

PRESS RELEASE

USS Pueblo

COMMAND INFORMATION BUREAU

U.S. NAVAL AMPHIBIOUS BASE, CORONADO, CALIFORNIA

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CIS RFL. NO. 58-69
17 February 1969

PROCEEDINGS OF THE COURT OF INQUIRY

17 FEBRUARY 1969.

The court convened at 1 p.m., Feb. 17, 1969 in open court. Lt. Edward Murphy, Executive Officer in Pueblo, was the first witness. He said the regularly assigned talker for the 1 JV circuit was not manning the phones because of modified General Quarters (GQ), and that hand-held phone sets were used for this circuit on the bridge.

Lt. Murphy said that the Military Code of Conduct was discussed frequently on the ship; that it was the subject of several articles in the Plan of the Day from time to time, and that he believed all personnel received word that only name, rank, and serial number would be given.

Murphy said he heard some interrogation in progress on the train from Wonsan to Pyongyang, with someone giving information consisting of the cover story that had been provided for Pueblo-- that they were involved in measuring electronic radiation caused by suspects.

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When it came his turn for interrogation in the railroad car he told his captors the same story he had heard others relate during earlier interrogations on board the railroad car.

After the train ride they were led into a four-story brick building and he was assigned a room with enlisted personnel. He, Ginther, Spear, and Rosales were quartered in a 10 by 18 foot room. The windows had been nailed shut in obvious preparation for the arrival of the crew, and the exact number of bunks necessary had been installed, giving the appearance that the exact number of crewmen was known well in advance. Murphy stated "Glorious General" said later the North Koreans had been expecting to capture Banner rather than the Pueblo, and showed Murphy a copy of a message captured from Pueblo that showed a schedule for Banner and Pueblo.

Shortly after arrival the crew was taken as a group into a large room where they were accused of violating territorial waters and spying. Murphy said he and all the officers were as one in denying the charges. The essence of the North Korean allegation was that Pueblo was the first ship of an invasion force. The crew was told that each man would be shot by sundown.

The following morning individual interrogations commenced. Murphy said he was taken before a 3-star Korean colonel, and a panel of officers who sat like a jury. Two officers worked with Lt. Murphy in preparing the documents used to support allegations of intrusions. Murphy said in response to questioning from Counsel for the Court that the Koreans knew by documents confiscated from the ship that he was the ship's navigator.

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Murphy said that he initially denied categorically any allegations of intruding. He said the initial interrogations were not very violent. About the 27th or 28th of January his captors tried to get concurrence that Paeblo had intruded at a point 4-5 miles from Ye De island.

This attempt started with three physical sessions. Murphy said a stick was placed behind his knees and he was forced to place his knees and the tops of his feet on the floor while holding his body vertical, with hands in the air for extended periods. He did not provide any information, and was returned to his room.

The next time he was forced to assume the same position while holding a chair over his head, then was repeatedly kicked and shoved from in front and behind. One kick opened a wound near his ear and bloodied his mouth. After he agreed to confess he was sent to his room; then he decided against confessing. About January 29, "Super C" called Murphy back and offered to play a tape recording of Cmdr. Bucher confessing to the intrusions and to spying. Murphy asked to see Cmdr. Bucher instead, but the request was denied. Murphy said he later heard what seemed to be such a tape being played somewhere in the building, but could not be sure it was Cmdr. Bucher's voice.

In a subsequent session an officer told Murphy he had authority to shoot him, and asked if he was prepared to die. When Murphy replied in the affirmative, he was asked if he would like to write a will. Murphy declined. He was then stripped to his shorts and his hands were bound with wire, and guards kicked his

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knees. A number of Korean officers entered the room while Murphy was forced to squat on the balls of his feet with a stick behind his knees. Murphy said he became unconscious five or six times during this session. After the fifth time he passed out, he said he heard some officers in the passageway had agreed to talk, and he decided that after hearing the confession recording that it was senseless to remain the only holdout. He demanded to see the senior colonel and was allowed to do so after further punishment. When taken to see the senior colonel he was unable to talk, and was returned to his room, and told to write a confession. An officer stayed with him till about 5:30 a.m., giving him phrases to use in his confession.

He stated he started drawing the chart subsequently used in Korean propaganda in late January or early February, and that the six alleged intrusions he originally plotted were reconstructed from erroneous positions taken from the position log he maintained on the ship. Eleven others alleged in a subsequent propaganda release were taken from a Loran log. Murphy said that these eleven positions were all erroneous positions, and were only a small percentage of those listed.

Murphy estimated that it was the 27th or 28th of January when he first heard the recording of what he assumed was the CO's confession. He said hearing the recording influenced him to give the same information.

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Asked about the procedure of joint ventures by the crew in drafting and signing petitions to people in the United States, Murphy replied that a committee composed of all the officers and some of the senior enlisted personnel and the senior oceanographer was formed, but that this later included only the officers, who tried to inject as much stilted English as possible as a tipoff that the confession was coerced.

The North Koreans told the crew that the matter was a civilian one, and that the crew, as spies, were not under the protection of the Geneva Convention.

Murphy said in response to questions from Counsel for the Court that the crew resisted writing letters to Korean officials and to officials in the United States.

He said at one point he was lectured on his responsibility for the welfare of the crew and the crew was threatened if he did not cooperate. Murphy said that he believed he could better resist if he could keep his wits instead of being beaten senseless. In response to questions concerning medical treatment, Lt. Murphy said only superficial treatment was afforded the crew.

He testified that after 40 days the crew was moved from their original building, which was quite old, to a newer building with four stories. He said that all the propaganda films shot in the earlier building were later shot in the new surroundings.

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Murphy said he could detect no studied isolation plan for the crew, but said three specific petty officers and others emerged as leaders but they were relieved of leadership positions by the North Koreans because of their strong pro-American attitude. He said the crew made every effort to keep the chain of command intact.

Asked how the petition letters were presented to the crew by the North Koreans, Lt. Murphy said they were told that the letters were the work of a committee. They were brought in in small groups and assured of the Commanding Officer's desire that they sign.

Murphy said he was aware of no serious disciplinary problems and that all were handled by the petty officers concerned.

In response to questions about diet, Murphy said the basic diet was soup, that the crew was initially given bread, but switched to rice as being more nutritious. He said two crewmembers developed diarrhea because of unsanitary food served from buckets. He said he lost approximately forty-five pounds.

He said the crew was given three chances to write letters, and that the crew was anxious to tell their families they were in reasonably good health. He said when he drafted one letter, the draft was returned to him with much of the material deleted and several phrases inserted for his use.

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Murphy stated that his letter dated March 24 was started after the March 5 move to the new building. They were required to prepare 3 copies of the final draft of each letter, sometimes taking 5 or 6 re-dos before being accepted.

Murphy stated that he tried in his letters to convey the point that he was of keen mind and on top of the situation. He received confirmation later that this word did get out. He cited various attempts to pass the word concerning the fallacy of the crew's statements. He added that they were told to write letters by the North Koreans, and that he was threatened by one officer with treatment similar to that he received on January 29 if he did not write to Secretary Rusk. He recalled there being three press conferences, all being completely rehearsed in advance, with both the questions and the answers known to them about a week beforehand.

In response to questions about "Hell Week," he said that by that time (Dec. 11) they were required to use Korean words and phrases in dealing with the guards. He noted that he was not severely beaten during Hell Week, but was unable to explain precisely why he was not beaten with boards as were other crewmembers.

Members of the court then questioned him on the "capture phase." In response to questioning about his relationship with the commanding officer, Murphy replied that there were some differences of opinion due to differences in background and training, but none that caused any conflict. He answered various questions about means of communicating during GQ and noted that there weren't any people who were unemployed on the bridge during GQ.

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He stated that the North Korean ships remained about 500 yards off after the first boarding attempt. In response to questioning about defending the ship with Thompson submachine guns from the portholes, he agreed that it might have been possible if the men were standing on something, but that he hadn't really considered defending the ship with Thompsons. He stated there were exposed men on the decks of the PT boats. He further said the decision to surrender was not his, he did not have all the information the commanding officer did, but he believed the decision would have been "close to what" he would have done.

Returning to the detention phase, he covered items concerning beatings and communication with other members of the crew. He said the North Koreans constantly tried to pin a CIA identification on him. He said the dark-complected men of the crew were initially given a bad time in Wonsan. He noted that no man was more isolated than the rest, and the North Koreans tried to screen conversation whenever a group was together and they never had an unsupervised gathering.

When asked what was the greatest single factor in his signing a confession, he said it was the knowledge that others already had done so, and added that his philosophy at that time was: "Why should I fight the war singlehanded when others have fallen?" There was no chance for special consideration or preferential treatment of any individual. The normal chain of command did not exist, that they used any individual member of the crew to transmit information as available.

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He stated the Geneva Convention was discussed with him by his captors and they said it was not the same one that the North Koreans had signed. He was told that they were not members of a war party. When queried as to whether he passed classified material to the North Koreans, he replied he had not passed any such information to them that they did not already have by virtue of captured documents, etc. He said the officers took part in the beatings with the exception of Senior Colonel, and that the enlisted men also did the beatings. In conversation with the Counsel for the Party, he agreed that the North Koreans had violated most of the particulars of the Geneva Convention that applied to Preble's crew. He said also that he did believe the North Koreans might try to kill him, but thought he perhaps was not their primary target. He voiced his belief that the basic principle of the Code of Conduct should be retained, but that the state of the art had changed radically since it came into being, and that its provisions might have to be revised in order to permit individuals to cope with the situation that exists today. He stated that under the circumstances, Cmdr. Bucher did his job as well as any Commanding Officer could do.