

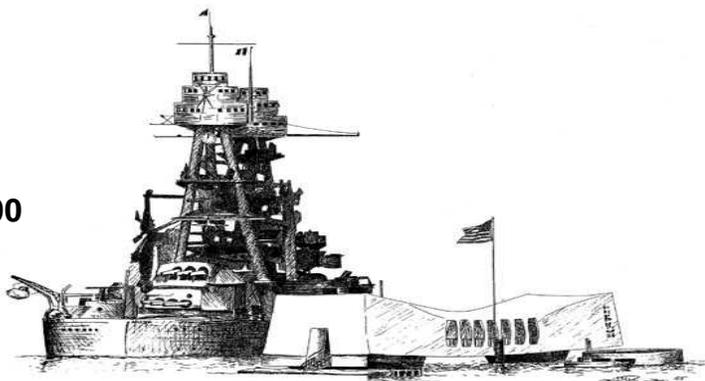
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Navy to mark 65th Anniversary of West Loch Disaster

PEARL HARBOR - Naval Station Pearl Harbor will host a commemoration ceremony on Thursday, May 21st to mark the 65th anniversary of the West Loch disaster.

On May 21, 1944, as 29 tank landing ships (LSTs) gathered in Pearl Harbor's West Loch to load ammunition in preparation for the invasion of Saipan, LST 353 exploded. A chain reaction of explosions followed that left six LSTs sunk, and several more severely damaged. In all, 163 men were killed, and 396 wounded. It was Pearl Harbor's second greatest disaster in terms of casualties. Though the incident could have caused a serious operational delay, replacements of ships and men were quickly rounded up and the LSTs got underway only one day late as the invasion of Saipan took place on schedule.

Four survivors from the incident will return to Pearl Harbor for the May 21st ceremony to pay honor to their fallen shipmates. Following the ceremony, guests will be able to conduct a floral tribute in the waters near the rusted hulk of LST 480, which is the only reminder left of that fateful day.

The pierside ceremony begins at 8 a.m. at Whiskey Piers, located at Navy Munitions Command East Asia Division's Pearl Harbor Detachment. Guests will board a white boat from Naval Station Pearl Harbor to the ceremony location.

(NOTE: Media interested in covering the event should contact Agnes Tauyan at 473-2875 or 554-4813 by 3 p.m., May 20th. Media will be met at the Pass & ID office parking lot at 6:45 a.m. on May 21st and escorted on base.)

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