

Captain of death ship testifies at court-martial

YORKTOWN, Va. (AP) — The captain of the Cuyahoga, which sank last year with the loss of 11 lives, testified at his court-martial Monday that doctors never told him he was medically unfit for duty even though he hadn't slept well for months before the accident.

Chief Warrant Officer Donald K. Robinson, 47, accused of negligently hazarding his vessel, told a court-martial panel he had been ill much of 1978 and reached the point in September and October that he was sleeping only about two hours a night because of a severe cough.

On the night of Oct. 20, 1978, the Coast Guard cutter turned left in front of the Argentine freighter Santa Cruz II and was rammed. The cutter sank within minutes, killing 11 of the 29 crewmen and officer cadets aboard.

If found guilty of negligence, Robinson could be sentenced to two years' hard labor and dismissed from the service.

The defense claims the accident was caused by Robinson's illness — diag-

nosed in December 1978 as bronchial pulmonary aspergillosis — not negligence.

Defense attorney Jerome Flanagan introduced witnesses last week who testified Robinson's lack of sleep would have caused a sharp reduction in his ability to handle the large amount of information needed successfully to navigate the busy Chesapeake Bay, where the collision occurred.

Robinson testified Monday he had left it up to the doctors treating him to determine whether he could perform his duties as the Cuyahoga's commanding officer.

"I felt I could carry out my duties. I was tired and I was coughing, but the medical authorities never stated there was anything in my problem that would affect my ability to do my job," he said.

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