

Six Killed In Explosion At Naval Post

Sitka, Alaska, Oct. 12 (AP).—An unexplained explosion in an underground dynamite magazine at the Sitka naval air station today killed at least six service men, injured dozens of persons in the nearby fishing village and damaged defense and private construction.

The blast reverberated across Baranof island just as hundreds of civilians and army families were listening to the benediction in a Sitka church at 12:10 p. m. The concussion sent windows cascading into the streets in showers of broken glass, inflicting cuts on many women and children walking out of the church and along the narrow streets of this island town.

The list of dead, as provided by naval officials, included Capt. Francis C. Allen of Kentfield, Cal., a former official of the Standard Oil Company of California at San Francisco and more recently provost marshal at the air station. Others were Pvt. Ralph E. Kirkbridge, Los Gatos, Cal.; Hedley C. Easterbrooks; Pvt. Frank E. Hayton, San Francisco, and Pvt. Albert A. Spurling, Evertsville, W. Va. All these were soldiers.

Thomas A. Baskom, a Marine, was the sixth fatality.

Officers Homes Damaged.

Many of the homes built recently for officers as part of the \$5,000,000 improvements on the air station were among the structures damaged. Although the station is being operated by the navy, an army detachment has also been assigned here, as well as a number of Marines.

Navy reluctance to give details made an accurate check of property damage inside the station impossible. Much of the construction there has been completed, including large hangars which may have been endangered. In Millerville, a tiny civilian settlement at the gates of the government property, windows were blown out of the station and houses. Sitka properly is some distance from Millerville.

A navy official said the dynamite which exploded had been stored in the magazine by contractors employed to build hangars and houses on the government property.

Caused by Grass Fire.

Cmdr. J. R. Tate, commanding the air station, said 15 persons were being treated for minor hurts.

The dynamite magazine, located on a small island off shore from the naval station proper, was being used by the Siems-Drake Puget Sound Company, contracting firm.

Unofficial sources said the explosion was caused by a grass fire which spread over the small island. The dead men, these sources said, were on a fire truck which approached the magazine just as more than 43,000 pounds of dynamite exploded from heat. The navy confirmed this in part by listing a fire truck as lost in the explosion.
