

Pueblo Inquiry Is Told Crewmen Were in Dark as to Mission

By BERNARD WEINRUB  
Special to The New York Times

CORONADO, Calif. Feb. 6—Two senior enlisted men and a civilian oceanographer testified today that many of the Pueblo's crew members had been unaware of the intelligence ship's over-all mission.

Through a morning of testimony at the Navy court of inquiry here, the three crewmen came under steady questioning as to the crew's knowledge of the Pueblo's secret mission off North Korea.

"Did the commanding officer ever brief the Pueblo crew after its mission," a member of the court, Rear Admiral Edward E. Grimm, asked Quartermaster 1st Cl. Charles B. Law Jr.

"No, sir," replied the short, hefty, 27-year-old sailor. Admiral Grimm pressed his questioning.

Q. Was the crew informed of what kind of mission it was going on? A.—No, 'sir. The crew knew it was not illegal and we were just carrying out our orders.

Q. So, no one even thought it was hazardous duty? A.—No, sir.

**Mission Was Secret**

A second enlisted man, Signalman 1st Cl. Wendell G. Leach, spoke nervously before the court of five admirals. Some of the crew, he said, "didn't even know which land they were looking at" on the afternoon of Jan. 23, 1968, when the Pueblo was attacked and captured by the North Koreans.

"Some of them may have," he said. "I don't think all of them knew."

A third witness this morning, Dunny R. Tuck Jr., one of the two civilian oceanographers aboard the Pueblo, testified, "One of my missions was a cover for the other operations on the ship."

The tall, baldish Virginian, who was known as "Friar" aboard the Pueblo, was asked by Admiral Grimm, "Did you ever hear the mission discussed?"

"Not the total mission," Mr. Tuck replied. "This was classified. It was not freely discussed. Of course, I had some idea."

Navy officials said privately that only 28 of the Pueblo's 83 crewmen knew the details of the ship's intelligence-gathering mission.

**Based on 'Need to Know'**

These 28 worked in the secret "research space" of the Pueblo, a small area on the main deck that was barred to most of the crew. This space, in which only a dozen persons could fit, was filled with secret papers, radios and hypersensitive electronic equipment.

Comdr. Lloyd M. Bucher, the skipper, has said privately that the crewmen's knowledge of the



Comdr. Lloyd M. Bucher, skipper of the Pueblo, and his wife, Rose, arriving for the Navy court session Wednesday.

Associated Press

Pueblo's mission was based on a "need to know," making it unlikely that the ship's firemen, cooks, signalmen and engineers were fully aware of her electronic "snooping" along the North Korean coast.

Navy officials indicated today that the majority of the Pueblo's crewmen were untrained in intelligence work and that their training before the ship's final mission was limited to shipboard duties such as firefighting, drills and gun training.

At the court of inquiry at the Naval Amphibious Base here, Mr. Tuck, 31 years old, who is with the Department of Defense, said that his duties aboard the Pueblo had been "to conduct these oceanographic stations on a not-to-interfere basis."

**His Task Secondary**

"My task as an oceanographer was secondary to the mission of the ship," he said.

The Pueblo performed her intelligence operations in the guise of an oceanographic research vessel.

Mr. Tuck said that he conducted about 20 Nansen casts from Jan. 13 to the day the Pueblo was seized.

A Nansen cast involves lowering specially designed bottles into the sea to take subsurface samples of water. The samples are used to determine the presence of microscopic forms of life and to make scientific measurements, along with tem-

peratures, the information is useful in connection with underwater sound equipment.

Such a Nansen cast was being performed when North Korean warships were sighted by the Pueblo.

Mr. Tuck, a trim, smiling man with a checkered sports jacket, had performed a similar mission on the Pueblo's sister ship, the Banner, in waters off the Soviet Union and China.

**Harassment Seemed Routine**

"Initially, I felt no reason for alarm on this particular day when we came under surveillance," Mr. Tuck said. "On the Banner, off the Russian coast, they placed us under surveillance with trawlers. There was mild harassment. It seemed to be a routine practice of the Communist states.

"It looked just like Russian harassment."

Pueblo crewmen recounted before the court of inquiry the events when North Korean submarine chasers and torpedo boats opened fire and seized the intelligence ship.

**Radio Frequency Change**

The crewmen remained unwavering in their support of Commander Bucher.

"I think he's the best commander I've ever served under," said Radioman 2d Cl. Lee Roy Hayes of Columbus, Ohio, a Navy veteran of six years.

The thin, red-haired radioman told of his efforts to transmit S O S messages on the

ship's high communications radio transmitter.

As the North Koreans opened fire, Radioman Hayes said, the radio's frequency suddenly changed. "We never had voice communications with anyone," he said. "We couldn't get through."

Radioman Hayes, who joined the Pueblo as a sudden replacement 10 minutes before the ship left Yokosuka on her mission, said that he considered the ship hazardous. "It was very small and I thought it was a hazard," he said. "I had never been on a ship this small. It was the first time I ever got seasick."

**Nixon to Examine Record**

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 6—President Nixon demonstrated today that the Navy had not been entirely successful in its efforts to persuade the American public that the court of inquiry into the capture of the Pueblo did not involve the guilt or innocence of the people involved.

In his news conference this morning, Mr. Nixon said that,

when he reviewed the record of the inquiry, he would consider the guilt or innocence of those involved. [Question 21, Page 16.]

In answer to a question as to whether it was proper for the Navy "to be, in effect, sitting in a judgment of itself," Mr. Nixon replied that he would "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."

The Navy has gone to great lengths lately to make the point that the crew's guilt is not at issue. Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, Chief of Naval Operations, issued a statement Jan. 23 in which he stressed that the Pueblo inquiry was not a court-martial and that the guilt or innocence of the crew was not at stake.

A press spokesman at the White House said later that Mr. Nixon had wished to make clear that he would give the Pueblo matter a thorough review.