

NSWU 802 Travel Order #58, Sandia Base 24 March 1950

NNWA friend and correspondent, Paul Roales, has again provided historically significant documentation for our interest. During his ongoing research into the life of Lt. Donald S. Lindberg USN, Mr. Roales turned up a group order (two views below) directing men of Special Weapons Unit 802, with support from Naval Administrative Unit, Albuquerque, SWU 471 and SWU 1233, to proceed from Albuquerque, NM to Norfolk, VA on or about 30 March 1950 for approximately 12 days in connection with Armed Forces Special Weapons Project activity. The order then lists the names of 63 members of Special Weapons Unit 802, 2 of NAU, 2 of SWU 471 and 2 of SWU 1233; a total of 69 officers and men. I hope the NNWA membership and particularly our more senior "Keepers of the Dragon", enjoy going through this list of names as much as I have.

Though the order provides no clue as to the specific "AFSWP activity" the Eight Oh Two will pursue, I easily envision an Essex Class aircraft carrier lying at anchor in Hampton Roads with a floating crane and covered barges alongside conducting an on-load originating at Naval Weapons Station Yorktown, Skiffes Creek Annex.

Most significant to me is the fact that this is the first set of SWU orders I have ever seen, despite years of communicating with SWU members and many hours paging through the NNWA historical archives and memorabilia. Until now the composition of a SWU depended upon the recollections of sailors older than I am currently, and that, in my case at least, is a questionable proposition. Many and varied were the numbers I heard including "Oh, there were a lot of us", "We filled three or four C-47's", "There must have been at least fifty", "I can recall about six or eight" and other similar exactitudes. At last we have something that reveals the composition of an actual deploying team.

I've performed a quantity and quality analysis of this order. I think it is quite revealing.

Travel Order Sandia Base No. 58 was directed by Colonel Hertford, US Army and signed by Major Fulton, US Army. It was issued on 24 March 1950 and directs sixty-nine Navy officers and enlisted to proceed from Albuquerque, NM to Norfolk VA on temporary duty for approximately twelve days, then return to base. Enlisted men were authorized per diem while travelling by air. Some of the acronyms and coding in the order text are indecipherable to me, probably because they are of Army origin. If anyone can contribute an interpretation, please do.

The 69 members of the party break down as follows:

16 Line or LDO officers

2	Commander
6	Lieutenant Commander
5	Lieutenant
3	Lieutenant (jg)

12 Warrant Officers

3	Gunner
1	Clerk
2	Postal Clerk
1	Machinist
2	Radar Electrician
3	Electrician

17 Chief Petty Officers

1	Electrician's Mate
3	Electronic Technician
1	Store Keeper
2	Gunner's Mate
1	Aviation Ordnanceman
1	Fire Controlman
2	Hospitalman
1	Boatswain's Mate
5	Interior Communications Electrician (3 ICC, 2 ICCA [acting])

10 Petty Officers First Class

1	Gunner's Mate
2	Electrician's Mate
1	Interior Communications Electrician
3	Metalsmith
2	Store Keeper
1	Electronic Technician

7 Petty Officers Second Class

1	Gunner's Mate
1	Electrician's Mate
1	Construction Mechanic
1	Machinery Repairman
1	Boatswain's Mate
2	Yeoman

5 Petty Officers Third Class

2	Yeoman
2	Constructionman Driver
1	Opticalman

2 Strikers

2	Constructionman Driver (E3)
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The total number of men in the unit is surprising. Before seeing this order and based on conversations with older NNWA members I had mentally settled on forty or so. The deploying SWU's were autonomous answering only to the CO of their ship. They had little interaction with the crew. The berthing spaces were separate from ship' company and I've been told that a separate wardroom area was set aside for SWU officers. The team carried all the documentation, test and handling equipment required for the assembly, test, storage and maintenance of the weapons they would have aboard. They also brought their "type III" training weapons with them from Albuquerque.

Can you imagine the logistics?! Sixty to seventy men, who might have received orders to deploy less than 24 hours earlier, assemble within a ring of heavily armed soldiers. They are on the flight line of what is now Kirtland Air Force Base with their personal baggage, pallet after pallet of equipment, one or two or three shrouded training weapons resting in their roadable containers while a half dozen cargo planes stand silent on the taxiway ready to receive them for flights to NAS Norfolk, NAS North Island, Quonset Point, RI, NAS Jacksonville, Gander, Newfoundland, Port Lyautey, Morocco or any of the many air bases throughout the United States. What an amazing task for this dedicated group of service men!

I have frequently asked where the men come from; how were they selected for the Navy Special Weapons Program. Not one person has provided an informed answer. The men listed in Sandia Base Travel Order # 58 and all the others like them were on the receiving end of a process that identified them for their intelligence, strength of character, professional capabilities and proven reliability. These men were not graduates of the Manhattan Project, but rather, the national response to its' dissolution following World War II. They received orders to Albuquerque to an undefined position requiring the ultimate level of security and integrity our government could impose. Our archives have a written account of a petty officer being awakened from sleep aboard his San Diego destroyer by FBI agents and handed rail tickets to some place in New Mexico. Departing with little more than the clothes he wore, his personal belongings were in Albuquerque upon arrival. In another instance a Warrant Officer was given Top Secret orders to join AFSWP but they failed to tell him what or where it was. He drove into White Sands Missile Range from the south, asked around, and it was suggested he proceed to Albuquerque where he found Sandia Base.

Travel Order #58 was issued only four and a half years after the conclusion of World War II. All but the very youngest of these sixty-nine men had served in and survived the war as fleet sailors. Their families had suffered through the deprivation of rationing and blackouts, and the uncertainty of if and when their man would come home. Now these SWU men lived with bags permanently packed and standing in the corner, ready to go with an hours notice. They did work they couldn't talk about in places that didn't exist. It's only in the past few years that the stories are being told outside our closed circle. And what wonderful, remarkable, dramatic stories they are. They always begin with the humorous. It's not until later that the hard parts and ragged edges are exposed: 11 month and longer deployments, endless nights on flight decks, meager pay, explosions and fires that took their shipmates, Broken Arrow recoveries, participation in detonations, endless training to perfect a task thy hoped would never come, and more.

When I look at Travel Order #58 it's much more than a bunch of guys getting ready for a quick trip to the east coast. I am confronted with their history and the environment in which they lived and worked. For the most part, I think it was an elite but difficult life. I have an enduring respect for every one of them.

Thank you, Paul, for this revealing look sixty years into our secretive past.

LCDR Mike Snyder, USN (ret)
Historian Navy Nuclear Weapons Association
October, 2010

R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS SANDIA BASE
ARMED FORCES SPECIAL WEAPONS PROJECT
Albuquerque, New Mexico

SBAG

24 March 1950

SUBJECT: Travel Order Sandia Base No 58

TO : Personnel Concerned
Sandia Base
Albuquerque, New Mexico

PAC 1st Ind OCS WDCMO to The Chief AFSWP 4 Mar 47 fol pers WP Norfolk Va o/a 30 Mar 50 on TDY aprx 12 days in connection w/AFSWP activity & upon completion TDY will return proper sta. EM auth per diem while tvl by air under provisions AR 35-401. TBMAA. TIN 2100102 1-9002 P434-02 S29-044 Cost Code 635610:

Navy Sp Wpns Unit 302

CDR	WILLIAM E KUNTZ	82701	BMC	FRANCIS E MARCOTTE	2124834
CDR	JAMES W THOMSON	75036	ETC	JOHN D METCALFE	4143787
LCDR	JOHN M CASTOR	100422	ICC	JAMES C MOORE	2618722
LCDR	FRED W PUMP	167850	ICC	GEORGE T RADCLIFF	2619486
LCDR	CARL T SMITH	82241	GMC	OTTIS F REED JR	3602459
LCDR	GEORGE E TRENEER	146716	ICC	RUSSELL L SCHULER	3422827
IT	HARVEY B JONES	202232	ICCA	JOHN H DEHNBOSTEL	3117919
IT	WILLIAM C JOSLYN	150838	ICCA	KENNETH L STACY	3824582
IT	ARTHUR R WORLEY	155249	GMI	BRADY D CARTWRIGHT	6302859
IT	OTTO B ZEMKE	349884	EM1	LESLIE J CLOUATRE	2748416
LTJG	MERSON BOOTH	484964	IC1	FRANK C CONERTY	2252851
LTJG	EIMER M FISCHER	314557	MEL	RUSSELL E FRANCIS	3114812
LTJG	JEREMIAH E LENTHAN	485349	MEL	RAYMOND O GINN	3814722
CHGUN	WILLIAM D ASBY	284979	EM1	AMOS T GUNTER	3291607
ELEC	ROBERT F DONNELLY	436102	MEL	JOHN W MOE	3685956
CHCLK	HERMAN E HULL	294398	ET1	CHARLES F SCHOEN	2023814
CHPCLK	ROBERT S JOYCE	397355	SK1	BUEL SCRANTON	7027050
CHMACH	DONALD A MCCOY	197564	SK1	RICHARD R WHITTINGTON	5549818
CHRELE	HENRY A MILLOTT	334309	GM2	CHARLES E BERGER	5531017
CHELEC	ROBERT A MUIR	300272	EM2	WOODROW P DALTON	8867436
CHRELE	ROBERT H SPARKS	201663	GM2	ROBERT A HANSEN	5580338
CHELEC	HAROLD D WRIGHT	388657	MR2	HARRISON C PLESS	7901669
GUN	ARTHUR M YOUTZ	436052	BM2	ROBERT B POPE	3859891
EMC	BILL W BECKER	3761694	YN2	DAVID E RANKIN	3176116
ETC	NORMAN BREEN	6104826	YN3	NORMAN J BRESSETTE	2089651
ETC	MICHAEL FAZIO	2386856	CD3	EDWARD J CARLISLE JR	2273891
SKC	JAMES H HACKLER	3510113	CD3	LESLIE L HINES	3178286
GMC	JAMES M HEALY	4134230	GM3	HUBERT W MILLER	9924447
ACC	EDWARD R HINCHEY	2679470	YN3	DAVID W REED	3658534
FC3	FRED E HOOD	3369350	CDCN	WILLIAM C HOLLEY	3178230
EMC	CHARLES I JOHNSON	3558699	CDCN	BOBBY L SCHMEDEMAN	3444537
EMC	ROBERT R KENLON	2563687			

(Cont)

R E S T R I C T E D

67
11
56

R E S T R I C T E D

TRAVEL ORDERS SANDIA BASE NO 58 (CONT)

24 Mar 50

NAVAL ADM UNIT

LT	DONALD S LINDBERG	283090	YN2 BILLY T PORTER	5572308
			<u>NAVY SP WNS UNIT 471</u>	
LCDR	MORGAN R CARTWRIGHT	168027	LCDR KENNETH W CRAMP	107974
			<u>NAVY SP WNS UNIT 1233</u>	
CHPCLK	JOSEPH O BUSSEY	459892	GUN LOUIS RUSO	442777

BY ORDER OF COLONEL HERTFORD:


H. A. FULTON
Major, AGD
Adjutant

DISTRIBUTION:

2 Fiscal
1 Finance
1 Trans O
1 CO Naval Adm Unit
1 CO Navy Sp Wpns Unit 471
1 CO Navy Sp Wpns Unit 802
1 CO Navy Sp Wpns Unit 1233
1 CO 8460th Sp Wpns Gp
1 S-3 8460th Sp Wpns Gp
4 Ea Off & EM (Thru Maj Bates)
2 Ea Off 201 File
1 Ea EM 201 File
2 Central Files
(385)

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R E S T R I C T E D