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Pueblo Lead A019

By RICHARD E. MEYER

Associated Press Writer

CORONADO, Calif. AP - The chief engineering officer of the Pueblo said today he was denied items he deemed necessary for its conversion into an intelligence ship.

He cited watertight hatches, a good communications system, damage control plating and a collision alarm.

Chief Warrant Officer Gene Howard Lacy, in testimony before a Navy court of inquiry, agreed with the skipper that it would have taken 22 hours to scuttle the craft, captured a year ago by the North Koreans.

Of the capture, Lacy said "there were a thousand to 1,100 holes in the ship, none below the water line, but she was pretty well sht up . . . the ship was completely riddled with small caliber machine gun fire."

Lacy supported much of the earlier testimony of the captain, Cmdr. Lloyd M. Zucher, and other officers of the Pueblo.

Lacy, thin with a full shock of hair and bushy eyebrows, told the court the crew was "more interested in keeping the Pueblo afloat rather than scuttling her."

When the ship was changed from an Army coastal freighter into a Navy intelligence ship at the Bremerton, Wash., naval shipyard, he said, there were no plans for the conversion and they were made up as work went along.

"Our main concern was damage control," Lacy said, referring to the likelihood the Pueblo might be rammed during harassment by Communist vessels.

"Very little damage control was built into the design of the ship . . ." he said. "We asked for water tight hatches for the crews berthing and office spaces . . . but it was not accomplished. They promised it would be done at the next regular overhaul in 1969."

"By letter we made a request for damage control books and damage control plates . . . and it was denied, so we made our own."

Lacy said another system was denied at first, but later the equipment was provided on the condition that the Pueblo crew install it themselves. They were in the final stages of installation when the ship was seized, he said.

"We didn't have a collision alarm," Lacy said. "It was disapproved and never approved."

To scuttle the Pueblo required removing 20 to 25 bolts from 1 1/2 inch pipes into the engine room and letting the water rise in the engine room, Lacy said.

"The best estimate was it would have taken 22 hours to scuttle the ship," Lacy said.

A witness Tuesday said men with fire axes smashed electronic gear into tangled metal and others tossed secret papers into blazing waste baskets—with smoke all but unbearable—after the Pueblo was attacked.

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Pueblo Bjt 500, 2 takes 950 total

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CORONADO, Calif. AP — Men with fire axes smashed electronic gear into tangled metal. Others tossed secret papers into blazing wastebaskets. Smoke became almost unbearable.

Outside, Lt. Stephen Harris told a Navy court of inquiry Tuesday, "the enemy was pouring bullets at us." Five North Korean gunboats were circling and steaming alongside the USS Pueblo.

Firemen Duane Hodges, 21, of Creswell, Ore., grabbed a weighted bag of classified paper and rushed onto a passageway on deck to throw it overboard.

A .57-millimeter North Korean cannon shell tore through his leg, into his abdomen and blew up.

"Parts 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," Harris said.

When it became "too painfully slow" to burn the papers and his men couldn't jettison them because of the raking gunfire, Harris said, the men got "feverish."

"We tried to tear up the publications," Harris said, "we reduced them to confetti. There was paper all over the place. We were feverish."

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

When it was over and the North Koreans boarded the Pueblo, there were some secret papers in his intelligence compartments left for them, he added.

The Navy summoned the Pueblo's supply officer, Lt.

J.G. Timothy Harris; the quartermaster, CWO Gene Howard Lacy, and operations officer, Lt. J.G. Frederick Schumacker, to testify today. A Navy spokesman also said an explosives expert might attend the session.

Before Harris took the stand Tuesday, Lt. Edward Murphy Jr., the ship's executive officer, backed up virtually every decision made by the Pueblo's skipper, Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher, during the capture a year ago. Murphy also denied—as had Bucher earlier—that the ship ever intruded into North Korean territorial waters.

Harris didn't volunteer in open court Tuesday how much classified material fell into North Korean hands. But Rear Adm. Edward Grimm, a member of the court who heard Harris detail the loss earlier this week in a session closed in the interest of national defense, asked how many bags full went over the side.

"At least one bag went overboard," Harris said.

"One of 12?"

Yes, sir."

"Why were you using laundry bags?" Grimm asked, when the Pueblo had special weighted bags made at a cost of \$50 apiece for jettisoning charts and publications.

"They were not sufficient," said Harris.

"Then two laundry bags and 10 others were not destroyed?"

"I don't know the number. I was aware of one bag that went over."

Harris said the special bags were three feet long, 16 to 18 inches wide and 12 inches high; heavy, but light enough for one man to carry, and designed to fit inside safes and file drawers for storing classified papers in quickly disposable containers.

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CORONADO Pueblo a019 take 2: containers.

Harris said there weren't enough bags to contain all of the papers and publications in an allotment given the Pueblo immediately before she left Japan.

"In my personal opinion the allowance of secret material on board was excessive," Harris said.

"Was there a priority in the destruction?" asked Capt. William Newsome, counsel for the court.

"Yes," said Harris, "and it was followed. This means the most sensitive materials were destroyed first."

He did not elaborate in the open session.

Was the confetti included in what Harris considered destroyed?

"No. That cannot be considered destroyed. Theoretically the enemy could have pasted it back together again."

What about the secret electronic equipment?

"It was reduced virtually to powder."

In addition to the heavy gunfire and the 10 to 12 hours it would have taken to destroy all of the Pueblo's secret papers, Harris said three other things kept him from getting the job done.

"There was so much smoke we were becoming blinded," Harris said, referring to the fires he ordered in the wastebaskets to speed the destruction.

"Were you less than effective because of the smoke?" asked Newsome.

"Considerably less than effective, yes sir."

Harris said his men got off to a "slow and somewhat disorganized start" because skipper Bucher did not order general quarters immediately.

In addition, Harris said the ship provided poor communications between him and the captain, making him unaware firsthand when Bucher did call for general quarters.

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 general quarters he had to operate with men who weren't assigned to this task during drills and then replace them with trained men once general quarters was called 15 to 20 minutes later.

At one point, Harris seemed to differ with 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.

"If he wanted to know, did he have the opportunity?" asked Newsome.

"Yes sir."

"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?" asked Bucher's counsel, E. Miles Harvey.

"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."

"If he felt the necessity to know, could he find out?"

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

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

But he said he was under Bucher's command in all other matters concerning the mission, adding:

"My first duty was to advise the commanding officer of any impending attack discovered through electronic detection upon the ship or upon the United States.

"Just second to that was to provide him other information collected by electronic means."

In Washington, Richard Helms, director of the Central Intelligence agency, said in a letter to Sen. Stuart Symington, D-Mo., that the CIA had nothing to do with the Pueblo's mission.

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