

Coral Sea Sails as Protest Founders

By Duffy Jennings

The USS Coral Sea steamed through the Golden Gate on schedule yesterday after efforts by anti-war protesters calling for mass desertion by her crew fizzled out.

Despite a noisy but orderly pre-dawn demonstration, the 63,000-ton aircraft carrier

weighed anchor at Alameda Naval Air Station at 12:15 p.m. and headed for her sixth tour in Vietnam waters.

A Navy spokesman announced later in the day that 35 men were not aboard and were listed as "unauthorized absences" following a muster taken just before departure. The Coral Sea has a crew of 4300.

He said it was not known whether any of the missing sailors had, in fact, deserted the ship to seek sanctuary offered crewmen by several East Bay churches.

Many sailors were seen boarding the ship minutes before the scheduled departure time, and Captain William H. Harris told newsmen it was common for a few to be late or missing because of personal emergencies or other reasons.

"The men on this ship are professional men," he said during a press conference on the flight deck. "There's no doubt in my mind they will carry out their assigned

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duties proudly and professionally."

Later in the afternoon, spokesmen for the "Stop Our Ship" movement announced that one man sought sanctuary yesterday in one of several Bay Area churches offering asylum for deserting servicemen.

They said, however, the man was not from the Coral Sea, but declined to identify him or to what service he belonged.

DEMONSTRATORS

Demonstrators began gathering at 5 a.m. in front of the air station's east gate where they were met by scores of police, sheriff's deputies, Marine guards and shore patrol.

Civilian authorities made no arrests, but MP's eventually cited 17 persons on

charges of trespassing on a government installation after they refused to obey directions once inside the gate.

One man was booked at the Alameda county jail after refusing to identify himself when officers attempted to cite him for the same violation. His bail was set at \$100.

OFFICERS

In all, some 150 officers from the 13 law enforcement agencies in Alameda county were called in to augment military authorities.

Leaflets handed out by Stop Our Ship cadremen urged protesters not to prevent sailors from entering the base, but did call for them to slow down the traffic flow leading into the sprawling air station.

Authorities said later "hundreds" of citations for impeding traffic were issued to demonstrators who slowed

their vehicles to a crawl as they approached the gate, but traffic in the area was rarely backed up for any length of time.

More citations were handed out for the same violation in the area of the Posey Tube tunnel leading to the base.

CROWD

The crowd outside the east gate numbered about 1000 at its peak at 6:30 a.m., then dwindled rapidly to about 200 when a driving rain began to fall a half-hour later.

By 8 a.m., nearly all the protesters had dispersed, many leaving to rendezvous at the University Lutheran Chapel in Berkeley where they hoped dozens of Coral Sea crewmen would seek refuge.

Throughout the latter part of the morning and early afternoon, 50 to 100 persons congregated outside the

church vainly waiting the arrival of deserting seamen.

OTHERS

Stop Our Ship spokesman Michael Hayes said that "many men jumped ship" but could not produce them or their names. He added that crewmen aboard the USS Hancock, which has been berthed alongside the Coral Sea, would refuse to go when that carrier sails for the war zone on January 12.

As the Coral Sea prepared to cast off its lines yesterday, up to 300 wives and children of the crew mingled on the pier after a tearful farewell to watch her put to sea.

A Navy band played "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" and "Anchors Aweigh" as two powerful tugs escorted the carrier out into deep water, while a fireboat spouted high streams of water in a farewell salute.