

NAVY DEPARTMENT

IMMEDIATE RELEASE
PRESS AND RADIO

JULY 20, 1944

COMMANDING OFFICER PRAISES NEGRO PERSONNEL WHO SERVED
AT PORT CHICAGO AFTER EXPLOSION MONDAY NIGHT

Negro Naval personnel attached to both the Naval magazine at Port Chicago, California, and the Naval ammunition depot at Mare Island Navy Yard, California, acquitted themselves with "great credit," during the explosion at Port Chicago Monday night, according to Captain Merrill T. Kinne, U.S.N.R., Commanding Officer.

"Under those emergency conditions," he said, "regular members of our complement and volunteers from Mare Island displayed creditable coolness and bravery."

Negro bluejackets comprise a large percentage of the Port Chicago Naval establishment enlisted personnel.

Captain Kinne said it was difficult to single out individuals who participated in rescue and preventive operations at Port Chicago. Four Negro enlisted men did, however, move boldly into a danger area around boxcars loaded with ammunition and quell flames, he said.

They were: Richard L. McTere, Seaman, First Class, of Detroit, Michigan; William E. Anderson, Seaman, First Class, of Chicago, Illinois; E. S. Allen, Seaman, First Class, of Detroit; John Andrew Haskins, Pharmacist's Mate, First Class, of Washington, D. C.

Some 200 Negro sailors volunteered at once at the Ammunition Depot, Mare Island, for service at Port Chicago during the emergency Monday night.

Declaring their conduct outstanding, Captain Kinne named the following men as having been observed in courageous pursuit of their duty: Richard E. Webb, Gunner's Mate, Second Class, of Chicago; Bernard N. Clagett, Gunner's Mate, Second Class, of Los Angeles; Ivan A. Hoyle, Motor Machinist's Mate, Second Class, of Chicago; James A. Martinez, Carpenter's Mate, Second Class, of Shreveport, Louisiana; Floyd E. Scarborough, Motor Machinist's Mate, Third Class, of Washington, D. C.; Harry Fortune, Seaman, First Class, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Wayman R. Nelson, Motor Machinist's Mate, Third Class, of Kansas City, Kansas; Robert Lee Williams, Electrician's Mate, Third Class, of Lexington, Kentucky; William T. Harris, Shipfitter, Third Class, of Bloomfield, New Jersey; William H. DeWitt, Seaman, Second Class, of Pittsfield, Massachusetts; Edward Harrington, Pharmacist's Mate, Third Class, of New York City; Archie B. Covington, Hospital Apprentice, First Class, of Chicago.

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STATEMENT OF REAR ADMIRAL CARLETON H. WRIGHT, U.S.N.

Rear Admiral Carleton H. Wright, U.S.N., Commandant of the Twelfth Naval District, stated today:

"I am gratified to learn, as was to be expected, Negro personnel attached to the Naval magazine, Port Chicago, performed bravely and efficiently in the emergency at that station last Monday night.

"These men, in the months that they served at that command, did excellent work in an important segment of the District's overseas combat supply system. As real Navy men, they simply carried on in the crisis attendant on the explosion, in accordance with our service's highest traditions."

RRC San Bruno

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Twelfth Naval District
OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
Room 105 Federal Office Building
San Francisco, 2, California

FOR RELEASE THURSDAY A.M., JULY 20, 1944

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Kansas; Robert Lee Williams, EM3/c, Lexington, Kentucky; William T. Harris, SF3/c, Bloomfield, N.J.; William H. DeWitt, S2/c, Pittsfield, Mass.; Edward Harrington, PhM3/c, New York City; Archie B. Covington, HAL/c, Chicago.

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JAMES BASSETT, JR.
Lieutenant Commander, USNR
Public Relations Officer

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