

# Is This Cylinder Nuclear Material Related?

or

## Why Local Chapters are so Valuable

by Greg Staisiunas

In case you are one of the few people who has not seen the email with the subject line of “Re: Is this Cylinder Nuclear Material Related?” that circulated for a few months ago, I thought I’d tell you a little bit about it.

On Thursday, 22May08, I was in my office and received the following email:

*Sent: Thu May 22 09:21:16 2008*

*Subject: FW: FW: Is this Cylinder Nuclear Material Related*

*Greg,*

*I am an Inspector in Springfield , MO and also a member of the Class of '79- West Point . One of my classmates is a Senior security Specialist for the NRC (see below) who was contacted by an EOD guy overseas with a conundrum. They have found a number of unknown items that he has sent out in PPT and photos in an attempt to id. In the air of inter-agency cooperation I called Vincent to see if we might not be able to at least look at and possibly connect him with someone that knows these things. Vincent dined YOU out as the go-to guy. I am asking if you could look at and pass on to any folks you know, who might be able to help. ?*

*Thanks,*

*Ed*

*Springfield , MO*



What a way to start a day! Sometimes it’s not good to be the “go-to” guy. I reviewed the photos my colleague had attached. Based on all my training and years of experience, I quickly came to the conclusion that I had no idea what I was looking at. So on to Plan B: “pass on to any folks you know who might be able to help”. I figured I knew someone who did, or in this case, someone who knew someone who knew someone who knew someone (you get the point) who did.

It just so happened that around the same time, I heard a guy named Ed Stark was talking about (re) starting the Golden Gate Chapter of IABTI and already had accumulated an extensive email collection of likely members. I had not yet met him, but since I was on “the list”, I figured why not activate it and reach out to the group. I contacted Ed and asked if he would forward the email to the people on his list. He enthusiastically agreed to do so and in fact did just that. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is how this whole thing got started.

Six degrees of separation. It seems that folks on Ed’s list had lists of their own that they forwarded the email on. And those folks had their own lists and so on and so on. In a few days, this email went to literally thousands of people all over the world. Responses poured in and suggestions as to what the item was or could have been were both many and varied. In the end, the item was identified in the following email. I am grateful to everyone who took the time to look at it and/or

who forwarded it on. To quote the esteemed Bill Conklin, "It never ceases to amaze me with the amount of talent and resources our group has available to help our soldiers and EOD team members". I think this example of pulling together is just one illustration as to why local IABTI chapters are so valuable.

*Sent: Wed May 28 11:56:56 2008*

*Subject: Fwd: FW: Is this Cylinder Nuclear Material Related - Request for info*

*The source of the solution was your group. Cup of jave for everyone! Thanks*

*Dear Patricia,*

*From what I have seen from the pictures and the limited info; here's my assessment, based on years of looking at old crap/ordnance washed ashore, dredged up etc.*

*I think this is a large British artillery shell dated late 19th century. Most likely Black Powder filled, but could possibly be an early HE fill (pre TNT probably picric acid type - maybe Lyddite - I'll ask Sidney). My deductions are based on the following:*

*It looks to be fitted with a nose plug (the plug would be removed and a fuse inserted prior to firing). However, caution should be used here, because some early fuses also looked like plugs! Regardless, the square key shape is a classic, and it may even have a Govt arrow if you look closely enough?"*

*The British were in Afghanistan around this period, so it fits historically.*

*The description hints at a lead coat over steel casing, rather than a lead construction. If this thing had spiral rifling marks along its sides it would indicate it had been fired - this one has not. Therefore, my guess is this is an early breech loading pre-driving band type shell (Armstrong Whitworth - I think?).*

*The letters are typical European - not Russian, but they were also in the area at that time.*

*I've passed this on to my Oppo in Fleet, who I know can't resist a challenge and he will (can) pass it on to Sandy Saunders at the UKs Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technical Information Centre (EODTIC). If Sandy can't tell what it is - give up! (Ken will probably remember Sandy from his days at DEODS). He's the best I know, and is seldom defeated. He will probably be able to tell you what, where and when and even who painted it!*

*Regards to all at AT Solutions*

*Windy Gale*

*Project Manager*

*Alford Technologies*

*Epilogue*

*"The people on the ground should please consider the historic significance of this find - The Great Game, what made Britain Great - etc. and hesitate before vulgarly blowing them all up. After all, any damned fool can do that. Perhaps the chaps on the ground might find time to use the the Vulcan to fire a jet of water through the side. This should not cause explosion whether the munitions is filled with black powder or picric acid. If a gentle probe reveals bright yellow stuff which dissolves in water, then it is probably picric acid: if a black or grey sludge is detected, then it is gunpowder. In the latter case at least, the thing to do then is to insert a plastic tube and wash it out. Behold: what remains is a trophy worthy of a place on any returning aircraft. Museum curators round the world will be grateful - including the one resident at Alford Technologies (although modesty prevents my giving you his name)."*

*Submitted by: Greg Staisiunas, Postal Inspector  
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