



Totti-Mikael Karpela, sgt.
Use of Force Training Board
National Police of Finland

Weber, polizeioberst
Head of Department of Operational Training in
Baden-Württemberg

Dear Mr. Weber,

Thank You for the letter I received from You. I would be more than happy to answer to Your questions concerning The experiences that the National Police of Finland had in testing, acquiring and applying the ASP-Expandable baton. Here are my answers:

1. Why did You make up Your mind to introduce a new baton?

Based on the public pressure and the need from the members of the National police, The supreme command of the National Police of Finland (NPF) started a project to study less than lethal force options in 1997. The goal was to study options that start from empty hand control tactics and end when the use of a fire arm cannot be avoided. One of the topics that was studied was the telescopic baton. The project lasted a full year during which the suitable baton was picked up, training was officially approved and the test group had enough time to gather personal experiences. The test group consisted of sixty (60) police officers that worked in different regions of Finland.

The problem with the current baton (60 cm. nylon/plastic baton) was that the baton was rarely carried along and was left to the car or even to the department. The other reason was that the presence of the baton seemed to provoke more problems than to stop them.

Based on the information we had received from various sources and also based on the experiences that our own officers (including me) who had carried the telescopic baton with good or even excellent results. At the starting point of our study we were looking into finding a baton that would be **easily carried along** and that might also help the officers **to control violent confrontations at the beginning of the incident**. As for



what we had heard and experienced, many incidents seemed to stop when the officer presented (opened) the baton.

2. Why have You decided on the ASP-expandable baton?

The testing was performed by the Material Depot of NPF. As a member of the European Union and as a government organization, a public bidding was opened for all manufacturers and companies. We received batons from seven (7) different manufacturers and/or import/resale companies.

The batons were critiqued and tested by a 10-man board that objectively criticized the batons on their product line (variables on material, lengths, grip material etc.), manufacturer's by-products (holsters, training material, maintenance etc.) and finally also on the products finish, outlook and material. Then the batons went through a test with approximately 100 punches with sandbag and training mats. The batons were also opened and closed approximately 200 times. This was to describe the minimum amount of use of the baton in a NPF's basic use-of-force training program. To our surprise, only one baton manufacturer's product survived this easy test without any problems. This was the ASP tactical baton.

After hearing the results the Supreme command of NPF made a decision based on officer safety and not on the total cost of the possible purchase. The National Police needed a product that would work during temperatures between +25 to -30 Celsius degrees. Most of our patrols also work in a rural area where no back-up is available for several hours.

The Finnish Department of Corrections and our Border Patrol Services had also followed up on the NPF's project and used our training system to teach their own officers in the use of batons. All of the law enforcement telescopic baton instructors for the corrections and border patrol have been trained by me and another instructor. Both of these organizations decided to purchase the ASP baton and I am sure this also had the impact that positively worked on our Supreme Command. As of this moment, the military, border patrol, correctional institutes and the National Police all carry the ASP-baton.



3. Have there been any objections concerning the possible infliction of serious injuries on the opponent due to its metal – steel – construction?

I have personally carried the ASP-baton from 1994 and have gathered information on any possible damages or injuries that might have been caused by the baton. So far, since the baton became official use of force tool for the National Police in 1998 I have heard of only one incident where the suspect's wrist was broken by the impact of the baton. In this incident the drugged suspect was trying to stab the officer and the officer acted in self-defence. The case was investigated and no charges were brought against the officer. I do have information of nearly hundred cases in which the officer's actions with the baton have caused bruises and swelling but no criminal charges or liability cases have been raised since the use of force was seen as appropriate.

We also asked the Board of Doctors of the possible differences in injuries that our current plastic baton (in 1997) and the telescopic baton would have. The answer was that "every time a person is hit with a baton, injuries will most likely follow of this". The doctors were reluctant in giving any more precise statement since it is impossible to measure.

The two differences that I have been able to discover are these:

The violent conflicts most likely end at the moment the officer opens the baton and starts to give loud verbal commands.

When the officer has to use his/her telescopic baton, the suspects usually surrender faster or become unable to resist after the first hits with the metal baton. This is not usually the case if they are being hit with the plastic baton.

The NPF also has a mandatory five (5) hour basic training for the telescopic baton that every officer must successfully pass before he/she can carry the baton. The instructors must pass a fifteen (15) hour training program.

The NPF officers carry telescopic batons, OC-sprays and 9 mm. handguns as their official use-of-force equipment. The officers receive a 150 hour training session in basic training



for these equipment and later on they must be certified (and successfully pass) once a year with their use-of force-equipment.

4. What experiences did You gain during the testing / after its introduction?

The results from the past 5 years have been only positive. The officer safety has increased dramatically since the officers now have less than lethal equipment (ASP and OC-spray) that they **can easily carry** in their equipment belt. Having the **mandatory training program** for the baton has also affected to the more professional level of use of force. Several officers have commented that their **personal feeling of safety** has increased since they now have a low profile tool that they can carry so that the subjects do not see the weapon. We have several hundred of documented cases where the **violence has stopped after the officers have opened their batons**. Since we have started to carry the batons, **the use of force continuum** has also been clearly present in several use of force situations.

It also seems that our tests were adequate, and that no technical problems have risen during these five years. The batons have proven to be reliable and extremely useful.

Based on my excellent experience of these batons as a law enforcement officer and use of force instructor, I can only warmly recommend You the ASP tactical baton.

Sincerely Yours,

Totti "Mike" Karpela, sergeant
Helsinki Police Department – Threat Management Services

+ 358 9 189 4150 (24 hrs)
+ 358 40 8383 201
totti-mikael.karpela@helsinki.poliisi.fi

Mailing address	Visiting address	Phone
Helsinki police department Central District PO BOX 18 00131 HELSINKI FINLAND	Pieni Roobertinkatu 1-3	+358 (9) 189 4150 +358 40 8383 201



Totti-Mikael Karpela is a sergeant with the National Police of Finland. Mr. Karpela is a 17 year law enforcement veteran. His current duties besides running the threat management services of Helsinki Police Department are to work in a 10-man board that develops the use of force procedures, training and equipment for the 8000-man National Police Force. Totti Karpela is the instructor trainer for the telescopic baton and oc-spray. Mr. Karpela holds a rank of a black belt in two martial arts.

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