

## Case 6: Mosquito Teen Deterrent

A device known as the Mosquito ultrasonic teenage deterrent has offered police and business people an effective way to disperse groups of young people.<sup>1</sup> It emits a high pitch sound, around 17.5 to 18.5 kHz, that is only audible to those under the age of 25. All humans suffer from a loss of hearing, most notably occurring around the age of 65. However, as early as 20 years of age, nearly every human can no longer hear the 18 to 20 kHz range due to a natural loss of hearing known as presbycusis. Teens hearing sounds in this range find them annoying and generally disperse within 8 to 10 minutes. Thus, the Mosquito can target a teenage audience and cause them to leave an area rather quickly.

The technology of Mosquito has been touted as an effective way to help prevent vandalism and loitering that can lead to other crimes or to an interruption of business for retail store owners.<sup>2</sup> Since Mosquito's sounds can be broadcast as far as 40 to 60 feet, large groups can be targeted at one time. According to a brochure from the American distributor of Mosquito, Kids Be Gone, the device is not violent and does not hurt. The brochure also suggests that the device may be used to reduce vandalism and theft, and improve quality of life for those "affected by anti social behavior." The effectiveness and popularity of the product led the Wall Street Journal to list it as a "hot dividend stock."<sup>3</sup>

Some suggest, however, that the Mosquito should be banned – they argue that the Mosquito helps perpetrate unfair age discrimination. As reported by TimesOnline.com, "Sir Albert Aynsley-Green, the Children's Commissioner for England... has set up a campaign – called Buzz Off – that is calling for the Mosquito to be banned on grounds that it infringes the rights of young people."<sup>4</sup> He argued that the Mosquito promoted "fear and hatred" of young people and caused greater dissention between young and old.<sup>5</sup> Scottish Children's Commissioner Kathleen Marshall and other civil liberties organizations also joined the Buzz Off campaign.<sup>6</sup>

According to British newspaper columnist, Melanie Phillips of The Daily Mail, however, banning this product would be unconscionable considering the "random savagery and sadism"

---

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the descriptive information about the Mosquito derived from company websites and brochures, located at: <http://www.kidsbegone.com/>; <http://www.kidsbegone.com/Mosquito-Fact-Sheet-MK11.pdf>; and, [http://www.compoundsecurity.co.uk/teenage\\_control\\_products.html](http://www.compoundsecurity.co.uk/teenage_control_products.html).

<sup>2</sup> "High-Pitch Alarm Quietens Youths," *BBC News*, Jan. 26, 2008. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/merseyside/7210923.stm>.

<sup>3</sup> Kazek, Kelly, "New Teen Repellent Has Practical Uses," *The News Courier*, March 4, 2008. [http://www.enewscourier.com/columns/local\\_story\\_064163144.html](http://www.enewscourier.com/columns/local_story_064163144.html).

<sup>4</sup> Naughton, Philippe, "Kids' Commissioner Calls for Ban on Mosquito, Ultrasonic Anti-Teen Device," *Times Online*, Feb. 12, 2008. Sec. UK News. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article3356157.ece>.

<sup>5</sup> "Buzz Off! Outcry as Children's Tsar Says Ultrasonic 'Mosquito' Device Is a Breach of Teenagers' Human Rights," *thisislondon.co.uk*, Feb. 14, 2008. <http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/news/article-23437233-details/Hands+off!+Outcry+as+Children's+Tsar+says+ultrasonic+'mosquito'+device+is+a+breach+of+teenagers'+human+rights/article.do>.

<sup>6</sup> Morgan, James, "Campaign to Ban the Teen Tormentor from Scotland," *The Herald*, Feb. 13, 2008. Sec. Politics. [http://www.theherald.co.uk/politics/news/display.var.2039529.0.Campaign\\_to\\_ban\\_the\\_teen\\_tormentor\\_from\\_Scotland.php](http://www.theherald.co.uk/politics/news/display.var.2039529.0.Campaign_to_ban_the_teen_tormentor_from_Scotland.php).

perpetrated by teenagers in recent days.<sup>7</sup> Retail entities, police, and governmental agencies have also argued to continue use of the Mosquito.<sup>8</sup> Columnist Kelly Kazek even (although admittedly offhandedly) recommends parents using the device to keep their children in line in smaller settings.<sup>9</sup>

The inventor of the product, Howard Stapleton, has chimed in on the debate, as well. He said hopes that government entities will regulate use of the product so that it is only used for legitimate crime prevention purposes, rather than as a means to shoo away unwanted teens.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Phillips, Melanie, "Children's Rights? What About the Rights of Those Who Live in Fear of Young Thugs?," *The Daily Mail*, Feb. 19, 2008. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/columnists/article-515469/Childrens-rights-What-rights-live-fear-young-thugs.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Kilner, Will, "Council Defends Use of Noise Devices," *Telegraph & Argus*, Feb. 13, 2008. [http://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/news/2039281.council\\_defends\\_use\\_of\\_noise\\_devices/](http://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/news/2039281.council_defends_use_of_noise_devices/); "No Ban on Mosquito Devices, Government Says," *talkingretail.com*, Feb. 12, 2008. <http://www.talkingretail.com/news/8551/No-ban-on-Mosquito-devices-Gov.ehtml>.

<sup>9</sup> Kazek, *supra* n. 3.

<sup>10</sup> "Warning from 'Teen-Repellent' Inventor," *news.com.au*, April 3, 2008. <http://www.news.com.au/story/0,23599,23476323-23109,00.html>.