

OST INTERVIEW: Dr. Kevin Parsons, ASP Inc.

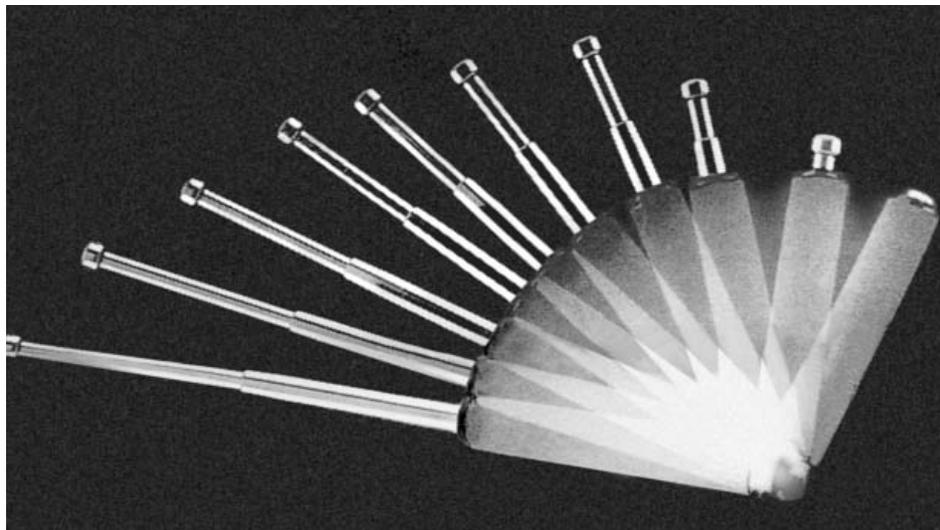
Ever since the first caveman fended off attacks from animals and others using a broken off tree limb, the search for a new and better self defense baton has been underway.

Black jacks, saps and long wooden batons have gradually given way over the years to a new generation of defensive tools, perhaps most notably the hard plastic or aluminum PR-24 side handle baton. But technology marches on and the past few years have seen the introduction of yet another refined police baton, one the OSP has field tested: the ASP Tactical Baton that features a unique telescopic action.

Oregon State Trooper spoke with the developer of the ASP Baton, Dr. Kevin Parsons, who manufactures and markets the device and other products from the Appleton, Wisconsin home of Armament Systems and Procedures Inc. (ASP). His answers to a wide range of questions follows. Further information on ASP products should be directed to ASP, Box 1794, Appleton WI 54913 (920) 731-7075.

1. (a) Give us some background on ASP, what it stands for, when formed, what products it markets and so forth.

Armament Systems and Procedures is a Wisconsin corporation. The company was initially formed in Michigan to produce the ASP 9mm semi-automatic pistol. This was a conversion of the Smith & Wesson Model 39-2. When the ASP was first introduced, it was the smallest 9mm available. We gained a reputation for quality because of the 286 hand operations that went into production of the weapon. However, as the major firearms manufacturers began producing small 9mm semi-automatic



EXPANDING—Testing by law enforcement agencies has determined that the ASP Tactical Baton is the ultimate intermediate weapon. Expansion of the weapon has repeatedly been documented to be a means of diffusing a confrontation. No other use of force option has the psychological deterrence and operational effectiveness of this intermediate force weapon.

weapons with custom features, the market for a weapon like the ASP diminished. Of course, fans of the James Bond novels know that the ASP is the official James Bond pistol. Most people, however, are not aware that the ASP is the only custom weapon ever to be included in *Jane's Infantry Weapons*. When the decision was made to discontinue the ASP and concentrate on the Expandable Baton, the technology that was initially used to produce this \$1,500 handgun was applied to our current product line.

(b) As chairman, you have a PhD. What discipline is it in?

The PhD is from the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University. The interest in an expandable baton for law enforcement came about when I was the Chief Defensive Tactics Instructor for a Regional Police Training Academy in the Midwest. At

that time (during the Vietnam War), a number of the servicemen returning from overseas brought back the Tokushu Keibo. The baton was produced by the Nobel Company in Tokyo. There were a number of merits to the concept. However, the baton was not particularly well made, had a great many sharp edges and was generally not compatible with American law enforcement. However, it was not until I became involved with the production of firearms that it was possible to actually set out to put into production a baton that met all the criteria necessary for a modern police impact weapon.

2. (a) Did ASP start out to service the law enforcement market?

Armament Systems and Procedures has always been a company that has directed its efforts toward law enforcement. Because my background for the past 20 years has been law

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enforcement related, this is the area that we are interested in dealing with.

(B) Besides police agencies what



ALWAYS READY—The finest baton is of little value if not available when you need it. In its collapsed configuration the ASP Tactical Baton is always readily available. When expanded the ASP presents the greatest psychological deterrence of any intermediate force weapon.



MAINTENANCE KITS—Armament Systems and Procedures offers a complete selection of maintenance kits for adjustment and repair of the ASP Expandable Baton. The Armorer's, Field and Technician's Kits contain spring adjustment tubes. The repair kit provides replacement O-rings, retaining springs and lubricant for ongoing maintenance of batons. All kits are encased in leather carriers.

other markets do you target? Military? Security? Self-defense?

ASP products are intended for the law enforcement community. We do not sell ASP Batons to the civilian market. As you are aware, the United States Coast Guard has adopted the ASP Baton agency wide for the 7,000 officers in their Maritime Law Enforcement Command. This came about as a result of the drug interdiction efforts that are currently going on. In addition, a number of the US Army personnel who are concerned with high level executive protection use and teach the ASP Baton. We understand that this was a spinoff of the Secret Service adoption of the weapon.

Security is an area of great concern to us. We do not want our products being used by individuals that are not trained in modern baton methods. For this reason, we are designing an entire training program for the security community. For the past two years we have been training security personnel and pilot testing the program in the State of Florida. Of course, large governmental security organizations such as Martin Marietta currently use

the ASP Baton agency wide in certain divisions. As a result, we have trained a significant number of instructors for them.

3. The ASP collapsible baton has a number of advantages over conventional wood or plastic units according to ASP literature. What are those advantages?

The finest baton available is of little value if it is in the car. Evaluations that have been done by agencies across the United States indicate that this is the number one advantage of the Expandable Baton concept. In addition to its convenience, the psychological deterrent of the ASP snapping in place was found by the Illinois State Police to be a significant advantage. In fact, to date four state police agencies have adopted the ASP organization wide: Illinois State Police, Wisconsin State Patrol, Minnesota State Patrol and the Louisiana State Police. All of them have noted the ability to defuse a situation without utilizing force as a prime advantage of the ASP Baton.

The design of the ASP results in a product that is lighter on the striking end than at the handle. Because of the small diameter of the striking surface, the ASP tends to create tremendous fluid shock waves. The result is bouncing trauma rather than the crushing trauma that is associated with heavy impact weapons. A side benefit of this feature is the ability of the ASP to bridge between techniques. In simple terms, the ASP can be used to strike a series of blows very rapidly and, thus, places the officer in a superior defensive position.

4. (a) Who designed the ASP Baton?

The concept of expandable batons came from the Orient. However, the Pending Patents on the ASP relate to the method of manufacture and the configuration of the weapon. That was something that I came up with employing technology that has not previously been utilized with intermediate weapons. It took almost ten years to find the proper combination of materials and construction methods. However, the result is a

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baton that is virtually indestructible. The unit is designed in a modular format that allows it to be easily maintained and repaired. For this reason, there is an extensive series of armorer's tools and repair materials as well as an armorer's course that is conducted by the factory.

(b) Where are they manufactured and what types of materials are used?

All ASP Batons are produced in Wisconsin. Many of the components are fabricated specifically for Armament Systems. As an example, the steel that comprises the tubing of the baton is produced from the same steel family that is used on the cylinder of service revolvers. The finish on the shafts of the weapon is silver or black chrome. The foamed vinyl that is used on our grips is extremely durable and available only from one manufacturer. Even the tape that we use to hold the handle in place is fabricated specifically for us in Germany. In fact, the raw materials that go into the ASP Baton cost more than some of the Oriental batons sold by the martial arts suppliers. The difference is in the performance. We hold our tolerances to +/- .002. A human hair is .003 in diameter.

5. What agencies currently issue the ASP Baton as an item of equipment? Any at the city, county, state or federal levels?

At this point it is extremely difficult to maintain a list of agencies using the baton since there are over 300 departments that have issued the



T21—An eight inch 21" expandable baton with textured steel grip. Satin chrome or black chrome shafts are held in place by an ordnance quality spring and O-ring sealed cap.

weapon. On the federal level, the ASP Baton is the agency wide issue of the United States Capitol Police, United States Postal Inspection Service, US Drug Enforcement Agency, US Secret Service and US Coast Guard. It is the only intermediate impact weapon taught by the FBI to their agents at Quantico although agency wide issue has not been made at this time.

In addition to the four state police agencies previously discussed, a number of State Wildlife and Departments of Natural Resources have issued the baton from Wisconsin to Georgia. The county agencies range from the 1,200 officers of the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office to smaller agencies across the country.

In fact, we often hear about an agency adopting the baton only as a result of one of our dealers mentioning in passing that they sold a large number of batons to a specific city.

6. Are there any foreign agencies using the ASP Batons?

The Executive Protection Detail for the Prime Minister Canada currently chooses the ASP Baton. The unit is currently being evaluated by both the Toronto Metropolitan Police Department and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

7. What about the deterrence factor---the low-profile ASP Baton vs. the openly carried and observed long baton? Wouldn't the long baton give a more pronounced psychological "message" to a potential aggressor?

Many agencies find that they want an extremely low profile image for their officers. It's only during a confrontation that they want to send a "message" to the subject they're trying to control. One of the greatest "complaints" that have been received from agencies that have adopted the baton has been the lack of an opportunity to "test" the weapon in real life confrontations. Agencies increasingly report that once the baton is opened, it has the same effect of an officer racking a shotgun. Often the subject does not know what the weapon is;



CUTAWAY BATONS—Cutaway F16, F21 and F26 batons illustrate mechanical operation and function of the ASP Tactical Batons.

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they only know that they want no part of it. Where the baton is actually used, it works extremely well. Even cities such as Tampa, Florida that have a major drug problem and have their officers daily confronting aggressive subjects find that the performance of the ASP Baton in real life high intensity confrontations exceeds any other intermediate weapon that has been employed.

8. *Can the ASP Baton be used in a "prodding" capacity to jab or would it just collapse in on itself as it is designed to do?*

The ASP Baton locks in place employing a deadlock taper. This particular design will not collapse on a soft surface but will break when it is wrapped sharply on a non-giving surface. ASP Batons have actually been used to "jab" through a hollow core door without collapsing. On a human target there is relatively little danger of the unit giving way if it has been properly expanded.

9. *What type of training is required to become familiar with the tool? Is it as extensive as that required for the PR-24?*

Because of my own background, ASP has from its inception been committed to training. Because we have an entire division within our company that designs training programs for major agencies across the United States, the ASP instruction

program is comprehensive. However, we also realize the needs of the street police officer. The greatest compliment our training program was ever paid was by a 15-year veteran who went through an ASP program and wrote on his critique, "This baton and training are designed for the *real* police." The ASP training consists of three techniques with the baton. Each of these techniques can be used when the baton is either closed or open. There is also a great deal of simulation that is done through use of the ASP Training Baton and Training Bag. In fact, the Instructor Logo actually comprises the entire training system. We believe that the most important thing that an officer can learn is to create a stable position for himself and decentralize the subject. Once this has been done by creating what we call a pyramid (wide base, deep base, low center, head over center), the strikes come from either the weapon side, reaction side or straight in. If you compare the ASP Training Program with a total of three techniques with the PR24 training program, I believe you will find that ASP training is considerably shorter and dramatically more intense. Given the agencies that we equip with batons, we feel a commitment to training that works on the street and can be easily remembered.

10. *Is the general public purchasing the baton as an item of personal*

protection? How much does it cost and where is it available?

Armament Systems and Procedures sells ASP Batons only through a network of police equipment distributors. The unit is not sold to the general public although some dealers may indeed make such sales. The various models of the ASP Baton are produced in extended lengths of 16", 21" and 26". Within each length batons are available with either a foam or textured handle. Each baton is also offered with either a black or silver chrome shaft. The retail price of the baton ranges from \$35.00 to \$45.00.

11. (a) *What type of liability defense is available with the ASP Baton?*

I mentioned previously that our company is involved in the design of Use of Force Training Programs for major agencies. We are also involved in the defense of officers and departments that have been sued as a result of force that was utilized. In fact, we do more Use of Force defense on behalf of law enforcement agencies than any other company in the United States. What is interesting is the fact that quite often the product being used by the department or officer is not one of our own manufacture. We are called in to defend the actions of an officer that has used a baton made by someone else.

(b) *Does Armament Systems and Procedures make batons other than the expandable series of ASP Tactical Batons?*

Yes. In fact, ASP produces a 1-1/4" Straight Baton with a foam or textured grip as well as a 1" diameter Straight Baton with a foam or textured handle. In addition, there is a one piece Side Handle Baton (S24) that is manufactured by the company and which offers performance characteristics which are superior to the Lexan one piece batons currently on the market. This one piece Side Handle is also available with either a textured or foam grip. However, the greatest interest on the part of agencies across the country is with the Expandable ASP Tactical Baton. After testing all types of intermediate weapons, officers in the field tell us that there is no product currently available that will match the performance of the ASP.



LEATHER SCABBARDS—ASP cases are constructed from premium shoulder leather which is corner stitched with nylon cord on specially modified harness machines. Scabbards feature a recessed one-direction snap and are available in Cordovan or black, plain or basketweave and high luster ASPtec.