

USS Mount Hood, Manus Island, PNG – 10 Nov 1944

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Munitions Safety Information Analysis Center



On the morning of the 10th November 1944, the cargo ship U.S.S. Mount Hood (AE-11) was anchored in Seeadler Harbour, Manus Island, Papua New Guinea with an estimated 3.4 million kg of ammunition on board. The ship was extremely busy, acting as the primary source of ammunition for ships of the Third Fleet, and men were in the process of moving ammunition in all five of her holds.

At 0855 hrs, an explosion shot up from amidships to more than masthead height and in seconds the bulk of the ammunition aboard detonated in an enormous explosion.

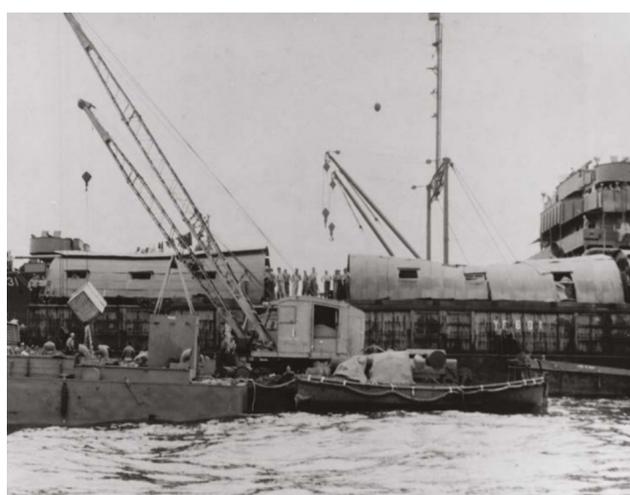
Smoke mushroomed 2 km into the air and obscured the ship and the surrounding vicinity for a radius of approximately 500 m on all sides. When the smoke lifted a few minutes later, only small pieces of debris were to be seen. The ship and all personnel on board had disappeared.

The only survivors from the Mount Hood were 18 men who were away from the ship at the time of the explosion.

The concussion and metal fragments hurled from the ship also caused casualties and damage to ships and small craft up to 2 km away. The repair ship U.S.S. Mindanao, which was broadside-on to the blast, was the most seriously damaged. All personnel topside on the Mindanao were killed outright, and dozens of men were killed or wounded below decks as numerous heavy fragments from Mount Hood penetrated the side plating. Eighty-two of the Mindanao's crew died.

The damage to other vessels required more than 100,000 man-hours to repair, while 22 small boats and landing craft were sunk, destroyed, or damaged beyond repair; 371 sailors were injured from all ships in the harbour.

At the time of the explosion the USS Mount Hood was in 35 m of water; the force of the explosion blasted through the water and created a trough in the ocean floor more than 100 m long, 20 m wide and 10 m deep. The largest piece of debris recovered was 40 cm by 25 cm, providing evidence of the force of the detonation.



372 Fatalities

371 Injuries

Unknown Damages