

# The ASP Tactical Baton<sup>1</sup>

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*Abstract:* The Georgia Department of Natural Resources is currently in the process of upgrading its law enforcement services through advanced training in the area of defensive tactics. One of the objectives of this mission is to certify each of Georgia's conservation law enforcement officers in the use of an intermediate weapon in an effort to have a complete line of force options available to its law enforcement personnel. In an attempt to fill this void, the Department has selected one of the most highly advanced intermediate weapons available to law enforcement today, the tactical baton. The Armament Systems and Procedures (ASP) tactical baton is the one the Department feels will be most suited for Conservation Law Enforcement. The Department believes that based upon tactical performance, control potential, injury reduction, psychological deterrence, instructor certification training availability, ease of implementation, and cost there is no better choice. The ASP tactical baton, combined with a progressive training program, enables the Georgia conservation officer to have a complete system of force options available in the continuum of force.

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In recent years, the role of the police administrator has become much more complex primarily because of a prolific increase in civil liability. Large court settlements and the reluctance of insurance agencies to provide liability coverage have forced administrators to closely examine their policies and procedures as they relate to training. Vicarious liability has brought attention to all areas, but because of the inherent problems in the use of force, this area has proven to be one of the most costly when mistakes are made. As a result of these considerations, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources recently initiated a review of its training in the use of force. The first objective that had to be met was to certify members of the training staff as defensive tactics instructors. Once this objective was met, a review of the department's use of force policy was started. This review revealed that both ends of the force continuum appeared to be adequately fulfilled. The lowest level of force is covered well in the "Ranger and the Public" instructional section, and the semi-

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annual training with firearms under various conditions gives the ranger sufficient training at the highest level. However, the gap between empty hand control and the use of deadly force was an issue that had to be addressed. A look at other modernized police agencies revealed that almost all have a complete line of force options available to the officer which includes an intermediate weapon. So the search for an intermediate weapon to complete the ranger's force options was initiated. The Department discovered the Armament Systems and Procedures (ASP) tactical baton, which seemed to fill all the unique needs that are inherent to conservation law enforcement.

The ASP tactical baton meets the 3 major criteria for any effective intermediate control device. First, the baton works in the field. Studies have been conducted by a very diverse group of law enforcement organizations which found that the baton is the most dynamic and operationally effective impact weapon available to law enforcement personnel today. Second, the ASP baton is capable of being readily implemented. The training program is applicable to all officers regardless of their age, sex, size, or skill level. The training program is based on 3 simple techniques which are capable of being taught to a level of competency in a short amount of time. In addition, ASP offers a complete line of instructor training. Finally, the baton was designed to be the most court defensible intermediate control device available.

Everything about the weapon, its unprecedented psychological deterrence, the design which has no sharp edges or knurling, the balance of the baton, as well as its hollow tubular construction minimizes the likelihood for injury while increasing control potential.

The ASP tactical baton was designed to be a light, fast, and maneuverable impact weapon. As a result, the balance of the weapon tends to transmit fluid shock waves without the impairing crushing injuries that are often associated with heavier impact weapons. To assure that the baton is used to its maximum potential, ASP offers an extensive training program. The ASP instructor certification is conducted without charge to law enforcement agencies throughout the United States. From the design of the weapon, through the training program, and the defense of the officer in court, the ASP tactical baton fulfills the needs of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources giving the department a complete line of force options.

## **Design Criteria**

The ASP expandable baton is American made from high quality aerospace alloys and ordnance synthetics. Virtually every component of the baton has undergone extensive research and development efforts and has brought pioneering technology to the field of impact weapons. The baton is non-reflective and its finish is rust resistant. The handle is made of a patented foam vinyl that is attractive and exceptionally tough, while providing a firm, durable gripping surface. There are no sharp edges on the baton to abrade clothing. Batons are available with chrome or black penetrate shafts. Grips are produced with either a foam or textured metal

surface. Each baton locks into place with the flick of a wrist. Units may be closed by tapping the tip on a hard surface.

### **Advantages**

The tactical baton has been called one of the most tactically advanced impact weapons in existence. The premium materials, exceptional workmanship and flawless function of the baton is set apart from all others in quality, durability and performance. ASP batons are the only impact weapons that meet the rigid requirements established for adoption by federal law enforcement agencies.

The primary advantage of the expandable baton is ease of carry. The expandable baton is with the officer when other longer batons are not practical or are left in the patrol car. Since the baton is readily carried on the belt, the officer does not have to make a conscious decision to take the baton on each call. The compact size of the baton provides the opportunity for intermediate force that has long been missing from many police agencies. From the non-uniform standpoint, the expandable baton is very easily concealed. As a result, it is compatible for the undercover officer as well as other non-uniform personnel. The weapon provides a low profile image without compromising tactical effectiveness.

There are numerous advantages of the ASP baton, but some of the most noted advantages are as follows. There is more controlled shock with less physical injury potential. This is due to the lighter design of the baton and the smaller striking tip. The baton is low profile. As a result public perception is positive which is especially important in conservation law enforcement. No baton is effective if it is left in the patrol unit when needed. The ASP baton is easily carried on the equipment belt on every call. There is an unparalleled psychological deterrent effect when the baton is extended, similar to the "racking" of a pump action shotgun. This noise and psychological effect will often defuse the confrontation prior to the actual use of the baton. Because of the lighter weight and the balance, the baton enables the officer to strike his target with more control and to gain control without permanent damage to the assailant. The baton can be used in the closed mode for a low profile control tool, or instantly extended for use as an intermediate impact weapon.

This is the first impact weapon that is practical for investigators, undercover officers, administrative, and tactical personnel. ASP provides an extensive instructor certification program available to all law enforcement agencies. Finally, ASP provides some of the nation's most experienced federal court qualified "use of force" experts available for agency defense. This defense is available for all use of force litigation, not just cases involving the ASP tactical baton.

### **Control vs. Damage**

A recent study conducted by the Japanese Secret Service concluded that expandable batons are better for controlling subjects than any other form of impact weapons. Expandable batons produce increased fluid shock waves due to their hollow construc-

tion. At the same time expandable batons are less likely to inflict permanent tissue damage. This greater control potential and the possibility of reduced injury potential is one of the major benefits of the expandable baton concept. Impact weapons have a striking capability that is directly proportionate to their weight: the heavier the baton, the slower the striking potential; the lighter the baton, the faster the striking potential. Expandable batons do not only have fast striking ability, but they also have extremely fast recovery time. Because of this diverse ability, the batons are an extremely effective defensive weapon. When striking target's motor points and nerve centers, the baton provides greater potential for controlling an aggressive assailant. Because the expandable batons are tooled out of metal, the baton unfortunately draws analogies between the weapon and a metal pipe or a flashlight. The truth is, the expandable baton differs greatly from these items in many ways: the design, its intent, and actual use are completely different. Metal flashlights are designed to produce light. They have sharp edges, knurled handles and very limited reach. They are filled with heavy batteries and are slow in striking. Simply put, they were never intended to be an impact weapon and should not be used as such. Recovery after the strike is also reduced because of the flashlight's weight. As a result, flashlights have a greater propensity for injury with a reduced propensity for control. Expandable batons are designed for striking. Modern tactical impact weapons do not have knurling or sharp edges that are objectionable in other products. These batons are balanced for striking as well as providing an extended reach. They have a fast delivery with a quicker recovery for multiple strikes. They provide greater propensity for control with a low propensity for injury. They provide greater fluid shock with less tissue damage.

There is little question that an expandable impact weapon has the greatest psychological advantage of any impact weapon on the market today. Balanced with the psychological deterrent is the rapid striking potential and counter strike capability which cannot be matched by any other weapon. Expandable batons provide the advantage of short length for better concealment, while also offering extended reach with relatively little effort. The weapon may be used in either a collapsed low profile mode or extended to a higher profile mode. They are the only type weapons that change so quickly from low to dramatic high profile instantly.

## **Basic Certification**

The ASP tactical baton basic certification was developed to teach law enforcement personnel fundamentals of using the ASP tactical baton in operational settings. The program relies primarily on instructional techniques. ASP tactical baton techniques are taught using a 4-part "progressive" format designed so that all participants gain competency during training sessions. Each of the 4 segments is structured to set a deliberate pace of instruction so each participant leaves the course confident in the use of the baton. The first step in the process breaks the different techniques into separate steps of movement. Each step is presented in a 1-2-3 sequence to slowly introduce the student to each technique. The second step allows the student to

combine all steps of movement to complete a whole system of movement, but the emphasis is still on form, not speed or power in delivery. The next step combines all previous parts and now speed and power is added for the student to experience the dynamics of the baton. The fourth and final step in the process is simulation. This segment provides a realistic, job related, dynamic use of the baton under stressful conditions.

### **ASP Target Areas**

There are 3 principle target areas for the ASP baton: the knee, abdomen, and elbow. These are target areas because of their physiological vulnerability. Strikes to the abdomen generate fluid shock waves, while strikes to the knees and elbows disable an assailant's "delivery system." It cannot be overemphasized that the face, head, and neck are not target areas. Strikes to these areas may not be effective at immediately terminating resistance and may produce fatal injuries; however, strikes to the target areas have a high potential for control and a low potential for fatal injury. These are forgiving targets. If the offender moves or a strike misses, surrounding targets also have high potential for control and low potential for damage.

### **Conclusion**

I believe that the Georgia Department of Natural Resources has taken a bold step forward. Its decision to include an intermediate weapon in its force options for the conservation ranger was not an easy decision to make. No department likes the thought of addressing a "forced encounter," but they do occur and are occurring more frequently each year. Ignoring the problem will not make it go away or any easier to deal with after the fact. The approach is to be proactive rather than reactive. This is addressed through a progressive training program which gives the ranger every possible option before the use of deadly force. Through proper training the ranger is capable of making an educated decision as to what level of force is necessary to control the situation. This "educated" decision is much less likely to bring harm to the ranger or to the offender. Regardless of what some people would like to think, conservation law enforcement is real police work. Statistically, the conservation ranger is more likely to be fatally assaulted than any other police officer. The point is that the potential for injury is present, and must be addressed.

As stated earlier, the decision to adopt the ASP tactical baton as the intermediate weapon was not a hard decision to make. The baton has been tested in the field and has proven to be effective. The training provided by ASP was excellent. The basic certification course can be taught to a level of competency to any officer in a relatively short period of time. The basic certification consist of 3 simple techniques which the officer is able to retain in a confrontational setting. The baton was designed to be the most court defensible control device on the market today. There is no decision of whether or not to take the baton on a call because it is always there. Because of its very low profile image, it is perfect for conservation law enforcement.

It would be best to never have to use the ASP baton, but now if the situation warrants, the ranger is prepared to meet the situation in a confident manner.

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