

IMPACT WEAPONS

RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

by

Tony H. King, Special Agent
US Drug Enforcement Administration
Physical Training Unit

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During 1987, 690 Federal Officers suffered assaults while in performance of their official duties. The 1987 assault total of 690 was 10 percent higher than the year before. The greatest number of assault victims was recorded by the Department of Justice with 45 percent of the total. In 1987, 80 Drug Enforcement Administration personnel were victims of assault, an increase of 27 from 1986.

During 1988, Special Agents Tony H. King and Kevin M. Foley, Physical Training Unit, researched the feasibility of utilizing impact weapons by Special Agents of the DEA. The Agents examined a number of recognized law enforcement impact weapons and evaluated each weapon in the areas of effectiveness, tactical soundness, court defensibility/liability, and training requirements. The following is a summation of findings.

Authorization

DEA Agents Manual Section 6123.1 (D) "Blackjacks, batons, and similar equipment may be authorized by field office management. They may be either purchased by the field office or personally owned. Those offices authorizing such equipment will conduct or arrange for training in their use."

List of Impact Weapons Examined

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Wooden Police Club | 26" Long |
| 2. Monadnock PR 24 | Side Handle Baton |
| 3. The Handler 12 | Grip Action Baton |
| 4. Blackjacks/Slapjacks | Bludgeons |
| 5. ASP Baton Expandable | 7" to 17" |

Several miscellaneous devices were examined because they are offered by vendors as police weapons. These include nunchakus and other martial arts weapons. Because of the obvious inadequacies of these devices they were not further evaluated.

Evaluation Criteria

1. Effectiveness as a Defensive Weapon

In order to have an effective defensive capability, a weapon must be able to prevent, stop, and block an assault immediately.

2. Potential for Civil Liability

3. Training Requirements

4. Tactical Soundness

Findings

1. Effectiveness

In the area of effectiveness, all the above examined impact weapons provided varying degrees of blocking capability. The side handle baton (PR-24) has the best blocking capability of any of the examined weapons. All the examined weapons were an effective stopping tool when applied to appropriate motor nerve areas of the body; for example, the stopping capability of the side handle baton is limited to its striking potential. A swinging strike might allow sufficient impact but would be difficult to direct on a moving target. The expandable baton allows for direct strikes in either a closed position or in full expansion. Blackjacks and slapjacks are generally classified as bludgeon weapons. Bludgeon weapons offer minimal blocking protection. However, they do possess stopping potential. Because of their small size, bludgeon weapons do not offer as good a deterrent capability as other impact weapons. The other weapons examined did provide a deterrent capability because if "brandished" to indicate possible use the weapons would probably cause a subject to reconsider his actions.

2. Potential for Liability

- (a) Wooden Batons - With proper training and supervision, the wooden batons have no more potential for liability than other currently recognized impact weapons.
- (b) Side Handle Batons (PR-24) - Civil liability might possibly result if utilized in a manner which deviated from the prescribed manufacture training program. This change could possibly be conceived as a negligence issue arising from failure to properly train.
- (c) Expandable Batons - The expandable batons are made of metal,

which could present a legal avenue for litigants to pursue if injured by their use. However, the batons have no sharp edges and when properly utilized as an impact weapon on motor nerve areas, pose no greater potential for civil liability than other impact weapons. One benefit of the collapsible baton is that it allows the officer to reasonably escalate the use of force, which makes use justification and legal defense more appropriate.

- (d) Bludgeons are old traditional law enforcement weapons. Presently, many agencies offer no training in the use of the bludgeon. This lack of appropriate training makes the bludgeon a real potential for greater civil liability. Secondly, the public conception of the blackjack/slapjack often conjures up imagery of brutal beatings by law enforcement.

3. Training Requirements

Training involving a physical skill requires a consistent and repetitive order to learn the skill effectively. Training should be systematic whereby all the techniques involved in the skill should complement each other. This allows for the agent to properly and naturally administer the appropriate level of force.

An impact weapon which requires a unique training program is more prone to misuse or disregard if the required skills are not constantly reinforced.

During the examination of the listed impact weapons, it was determined that the PR-24 and the Handler 12 required unique skills in order to utilize the weapons effectively. Based upon the reality of a DEA Agent's time allocated to training, it was felt that the utilization of these weapons would be impractical. Impact weapons, such as a straight baton, were deemed more feasible; in that no unique skills were required to operate. Initial training in the areas of pressure point control techniques, striking areas, tactics, and

practical use are more easily taught and retained with less emphasis upon unique skills than those that would be required with the PR-24 or Handler 12. In impact weapons training, man-hours can be more effectively utilized with the straight baton.

It must be emphasized, however, that regardless of the length or quality of initial training, refresher training must be administered on a regular basis. Once again, the straight baton would allow for an abbreviated form of the initial training and make for a more efficient use of the agent's time.

4. Tactical Soundness

By the very nature of DEA's mission, discreetness and a low-profile image are apparent. To obtain this non-threatening appearance, agents have attempted to conceal weapons in ankle-holsters, under clothing, and in handbags. Although these techniques allow the agent concealment, the techniques do not allow for a quick effective use of the weapon should the need arise.

It was felt that the expandable/collapsible baton allowed for concealment, yet offered immediate access if carried in a pant's pocket or coat pocket. This is impossible with the PR-24, or even the Handler 12 although the manufacturer argues the concealability of the weapon.

Although the blackjack/slapjack bludgeon weapon offers concealment and effectiveness in striking, the length of the weapon requires the agent to be extremely close to the assailant for efficient use.

In experimentation during simulated raid sequences, members of the tactical unit made safe and effective use of the expandable baton to subdue resistant defendants. The expandability of the baton allowed the agent mobility and access to his handgun during the initial raid entry and easy access to the impact weapon when the need

arose.

The expandable baton was deemed to have the greatest psychological advantage of the impact weapons examined. The extension of the baton following its presentation can be compared to the impact of a round being "racked" into a pump shotgun.

In sum, the expandable baton was chosen for its advantages of a short length for concealment and portability while simultaneously having the practical utility of an extended reach. This was the only weapon to offer a dramatic low-to-high profile range.

Summary and Recommendation

Based upon close examination of the above-named impact weapons, the Physical Training Unit recommends the use of the expandable baton; specifically, the ASP Model 616 as the primary impact weapon utilized by DEA training. The expandable baton was found to be effective, liability defensible, conducive to training, and tactically sound. The advantages of the baton:

1. A more controlled shock with less physical injury potential
2. A low profile image
3. Psychological deterrence when extended subsequently defusing confrontations before actual force is used
4. The baton is lighter, faster and better balanced than traditional wooden batons
5. No sharp edges to cut a defendant or tear clothing
6. A practical impact weapon for investigators, undercover, administrative and tactical personnel
7. Can be readily integrated into the current DEA Defensive Tactics Training Program

It is the recommendation of the Physical Training/Defensive Tactic Section that the ASP Impact Weapon be utilized by DEA training.