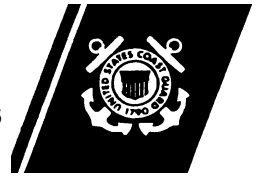


# Maritime Law Enforcement *Bulletin*

U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**United States  
Coast Guard**



## FLASHLIGHT OR EXPANDABLE BATON?

Why are graduates of MLE School at Yorktown coming back to their units with an ASP Expandable Baton? What is an ASP? Is the 5 cell flashlight being phased out? Am I supposed to be wearing a Mini Lite now on my belt?

These are the typical questions which the staff at MLE School field every day. Let's take a look at these questions and try to clear up some confusion.

Yes, graduates of MLE School in Yorktown are being issued an ASP F21C Expandable Baton. The 5 cell flashlight is being phased out as the Coast Guard's INTERMEDIATE FORCE IMPACT WEAPON, but not as a FLASHLIGHT. The Mini flashlights are optional for wearing, once an individual has had ASP training and is certified to use the ASP baton. Now, let's look at the ASP Tactical Baton.

The ASP F21C TACTICAL BATON is a defensive police impact weapon designed to be inconspicuous yet highly effective in an operational setting. This precision machined steel baton has two modes. The first is the closed mode with the baton collapsed in the handle. The second is the open mode with baton fully extended by the snap of the wrist. We'll discuss these modes in detail, but first let's look at where the baton came from.

The concept of expandable batons originated in the Orient. While well conceived, they suffered from relatively thin tubing, sharp edges, knurling, and poor construction that was not compatible with U.S. law enforcement requirements.

The ASP Tactical Baton was designed in an effort to provide an Intermediate Impact Weapon. As already stated it is small enough to be inconspicuous, yet rugged enough to stand up to the Coast Guards operational environment. Extensive testing over a five year period was conducted under field conditions to improve the handling characteristics, durability and ease of maintenance. The result is the first weapon of its type to meet the specifications established by federal law enforcement agencies.

**TRAINING:** The system is simple to learn, easy to understand, readily maintained long after the training is complete, and yet provides efficient defense for law enforcement personnel without long hours of training. MLE School is currently training each student who attends the Basic Boarding Officer Course and upon successful graduation, is issued one ASP baton to take back to that students command. Additionally, graduates of the MLE Instructor Course are being issued a baton.

**FIELD ISSUE:** Currently MLE School is the only issuing source for the ASP Baton. This is done in two ways. First, the graduates of the two courses at Yorktown receive an ASP Tactical Baton upon successful completion of the course, and second, through the Instructor Graduate who is training students in the field. Each graduate of the MLE Instructor Course is certified to conduct training in the field. When that graduate conducts training, he/she submits a rapidraft and a copy of the unit small arms allowance to MLE School. At that time, MLE School will send as many batons as feasible to meet the units allowance. (One baton per handgun, .45 or 9mm. maximum) I mention the word feasible, because some units have a greater quantity need than we can provide. MLE School does not have a warehouse full of ASP Batons, in fact we maintain a quantity of about 100 on board which are used for training classes as well as issued to graduates. Of course funding is a major issue too, but G-OLE has been 100% supportive of the demand. The objective of the program is three-fold. One, to introduce the batons to the personnel in the field. Two, to get the batons out into the field, and lastly, get our Coast Guard boarding personnel away from using a flashlight as an intermediate force impact weapon. We've had units call and ask if they could buy the ASP Batons direct from the company. Yes you can. In fact it is encouraged, simply because G-OLE does not have the funding to provide every unit with enough batons to fulfill their allowance. BUT, and this is very important, DO NOT wear the baton until proper training has been conducted. Like any other weapon, improper use can result in liability issues and possible unnecessary personal injury.

### SO WHAT ABOUT THE 5 CELL FLASHLIGHT?

As previously discussed, the 5 cell flashlight is just that...a flashlight. Every boarding officer in the Coast Guard knows how important a flashlight is. So the wearing of the flashlight is still authorized. The size of

the flashlight though can vary if it's only being used as a source of light. This is why the Mini light is being worn by some boarding personnel, but for these personnel, the ASP is their Intermediate Force Impact Weapon. The 5 cell offers some fine features as a flashlight. It has an aluminum knurled grip, built to last a long time and stand up to our operational environment, and some offer an adjustable beam.

**WHAT ABOUT UNIFORMITY?** This is a very important issue. All personnel within a boarding party should always look professional. This cannot be stressed enough. A sharp looking boarding party is a deterrent in itself from possible violence. Just for a minute, stop and think about police officers who you have seen. I think about some of the state troopers I've seen. Their uniforms are always impeccable. It's impressive, and it makes you think that if they're sharp looking, they're more than likely sharp acting. The same applies to Coasties. The majority of the folks who take pride in their uniform appearance, take pride in knowing and doing their job. The boarding party needs to be uniform in what they wear and how they wear it. The ASP Baton may be worn on either side, depending upon personal preference. However, it must not be worn forward of the service-pistol. Again, the need for uniformity is stressed. The boarding party should all be in

Nylon or all in Leather. If every member of the boarding party is trained in the use of the ASP, and the unit has sufficient quantity, then it should be worn as the intermediate force impact weapon. If only one member of the boarding party is trained with the ASP, then 5 cell flashlights should be continued to be worn by the personnel who are not qualified to wear the ASP. Remember, the flashlight is a light source, and not intended to be used as an impact weapon. More and more graduates of our courses are getting into the field, so hopefully the ASP Baton will be worn by all of our boarding parties in the near future. Questions on the ASP Baton are welcome, as are any questions pertaining to any MLE subject.

The source of supply for the ASP F21C Baton is:

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