

# Pueblo Crewmen Questioned on Why the Ship Was Not Scuttled

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CORONADO, Calif., Feb. 10 —The five admirals on the court of inquiry into the capture of the intelligence ship Pueblo pressed several questions today on enlisted men of the crew:

Why did the American crewmen not overpower the North Koreans who climbed aboard the ship off North Korea in January of 1968? Why was the Pueblo not scuttled or the engines destroyed? Why were secret papers not destroyed?

“Weren’t you surprised that no effort was made to defend the Pueblo?” the president of the court, Vice Adm. Harold G. Bowen Jr., asked Engineman Third Class Peter M. Bander.

The 20-year-old sailor bit his lip and toyed with his rimless glasses.

“Yes, Sir,” he said. In three hours of testimony at the naval amphibious base here, the crewmen—many of them engineroom personnel—were repeatedly questioned on why the Pueblo was not scuttled when the North Koreans opened fire. Such action might have kept the ship’s secret papers and electronic intelligence equipment from falling into the hands of the North Koreans.

**Engineman Questioned**  
The questioning of Chief Engineman Monroe O. Goldman was especially prolonged.

“Did any officer come down to give you direction [during the attack]?” the counsel of the court, Capt. William R. New- some, asked him.

“No, Sir,” the slight, pudgy Californian replied.

“What about after the boarding?” Captain Newsome asked. Engineman Goldman paused.

“Yes, Sir,” the captain [Comdr. Lloyd M. Bucher] came down with a Korean officer,” he said.

“Did you consider scuttling or destroying the ship?” “I thought about it, but received no word,” the witness said.

“Well, after the captain and the North Korean guard came in, what instructions were you given,” asked Captain Newsome, a sallow-skinned, 45-year-old Navy veteran who speaks with a pronounced Brooklyn accent.

“None, sir,” said Engineman Goldman.

“Did the captain talk to you? Did he say one word?” “No sir, I didn’t know what to do. . . . It was not made clear.”

**Guard Kept Gun on Crew**  
Through the morning of testimony, the Pueblo crewmen testified that the former cargo ship was in little danger of sinking. Two cannon bursts had hit four and five feet above the ship’s water line.

The only other damage to the engine area was the loss of a suction pump.

Engineman Goldman, a veteran of 19 years in the Navy, said the ship could have moved off at 13 knots or could have started the scuttling by opening hatches and allowing water to pour in. It would have taken ninety minutes to begin scuttling the ship, he said.

“If we tried I’m sure we’d have been killed,” he said.

“The guard [in the engineroom] stood against the ladder and kept his gun trained on us.”

The admirals and Captain Newsome pressed Engineman Goldman on the possibility of destroying or disrupting the engine, thus forcing the North Koreans to tow the ship into Wonsan harbor and possibly enabling the crewmen to destroy more secret documents.

“I thought about this, but I knew the North Korean guard man Goldman said. He blinked nervously and avoided gazing at the five admirals.

“Suppose you would have had a fortuitous engine failure—would you have been shot?” asked Captain Newsome.

“Yes, sir,” the crewman said.

**Never Received Any Word?**  
Moments later, Engineman First Class Ruchel J. Blansett Jr., estimated that the three crewmen in the engineroom had 30 minutes free from the time the Pueblo was boarded until the North Koreans moved into the engineroom.

Moreover, he said, the crew had “a couple of minutes” when the North Koreans changed the soldiers and left the engineroom unguarded.

“We never received any word to disable the engineroom,” the 35-year-old sailor told a member of the court, Rear Adm. Edward F. Grimm.

“Blansett,” Admiral Grimm said, “did you have any idea of the importance of this mission?”

“No, Sir,” the pudgy, baldish engineman replied.

“Did you have any idea that there was highly sensitive material on the ship?” the admiral asked.

Engineman Blansett shrugged and said: “Well . . . yes, Sir, there was a lot of material under locked doors.”

“The fact that you had a number of technicians—didn’t talk much about their work—what did you think?”

“Well, I was suspicious,” Engineman Blansett replied uncomfortably. “Everyone was to an extent. They didn’t say much.”

**Unaware of Mission**  
Admiral Grimm continued this line of questioning with other crewmen, who said they were unaware of the Pueblo’s mission and were not warned that the ship was about to be boarded as they worked in the engineroom.

“Goldman,” Admiral Grimm said, turning to the Pueblo’s chief engineer and master of arms, “it’s been my experience that the master of arms knows everything going on. . . .”

“We try to, sir,” the sailor said. “What do you think was going on in that research detachment on?”

The 37-year-old Navy man shrugged.

“I’ve often wondered,” he said. “The people there never did talk about it. I was wondering what was going on.”

The 28-man research detachment on the Pueblo performed the bulk of the ship’s secret mission, which was to collect electronic intelligence of radar installation along the North

Korean coast and check on the movements of vessels, particularly submarines, in the area.

Admiral Grimm discussed with Engineman Goldman whether it would have been possible to scuttle the ship while the three men in the engineroom were under guard by a lone North Korean.

“In hindsight do you wish that you’d have overpowered him?” the admiral asked.

“If we tried I’m sure we’d have been killed,” Engineman Goldman said. “He kept a gun on us.”