



Navy Photo

U.S. Navy intelligence ship Pueblo before its capture.

## *Pueblo-Type Spy Missions Are Officially Ended by U.S.*

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By George C. Wilson  
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Pueblo experiment officially ended yesterday as the Pentagon announced it was retiring that type of spy ship to save money.

The epitaph of the program that cost the nation so much in pride and pain was two sentences in a Pentagon press release:

"Among the support ships to be retired are two intelligence collection ships, the USS Banner and USS Palm Beach," sisters of the Pueblo.

"Appropriate arrangements have been made for their tasks to be assumed by other ships and aircraft," the Pentagon added.

Thus President Nixon, as President Eisenhower did before him on the U-2 spy plane, has decided to turn to advanced technology rather than risk another confrontation with the Communists on this type of ferret.

Gen. Eisenhower and the intelligence leaders of his day substituted the Samos spy satellite for the plane Gary Powers flew over Russia in the late 1950s before the Soviets knocked him out of the sky.

The U-2, Central Intelligence Agency leaders had assured Gen. Eisenhower, flew too high for Soviet Mig fighters to reach or surface-to-air missiles (SAM) to hit.

See PUEBLO, A13, Col. 1



# Pentagon Ends Pueblo Spy Ship Experiment

## PUEBLO, From A1

The pictures the U-2 brought back from its first missions over Russia were reassuring as far as the ability of the Migs to reach the spy plane. Photographs the CIA has never released show fighters below the U-2, rasping in an effort to reach

It is now part of the history of the Cold War that the CIA's calculations were blown up along with the U-2 on May 1, 1960. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev used the intrusion as an excuse to call off the scheduled Summit Conference in Paris.

### Start Was Similar

The Pueblo program started out in much the same way as the U-2. Somebody—the government has yet to identify him in any of the inquiries—assured the

Presidentor the Chief of body—the government has President or the Chief of Naval Operations, or both, that a small, unarmed, unobtrusive looking ship could stream off another nation's shores without provoking anybody.

A small cargo ship with big electronic ears could learn an awful lot that way, it was argued. And this kind of electronic intelligence, or ELINT, would be much cheaper than that carried on by bigger ships—like destroyers.

The Navy—in deepest secrecy—in 1965 rushed an old cargo ship in the AKL class to the Puget Sound Naval Ship Yard in Bremerton, Wash., where it got the antennas, coding machines and radio equipment needed for the ferret mission.

This ship, the Banner, sailed off the Soviet Union, its electronic ears recording anything interesting in the way of Soviet radar or radio messages.

### Russians Play 'Chicken'

The Banner also eavesdropped off China where it was banged around quite a bit by angry fishing boats. Soviet skippers also played

"chicken" with the Banner, threatening to run her down at sea.

But U.S. intelligence leaders reasoned the Navy could take such harassing, considering all the information the little Banner was getting as she lay quietly for days at a time in strategic spots.

Two other small cargo ships were converted to follow the Banner into the spying business, the Pueblo and the Palm Beach.

Navy enthusiasts of this so-called AGER program—with the ER the cover term of environmental research—say these three ships as just the beginning. After these converted vessels proved their worth, the intelligence leaders envisioned a new class of ferret ship built from the keel up for the mission.

### Sails From Japan

The Pueblo sailed Jan. 11, 1968, from Japan for its first ferret mission. It was regarded by the Navy—as just a shakedown and crew training cruise.

The policy makers in Washington who approved the Pueblo mission counted on the freedom of the seas to protect the lightly-armed

ship. The term parity—considered a big factor in guessing how another nation will react to our weaponry—apparently was not considered in the Pueblo case.

Just as Russia had no U-2 to spy on the U.S., North Korea had no Pueblo to listen in on the U.S. This lack of parity led to desperate acts by those nations in both cases.

Now that the Pueblo experiment has been abandoned under the guise of an economy move—although the spying missions with these type ships had actually stopped long before yesterday's announcement—the question is how to get the same information. Airplanes pass over an area too fast for long term eavesdropping. Submarines are one answer.

Although the Navy does not talk about it, some of its submarines sail close into Communist shores to eavesdrop and watch, often with cameras. Unlike the Pueblo, they can dive to escape trouble.

### Disagreement on Worth

Submarine ferreting—with the help of some new and highly classified elec-

tronic equipment with amazing capabilities—is one way the United States will plug whatever gap the retirement of AGER ships really leaves. Their worth has been debated, with the Pueblo mission described by some as a flop as far as new information picked up before its capture.

Another substitute will be spy satellites, including the new breed coming along. Instead of the present system of waiting until film is exposed and then parachuting it out of the satellite for an airplane to snatch out of the air, the new space ferrets will relay their information to the ground through another satellite.

Although more obtusive

than the 176½-foot Pueblo, the U.S. has still other electronic ferrets in the fleet, such as the 441-foot "technical research" ships. The USS Liberty, shot up during the Arab-Israeli war of 1967, was one of these. But these ships appear to be on their way out, too.

Also, if seemed like a real threat, the U.S. could always use its ELINT destroyers—provocative or not—to look through another nation's keyhole.