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Volume 18
Number 4 *Symposium on Blinding Laser
Weapons*

Article 1

9-1-1996

Editors' Introduction

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, *Editors' Introduction*, 18 Loy. L.A. Int'l & Comp. L. Rev. 703 (1996).
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LOYOLA OF LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL AND COMPARATIVE LAW JOURNAL

VOLUME 18

SEPTEMBER 1996

NUMBER 4

Symposium on Blinding Laser Weapons

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

In October 1995, the international community adopted the fourth protocol banning blinding laser weapons (Protocol IV).¹ Protocol IV was a landmark event in international humanitarian law. Traditionally, humanitarian law dealing with weapons and warfare has developed as a reaction to horrors that have already occurred on the battlefield. For example, demands for the ban on chemical weapons were triggered by the catastrophic use of lethal substances during World War I. The continuing revisions of land mine regulations represent a reaction to large numbers of military and civilian land mine casualties. Protocol IV, however, indicates states' use of international humanitarian law to preempt a non-existing, but unwanted development: the use of blinding laser weapons.²

Protocol IV becomes effective when twenty states agree to be

1. *Additional Protocol on the Convention on Prohibitions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Certain Indiscriminate Effects, Protocol on Blinding Laser Weapons (Protocol IV)*, CCW/CONF.1/7 (Oct. 12, 1995).

2. Johan Molander, *Getting Together to Ban the Use of Blinding Laser Weapons*, INT'L HERALD TRIB., Dec. 18, 1995, at 2.

bound by its requirements.³ In order to educate the international community and to provide information on which states may base their decisions whether to ratify the ban on blinding laser weapons, this symposium provides discussions for and against the ban on the use of such weapons in military combat.

3. Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, *opened for signature* Apr. 10, 1981, 19 I.L.M. 1524, 1526.