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Intelligence-Pueblo Bjt 500 Two Takes 700

By FRED S. HOFFMAN

AP Military Writer

WASHINGTON AP - Capture of the Pueblo by the North Koreans and the Pentagon's acknowledgment the ship was a Navy intelligence vessel-lifts the official lid on worldwide electronic spying by the major powers.

It marks a drastic change from the Pentagon's insistence that the Liberty, a spy ship shot up by the Israelis off Egypt last June, was a "technical research ship."

"Intelligence collection by naval vessels is a routine activity among major powers," a defense official said Tuesday, indicating a more relaxed attitude toward suggestions the United States engages in this kind of activity.

"It is common knowledge that for a number of years intelligence collecting ships have followed U.S. fleet activities in various parts of the world," he added. The official obviously was alluding to the Soviet Union's terrier-like electronic eavesdropping vessels which show up wherever U.S. fleets are maneuvering and near important Polaris submarine and other bases.

Such ships, in the guise of fishing trawlers, are "in fact positioned in international waters off the shores of the United States and other nations right now," this official said.

The U.S. intelligence vessels-which listen in on the radio traffic of other countries, spot radar sites and gather information to permit jamming them-and the Soviet Union's deep sea intelligence ships are parts of an extensive electronic intelligence system which has grown up in the Cold War years.

There are spy-in-the-sky satellites, both Soviet and American, whirling about the earth with almost unbelievably accurate cameras and "ferret" listening devices for eavesdropping on radio communications.

There are unmanned drones with sensitive information-gathering equipment. There are destroyers carrying "black boxes" which slip close to hostile shores to intercept radio talk, record coded messages and pick up other information. One of the two U.S. destroyers involved in the historic Tonkin Gulf attack by North Vietnamese patrol boats in August 1964 reportedly had been on such a mission.

The United States and Soviet Union, say nothing about what they know of the other side's electronic snooping from space.

But the U.S. Navy complains out loud about the operations of

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But the U.S. Navy complains out loud about the operations of the Soviet "trawlers," some of which get into the flow of fleet traffic and sometimes interfere with carrier and other operations. Members of Congress also have expressed alarm about increasingly active Soviet naval snooping.

Soviet trawlers have been reported standing off Polaris submarine bases at Holy Loch, Scotland, at Rota, Spain, Guam, and Charleston, S.C.

The Red trawlers monitored U.S. nuclear weapons tests in the Pacific in 1962.

U.S. vessels have taken positions in the Pacific to observe the re-entry and splashdown of Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles fired into the mid-Pacific.

A Soviet intelligence-gathering trawler, the Anemometer, collided with a U.S. intelligence ship, the Banner, in the Sea of Japan in June 1966.

The 935-ton Pueblo is one of three of her class, all converted light cargo vessels.

She has about eight whip antennae and two heavy masts hung with special electronic gear.

The Pueblo engages in hydrographic surveys as well as electronic intelligence, dropping devices into the water to measure its temperature at various levels, its salinity and its density. All these factors are important in antisubmarine warfare work because they affect the penetration of sonar beams.

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All told, there are about a dozen clearly identifiable intelligence-type ships in the U.S. Navy, along with about 15 oceanographic survey ships which may well serve an intelligence function also.

Then there are the destroyers and other surface craft which can be equipped with electronic sensors as needed.

The Liberty, at 11,000 tons, was a bigger and more sophisticated intelligence vessel.

Among other things, the Liberty was equipped with a "big ear" dish-type detector that could monitor communications more than 100 miles distant.

There are five vessels in the Liberty class with crews of nearly 300 men each.

There were reports the Liberty was operated by the Navy for the super-secret National Security Agency, whose mission is to crack the codes of foreign countries and to pick up and analyze foreign radio communications.

One of the 34 men who died when the Liberty was shot up and torpedoed by the Israelis was an NSA technician who reportedly was working with Navy communications specialists.

Although the Pentagon steadfastly stuck to its cover story, an officer on the carrier America told The Associated Press the Liberty was "there to spy for us."

He said "we moved in close to monitor the communications of both Egypt and Israel."

In the case of the Pueblo, the Pentagon insisted the two civilians among her company are hydrographic technicians and that the ship was not being operated for the NSA.

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