

'ORDERED TO WATCH SHIPS' 5-1 9-13-68

Pueblo Assigned to Spy On Soviets, U.S. Reports

By BOB HORTON

WASHINGTON (AP) — The USS Pueblo was told to snoop on Soviet ships passing near Japan as a follow-up to her electronic surveillance of North Korea, a U.S. document shows.

The intelligence ship was supposed to visually inspect and photograph Soviet naval vessels, openly, while returning to the U.S. base at Sasebo, Japan.

The additional mission was forestalled when the North Koreans captured the Pueblo — in North Korean territorial

waters, they claim—on Jan. 23, four days before she would have headed for Sasebo.

THE SECONDARY snooping job was disclosed for the first time yesterday as the U.S. government broke out of secrecy a Jan. 5, 1968, order to refute a new North Korean allegation.

The North Korean radio said the Pueblo was authorized to go as near as three miles from the North Korean coast, under a Feb. 28, 1966, order. The United States recognizes a three-mile limit.

North Korea claims 12.

The State Department acknowledged such an order went out to "a great many" Navy vessels operating near foreign shores but this was superseded in the case of the Pueblo by a specific instruction Jan. 5, 1968.

THAT MESSAGE, couched in cryptic, often garbled military lingo, set out general details for the Pueblo's North Korea spy assignment, code-named "Ichthyonic One."

A key passage, so far as the U. S. government's effort to refute the North Korean claim is concerned, said.

"CPA (closest point of approach) to Korcom (Communist Korea)—Soviet (Land) Mass—Offshore islands will be 13 NM (nautical miles).

SAID STATE Department press officer Robert J. McCloskey:

"We continue to have no reason to believe that the captain of the Pueblo did not adhere to the 13-mile restriction in the sailing order."

The instruction told Comdr.

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Lloyd M. Bucher, skipper of the Pueblo, to leave Sasebo about Jan. 8, proceed through the Tsushima Straits and up the Korean coast to operational areas designated Mars, Venus and Pluto.

THESE WERE Sea of Japan zones delineated on a north-south basis by the 39th to the 42nd parallels.

The Pueblo, according to the publicly released copy of the order, was to operate from 13 miles offshore to 60 miles out between the 39th and 42nd parallels.

Under these guidelines she would have been permitted to go to within about 20 miles of Soviet territory adjacent to northern North Korea.

ON THE WAY she was to "attempt to avoid detection by Soviet naval units."

Upon reaching the 39th parallel the Pueblo could move about the Mars, Pluto and Venus operational areas "concentrating efforts in areas which appear most lucrative."

This was not otherwise defined but officials have acknowledged the ship was electronically eavesdropping on North Korean shore transmissions, among other things.

ON JAN 27 the Pueblo was to leave the operational areas "and if not under surveillance, maintain strict emcom (emissions control or radio silence)" while proceeding south along the Korean coast to the Tsushima Straits.

There, the ship was to "intercept and conduct surveillance" of Soviet naval units passing through the area.

Asked what this meant, a Pentagon spokesman said:

"Just take a look at them. Follow them around. See what they're doing."

Apparently the Soviet surveillance would not have been covert.

'CHINA, RUSS SPIED ON'

Bucher Quoted as Telling Of 2 Other Spy Ships

By ROBERT LIU

TOKYO (AP)—North Korea reported today that the skipper of the Pueblo admitted he knew of two other U.S. Navy ships that carried out spy missions against Communist nations, including Communist China and the Soviet Union.

The North Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said Comdr. Lloyd M. Bucher told a news conference yesterday the two ships were the USS Banner, operating out of Yokosuka, Japan, and the USS Palm Beach, operating in the Atlantic.

KCNA, WHICH broadcast lengthy accounts earlier of Bucher's appearance before foreign newsmen, quoted the Pueblo skipper in its latest dispatch as saying the Banner spied off North Korea, Red China and the Soviet Union.

It said Bucher denied knowing anything specific about the Palm Beach's missions, except that it, too, was assigned

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to gather intelligence through electronic surveillance.

The Korean agency reported earlier that Bucher admitted the Pueblo was deep in North Korean waters when it was seized Jan. 23. The U.S. government says the ship had been instructed to stay at least 13 miles off the North Korean coast, past the 12-mile limit claimed by North Korea. Washington said yesterday it had no reason to believe Bucher did not carry out these instructions.

ONE OF THE Japanese correspondents who attended the news conference, Tamao Yokota of Kyodo News Service reported that Bucher and 21 other Pueblo crewmen who appeared with him were "apparently in good health."

The conference was held in a concentration camp in a suburb of Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, where the Pueblo's 82 crewmen apparently are being held, Yokota reported.

He said Bucher and his men "unanimously emphasized" that the United States should assume "moral responsibility" for the Pueblo incident and "wondered why Washington is hesitating to apologize."