

What is it?

By Lance Brown



Background: The mission of the Naval Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Technology Division (NAVEODTECHDIV) is to exploit technology and intelligence to develop and deliver EOD information, tools, equipment and their life cycle support to meet the needs of Joint Service EOD operating forces and other customers.

At the 2007 Shooting and Hunting Outdoor Trade (SHOT) Show, which was held in Orlando, Florida, I ran into Commander Stewart Blackton of the Orange County (Florida) Sheriff's Bomb Squad. After getting caught up on recent developments and/or projects that we were both working on, an exchange of business cards was made and we parted ways with the standard ending of, "if there is anything I can do for you..." In June of this year, I received a call from Stewart asking for help.

His squad had responded to a call for assistance at a home belonging to the wife of a World War II veteran. The veteran had recently passed away, and when the wife was going through his things, she discovered three pieces of what she thought were military ordnance items. During a conversation with the woman, it was revealed that the veteran had served in the Pacific theatre of operations. The first two items were very easy to identify: Japanese hand grenades. Fortunately, even though fuzed, the grenades were in good condition with the safety pins still in place. The last item, though, is what caused Stewart to call me. Even after he described the item to me twice, I still couldn't help him out with a positive identification. So, I asked him for some digital pictures of the item, along with the length and width measurements. The picture at the beginning of this article is what I received via email from Stewart.

Stewart, by looking through old copies of military Field Manuals, tentatively identified it as some sort of artillery point detonating fuze. I, on the other hand, originally thought it was some type of small mortar round or a submunition. Since a positive identification was required, I forwarded Stewart's email to the NAVEODTECHDIV's Technical Support Center (TSC). The TSC is the United States point of reference for EOD technicians worldwide to query the country's center of knowledge and expertise for EOD and IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices). Put simply, the job of the TSC is to respond to requests for information from U.S. and foreign military, civil law enforcement and civilian EOD technicians.

Upon receipt of the image and accompanying email, the TSC entered the request into their automated workflow process. While performing some initial research in their database, the TSC watch discovered that a similar request (with an almost identical photo) was submitted from an individual in Illinois. Because the NAVEODTECHDIV could not positively identify the item as shown in Stewart's photo, we enlisted the assistance of LtCol Bob Leiendecker, US Army (Ret.), who works at the National Ground Intelligence Center (NGIC). He is one of this country's most knowledgeable individuals concerning ground-type ordnance. LtCol Leiendecker almost immediately identified the "bomb" as actually being two different Japanese artillery point detonating fuzes screwed together (a Type 88 Short Delay fuze for the nose and a Type 88 Instantaneous fuze for the tail) with some aluminum pieces inserted to serve

as fins. LtCol Leiendecker theorizes that some entrepreneurs established a “cottage industry” of assembling and selling the inert fuzes into a facsimile of an ordnance item and sold them as souvenirs. LtCol Leiendecker’s information was added to the TSC database and then forwarded to Stewart. From the time of Stewart’s initial phone call to a return phone call with a positive identification, less than 24 hours had passed.

If you or your squad ever has an ordnance type of question, please feel free to contact the TSC directly via the telephone at (301) 744-4069/4070 or via email at: eodtsc@navy.mil. They will need to know the width and length measurements, any markings or stenciling on the item, and how soon you need an answer. When at all possible, please provide a clear digital picture. While they can’t always guarantee a response as fast as Stewart received, rest assured that they will get back to you.

*“You don’t manage people,
you manage things. You lead
people.”*

~ Admiral Grace Hopper



Lance Brown is currently serving as a Lead Program Analyst for Code 51 (Acquisition and Technology Development, formerly known as Research & Development) at the Naval Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technology Division (NAVEODTECHDIV) near Indian Head, Maryland. Prior to this position, he was an equipment specialist in the same code and organization, working on many different EOD projects. A January 1988 graduate of the U.S. Navy’s EOD school, Lance retired from the Marine Corps in December of 2000.



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