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Pueblo NL 270

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CORONADO, Calif. AP - A sailor assigned to clean Cmdr. Lloyd Bucher's prison room said Monday he passed secret orders from the skipper to the rest of the Pueblo crew to get resistance messages home any way possible.

The messages - in letters, photos and at news conferences - were designed to tell friends, relatives and the U.S. government that confessions by officers and the crew were false and prison wasn't the way the North Koreans pictured it, Electrician's Mate E.C. John Arthur Mitchell, 21, Dixon, Calif., testified at a Navy court of inquiry.

"They asked what the captain and I were talking about all along. I told them we talked about home, cars, girls, food - - - the basics of life more or less," Mitchell said.

The court is investigating the Pueblo capture last year by North Koreans and the conduct of its men during 11 months imprisonment.

Communications Technician 1.C. Charles R. Sterling, 29, Stratford, Conn., told the court that if he ever caught his North Korean tormentor, "The Bear," in a dark alley in nearby San Diego, Calif., "there wouldn't be any more bear."

Chief Communications Technician James F. Kell, 22, Culver City, Calif., said the North Koreans offered to pay his expenses if he would return after being freed. Kell said they told him to come back through Czechoslovakia and Russia.

Storekeeper E.C. Earl R. Pharies, 20, Ontario, Calif., said his captors wanted him to "go to another country to make a televised announcement in my behalf . . . to get myself out."

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Pueblo NL insert

CORONADO, Calif. Pueblo NL A270LA insert after 7th graf: out."

As the loader for the Pueblo's forward .50-caliber machine gun at battle stations, Pharies said he knew how to supply ammunition and had fired about 100 rounds through the weapon in practice.

But he said he knew ammunition lockers were locked when the vessel was attacked. Previous testimony had indicated the gunner's mate had the only available key.

Pharies said he had no idea how he could have gotten the lockers opened without it.

Mitchell 8th graf

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Mitchell said the North Koreans ordered him to clean the captain's room "every day, twice a day." He said Bucher gave him a message to pass on to the crew nearly every day.

"Bucher said to try to put things in the letters that people back home would understand and the North Koreans wouldn't. And in photos and news conferences to put things that people back home would understand."

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