

## THE KOREAN WAR (JUNE 1950 – JULY 1953)

When President Truman ordered United States forces into Korea in June 1950, the Department of the Navy had just launched an austerity program. “All jobs must be fully justified,” the program mandated. “Expenditures for overhead must be reduced and held at a minimum and the greatest productive return for funds available must be maintained.”

Locally, Naval Magazine Port Chicago was funded for no more than 608 civilian personnel.<sup>3</sup> Now it became necessary to recruit workers for all departments. 1,500 people were hired during the first thirty days of the Korean War. The civilian population peaked at 2,700 in September 1950.

### Number of Personnel at U.S. Naval Magazine Port Chicago

	<i>Navy</i> (officers and enlisted)	<i>USMC</i> (officers and enlisted)	<i>Civilian</i>
April 1943	549	59	100 <sup>4</sup>
January 1944	750	70	142 <sup>5</sup>
July 1945	4,683	231	654 <sup>6</sup>
October 1948	136	—	681 <sup>7</sup>
September 1950	—	—	2,700 <sup>8</sup>
May 1952	—	—	1,350 <sup>9</sup>
May 1954	92	142	1,000 <sup>10</sup>
May 1956	70	154	1,000 <sup>11</sup>

The number of civilian employees remained steady into the mid-1950s as unused ammunition being returned from the Pacific was unloaded and renovated at NMPC.<sup>12</sup>

The extreme demands made upon the Employment Division at the onset of the Korean War were felt keenly by the Ordnance Department as well. It had only recently relocated from the Tidal to the Inland Area; organizational and procedural changes remained unresolved. Nevertheless, Ordnance did what needed to be done. It managed to increase monthly shipments of ammunition from 5,000 tons in June 1950 to 59,054 tons that September. In the end nearly three-quarters of the ammunition shipped from the Pacific Coast for use in Korea by the Army, Navy and Air Force crossed the piers at Port Chicago. This involved 1,001 ships and 1,206 barges. “We were moving out a ship and a barge a day, and that’s a lot of work,” noted the magazine’s Executive Officer, Commander M.F. Hathaway.<sup>13</sup>

The Marine Barracks came up shorthanded as well, although not for lack of funding. Because of rapidly increased deployments overseas there was a three month period during 1950 when civilian guards replaced Marine sentries at the main gates until replacements could be had.<sup>14</sup>

Naval Magazine Port Chicago had weighed in successfully as a major player in national security. It would do so again later in the decade during the Lebanese Crisis (July – October 1958<sup>15</sup>) when, it was noted, “If [this base] had failed, the fleet would not have been ready.”<sup>16</sup>

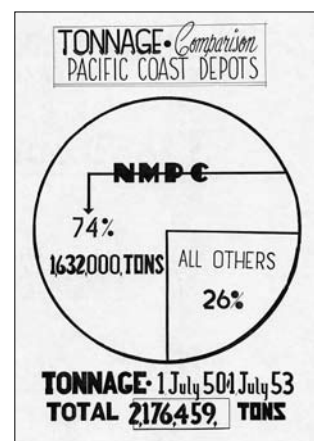


Chart presented to the House Armed Services Subcommittee at NMPC on August 30, 1955 (National Archives – San Bruno; 181-76-0308)