

DR. E. L. KING
1527 DELACHAISE STREET
NEW ORLEANS 15, LA.

35992

October 30, 1945

4th Ind to Lt & Mrs. WOSS

Chief of Ordnance Department
War Department
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

I understand that my letter to Secretary Patterson has been referred to your Ordnance experts by Brigadier General Reber.

This disastrous explosion occurred on August 21, 1945, on Guiuan, Samar, P. I. and 30 Army and Navy men were killed. My son, Lt. Edward L. King, Jr., USNR, was one of these.

The Bureau of Naval Personnel informs me that the bombs were of the fragmentation type, they were corroded, and that most of them were crated. They were loaded on trucks, taken out to the end of a jetty, and reloaded onto a barge for disposal at sea. The explosion, I am informed, occurred just after the loading was completed. It could have happened at any of the various stages of this procedure.

To me, as a layman, this seems to be about the worst possible method for the disposal of dangerous bombs. The tragedy confirms this opinion. Why were they not flown out by bombers, and dumped safely in the sea, away from men and installations? Surely this would endanger fewer men. Is it not possible to devise a better and safer method than the one used? Surely the War Department has men with sufficient intelligence to do so.

I protest very strongly against the continued use of such a dangerous method which results in the needless loss of life. I am sure that the War and Navy Departments do not wish further tragedies such as this.

Yours truly,

E. L. King
E. L. King

ELK:HRF

OX
4:45

No reply necessary - see
attached copy letter re - same subject
Edward M. Pennington
Maj O.D.
13 Nov 45.

Mc
File
re March 1945
13 Nov 45

Honorable Paul H. Maloney
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Maloney:

I am writing in further reply to your letter of October 9th, concerning the accidental death of Lieutenant Edward L. King, USNR.

A report on bomb disposal methods has just been received from the Ordnance Department of the Army, and I find that there is no record of the details of the accident referred to in Dr. King's letter. However, I shall be very glad to comment in general on the disposal of ammunition and bombs of questionable serviceability by dumping them at sea.

The procedure for the disposition of bombs and ammunition of questionable serviceability by dumping them at sea has been used by the armies of all countries for years. It is considered the safest way of disposing of quantities of ammunition which cannot be detonated in position and which must be moved. As a general rule it entails less handling than other methods, and if the prescribed safety rules and regulations are followed, the hazards involved are, in our opinion, less than in any other method known.

At best, the movement of ammunition of questionable serviceability is a hazardous task, and we have trained and furnished to the theaters, officers and enlisted men who are competent to do this type of work. The idea suggested by Dr. King of disposing of bombs by loading them on airplanes and dropping them at sea involves a much greater hazard than dumping them into the sea from barges. The necessary handling required to load the bomb onto an airplane, and the hazard involved in the take-off of the plane with the bombs of questionable serviceability offer risks which in the opinion of our experts would be justified only in the most extreme emergencies. There would be just as much actual handling involved in the disposal of dangerous bombs by dropping them from airplanes as by dumping them from barges at sea.

I hope that the above information will be useful to you. With kind regards,

cc: AAS/W
C/S
TAG
L&LD COMEBACK

Sincerely yours,

JOHN W. MARTYN
Administrative Assistant