"Fact Sheet for DIRNSA"

~~S-CCO~~

USS LIBERTY (AGTR)

Previously known as SIMMONS VICTORY.

Victory hull - converted by Williamette Iron and Steel Works, Portland, Oregon

Commissioned December 1964

Personnel Allowed----------294

	OFFICERS	ENLISTED	TOTAL
General Service	9	151	160
Naval Security Group	6	128	134

Maximum Speed----------18 Knots

Armament: 4 50 cal. machine guns

Damage - Extensive. All Antennas and cabling beyond repair.
80 % of intercept equipment beyond repair

Estimate $7 million to reconfigure.

Declassified and approved for release by NSA on 01-18-2007 pursuant to E.O. 12958, as amended. ST case 51671.

Q: What is the relationship of the USS LIBERTY with the National Security Agency?

- Command and control of a seaborne SIGINT collection platform is exercised in military command channels.
- JCS control delegated to the U&S and component commanders as required.
- NSA exercises operational and technical control of SIGINT portion of the mission <u>only</u>.
- Command and NSA relationships are documented in a 1965 JCS message sent to all U&S commanders. This was done by JCS at the request of NSA for clarification of the relationship.
- Military command channels make the final decision to deploy any SIGINT platform consistent with the safety of the ship. This is spelled out in the JCS message.
- NSA tasks Naval Security Group personnel on board with communication responsibilities to satisfy national intelligence requirements.

Q: Why was the LIBERTY there?

- Satisfy consumer requirements.

  CIA - needed information on UAR Naval and Air movements and tactical ground forces communications.

DIA - needed information on the status of UAR Airborne and Air Defense Systems as well as more information on night time operations.

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- Anticipated loss of [redacted] SIGINT sites [redacted]
- Development of tactical data in case of U. S. involvement in hostilities.
- Information was needed to properly support U. S. Forces should this requirement be levied.
- UAR targets involved were primarily in the UHF/VHF range. These are line-of-sight communications.

Q: Why a ship and not an aircraft to do the job?

- Around the clock coverage was needed.
- Cheaper to operate a ship.
- We estimate 13 aircraft to do the job of one ship.
- Since the average on station time of an aircraft is five to six hours and down time for maintenance is greater than would be required for other platforms. Besides, we didn't have the aircraft to spare. Every other collection effort would suffer.
- One aircraft costs about 4600 dollars to operate per day excluding support.
- Use of these 13 aircraft would entail approximately 1,000 personnel including the support.

- Ship of 294 personnel on board costs 4000 dollars a day to operate for all services and is self-sustaining.

Q: Was it necessary to place the LIBERTY so close to the center of hostilities?

- Propagation study revealed that it was necessary. Primary target involved were tactical.
- Communications were predominately in the 50-400 mcs range (line-of-sight).
- These tactical communications cannot be covered in any other manner as efficiently or economically.
- It is necessary to be as close as possible to the source of transmission in order to maintain adequate coverage.

Q: Who was in charge of the LIBERTY operation?

- Overall operation of the ship was exercised by COMSIXTH FLT.
- Operation of the SIGINT portion of the mission was exercised by NSA.

Q: Were the civilians on board the LIBERTY NSA employees?

- Yes. Three civilian linguist personnel were assigned.
- GG-7 Messrs. Blue (deceased), Blalock and Wilson.

Q: Why send civilians to do a job of this kind?

- There ~~was~~ is a scarcity of military linguists. This coupled with extensive NSA familiarity with the problem prompted the assignment of civilian linguists.

Q: Does NSA send civilians on board other Naval ships of this type?

- Yes as need dictates. For example, on most deployments to South American and African waters civilian linguists are assigned to augment the ship's military linguistic capability; however, in Viet Nam, at the present time, there are no civilian linguists on board on a regular basis.

Q: Do you feel that more training is necessary for the military in order that the services have the proper resources to accomplish thetjob without use of civilians?

- These ships are highly mobile. Their areas of operation are constantly changing, requiring many special skills. Although training in the military increases each year, it is not always possible to satisfy all requirements without civilian help.
- The military training pipeline is too long to satisfy every unplanned requirement.

Q: Are there any other TRSs deployed now? Where?

- There are seven technical research ships:

  USS OXFORD - is in Sasebo, Japan for annual overhaul.

  USS JAMESTOWN - is enroute from Danang, Viet Nam to Subic Bay, Philippines with minor engineering problems for repair.

USS GEORGETOWN - has just returned from an extended deployment and is preparing for a South American deployment. Presently in Norfolk, Virginia.

USS BELMONT - scheduled to deploy 3 August from Norfolk to African waters.

USS MULLER - is on station off Havana.

USS VALDEZ - is in New York for overhaul. This is the first time VALDEZ has returned to the U. S. since it was commissioned in 1961.

USS LIBERTY - in drydock in Malta.

Q: There has been considerable discussion concerning the status of communication with regard to the LIBERTY. What are your views on the communications problem?

- This question should probably be addressed to the JCS, DCA and Services.

Q: Why is there no replacement for the LIBERTY in the Mid-East?

- JCS has imposed a 100 mile restriction to waters in the Israeli area. Consequently optimum coverage is not possible with this restriction.
- Fixed sites continue to provide minimum coverage.
- ACRP coverage is being maintained.

Q: Was the attack on the LIBERTY premeditated?

- There is no conclusive evidence from SIGINT that all parties knew of the LIBERTY in advance of the attack.
- Israel is noted for its outstanding intelligence posture.
- Intense nationalism on the part of everyone there leads one to believe that excellent organization exists ~~of change~~ and yet ordinary of information is prompt and efficient.
- Dedication to cause.
- Extremely effective manner in which the battle was fought.
- Reconnaissance conducted prior to the attack must have been repeated.

Q: Was any classified material lost?

- Some Registered Publications have not yet been accounted for. Once all the debris is sifted and a complete inventory developed we should know more about the situation.

Q: Do you foresee any difficulty in operating these ships in the future as a result of the considerable press coverage and general public awareness?

- Time will tell.
- Reduction in amount of cooperation by other countries may occur.
- Port call refusals by countries might be expected.