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Pueblo 2nd NL 550

By RICHARD E. MEYER

Associated Press Writer

CORONADO, Calif. AP — The officer in charge of intelligence on the USS Pueblo said Tuesday he was unable to destroy all classified documents when the ship was captured by North Koreans because there were too many to burn in a short time and gunfire kept his men from dumping much overboard.

Lt. Stephen Harris, the intelligence officer, also told a Navy court of inquiry that his men got off to a slow start because the skipper, Lt. Omdr. Lloyd M. Bucher, did not order general quarters immediately and the ship provided poor communications between him and the captain.

Another problem, he testified, was that smoke from fires in wastebaskets became unbearable.

"We tried to keep it as orderly as possible but it actually resulted in a great deal of confusion," Harris said.

"You must realize we were under fire, and one man had been wounded severely, and part of his body exploded into the area where the destruction of classified material was taking place. There was flesh and blood all over the place.

"Our efforts could be described as feverish, and it could be described as frustrating because it took such a long time to burn the materials, so when it became obvious we weren't going to get it burned and we couldn't jettison because of the gunfire we feverishly tried to tear up the publications.

"We reduced them to confetti. There was paper all over the place. We were just feverish."

Harris said his written instructions on destroying secret material included specific assignments for men who would come to his area to help during general quarters.

He said that when the skipper ordered destruction before modified general quarters he had to operate with men who hadn't been assigned to this task during drills—and then replace them with trained men once general quarters was called a short time later.

Harris said it would have taken his men 10 to 12 hours to burn all the classified documents on board the Pueblo.

At one point, Harris seemed to differ on testimony by Bucher, who had told the court: "I was not cleared for some of the materials they the intelligence working areas carried."

"The commanding officer and I held exactly the same clearances," Harris said. "I had no authority to deny him entrance to any area."

But Harris did say Bucher did not have intimate awareness of all the classified information given to Harris' intelligence detachment.

Q. Capt. William Newsome, counsel for the court: "If he wanted to know did he have the opportunity?"

A. Harris: "Yes sir..."

Q. E. Miles Harvey, counsel for Bucher: "Did you ever tell the commander or lead him to believe he was not privy to any of the information or lacked the need to know?"

A. Harris: "I told him there were projects involved in the future that were not necessary for his knowledge in order for him to perform his duties."

Q. Harvey: "If he felt the necessity to know, could he find out?"

A. Harris: "Absolutely. I felt there was nothing the commanding officer should not know."

Harris testified that he had direct line authority to the commander-in-chief of the Pacific Fleet, over Bucher's head, for technical parts of his mission.

But he said he was otherwise under Bucher's command in all military matters concerning the mission.

Asked by counsel for the court whether the torn publications could have been considered official destroyed, Harris replied,

"No—theoretically the enemy could have pasted them back together."

Asked by Rear Adm. Edward Grimm if, under the situation, it would not have been better to jettison the materials—rather than

try to burn it—despite the fact the water was not deep enough, Harris said: "That is why I ordered jettisoning anyway. At least one bag went overboard."

Q. "One of 12?"

A. "Yes, sir."

Harris earlier had testified for five hours secretly about what the Navy described as classified information. He took the stand publicly after the Pueblo's navigator denied that the intelligence ship intruded inside North Korean territorial waters but conceded that the ship's own log showed such intrusions.

Lt. Edward, etc., 2nd graf A2691A, deleting now outdated 5th graf: "Murphy, first, etc."

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CORONADO, Calif. AP - The Pueblo's navigator denied Tuesday that the intelligence ship intruded inside North Korean territorial waters but conceded that the ship's own log showed such intrusions. He blamed faulty equipment for the log entries.

Lt. Edward R. Murphy Jr. told a Navy court of inquiry that 11 of the intrusions claimed by North Koreans at a news conference last September were based on recordings made by the ship's main navigational device, called a Loran system.

But Murphy, the ship's executive officer, said the device made consistent errors of as much as five miles and that Pueblo navigators had to compensate for such errors in determining the ship's actual location.

"I unreservedly comment that at no time between the day we got underway on 11 January, 1968, to the day of the capture on 23 January, 1968, did the USS Pueblo violate the 12-mile limit claimed by North Korea," Murphy said.

Murphy, first Pueblo crewman aside from skipper Lloyd M. Bucher to testify publicly, was followed to the stand by Lt. Stephen Harris, who was in charge of the ship's intelligence section.

Harris earlier testified five hours secretly about what the Navy described as classified information.

Murphy supported Bucher's statement that the ship was "heavily outgunned" and backed up each of Bucher's decisions. Bucher also had denied intruding into North Korean waters.

Boyish-faced with thinning black hair streaked with gray, Murphy, 31, spoke clearly and deliberately to the court of five admirals investigating the capture of the Pueblo last year.

Six intrusions claimed by the North Koreans were based on erroneous entries in the Pueblo's position log by one of his subordinate navigators, Murphy said. Others were based on markings that appeared as identified location fixes on charts the Pueblo was using at the time of her capture, Murphy added.

He said one of the positions taken from the log would even have been impossible for the ship to reach.

"The man navigator making this recording recorded a Loran reading without going through a complete process of verification and evaluating it for its accuracy," Murphy said.

Others would have been impossible to reach at its top speed, he added.

A Loran system determines location by radio waves from beacons in various locations. Murphy said part of the trouble with the Pueblo's system was due to storm and atmospheric conditions during late night and early morning hours.

Like Bucher, Murphy stood before a chart of 17 Communist claims of intrusion, pointed at some and denied them. He also voiced support for Bucher's decision in surrendering the Pueblo.

Referring to Navy regulations which say commanders should not surrender as long as they have power to resist, Bucher's attorney, E. Miles Harvey, asked Murphy whether he thought Bucher had this power when North Koreans came aboard.

"I can say the decisions I was aware of, including the one about which we're talking, essentially were the ones I would have made if the captain would have fallen to enemy fire," Murphy replied.

"I can see no difference in the end result, sir."

Rear Adm. Edward Grimm, who pressed Murphy hard about the details of his navigation, asked whether he agreed with Bucher's decisions before the vessel was boarded.

"As executive officer," Murphy replied, "I didn't have all the information the captain had. But essentially my actions would have been essentially the same."

Murphy said the Pueblo was outgunned by the North Koreans who took her captive. Referring to the Pueblo's two .50 caliber machine guns plus some hand weapons, Murphy said:

"It is not my opinion that we could have held up against any ship . . . that had any greater armaments than we had. It was defense only against a ship of equal stature, a small coastal transport with say .50 caliber machine guns . . . a small type of boat not normally heavily armed. From the very instant we were outgunned. There's no question about it."

Murphy also spoke at length about the death of fireman Duane Hodges, 21, of Creswell, Ore.

Hodges was hit in the leg and abdomen when a North Korean gunboat fired on the Pueblo after demand it heave-to. Murphy, also the ship's medical officer, said he was with Hodges at the end and he died "resting easy."