

SURVIVAL EXPERT IS PUEBLO WITNESS

Officer Tells of Navy Course for Averting Confessions

By **BERNARD WEINRAUB**
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CORONADO, Calif., March 7 — A naval captain who is an authority on methods of enduring enemy prison camps and escaping from them appeared today before the court of inquiry investigating the seizure of the Pueblo.

The officer, Capt. John R. Strane, was called before a closed session of the court this morning and testified on the Navy's SERE program, which teaches survival, evasion, resistance and escape from hostile prisons.

Captain Strane was summoned before the inquiry after repeated testimony by some of the 82 Pueblo crewmen on their 11 months of detention in North Korea.

During these months, the crewmen signed numerous confessions that the Pueblo was spying in the territorial waters of North Korea. Methods of possibly averting such confessions — which were usually signed in North Korea after beatings and threats of death — were believed to be one of the key points raised at this morning's session, which was placed under armed Marine guard.

In the Navy's SERE training program, which still remains shrouded in secrecy, enlisted men and officers are placed in a mock prisoner-of-war camp and subjected to "captors" who harass pressure and sometimes slap and punch the "prisoners." Each "prisoner" is required to maintain the code of conduct for American servicemen and not yield to any of the physical and mental duress.

The servicemen who "escape" are usually rewarded with a sandwich.

In the program, sailors are also placed for nearly one week in thick woods where they must return to "friendly lines." During this week, the men neither shave nor bathe. They eat only what they can hunt or kill in the woods, usually wild rabbit.

The program is especially designed for enlisted men and pilots assigned to Vietnam. It takes place in Water Springs, Calif., forty miles from San Diego.

One of the few Pueblo crewmen to attend SERE training, Communications Technician 1st Cl. Don E. Bailey, testified earlier in the week that he lost eight pounds in one week at the school and 25 pounds in 11 months in North Korea, but

observed that living conditions in prison were better than in the SERE program.

The five admirals on the court of inquiry have pressed the Pueblo's crew in recent weeks on the specific reasons the officers and enlisted men departed from the code of conduct. The code tells all servicemen to give only name, rank, serial number and date of birth, if captured.

The crewmen's replies are similar: "... fear sir ... they would have gotten what they wanted anyway ... They threatened to kill me and I believed them ... I could have taken death, but not torture, and that's what they would have done."

After Captain Strane's testimony today, the court adjourned for the weekend. The president of the inquiry, Vice Adm. Harold G. Bowen Jr., and several staff members flew to Hawaii for a conference with Adm. John J. Hyland, the Commander in Chief of the United States Pacific fleet.

Admiral Hyland was the convening authority for the court of inquiry, which is expected to end next week. He will receive the court's recommendations after the inquiry ends. Under Navy procedure, Admiral Hyland will then file his own recommendations to Washington.

WORLD-WIDE BROADCAST

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