

## **MELBOURNE POLICE DEPARTMENT**

### **Melbourne, Florida**

#### THE PROBLEM

In recent months, while serving search warrants, the SWAT Team has been confronted by gathering crowds. Elements within these crowds have expressed hostility. Recognizing the potential for "crowd problems" and "crowd control," the SWAT Unit Commander has ordered that Department issue PR24's be carried along on these operations.

The problem becomes apparent when one considers that each member carries his equipment on his person. Rapid deployment from the SWAT vehicle and rapid penetration and mobility of, and through, the target structure, usually in tight and confined areas is the normal method of operation.

The PR24 is two feet long and has a 6" right angle handle on it. Put bluntly, this instrument is too bulky to lace upon the SWAT officer as he is performing in the above described fashion. They are placed in the SWAT vehicle till needed.

#### THE TACTICAL IMPACT WEAPON

What is needed is an impact weapon that is compact and easy to carry, making access and deployment immediate. This eliminates the need to go back to the SWAT vehicle, for PR24's, which could conceivably be any distance from the scene.

#### THE TOKUSHU KEIBO

While considering a solution to this problem, I encountered an old concept which has been modernized and improved. This is the "telescoping" or "collapsible" baton. Originated as the "Tokushu Keibo" in Japan, this type of instrument has long been used by various Japanese Police Departments.

#### ARMAMENT SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES

Armament Systems and Procedures, or ASP, INC, has been incorporated since 1975. At that time they were marketing a custom compact 9mm pistol. The quality and function was such that the pistols were considered by some authorities as the finest of their type available. The company also manufactured a collapsible baton at this time as a lesser part of the overall product line.

By 1985, the company discontinued the 9mm pistol and devoted it's full manufacturing efforts toward the product line of batons. This was the company's response to what it describes as a "growing demand" for their collapsible baton.

#### TESTING AND EVALUATION

I received three ASP batons for testing and evaluation. There are actually a number of variations, but the three basic batons are available in 16", 21" and 26" lengths when fully extended. The models I received have a closed-cell foam covered handle and a dark "gun-bluing" style finish to the exposed shafts. First impressions of the batons, in their collapsed state, is that they are rather unobtrusive in appearance, particularly the smallest model.

In fact, the 16" model closes to 6" and can nearly be hidden in one hand. The 21" and 26" close to 7-1/2" and 9-3/8" respectively. With a little practice these batons can be deployed to their extended position with little more than a flick of the wrist. The deployment is exceedingly quick and impressive to see. Indeed, indicators are that this very probably has a favorable psychological impact upon potentially resistant and/or hostile suspects. The three large

agencies I contacted have experienced incidents where the instant, visually imposing deployment of an impact weapon, where none had been seen prior, halted further combativeness from the suspect.

The batons are all three-piece affairs, plus buttcap and retaining clip. When collapsed, the baton is held closed by an oval shape retaining clip in the buttcap. When needed, the clip tension is overcome by the centrifugal force created by flicking the wrist while holding the baton.

This retaining clip is the weakest point I could find in the baton. It is held to an aluminum plate by a small rivet and sits in the buttcap. The company apparently also recognizes this as a high stress on weak point and had made it easily removable and easy to replace.

My tests were conducted with several striking targets, including an empty tire, a heavy striking bag, and a barricade vest, wrapped around a person.

I struck the tire several hundred times with all three models. The tire was fastened in such a manner so as to allow some "give" upon impact. Despite sweat and wet hands, I never lost control of the grip. In fact, I developed a small blister in the web of my hand. The foam handles work well for impact absorption and grip retention.

Following the session with the tire, I re-examined the batons. I found that all three had slight bends in the 3rd shaft. I opened and closed all three batons repeatedly, again, but could discern no effect or impairment of function.

I contacted Mr. Donald Roegner, company President, and inquired about the bend. He explained that while no one else had ever used a tire as a testing instrument, these bends will sometimes appear when striking a heavy bag, if done repeatedly enough times. He said that the bend is easily rectified by a padded vice.

Upon hearing this, I immediately located a heavy bag (canvass, about 50 lbs.) and proceeded to strike it repeatedly, horizontally and vertically. Upon re-examination I could find no change at all in the bends. So, I repeated my session with the tire. Again, no change in the shape of the batons.

I brought the batons to a recent SWAT training session and passed them around for examination. It was explained what was being done and what I was trying to accomplish.

These officers are all readily familiar with the PR24 and are quite proficient with it. Most have had occasion to use it in the street and are comfortable with its ability.

For comparison purposes I also brought along a PR16. This is a collapsible side handle baton manufactured by ASP, INC for Monadnock.

Despite the fact that the PR16 is also a side handle baton, the entire team preferred the ASP batons instead. I attribute this divergence in loyalties to the smaller overall size and lighter weight of the PR16. This creates radically different handling and characteristics that none of the officers liked in a side handle baton.

While at the training session I wore a 13 lb. Safariland Barricade Vest, which is stiff with little flexibility. A number of strikes were made across the front of the vest with the ASP batons. The vest absorbed the worst of the impact but there was still quite a bit of "sting" experienced. Several other team members wore the vest and the strikes were conducted on them. All were impressed with the results.

I have no doubt that these batons would be as effective as any conventional baton currently available. Additionally, any comealong holds and locking techniques performed with a straight baton can be done with the ASP batons.

Another examination of the batons revealed no further change in the shape. I have not been able to make the batons bend any further and no change in performance and function has been experienced.

I have concluded from this that these batons are not going to bend or break under normal conditions. It also forces me to call into question my own testing method using a tire. Given the toughness of a belted radial, it may not be a valid measure of the baton's ability anymore than it would against surfaces like wood or cement.

Once the batons are flicked open, they lock into place by a friction/wedging action. This "lock" is tight enough that it requires a sharp rap against the tip on a hard surface (like cement or terrazzo) to close it.

This is the only time I was able to damage any of the batons. The 26" baton somehow managed to mis-align the buttcap retention clip and mangled it upon closing. It also tore the retaining clip loose from the rivet and aluminum anchor plate. This damaged retaining clip did not effect any function of the baton except it's ability to stay closed. To date, this has not happened to either of the other two batons, despite daily practice and repeated opening and closing, probably several hundred times.

#### OTHER AGENCY EVALUATIONS

Of the agencies listed in the company literature, I contacted the Washington, DC Capitol Police; Madison Police Department, Madison, Wisconsin; and the Illinois State Police Academy. Briefly, the results were as follows:

Washington, DC - Lt. Jim Rohan headed up the effort to study the batons. The results were so favorable that the department ordered 1,200 units in the 16" model for issue to regular uniform street personnel. Test results can be obtained by writing for a copy of the "Alternative Non-Lethal Weapon Project."

Madison, Wisconsin - Lt. Michael Hughes told me that the batons in all lengths were received for testing for a one-year period. The response from street personnel, uniform and non-uniform, was so overwhelming that the test was terminated in 5 months. Due to budgetary restrictions the department was unable to purchase the batons for 300 sworn personnel. Since the batons were so popular, the department authorized the purchase and carrying of any of the three models by all personnel. Lt. Hughes was quite specific in telling me that he owns and carries all three models depending on the detail worked.

Illinois State Police - This test was conducted by the ISP Academy personnel. I spoke with Trooper Weaver, who also worked with Sgt. Hamilton and a Master Sgt. Kent regarding a 6 month study on the batons. The results of the study are attached with this. In a nutshell, the troopers involved in the study liked and preferred their ASP batons. Plainclothes preferred the 16" and uniform preferred the 21". A special notation is made toward the psychological deterrent factor they experienced, which is mentioned earlier in this report. The ISP now issues the ASP batons in the two above mentioned models.

The agencies all made it a point to mention that the success of the baton was due in part to specific inservice training.

The thrust of this study is aimed at problems experienced by the SWAT Team. The Team trains twice a month, on the average, and training time would not be a serious problem here.

# RECOMMENDATION

I would like to recommend adoption of the ASP 21" Baton for the SWAT Team. In our efforts to find a tactical impact weapon, lighter weight and compactness was specified as was immediate access and deployment. At 7-1/2" closed length and 17 oz. weight, it is considerably more compact than the 24", 26 oz. PR24. It would be carried without hindrance to the SWAT officers required mobility and speed.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sergeant Frank N. Armeson  
Melbourne Police Department (Florida)  
November 4, 1988