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Pueblo NL #20
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CORONADO, Calif. AP - The Pueblo's crew never was briefed on the intelligence ship's mission, two enlisted men testified Thursday.

"The crew was told it was not illegal . . . that we were just carrying out our duties," said Charles B. Law Jr., the ship's senior quartermaster.

"So no one had occasion to think about whether it was hazardous duty?" asked Rear Adm. Edward Grimm, a member of the five-admiral court of inquiry into the ship's capture a year ago and the 11 months those aboard spent in North Korean prisons.

"No, sir," replied Law, 27, of Chehalis, WASH. The only signalman on board, Wendell Leach, 26, of Houston, Tex., agreed the crew never was briefed on the mission and said when she arrived off the Korean coast "some of them didn't even know what land they were looking at."

Dunny R. Tuck, 31, of Richmond, Va., one of two civilians aboard, said he ate and slept in the same quarters as the ship's officers and the mission wasn't even discussed much among them.

The Pueblo's skipper, Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher, told the court earlier that his mission was to scout Soviet ships and North Korean radar facilities.

Tuck said that as an oceanographer one of the purposes of his assignment was "to serve as a cover for the ship, to show that it was an oceanographic ship." He said that either he or the captain suggested making the oceanographic reading when the first North Korean submarine chaser approached the Pueblo on the day of capture "to show the North Koreans why we were there." Tuck said the Pueblo then was 15 to 16 miles from land.

Tuck described his orders as conducting oceanography "on a not-to-interfere basis" with the main surveillance mission of the ship. He is a Civil Service employee of the Defense Department.

"WAS THE MISSION DISCUSSED MUCH?" asked Adm. Grimm. "Not the total mission of the ship. That is classified. I could tell somewhat what we were doing there by the outside silhouette of the ship. But it was not fully discussed even in the ward room."

Quartermaster Law was asked his impressions when the North Koreans started firing. He said he hit the deck on the signal bridge, adding, "My impression was that they meant business and I was scared." He said he thought Bucher "did a hell of a good job" as skipper.

Signalman Leach said he could recall no order from Bucher to fly a signal. "I am in international waters," Bucher has said he ordered the signal after North Korean gunboats threatened to open fire.

Leach also said he could not determine from international signal code how to fly flags to indicate that the North Koreans were interfering with the PUEBLO'S FREE PASSAGE IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS.

He said he raised a signal of general protest instead, but couldn't remember precisely what it said and then raised a signal that the Pueblo needed medical attention.

Tuck, who also served on the Pueblo's sister intelligence ship, the Banner, said his first impression of the incident with the North Koreans was that it was similar to harassment of the Banner. He said his experience was that some vessels would come close enough to intelligence ships to make contact and "bang on their bow."

In Washington, President Nixon told his news conference he was satisfied the Navy was taking adequate precautions to protect the rights of all those being questioned in the Pueblo inquiry. He said he also plans to "examine the whole record myself, both with regard to the individual guilt or innocence of the people involved, and also with regard to the even more important objective of seeing to it that this kind of incident can be avoided in the future."

Dunny Tuck eq
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