

# A.S.P. TACTICAL BATON

In 1991 a total of 522 officers were assaulted in the Avon and Somerset Constabulary. Whilst all were not serious, it does represent the way violence towards Police Officers is on the increase.

In particular, the willingness of offenders to use weapons is cause for great concern. The only weapon the uniformed officers can draw on is the standard issue truncheon. (CID officers do not have even that luxury.) Most of us argue that the truncheon is outdated and very limited in its use.

About 2 years ago the National Police Federation adopted a policy for the introduction of the PR24 side handled baton to be issued to uniformed officers. Whilst I applaud their motive, I question the feasibility of such a baton. Apart from its overall size and aggressive appearance, the PR 24 has to be instantly accessible if it is to be used successfully. Fine in shirt sleeve order, but when wearing an anorak or tunic, it is not possible to deploy the baton as it is intended. Hence, the US Police Forces who use the baton wear either bomber jacket type tunics or the climate is such that shirt sleeve order is permanently worn.

The PR24 also requires a good deal of training, i.e., an initial course followed by regular updated and refresher training. It is, after all, an adaptation of a martial arts weapon known originally as the OKIYAWAN TONFA and like many martial arts weapons involves a large number of technical and defensive moves or parries followed by a strike to the body.

So is there an alternative?

In November last year I was made welcome at the Miami Defensive Tactics Training Centre (Spring Edition of 10/9), when I was introduced to an expanding baton called 'A.S.P'.

This baton was at that time being evaluated by the Miami Police. I have since been informed that the evaluation was a great success and the Miami Police, like many of the US Police Departments, have abandoned the use of the PR24 and adopted the A.S.P. as its replacement baton.

The principle of expanding batons is nothing new, once again the origins go back to the Orient where it was originally known as the TOKUSHI KEIBO. The early models suffered from poor construction and hard sharp edges which could cause serious damage. However, the principle was developed by the American Company Armaments Systems and Procedures (A.S.P.) and after many years of research produced the Hi-Tech Baton known as A.S.P., constructed of gun metal and aerospace alloys it is very compact, measuring only 7" in length, which allows ease of carriage being worn on the belt, but once expanded by a sharp flick of the wrist two internal sections lock out giving a very well balanced baton measuring 21" in length.

There are no complicated manoeuvres when using the baton and a training programme of 6 hours is all that is needed to qualify as a user. There is no requirement for additional training once an officer has been granted a users certificate.

Field tests in America revealed that the action of actually deploying the baton (which has been likened to racking a shotgun) had such a psychological effect on would be assailants, that the situation was diffused before any violence occurred.

Due to the construction of the baton (being hollow), if struck the likelihood of orthopaedic injury being caused is considerably less than of the PR24, or even the police truncheon.

The Baton works on a principle of Fluid Shock Waves, which in effect renders the area struck (arm or leg) temporarily useless. Ideal for disarming assailants wielding knives.

There are many other desirable features of this baton, not least its very low profile, allowing for the first time a defence weapon that can be carried by CID officers and uniformed officers alike. Together with the psychological effect of deploying the baton, I feel for the first time a baton is available which is conducive with British Policing needs.

In January this year, I demonstrated the A.S.P. to our Federation Joint Branch Board, who immediately realised its potential. Having the courage to ignore National Policy, the Avon and Somerset Federation have given full support for the A.S.P. and have been instrumental in campaigning for its introduction.

Following discussions with Chief Constable and ACC Hedges it was agreed by the Chief Constable to progress the A.S.P. baton within the Avon and Somerset Constabulary by inviting its designer Dr. Kevin Parsons to come to the Force to train our Force Instructors in its use and to demonstrate the baton to interested parties.

The Chief Constable has also agreed to a limited introduction, on one Force District, for evaluation purposes, sometime in the near future.

**We need support on the streets and we need to be able to defend ourselves from violent thugs. Let's have a baton that not only works but does not distract from the image of the British Police Officer.**

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