

# Navy Jams Sailors As Sabotage Incidents Mount

Liberation News Service

1972

NORFOLK, Va.—(LNS)—When a \$12 million fire rips through one of the U.S. Navy's finest ships—in this case, the aircraft carrier Forrestal—they have to find a culprit. And when the fire takes place in the midst of widespread rebellion and crisis, they need one fast.

The Naval command structure has pinned the blame for both the fire and the rebellion on board the Forrestal on a 19-year-old seaman apprentice named Jeffrey Allison.

Allison, the son of a California highway patrolman, was convicted on December 7 of arson, sabotage, hazarding a vessel, willful damage to military property and possession of LSD and mescaline. He was sentenced to five years in prison and given a bad conduct discharge.

The Forrestal, known in Norfolk as the "USS Zippo," clinched its reputation as a fire-prone ship for all time on the night of July 10, 1972, in what may be the biggest sabotage incident in U.S. Naval history. Three separate fires were discovered, on the O-3 level, in the War Communications Room annex, and in the quarters of Rear Admiral Moorer.

Between the flames and the sea water used to put out the fire, between \$8 and \$12 million worth of damage was done to the War Room, the Combat Information Center, the Computer Room, the switchboard, the Detection and Tracking Room, and to the admiral's quarters. The ship's impending Mediterranean cruise was delayed two months, and the questioning began.

Allison had been on the ship two weeks, attached to the Admiral's staff. The evening of July 10, he was standing watch with two other sailors when the fires were discovered. Jeff was questioned by Naval Intelligence investigators that night, along with a number of other men.

Letters of support can be sent to:

Jeff Allison

c/o The Defense Committee

Box 1492

Norfolk Va. 23501

In another series of incidents, the San Francisco-based carrier Ranger has been hit by sabotage, beginning in late May.

Sailors have cut fire hoses, contaminated the ship's drinking water—once with salt water and once with airplane fuel, started small fires, damaged pressure gauges and oil pumps, and fouled up the generators.

Several times bomb threats and rumors of mass desertion spread throughout the ship. The Navy itself confirmed 12 incidents since May, and crew members have revealed another 16.

Until late July, the ship's plan to depart for Vietnam on August 1 remained unaffected. The commanding officer, Capt. H.P. Glindemann Jr., was not about to be intimidated by what Admiral Charles Duncan calls "those few with mental aberrations who cause sabotage."

However, shortly before the ship was supposed to leave Alameda, the Ranger's captain was given a chance to change his mind. A paint scraper and two 12-inch bolts were slipped into the number-4 main reduction gears. The

mechanism was destroyed and the ship couldn't move. Replacing the gears took the Navy and General Electric three and a half months and cost over \$800,000. Meanwhile, the crew of 4,700 men were idle.

The Navy fingered Patrick Chenoweth, 21, a quiet, unassuming sailor from Puyallup, Washington, as the saboteur. They charged Chenoweth with "willful destruction of government property" and "sabotage in time of war." The charges could result in a sentence of 35 years in jail.

"There are no witnesses," says Eric Seitz, Chenoweth's attorney, "to the act or acts which caused the damage; no fingerprints or other physical evidence linking Pat to the damage.

"There is evidence that literally hundreds of persons aboard the Ranger had access to the gears in question and that many persons were overheard to make admissions similar to those attributed to my client."

To its embarrassment, the Navy cannot even place the time when the scrap was added to the gears more closely than an eight-day period in late June and early July. In a civilian courtroom, the government would probably not take the chance of prosecuting Chenoweth on such flimsy evidence.

Navy officials apparently believe that if Chenoweth gets convicted and sentenced, sailors will think twice about continuing to screw up the ship. In fact, the opposite seems to be true.

Since Chenoweth's arrest, sabotage on the ship has continued and political activity has increased. In October, the Ranger executed trial maneuvers, two oil pumps went up in flames and the number two engine had to shut down due to unusual vibrations. Anti-war slogans and stickers began to appear on the damaged equipment. And a few weeks ago, an anti-war slide show, smuggled onto the Ranger, made its shipboard debut in the carpenter's shack.



Liberation News Service  
Navy Jams Sailors As Sabotage Incidents Mount  
1972

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/173-december-16-1972-january-5-1973/navy-jams-sailors-as-sabota>  
Fifth Estate #173, December 16, 1972-January 5, 1973

**[fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net)**