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On the night of July 17, 1944, a huge explosion occurred aboard one of the two merchant ships docked at the Port Chicago Magazine located on the Suisun Bay, 11 miles upstream from Vallejo. Clocks in the town of Port Chicago, over a mile away, were stopped by the shock waves at 10:19 p.m. The enormity of the blast was shown by the 3.5 magnitude earthquake registered as far away as Bonner's Ferry, Nevada. The explosion's fire ball, as observed by pilots flying over the area, towered in the night sky to an altitude of 8000 or 9,000 feet before being extinguished.

-- <http://www.sonic.net/sentinel/usa4.html>

The US Navy has long ascribed the Port Chicago Blast as the result of a Liberty Ship, loaded with conventional munitions, suffering a "high order" (all at once) explosion at the pier. But the following links provide an interesting set of facts & suppositions that *seem* to indicate that the US was in possession of a low-yield, crude "Harbor Busting" nuke in the summer of '43. At the time, there was no way to deliver a nuclear weapon via air. Therefore, the concept of delivering a weapon by ship was explored.

It is possible that the US planned to deliver this crude weapon to Japanese territory in the late summer/early fall of '43 via one of the Liberty Ships at Port Chicago. However, either something went wrong and the device went off, or -- even more chilling - it was a designed test of an unknown weapon to verify theoretical work done at Los Alamos. As the following URLs indicate, Los Alamos investigators arrived at Port Chicago the very next day after the explosion.

I'm not sure I'm convinced, but See & Read:

<http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq80-1.htm>

<http://www.sonic.net/sentinel/usa5.html>

<http://www.dreamscape.com/morgana/sinope.htm>

<http://www.sonic.net/sentinel/usa4.html>

Interesting theory, anyway!

Yoda

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**Author:** [TMFBarmin](#)    

**Number:** 13290 of 53731

**Subject:** Re: At The Bar: Port Chicago Blast: 1943 Nuke?

**Date:** 1/9/2003 2:54 PM

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Yoda,

Interesting indeed! I am not sure if I buy it either, but the accident angle is a possibility. I can't swallow the idea that it was on purpose.

Reminds me of the "Philadelphia Experiment" stories. Here is what the Navy says:

<http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq21-1.htm>

Here is what the "true believers" say:

<http://www.viewzone.com/philadelphia.html>

Curt



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**Author:** [SirYoda](#)    

**Number:** 13291 of 53731

**Subject:** Re: At The Bar: Port Chicago Blast: 1943 Nuke?

**Date:** 1/9/2003 3:23 PM

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*Interesting indeed! I am not sure if I buy it either, but the accident angle is a possibility. I can't swallow the idea that it was on purpose.*

*Reminds me of the "Philadelphia Experiment" stories. Here is what the Navy says:*

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The Port Chicago Nuke Theory - unlike the Philadelphia Experiment - doesn't seem to require much "willing suspension of disbelief." Everything needed for crude nuclear weapons was likely in place in the summer of '44 (title of my post should be a '**44 Nuke, btw**).....**everything except**

assembly, testing & delivery.

It seems at least *possible* that a nuclear weapon could explain the observed blast characteristics and damage reported (in the open press, too) at Port Chicago.

I also don't buy the "weapons test" theory.....but an accident ("Ooops!!!") with a crude nuke? Entirely possible and completely believable....

Yoda



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**Author:** [SirYoda](#)      
**Subject:** Re: At The Bar: Port Chicago Blast: 1943 Nuke?  
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**Date:** 1/9/2003 3:24 PM

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stupid HTML tags.....Note to self:  
preview, preview, preview!!!

Yoda



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**Author:** [WuLong](#)      
**Subject:** Re: At The Bar: Port Chicago Blast: 1943 Nuke?  
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**Number:** 13293 of 53731

**Date:** 1/9/2003 5:26 PM

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Yoda:

This one has been around since at least 1994.

[http://www.urbanlegends.com/death/port\\_chicago\\_explosion.html](http://www.urbanlegends.com/death/port_chicago_explosion.html)

You are perhaps aware of the Port Chicago Mutiny following the explosion.

If not, <http://portchicagomutiny.com/history/history.html>

In 1999 President Clinton pardoned the 50 men who had been convicted of mutiny

<http://www.house.gov/georgemiller/rel122399.html>

Considering the amount of investigation and publicity the event has generated over the years, I seriously doubt the government could have kept it quiet if there had been a nuke on site at the time.

Personally, I don't find it that unlikely that 4000+ tons of munitions would generate a blast in the 5 kiloton range. Note the damage done to the USS Iowa during a test firing [http://www.jagcnet.army.mil/JAGCNETInternet/Homepages/AC/TJAGSAWeb.nsf/8f7edfd448e0ec6c8525694b0064ba51/a862756aebc7c010852569520066a300/\\$FILE/Volume164BRKellogg.pdf](http://www.jagcnet.army.mil/JAGCNETInternet/Homepages/AC/TJAGSAWeb.nsf/8f7edfd448e0ec6c8525694b0064ba51/a862756aebc7c010852569520066a300/$FILE/Volume164BRKellogg.pdf)  
Additionally, I would be shocked if someone from Los Alamos **hadn't** shown up to investigate the blast effects and better understand what to expect.

FWIW - the Port Chicago explosion was the largest explosion in history to that date, as large as a 5-kiloton bomb. The E.A. Bryan docked at Port Chicago on July 13th, 1944. At 8:00 a.m. the next day, Naval personnel began their job of loading the ship's hold with ammunition. By July 17th at 10:00 p.m., the ship had been loaded with well over 4000 tons of munitions, almost 2000 tons of which were high explosives.

Minutes before 10:30 p.m., two explosions, seconds apart, ignited the summer night sky with a column of fire and smoke rising over 2 miles high. The first blast was fairly small and localized. But it triggered a second catastrophic blast that incinerated the entire E.A. Bryan.

Although no cause was found for the explosion, Navy investigators blamed the black sailors, insinuating they were intellectually incompetent to handle loading operations.

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**Author:** [SirYoda](#)    

**Number:** 13294 of 53731

**Subject:** Re: At The Bar: Port Chicago Blast: 1943 Nuke?

**Date:** 1/9/2003 5:56 PM

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WuLong,

I can find no evidence that this is a "typical" Urban Legend." And the mutiny charges are a secondary story here. A tragic, tragic chapter from the segregated military's past...and an clear injustice.

(Maybe even a tactic used by the War Dept -- forerunner of the DoD -- to divert attention away from the real cause of the explosion. Who knows??)

Regarding your statement that *Personally, I don't find it that unlikely that 4000+ tons of munitions would generate a blast in the 5 kiloton range.*, one of my URLs earlier led to an article that discussed the size of the blast at length. A long snip is below from:

<http://www.sonic.net/sentinel/usa5.html>

(Part 4, Evidence points to a Port Chicago nuclear device, by Harry V. Martin, Fourth in a Series, Copyright, The Napa Sentinel, 1990)

Bottom Line: The best evidence states that the amount of explosives PLUS full fuel bunkers was *just enough* to reach the very low end of the calculated energy dispersed by the blast. Just enough....barely, assuming a simultaneous explosion. So, yes a conventional chemical explosion could account for the blast. But, the report does not rule out a nuclear device. The crude nuclear device imagined, OTOH, would produce energy/damage *beginning* at the High End of the ergs produced by the ammo explosion.

And, the War Dept had numerous options and explosives experts to examine the blast area...there was no specific *need* to call in experts from Los Alamos.....who were presumably so valuable that they shouldn't be bothered with a "non-Manhattan Project" issue as a simple chemical explosion. I also find it curious that the commander of Port Chicago's previous assignment was....Los Alamos. And, this same individual was actually *on-board the Enola Gay* as the targeting officer 14 months later. An "atomic coincidence?" Maybe.....maybe not.

Like I said, I'm not convinced, but it is intriguing to think that there might still be a few secrets buried from the dawn of the nuclear age.....

Here's the clip talking about the size of the blast.....

Yoda  
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From the aforementioned website:

*A research paper was submitted on December 7, 1988 entitled Computational Evaluation for the Energy Released in the Port Chicago Explosion. This report evaluates the energy released by the 1944 explosion at Port Chicago on July 17, 1944. The explosion occurred while the Liberty ship E.A Bryan was loading 1780 tons of high explosives and 4600 tons of ammunition - the shipment was destined for Tinian - the island from which the Enola Gay took off enroute to dropping the first atomic bomb on Japan, the Hiroshima bomb was dropped 13 months after the Port Chicago explosion.*

*The research document creates the theoretical energy released at Port Chicago, based upon the calculation and probable energy source, using the 1780 tons of high explosive. The paper analyzes detonation of fuel, high explosives and a nuclear bomb. These sources are then compared to the probable energy expended into production of the Bay floor crater, heat energy and seismic energy caused by the 1944 explosion.*

*The report states simply, "If the probable energy expended markedly exceeded that which a chemical explosion could supply, then an additional source of energy (possible nuclear) must have been present." The report states, "It is not now possible to determine with certainty the precise nature of the 1944 explosion at Port Chicago. The reclassification of a pertinent document, Technical Report No. 6, Army-Navy Explosives Safety Board, prohibits any such definitive conclusions. However, given the size of the crater formed by the explosion and the distance the debris was scattered, a calculation of the theoretical explosive energy released can*

*be compared to the probable source of the energy." The report uses a "worst case" scenario to the amount of energy generated. This means that the report provides the benefit of the doubt toward aspects subscribing to a non-nuclear explosion. For instance, it assumes that all 1780 tons of explosives were aboard the ship and went off high order (spontaneously) and all at full power). And that the ship's fuel was at capacity and detonated.*

*"At this point, the only conclusion to be drawn is as follows: While there may have been an additional explosive energy source present (such as a low yield nuclear device), the explosive energy derived from the conventional munitions is in agreement with the lower limit for the calculated total energy given-off by the explosion, and thus, the explosion might have been purely conventional (non-nuclear) in origin."*

*The specific facts the report could rely on were that the amount of explosives present was 1780 tons, and the size of the crater created by the explosion, was 66 feet deep, 300 feet wide and 700 feet long.*

*The report did discover that a measurement of the blast crater in 1944 had more than doubled in size by 1946 - indicating that the government may well have made every attempt to retrieve any remains or evidence still at the bottom of Suisun Bay. The report could not confirm the type of fuel used by the Bryan, but selected the probability of diesel fuel. The Sentinel has ascertained that the ship was indeed loaded with 5292 barrels of bunker C-type diesel fuel oil.*

*The report further states that Vogel's comment as to the fireball being white does not prove it was nuclear in origin. The report also states that it is unlikely that the fuel aboard the vessel caused the explosion.*

*The report estimates the magnitude of the blast was between  $(10)^{18}$  to  $(10)^{72}$  ergs. Is this the magnitude of a non-nuclear or a nuclear explosion? The report addresses that issue. If the Port Chicago disaster had been caused by a chemical explosion, the maximum energy expenditure would be expected to approach  $(10)^{18}$  ergs - the low end of the estimated magnitude of the Port Chicago blast. The report qualifies that statement. "However, the likely expenditure for such a chemical explosion would be a fraction of this value, since the maximum value would require all the explosives and fuel to go off in high order fashion. If the Port Chicago disaster had been caused by a nuclear bomb, the energy expenditure would be expected to approach the order of  $(10)^{72}$  ergs."*

*"While the energy expenditure from a nuclear explosion fits this calculation of energy expenditure better than does the chemical explosion, a purely chemical explosion would have produced sufficient energy to be in agreement with the low end of the calculated range. Therefore, no conclusion can be drawn at this time as to the exact nature of the explosion: further information would be required to refine the calculated energy figure and reduce its uncertainty. Unfortunately, since this information has now been reclassified, calculation refinements are no longer possible," the report concludes.*

*So what we have in this report is the estimate of a magnitude. The only way a conventional explosion could have caused the blast was if everything had gone off at one time - something that is not too common in munitions explosions.*



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**Author:** [tgrmn](#)     

**Number:** 13295 of 53731

**Subject:** Re: At The Bar: Port Chicago Blast: 1943 Nuke?

**Date:** 1/9/2003 6:24 PM

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The things it makes me wonder are; a possibility of a fuel air explosive(FAE) detonation, how many people got sick, what happened to the hospital records, do any of the bldgs still exist that survived? Did any radio stations go off the air, did electrical power die in the surrounding areas, are any local junk yard owners from that time still live to talk to? Even though everything was censored then, possibly print media types talked to folks and each other and knew details but didn't publish anything they knew.

The really curious move was the re-classification of the report. That's the crux of the whole thing. Imho.



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**Author:** [WuLong](#)    

**Number:** 13296 of 53731

**Subject:** Re: At The Bar: Port Chicago Blast: 1943 Nuke?

**Date:** 1/9/2003 6:29 PM

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*the mutiny charges are a secondary story here*

Well, not to Thurgood Marshall, NAACP, Congressman Miller and President Clinton, as well as the men themselves.

But my point was that this story has been covered by lots of people for decades. The US government has a really tough time keeping a secret that the populace wants to expose, particularly when 60 years have passed, most of the participants have died, and the President wants to appologize to everyone on the planet. I seriously doubt that a nuke was present because I think by now that would have come out.

Frankly, the only evidence for a possible nuke is the size of the blast. That evidence is necessary, but not sufficient. There are other ways of generating an explosion of that size and those conditions were present. Occam's razor.



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**Author:** [SirYoda](#)    

**Number:** 13298 of 53731

I commented: **"the mutiny charges are a secondary story here"**

Wulong replied: *Well, not to Thurgood Marshall, NAACP, Congressman Miller and President Clinton, as well as the men themselves.*

Let me a bit more precise: In that matter of the question: "Was the Port Chicago Blast of July, 1944 a crude nuclear device or a conventional explosion?"

.....the issue that troops (regardless of race, creed, religion, ancestry, gender, etc) were subsequently charge with mutiny (and later pardoned) has no bearing on the question. It is an event that occurred *due to the explosion itself*, and not due to whatever *caused* the explosion. So, it is a secondary story in terms of this issue. No disrespect to Justice Marshall or anyone else.

WuLung continues: *But my point was that this story has been covered by lots of people for decades. The US government has a really tough time keeping a secret that the populace wants to expose, particularly when 60 years have passed, most of the participants have died, and the President wants to appologize to everyone on the planet. I seriously doubt that a nuke was present because I think by now that would have come out.*

And this is the strongest argument that the explosion was indeed a conventional chemical explosion. But, I would also point out that in the War Years, life was different, the news coverage was different and it's possible that a coverup might have occurred. The press was more amenable to "not covering" certain events at the request of the govt (witness the press's wide knowledge of JFK's peccadilloes less than 20 years after this time period as one simple example). Neither was the press 24/7/365 as it is today, and there were far fewer outlets. Also, events in "wartime support areas" were probably tightly controlled. Port Chicago was certainly a tightly controlled port, merely due to its role as an ammo dump.

Indeed, many stories *do* come out decades after the fact, precisely due to the death of the principals involved. For example, Watergate reporters Woodward & Berstien have stated they won't reveal who their source "Deep Throat" was until after that source is dead. As people age, sometimes they want to make a "deathbed" confession, not wanting to take certain info to their graves. Other people, do indeed take national secrets to their graves, making any coverup (Port Chicago, whatever) actually *easier* to keep as the principals pass on.

The evidence "for" the nuke is more than the size of the blast (that is the key piece). The presence of Los Alamos personnel is one. The fact that a brand new ship, 1 week after her maiden voyage, was refitted specifically with a pair of ten tone cranes (vs. the standard 5 ton cranes) is another. The fact that on this particular loading, the crew of the ship was not permitted to remain aboard is another. The fact that, out of 4000+ tons (tons!) of explosives containers, only two box car loads were listed as "missing from the manifest" (and that these two box cars were in the sealed Hold #5) is another bit of evidence. The fact that the Navy was filming this particular loading from across the Bay is another. The fact that the Navy claimed, in the 60s, that the film was a "simulated film" only AFTER the question was raised about the nuke is yet another. The strange coincidence of the Port's Commander being a recently re-assigned Los Alamos staff member (recall that Los Alamos was the WWII equivalent of today's "Black Programs" like the stealth fighter, etc) is another. The fact that this same individual was reassigned yet again and landed as

the target officer on the *Enola Gay* is another (the *Enola Gay* dropped the Hiroshima Bomb 14 months after Port Chicago). Another fact is, even if we had a "10,000 Pound Gadget" in late '43, we had no way to deliver it by aircraft is another point. (The B-29 wasn't fully deployed, and in late '43 we had yet to capture/establish an island airfield close enough to Japan even for the B-29 to reach Japan, had the B-29 been in full service)

The fact that a declassified (and later reclassified) Los Alamos report referred to a particular blast as "a Port Chicago style blast" is another bit of evidence. The fact that the report remains re-classified, 60 years later is another bit of evidence.

Moving to pure speculation: The speculation that America's first bomb might have been a large device, crudely made, planned to be delivered by ship and possibly subject to ignition if placed - say - in or near a ship that DID suffer a diasatrous conventional accident is another bit of info (not fact, though).

The speculation that the War Dept might have felt "if we court-martial everyone, we can lock them up and keep this secret" might have played into the (later dismissed/revoked/pardoned) decision to charge workers who *were simply a bit nervous about returning to work* with **mutiny**, fer pete's sake!!! is yet another bit of evidence (again, not fact, though).

In short, there are a number of issues that *seem to indicate* that Port Chicago *might* have been an accidental ignition of a nuclear device. These bits & pieces are all interesting. Like you pointed out, Port Chicago was -- until Trinity Point a mere 12-13 months later (the first official nuclear explosion on the planet) -- the largest man-made explosion ever recorded. So, the size of the blast is a key piece of evidence. But to claim as you do that "*the only evidence for a possible nuke is the size of the blast*" disregards other facts.

As you say, Occum's Razor leads us to the most probable conclusion: The blast was, while of minimal nuclear proportions, conventional. I tend to agree with that conclusion (and I completely reject that it was a purposeful test, carried out on a port just to see the effects).

But, still.....I wonder. Accidents happen & wartime secrets **can** be kept.

Yoda

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**Author:** [aegamemnon](#)    

**Number:** 13299 of 53731

**Subject:** Re: At The Bar: Port Chicago Blast: 1943 Nuke?

**Date:** 1/9/2003 10:22 PM

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To say that I'm skeptical of that a fission event occurred at Port Chicago would be a huge understatement. The fission explosion theory rests entirely on the arguments that an absense of contrary evidence is proof of the theory.

Mainly the theory rests on the fact that this was a really big explosion. So what? The Port Chicago blast killed only about one third as many people as the Texas City blast three years later. Port Chicago was a weapons station loading tons of ordnance for the war in the Pacific. Texas City was a commercial port and the ship that blew up was carrying only fertilizer. Furthermore, the Texas City blast appears to have had a much greater thermal signature than Port Chicago based upon the flash fires that burned most of the town of 16,000. Over 3500 people were injured in the Texas City blast and far more area was destroyed. Port Chicago may have happened first but history is not without at least a couple of other recent precedents for really big non-nuclear explosions.

To add a little perspective to this conspiracy theory, check out the photos at the link below of the Texas City blast and the devastation. The 1.5 ton anchor of the S.S. Grandcamp was thrown over two miles from where the ship disintegrated.

<http://www.chron.com/content/chronicle/metropolitan/txcity/explosive.html>

The largest non-nuclear detonation in history (known to the US) took place in 1985 or 1986, non coincidentally at White Sands Missile Range. I remember the morning because I was on summer vacation and sleeping late when a shockwave rattled the windows and woke me up about 0800. I thought that it had been an earthquake until I saw the story on the evening news. The test was conducted to simulate the effects of a nuclear blast on vehicles and buildings. The explosive device was almost a hundred tons of ammonium nitrate and fuel oil under a concrete dome. The film footage of that blast (taken from miles away) that was run on the evening news looked a lot like footage of the Trinity test that most people have seen. There was a flash, a visible shockwave, and a vertical mushroom like cloud. Nothing special and certainly no fission event.

There is scarcely any discussion (I did not read all of the links) about residual background radiation or fallout. I've been to the Trinity site and watched the tour guide demonstrate the residual radiation (which is one reason that only semi annual short tours are allowed to Lake Lucero where the Trinity site is located). There's also a substance called Trinitite that was created at the blast crater from sand being fused by the heat of the blast. Trinitite is still radioactive today but, we would have to believe that there is none, zero, zilch remaining from the supposed Port Chicago fission explosion.

The only allusion to the long term effects of radiation exposure that would have huge statistical consequences in CERTAIN types of cancers and illnesses is an unreferenced claim that Contra Costa County has the nation's highest cancer rate. Really? Would that be the signature malignancies associated with radiation exposure such as thyroid cancer? Or is it perhaps other forms of cancer that have other well known causes such as colon, prostate, stomach, or lung cancer?

Port Chicago was rebuilt a week later yet, there are no reports of any radiation illness or burns at the time of the explosion or cleanup. Presumably none of the cleanup and rebuilding crews were wearing NBC protective gear and yet, they escaped unscathed which is in stark contrast to the dozens of workers who died in short order after being near the Chernobyl reactor even with protective suits and breathing apparatus. Fiftyseven years after the detonation in NM the background radiation at the crater is 10 times the normal background radiation (which is higher than most places to begin with because of uranium ore deposits). Why is there no mysterious radiation in Contra Costa County?

<http://www.alamogordo.com/trinity.html#trinitite>

Let's make a really bold assumption that the military would have tested a nuclear fission bomb somewhere before loading one onto a ship bound for WestPac (presumably to be piloted through the Kamikazes into a Japanese harbor). Where did they test it? If they tested it without being discovered (let's say in Nevada) why on earth would they move their test operations for Trinity to NM where it was bound to be seen from Alamogordo? Some of the old timers who worked on the Trinity Project continued to work at White Sands Missile range and retired in my home town of Las Cruces. Some of these men were within earshot of Oppenheimer when he made his quote from the Hindu Book of the Dead. These witnesses are absolutely convincing in descriptions of specualtions by Oppenheimer, Teller, and oters about what would happen when they detonated the device. Their accounts, while not made for this purpose, make it completely clear that no one present, including Oppenheimer, Teller, and Fermi had ever witnessed a fission explosion on any scale. If they were seeing it for the first time 364 days after the Port Chicago blast, who supervised the other test?

Why should I believe that the missing cargo manifests of two boxcars indicate that they carried components of a fission bomb? They are just as likely to have carried the space aliens that would crash their flying saucer three years later at Roswell.

Somebody's been watching too much Muldur & Scully. I will set aside a place in my mind for the "Port Chicago Nuclear Bomb" theory right next to the "Apollo missions were faked on a Hollywood sound stage" garbage.

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**Author:** [sunrayman](#)



**Number:** 13300 of 53731

**Subject:** Re: At The Bar: Port Chicago Blast: 1943 Nuke?

**Date:** 1/9/2003 11:38 PM

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*Recommendations: 1*

*Thank you for recommending this post to our Best of feature.*

*To say that I'm skeptical of that a fission event occurred at Port Chicago would be a huge understatement.*

---

Ditto.

Radioactive results from a nuclear explosion could not he "hidden" despite the best efforts of a Govt geared up for WWII.

☪~sunray

Author: [SirYoda](#)    

Number: 13301 of 53731

Subject: Re: At The Bar: Port Chicago Blast: 1943 Nuke?

Date: 1/9/2003 11:53 PM

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*There is scarcely any discussion (I did not read all of the links) about residual background radiation or fallout.*

-----

This is of course the "golden BB." You have the following "givens" for Port Chicago:

Really Large Explosion (but within the range of a chemical explosion) + little to no significant evidence of radiation = It was a conventional explosion. QED. Case closed.

But, I would ask Aeg to read just one (rather long) link:

<http://www.sonic.net/sentinel/usa4.html>

*<snip> (EDITOR'S NOTE: In January 1990, the Napa Sentinel commenced a series of articles concerning the explosion at Port Chicago in San Francisco Bay on July 17, 1944. Several other articles were produced to support the theory that the explosion was nuclear. **Over the years, the Sentinel has been challenged on one point of the articles: If it was a nuclear explosion what about the radiation?** (emphasis added). For several years our research team has devoted itself to searching for records of other atomic explosions of the era to determine the levels of radiation association with those tests. This four part article addresses the question of radiation at Port Chicago.)*

*From Part III: Throughout the years, there have been several critics of the Port Chicago nuclear explosion theory. Among the most noted were the late Russ Coughlan, general manager of KGO TV and his producer Bob Anderson. In their documentary entitled "The Mystery of Port Chicago", they discounted the nuclear theory based on what they believe was the absence of flash burns among victims, temporary blindness and radiation sickness, such as reported from Hiroshima and Nagasaki.*

*Nuclear explosions produce temperatures on the order of millions of degrees centigrade, whereas conventional explosions generate heat on the order of thousands of degrees. In addition, at the time of a nuclear detonation, intense penetrating radiation emanates from the fireball.*

*This article will present an explanation of how a nuclear explosion at Port Chicago could have features which would prevent flash blindness and flash burns, and also explain how it was that the effects of the radiation exposure on the personnel at the facility would not have been as obvious as KGO indicated.*

*Given the many variables which surround nuclear explosions, such as weather, placement, potential yield, type of device, and topography, it is not always possible to judge in advance what will happen. Therefore, nuclear explosions can be very unique events and do not always duplicate each other.*

Read the entire article as the author compares Port Chicago with the "best possible" comparison available: The Bikini Atoll sub-surface tests of 1946.

Let me be clear: I tend to believe that the explosion WAS conventional. But I'm willing to think that it is not beyond the realm of possibility that it may have been an accidental fission event (and much more probable than, say, aliens are at an underground hanger at Area 51 or Wright-Pat).

Yoda

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**Author:** [SirYoda](#)    

**Number:** 13302 of 53731

**Subject:** Re: At The Bar: Port Chicago Blast: 1943 Nuke?

**Date:** 1/9/2003 11:55 PM

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PS.

Besides, what's a good Pub without the occasional "conspiracy theory??"

;-)

Yoda



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**Author:** [aegamemnon](#)    

**Number:** 13303 of 53731

**Subject:** Re: At The Bar: Port Chicago Blast: 1943 Nuke?

**Date:** 1/10/2003 2:00 AM

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Even after reading that particular link, it appears to me that the reporters are doing a contortion act that puts the Cirque de Soleil to shame to explain away the lack of residual radiation.

Here's the crux of the radiation aspect in my opinion. If with the technology available to him in the early 1970s Louis Leakey could accurately measure the age of Lucy's bones by quantifying the presence of radioactive Carbon 14, it is utterly inconceivable to me that with technology thirty years more advanced that no one would have found astronomically greater amounts of U235/238 at Port Chicago IF a nuclear event (even the hybrid dirty bomb that the authors call the Mark II) had occurred there any time more recently than the Pleiocene epoch. If they we can detect the presence of infinitesimal amounts of Carbon 14 in 100,000 year old bones, why can't we

detect anomalous amounts of fission byproducts at port Chicago? Take a core sample from 27 feet deep in the mud in the harbor for crying out loud.

Now, to show you that I'm not entirely without a soft spot for conspiracy theories I'll confess to harboring sympathy for one about the use of nuclear weapons in the closing days of WW II. In the book *Beyond Courage: One Regiment Against Japan* by Dorothy Cave ([www.yuccatreepress.com](http://www.yuccatreepress.com)), a US POW tells of a puzzling incident that happened in early August 1945. The soldier and his fellow POWs had been a prisoners since the fall of Corregidor and were presently in a labor camp in a coastal city (possibly Fukuoka or Kobe but my memory is failing me and the book is in storage right now) on the Japanese mainland.

One day, a US aircraft with fighters escorting it overflies the city and drops leaflets. The POWs are overjoyed at seeing a US plane but cannot read the leaflets written in Japanese. The next day, another lone US aircraft, presumed to be a bomber because of its high altitude and multiple engines, flies over the harbor and drops a load of bombs. The American soldiers are all watching and cheering the plane (knowing they will be severely beaten but not caring). Rather than a load of bombs the soldiers observe what appears to be a single bomb airburst harmlessly over the harbor at an altitude of about 1000 feet. They are disappointed that they did not witness any real payback but are happy when they are notified by their captors four days later that the war is over and Japan has surrendered. Only months later do the former POWs learn about the nuclear bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and wonder if they had not witnessed a third bomb that fizzled.

It seems plausible to me that they did for the following reason. As the war ended and the US began to realize that the USSR was a serious threat and had expansionist designs around the world, it would have been of paramount importance for the only nuclear armed nation to ensure that the rest of the world believed that our new weapon had a 100% success rate in combat vice only 66%. A dud nuke is the type of secret that would have remained classified for at least fifty years.

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**Author:** [DoctorBombay](#)     

**Number:** 13310 of 53731

**Subject:** Re: At The Bar: Port Chicago Blast: 1943 Nuke?

**Date:** 1/10/2003 8:00 AM

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Nice conspiracy theory.

It doesn't touch Roswell though.

Why are documents relating to Roswell still clasified anyhow?



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Author: SirYoda    

Number: 13320 of 53731

Subject: Re: At The Bar: Port Chicago Blast: 1943 Nuke?

Date: 1/10/2003 8:27 AM

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*If they we can detect the presence of infinitesimal amounts of Carbon 14 in 100,000 year old bones, why can't we detect anomalous amounts of fission byproducts at port Chicago? Take a core sample from 27 feet deep in the mud in the harbor for crying out loud.*

-----

<Conspiratorial Whisper>

Port Chicago is still part of a Naval Installation (true, as far as I know), and the Evil Govt "Men in Black" secretly excavated all the dirt from the harbor and it is stored in a secret underground bunker not far from Roswell, NM. (yeah, sure!).

</Conspiratorial Whisper>

True.....the issue of apparent lack of evidence of radiation remains the "long pole in the tent." As far as I know, nobody has been allowed to scientifically examine the site.

Yoda



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Author: stevpete     

Number: 13381 of 53731

Subject: Re: At The Bar: Port Chicago Blast: 1943 Nuke?

Date: 1/10/2003 1:28 PM

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I would have to agree with aegamemnon in that I am *"skeptical of that a fission event occurred at Port Chicago"*. By way of disclosure, I should say that I did not take the time to skim all the links. It appears that people are referring to a dirty nuke as if it is a partial high-order supercritical nuclear fission event. It has been now some 25 years since I was weapons officer on a submarine, so maybe things have changed considerably, but I was taught:

It is hard to "set-off" a nuclear bomb. Enough enriched fissable material must be forced into *very* close proximity *for long enough* to all receive a dose of the correct energy of fission neutrons to allow fission to proceed through a sizeable percentage of the fissable material. This is typically done by a very sophisticated network of high explosive (conventional) shaped charges (i.e. the charges are purposely designed to give a particular push in a particular direction), which are ignited in a precise order with nano-second timing required. This is needed to get a supercritical mass.

A supercritical mass is enough fissible material close enough together so that radiation from one chunk of material hits enough nuclei from other chunks of material to propagate enough neutrons of the correct energy level so that all of the fissible material is "instantaneously" fissioned, or split, releasing  $E=mc^2$  energy.

Usually what happens is that the energy released from the fissible material goes into metal and air and not enough "slow" neutrons from the first uranium molecules to be split hit the nuclei of other fissible material to start a chain reaction.

A poorly designed or poorly executed (i.e. "crude") nuclear device might *start* what is hoped to become a chain reaction, but the result will be that the heat generated causes the fissible material to fall apart in a very low yield dirty event. Chain reaction fission does not take place, because now the nuclear material is not in close enough proximity to each other to be a critical mass. Remember, the fissible material in a device as small as a bomb is not a critical mass, it is too far apart for a chain reaction. Close enough, in this context, is very close indeed. It only becomes a critical mass if it is pushed together close enough with sufficient *force* to hold it together as a critical mass for a sufficient *duration* to allow the chain reaction to fully proceed.

Very often, in order to get a small device to fission rapidly, tritium gas, which is radioactive, is injected in order to enrich the initial fission event(s). Split second timing is required for this as well. Usually, the tritium cannister is removed until just prior to arming the device. It will not ever proceed to a fission event without the tritium cannister. If this technique was employed at Chicago, (doubtful), they would not have installed the tritium cannisters for storage during transport.

It is *very hard* to do a nuclear bomb that works. Somewhat easier is a so-called dirty bomb. This is basically a conventional bomb that spews a bunch of radioactivity all around. Not many ergs of energy are yielded unless nuclear material is converted to a bunch of neutrons by a chain reaction fission event.

The energy yield of a nuclear device which was "blown up" by a nearby conventional explosion will not give any significant energy yield. It will have massive amounts of unfissioned radioactive material blown hither and yon by the conventional explosion. The radioactivity from this, as has been noted would be impossible to hide.

The energy yield from a poorly designed and executed nuclear device which blew up as designed and which did give significant ( $10^{12}$  ergs) yield but did not give Hiroshima / Nagasaki level yields, while theoretically could be as low as Chicago energy yield, would of necessity also have a very high radioactivity signature. Low yield = lots of unfissioned material spewed out = high degree of radioactivity = easy to detect.

There is no way this was a nuclear or (new-kew-lur) event, in my opinion.

Steve

Author: UKBB    

Number: 13448 of 53731

Subject: Re: At The Bar: Port Chicago Blast: 1943 Nuke?

Date: 1/12/2003 7:35 PM

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*Did any radio stations go off the air, did electrical power die in the surrounding areas,*

Doesn't that require a high altitude burst?

UKBB



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Author: MsMike1  

Number: 13807 of 53731

Subject: Re: At The Bar: Port Chicago Blast: 1943 Nuke?

Date: 1/16/2003 8:25 PM

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This is an interesting piece of history! I wonder the connection to the accident and incident across the Suisun Bay. As follows:

Here in Contra Costa County we regret the 1944 explosion and incidents leading to with the strike of African American workers at Naval Weapons Station directly across the river from the Suisun ship. Repeated high risk duties at the Naval Weapons Station led to complaints and retaliation (based on race). The strike occurred because of safety risks identified by the workers, however black military members were still trying to prove themselves brave, intelligent and worthy of the uniform. The navy had accepted men of Color, only to assign them to hard labor behind the scenes.

The strike and resulting court marshals have been forgiven/recinded. For those that survive today, the years of injustice, guilt and racial ridicule have been a terrible burden.

If we were to discover/verify that there was an A (H)Bomb detonated nearby, or even at the NW Station, I wonder if it offers some validation to those who were there. The risk becomes even more obvious and important historically. Today, the questions would be about responsibility for loss of life, environmental impact, and health risk to the surrounding community for years. Any data about that to show the radioactivity in the area? How about fish with three eyes?

Thanks especially for the references, I will read them! Try the SF Examiner/Oakland Tribune too.

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**Author:** [DoctorBombay](#)     

**Number:** 13809 of 53731

**Subject:** Re: At The Bar: Port Chicago Blast: 1943 Nuke?

**Date:** 1/16/2003 8:44 PM

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Thank you for making your first post ever at the pub.

Welcome and enjoy your first drink on the house.

TJ  
Part-time proprietor



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**Author:** [frankwomble](#)   

**Number:** 13864 of 53731

**Subject:** Re: At The Bar: Port Chicago Blast: 1943 Nuke?

**Date:** 1/17/2003 11:47 AM

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Sorry, but it's a little ludicrous to believe that the Port Chicago explosion was nuclear in nature. There are too many unique effects from even so-called 'small yield' nukes to mistake them for conventional explosions. (Heat and radiation being the two most obvious.)

And conventional explosions can be quite large and dramatic when enough high explosives are packed into a small enough area -- witness the magazine explosion that sank the USS Arizona, for example.



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