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# Delay to Montgomery report may be good news, says MP

by Fiona Cooper  
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THE latest report on the bomb-laden SS Richard Montgomery will now not be released until later this month.

The 2010 survey on the ship, which sunk off Sheerness in 1944 with thousands of bombs on board, revealed it was deteriorating more quickly than in recent years.

The results of the latest survey – carried out in the past few months by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency – were due to be announced in November by transport minister Mike Penning at a meeting with Sheppey MP Gordon Henderson and Tracey Crouch, MP for Chatham and Aylesford.

That meeting was cancelled due to ministerial business and has been re-scheduled



**SUNKEN:** The masts of the SS Richard Montgomery wreckage off the coast of Sheerness

www.ssrichardmontgomery.com

Picture: Barry Crayford

for Monday, December 19. Mr Henderson said he was not alarmed by the delay.

"In many ways it is a good thing," he said. "While I don't want to pre-empt anything, I

feel if there was something critical in latest survey, I am sure they would have wanted to have called a more urgent meeting."

The SS Richard Mont-

gomery, an American Liberty ship built during the Second World War, sank after it became grounded on a bank and broke in two.

A salvage operation had to be abandoned and the wreck remains packed with explosives, including more than 2,000 cases of cluster fragmentation bombs, nearly 600 500lb semi-armour-piercing bombs and at least 1,000 additional 1,000lb bombs.

An explosion could trigger a tidal wave up to one metre high, destroying some coastal communities and causing as much as £1 billion worth of damage.

A summary of the 2010 report showed greater levels of deterioration than has been seen in previous years, which may suggest the rate of its decline in some areas of the hull has accelerated. The results point towards significant collapse and loss of munitions becoming a more realistic possibility in the medium term, although there appears to be no imminent danger.