

# THE PORT CHICAGO MAGAZINE EXPLOSION

17 JULY 1944



View of loading activity at the Port Chicago Naval Magazine munitions pier, circa 1943/44 (U.S. Navy/National Park Service).



Debris-impact area and blast-effect radius of the Port Chicago Naval Magazine explosion.



Northward view of the effects of the 17 July 1944 explosion, showing the damage to buildings and munitions pier beyond (U.S. Navy).



Learn more about the Port Chicago magazine explosion at [history.navy.mil](https://history.navy.mil)



African American sailors from a naval ordnance battalion unload aerial bombs from a railcar, Port Chicago Naval Magazine, circa 1943/44 (U.S. Navy/National Park Service).



Southward view from the munitions pier showing on-base wreckage (U.S. Navy).

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- Cargo ships *E. A. Bryant* and *Quinault Victory* were moored at loading pier
- Round-the-clock loading operations by divisions of primarily Black ordnance battalion sailors
- More than 5,000 tons of munitions aboard *E. A. Bryant* or on pier and in boxcars
- Approximately 10:17 PM: “Dull clang” followed by massive explosion at loading pier
- Pier, both ships, USCG fire barge, and all structures in 1,000-foot radius obliterated
- 325 killed; nearly 390 injured (mostly African American enlisted personnel)
- Most buildings on base damaged; some completely destroyed
- Raging fires and additional ordnance “cooking off”
- Blast felt in San Francisco; registered in Nevada
- Port Chicago Naval Magazine became a national memorial site maintained by the National Park Service on 17 July 1994

## Boxcar Tonnage Spotted for *E. A. Bryant*

M-7 incendiary clusters	2 30-ton cars, about 1 empty	30 tons
MK-47 (350-lb.) bombs (60)	2 97-ton cars, half unloaded	51 tons
M-4 (100-lb.) fragmentation clusters	2 93-ton cars, half unloaded	43 tons
20mm shells	1 car	50 tons
40mm shells		2 tons
	TOTAL	176 tons

## Boxcar Tonnage Spotted for *Quinault Victory*

MK-33 (1,000-lb.) bombs	2 cars	106 tons
MK-65 (1,000-lb.) bombs	2 cars	88 tons
5” antiaircraft projectiles	1 car	59 tons
	TOTAL	253 tons

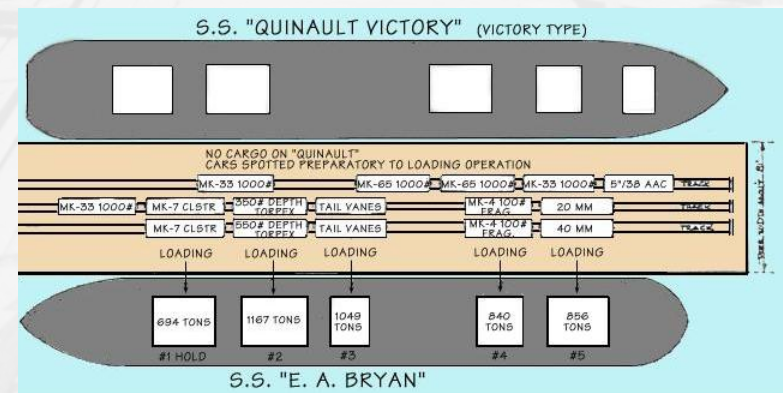


Diagram from the Port Chicago board of inquiry’s report showing the facility’s munitions pier at the time of the disaster. Note the two cargo ships, *E. A. Bryant* and *Quinault Victory*, the three lines of railcars, and the placement and quantities of various types of munitions (U.S. Navy).