including grenades, and the use of confidential informants.

By Council Members Seabrook, Baez, Clarke, Comrie, Felder, Foster, Gerson, Jennings, Lopez, Recchia, Sanders, Vann, Jackson and Espada

Whereas, On May 16, 2003, at 6:10 AM, police raided the apartment of 57-year old Harlem resident Alberta Spruill, acting on information from a confidential informant that guns and drugs were stored at that residence; and
Whereas, In executing the "no-knock" search warrant, police broke down Ms. Spruill's door, threw a concussion grenade, which is designed to momentarily stun and disorient people with a loud noise and a flash, and handcuffed her; and
Whereas, Ms. Spruill, a city employee and devout churchgoer, suffered from a heart condition, and the forced entry by police into her apartment, coupled with the loud noise and flash from the grenade, caused her to go into cardiac arrest, from which she did not recover; and
Whereas, Although the Police Commissioner and Mayor offered apologies for this incident, serious questions regarding police procedure were raised, particularly as it relates to the use of informants, "no-knock" search warrants, and the use of so-called diversionary devices; and
Whereas, These diversionary devices, which include concussion and flash grenades, are designed to momentarily disorient, stun and blind people so that police can more effectively carry out a raid in dangerous and uncertain conditions; and
Whereas, According to the Police Commissioner, in this year alone, more than 1,900 search warrants have been executed, and grenades have been used in 85 of these instances; and
Whereas, Although no previous deaths have resulted from use of these grenades, according to the commissioner, he suspended their use pending further investigation; and
Whereas, In light of the hazardous nature of these diversionary devices, and the death of Alberta Spruill on May 16, their use by the NYPD, particularly when entering apartments, homes and other private residences, must be explored and examined; and
Whereas, In addition, a review of the use of confidential informants, and the process by which the information they provide is verified, must also be undertaken; now, therefore, be it
Resolved, That the appropriate committee of the Council of the City of New York hold a hearing on the New York City Police Department's use of diversionary devices, including grenades, and the use of confidential informants.

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