

Historic Headlines (1945) Debate Over Delivery Methods for Sea Dumping of Munitions

Posted At : October 19, 2007 11:26 AM | Posted By : Admin

Related Categories: Historical / Classic

August 21, 1945. 30 U.S. Military personnel were killed when a load of unserviceable fragmentation bombs exploded after being loaded onto a barge for transporting to a designated sea disposal site. Reportedly, the corroded bombs loaded into crates were safely transported by truck to a jetty and exploded shortly after being loaded onto the barge.

The accident sparked a lively debate on which method or delivery vehicle (ship/barge or aircraft) should be used to transport military munitions to sea for disposal. The debate started by a letter written by the father of a Navy Lt that lost his life in the unfortunate incident. In his letter to the War Department Dated October 30, 1945, Mr. King protested the use of ships in the delivery of munitions to be dumped at sea due to the amount of handling necessary to load and transport the munitions out to their final disposal location. He questioned why aircraft bombers were not used as the delivery means to dispose of munitions at sea.

The father received a response to his letter from the War Department through then Congressman Paul Maloney's office which suggested that risks involved with the handling and loading unserviceable munitions onto an aircraft coupled with the take-off would pose more risk. The letter also stated that the use of aircraft bombers to transport unserviceable munitions to sea for disposal would "be justified only in the most extreme emergencies".

History would show that ships and barges continued to be used as a means for transporting munitions out to sea for disposal clear through the time sea disposal was banned; however, there are numerous cases or examples in history where aircraft were also used as the method or platform for delivering munitions to the sea for disposal.

Use the download link below to view the correspondences from 1945 which were referenced above. The declassified letters were found at the National Archives in Washington, D.C by a UXOInfo.com user.