



AVON AND SOMERSET CONSTABULARY

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ASP TELESCOPIC BATON - TRAINING OF INSTRUCTORS

I am writing in response to growing national interest in our experience of trialling the above baton and our new capacity to train instructors.

Forces will be all too aware of the trend towards greater violence in society and how this affects their front-line officers (whether in uniform or plain clothes). In recent years we have witnessed an escalation in the level of violence faced by police officers often involving the use of offensive weapons.

The traditional truncheon has generally failed to protect against increased aggression. We have seen more serious injuries, lengthier periods of sick leave, a steep increase in premature medical retirements, and an overall loss of confidence in the truncheon as an effective weapon of defence.

You will be aware of the national debate surrounding the PR24 side-handled baton and examination of a range of alternatives under the umbrella of the Home Office Working Group considering the Physical Protection of Police, in which Alan Dyer, (Chief Constable, Bedfordshire) and David Cansdale (ACC, Hertfordshire) represent ACPO. We have kept the Working Group informed of our progress with the ASP baton and this was endorsed in the Home Secretary's recent pronouncement on the subject of alternative batons.

Avon and Somerset Constabulary have over the past two years considered a range of batons before taking the decision to field trial the American ASP telescopic version. We commissioned independent forensic laboratory research (University of Wales), developed a protocol for use, designed a training programme to ensure understanding of the 'continuum of force' philosophy and practice (similar to the FBI model) and 'tested trainees' understanding prior to certification to authorise operational use. This programme was supported by our insurers.

We have now moved into field trials involving 200 front-line officers (uniform and CID) and the evaluation reports show that officers are and

feel much better protected in confrontational situations. The defusing effect on aggressors when it has been necessary to rack (flick) the baton to its extended length has been remarkably effective. Although we intend to run the field trials for at least six months I already anticipate we shall conclude it will remain our preferred option to meet the needs of our front-line staff to defend themselves. Its flexibility (being only 7" long, extending to 21"), its suitability for men and women, uniform and plain clothes duties, and its cultural acceptability are its key advantages.

Our three senior qualified ASP instructors have recently been for further training in the United States and are all now certified to train other instructors. This will enable us to meet future force needs and to offer training to potential instructors in other forces interested in evaluating this baton. This training programme will be maintained at the highest standard, as required by the manufacturer, and will allow forces to properly train front-line officers to use the baton operationally.

Enclosed is an explanatory brochure and an application form for courses to train trainers to be run this autumn. The acceptable safe trainer:student ratio will limit the size of each course to sixteen. It is recommended that a minimum of two trainers per force be trained and certified to enable introduction of their own in-force programme. Applications will be dealt with on a 'first come - first served' basis.

H R Pike
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Personnel and Training

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Sent to Chief Officer of every force in England, Wales and Scotland,
Ministry of Defence Police and British Transport Police.