

A History of NASIC

NATIONAL AIR AND SPACE INTELLIGENCE CENTER

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, OHIO

The Last Train Out

Contributing author Charles Cram

During my 22-plus years of service at NASIC and its predecessors, I had ample opportunity to travel to and enjoy Germany. In September 1989, I got to participate in one of the unique experiences of the Cold War—travel to or from Berlin on the United States Army Duty Train.

As it explained on the back of your orders, the daily passenger service between Berlin and Frankfurt was initiated on 8 December 1945 and, except for a brief halt during the Berlin Airlift, continued throughout the Cold War. For those riding the Duty Train, the trip from Berlin to the exit of East Germany at Helmstedt was a haunting experience. So that East Germans would not be polluted by Western ideas and loose morals, passengers were sealed within the train. Drinking alcoholic beverages, taking pictures, and using binoculars were all prohibited. Even looking outside, particularly while at the crossing points, was frowned on.

My journey on the Duty Train was made on 10 September 1989, from Berlin to Frankfurt. My companion and I boarded the train in Berlin around 6:00 or 7:00 PM and the train departed the station around 7:30 PM. Soon after leaving, we entered East Germany into what seemed to be an entirely different world.

I remember the first time I flew from West Germany to Berlin, I knew when we crossed the East Germany border because I could see the border fence from 30,000 feet and the color of green in the countryside was even different. I had the same feelings crossing East Germany on the ground.

With what little we were allowed to look at and having even less to do, we turned in about 10:00 PM. I slept soundly until around midnight when the train reached Helmstedt, the crossing point into West Germany. Furtive looks around the blinds covering the windows revealed the crossing guards, the extended high border fence, and the watchtowers.

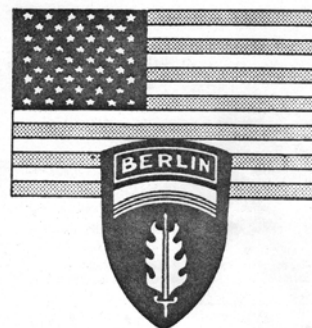
For G13 CRAM-COU-, c
FOR To Frankfurt
AND OTHERS
Railcar 1 Berth(s) E1
FROM BERLIN TO
DATE _____ AUTHORIZATION STAMP
CAR NO _____
COMP NO _____

Duty Train Booking Offices

BERLIN MIL 6381 CIV 030- 819 - 6381
FRANKFURT MIL 5755 CIV 069 - 151 - 5755
BREMERHAVEN MIL 7869 CIV 0471- 891 - 7869

FOR _____ AND _____ OTHERS
FROM _____ TO BERLIN
DATE _____ AUTHORIZATION STAMP
CAR NO _____
COMP NO _____

*The United States Army
Duty Train ...*



*... serving you
while maintaining the
Allied Right to Free Access*

ARBA FORM 55-355J NOV 87

WELCOME ABOARD THE U.S. BERLIN DUTY TRAIN!

In accordance with USAREUR Reg 550-180, USAREUR Reg 55-355, USCIB/USAB Reg 550-180, and Trans Div Policy, the following actions are PROHIBITED aboard the Berlin duty train:

- DRINKING OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES.
- NO SMOKING in sleeping compartments. Smoking is permitted only in the rear hallway portion of the car adjacent to latrines.
- TAKING PICTURES OR THE USE OF BINOCULARS BETWEEN BERLIN AND HELMSTEDT.
- SPEAKING OR ATTEMPTING TO SPEAK WITH EAST GERMAN OR SOVIET PERSONNEL.
- Pulling emergency brakes (NOTBREHSE) except in case of actual emergency.
- Extending the head or limbs out of the windows.
- Throwing lighted cigarettes, cigars, matches or any dangerous articles from the train.
- Jumping on or off moving trains.
- Leaving compartments without shoes on.

Passengers will be held accountable for damage they cause to railway equipment. All personnel and property are subject to be searched at the RTO and/or aboard the train.

PASSENGER PROCESSING

- ALL PASSENGERS WILL BE PROCESSED BY THE RTO ONE HOUR PRIOR TO BOARDING. PLEASE HAVE RETURN TICKETS, ID DOCUMENTS AND FLAG ORDERS READY.
- DO NOT BOARD THE TRAIN UNTIL AUTHORIZED TO DO SO BY AN MP, TRAIN CONDUCTOR OR TRAIN COMMANDER.
- UPON ARRIVAL AT DESTINATION, PLEASE CHECK AND CONFIRM RETURN RESERVATIONS BY USING THIS BOARDING PASS.


- AS A MATTER OF INTEREST**
- THE FIRST DAILY PASSENGER SERVICE BETWEEN FRANKFURT AND BERLIN WAS INITIATED ON 8 DEC 1945. THE ALLIED RIGHT OF ACCESS TO BERLIN HAS SINCE CONTINUED.
 - THE TRAIN CREW CONSISTS OF THE TRAIN COMMANDER, TRAIN CONDUCTOR, INTERPRETER, AND MILITARY POLICEMEN.
 - AT HARTENBORN (DDR), THE TRAIN COMMANDER AND INTERPRETER DE-TRAIN AND PROCESS YOUR DOCUMENTS WITH THE SOVIET OFFICER IN CHARGE.
 - WHEN THE TRAIN ARRIVES AT HELMSTEDT (FRG), THE TRAIN COMMANDER AND INTERPRETER LEAVE THE TRAIN AND PREPARE TO BRING THE INCOMING DUTY TRAIN BACK TO BERLIN. THE TRAIN CONDUCTOR REMAINS WITH THE TRAIN TO ITS FINAL DESTINATION.





Although the Allied Right to Free Access to Berlin was tolerated, we were definitely not made to feel welcome. Always, in the back of your mind was the tiny fear that something would not be in order with your papers and that you would be taken from the train. Maybe I just watched too many spy movies.

After leaving East Germany, I again went to sleep. Only the train conductor coming through and rousting us out of our bunks at 6:00 AM kept us from missing our stop in Frankfurt. In my memory, it seems that my Duty Train experience occurred at the height of the Cold War. Little did I realize at the time but it would soon be all over. Within the next month, the Berlin Wall fell and the whole world changed. Duty Trains continued for a short time thereafter, but the need for Allied Free Access to Berlin was soon obsolete. Although I may not have been literally on the last Duty Train out, the speed at which things subsequently changed sure makes it feel that way.



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
ÉTATS-UNIS D'AMÉRIQUE
СОЕДИНЕННЫЕ ШТАТЫ АМЕРИКИ

**MOVEMENT ORDERS
LAISSEZ-PASSER
ПУТЕВКА**

Name Nom, Prénom Фамилия, Имя	Rank Qualité Чин	Nationality Nationalité Гражданство	Identity Document No. Pièce d'identité No. № удостоверения личности
GRAM CHARLES WELBOURN CHILDRESS TIMOTHY G	Civ CAPT	American American	US PP No 013752008

is/one authorized to travel from
est/son autorisé(s) à se rendre de Berlin to à Helmstedt and return
et/son retour
уполномочен/уполномочены
следовать из в и обратно

by train or by vehicle No.
par le train ou par voiture No.
поездом или на автомобиле №

from (date) de (date) от (число)	to (date) au (date) по (число)	inclusive inclus включительно
10 Sep 89 10 SEP 89	15 Sep 89 15 SEP 89	

by
par

Signature
Подпись: *Raymond E. Hedlock*

Title
Qualité
Звание: **MG US ARMY
US COMMANDANT**

Date
Date: 7 Sep 89

HEADQUARTERS
OFFICIAL
US ARMY BERLIN