

Posted by [REDACTED] @ 2010-03-12 17:53:47

Tags: history today

Mood: thoughtful

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Flares

Are the flares mentioned in today's History Today the ancestors of the emergency flares I carry in my car now?

4039 [REDACTED] @ 2010-03-15 11:33:23

Flares

Good question. There's a similarity in that they share same general shape and used some of the same chemicals. One has to suspect that the Coston's manufacturing techniques eventually got out and were modified by companies making flares for the railroads. The railway flare was the direct parent of today's emergency road flare.

There were two types of Coston marine flare. The earlier hand-held version, similar to the emergency road flare used today, came in different colors--which was advantageous when using them for communications purposes. The so-called hand-held version was deployed at the end of a spar or gaff and was EXTREMELY hazardous in the days of wooden ships and sails. Even today they pose a fire hazard alongside the road and are pretty much impervious to rain or snow.

The hand-held flares, however, were infrequently used at sea following the advent of the slightly later Coston flare which acted more like a small rocket. The rocket type was used as late as WW II and even Vietnam.

I recall these latter flares (we called them "pop-ups") being used by forward spotters at night to direct artillery fire. Every once in a while the VC would try to spoof US forces by using flares of their own. However, since they did not know the proper color sequence, this attempt never worked.



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