

Pueblo Intelligence Officer ~~says~~ Says 10 Bags of Secret Papers were lost when Koreans took Ship

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CORONADO, Calif., Feb. 4—

The chief intelligence officer of the Pueblo said today that at least 10 bags filled with secret papers were seized last year after North Korean vessels attacked the ship.

The intelligence officer, Lieut. Stephen R. Harris, told the Navy court of inquiry here that the secret papers had not been destroyed because of thick smoke that shrouded the ship, poor communications, and steady bursts of machine gun and 57-mm. cannon fire that left the Pueblo's decks impassable to crewmen.

"The effort was feverish, it was frustrating," the thin, sharp-faced officer told the court of five admirals investigating North Korea's capture of the ship on Jan. 23, 1968. "We were in conditions of absolute combat."

Some Bags Put Over Side

"It took such a long time," he said slowly. "It was difficult jettisoning them over the side with the enemy raising bullets on us. We were limited in our ability to communicate effectively. There was smoke all over."

"It was a painfully frustrating effort."

Lieutenant Harris said that "one, possibly more" of 12 bags with secret papers were tossed

into the Sea of Japan as North Korean submarine chasers and torpedo boats opened fire on the Pueblo. The 12 bags included two 6-foot-long laundry bags and 10 weighted bags, about a foot high and 16 to 18 inches wide.

As the 29-year-old Harvard graduate spoke, he glanced at Comdr. Lloyd M. Bucher, the Pueblo's skipper, who sat four feet away, flanked by civilian and military attorneys. Commander Bucher, who relationship with Lieutenant Harris aboard ship was somewhat strained, stared unblinking at the admirals nearby.

Lieutenant Harris, as head of the "research space" on the main level of the Pueblo, commanded 28 intelligence specialists who performed the bulk of the ship's secret mission. Part of the group's mission was to collect electronic intelligence on radar installations along the North Korean coast as well as pick up the movements of submarines in the area.

"The first priority I had was to warn the commanding officer of any impending attack on the ship or the United States," Lieutenant Harris said this afternoon. "I would provide him with information acquired through electronic means."

Speaking slowly, he touched only briefly upon what ap-

peared to be a sore point between himself and Commander Bucher—the division of authority between them.

Lieutenant Harris said that on "technical matters" he had reported directly to the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet and not to Commander Bucher.

He added quickly, "The commanding officer was my military commander."

At one point, however, Lieutenant Harris seemed to differ sharply with Commander Bucher, who had told the court, "I was not cleared for some of the materials they [the research space] carried."

"The commanding officer and I held exactly the same clearances," said Lieutenant Harris, a Navy veteran of nine years who speaks four foreign languages. "I had no thought to deny him entry to any of the spaces."

In testimony this morning, the Pueblo's executive officer strongly supported Commander Bucher's decision to surrender his ship to the North Koreans without a fight.

"We were definitely outgunned and we had the short end of the stick all around," the executive officer, Lieutenant Edward R. Murphy, testified.

"We had 83 men to go up to

our guns and they had 83 bullets that would have caused fatal injuries to each one of us," said Lieutenant Murphy, who was second in command aboard the Pueblo.

"I think my actions would have been essentially the same" as Commander Bucher's, the thin, prematurely gray-haired officer told the court.

Calls Armament Lighter

Sitting four feet from the Pueblo skipper, Lieutenant Murphy came under repeated questioning by Commander Bucher's attorney, E. Miles Harvey, and the admirals sitting behind an elevated green-felt-covered table in the center of the room.

"Was there any opportunity

for the Pueblo to resist?" Mr. Harvey asked.

Lieutenant Murphy leaned forward. "There's no question that our armament was much lighter than theirs," he said. "I think from the very first instance we were outgunned. There's no question about that."

Moments later, a member of the court, Rear Adm. Edward E. Grimm, turned to Lieut. Murphy and asked, "Prior to the actual boarding [by the North Koreans] would you have done the same [as Commander Bucher]?"

Lieutenant Murphy paused at last 20 seconds. "I don't know," he said slowly. "But I think my actions would have been essentially the same."

Commander Bucher surrendered the Pueblo after she was surrounded and attacked by North Korean submarine chasers and torpedo boats. He has maintained that firing the Pueblo's two .50-caliber machine guns would have resulted in the loss of the ship and in the "slaughter" of the crew.

Terms Protection 'Nil'

In testimony today, Lieutenant Murphy, a 31-year-old Californian, said that protection around the two machine guns on the main deck had been "absolutely nil."

"There were no personnel shields, no bulwarks and no personnel protection," he said. "I have no doubt that anyone

trying to go near the forward mount would probably have received fatal injuries 25 feet from that mount."

"They'd have to cross an exposed deck," he said. "There was a definite personnel hazard there."

The machine guns, he went on, did not "appear effective against a task force."

The witness, who was also the navigator of the Pueblo, repeated emphatically that the intelligence ship had never steamed within North Korea's claimed 12-mile territorial limit.

"I unreservedly make the comment that at no time did the U.S.S. Pueblo violate the claimed territorial limit of

North Korea," he declared. "The closest point of land to the Pueblo at the time of the capture was 15.6 to 15.8 miles."

Helms Denies C.I.A. Role

WASHINGTON, Feb. 4 (AP)—Richard Helms, Director of Central Intelligence, has denied that the Central Intelligence Agency had anything to do with the mission of the Pueblo.

"Neither this agency nor I personally have had anything to do with the mission of the U. S. S. Pueblo, the ship itself or any of its crew," Mr. Helms said in a letter to Senator Stuart Symington, Democrat of Missouri.

The letter was dated and released today.