

Staff Writer

Jurors in a marijuana smuggling trial saw an unusual video tape Wednesday of an alleged marijuana "mother ship" as it was intercepted by the U.S. Coast Guard in the Gulf of Maine last December.

Defense attorneys gathered next to the jury box to watch a television set showing the 150-foot Haitian freighter Adina come to a stop after being tailed by the U.S. Coast Guard cutter Unimak for more than 12 hours.

They also saw Colombian crew members gathered on the deck as Coast Guardsmen approached the vessel in an inflatable boat.

The video tape did not show what Lt. J.g. Peter Ottinen said he and other officers saw in the ship's hold: more than 1,000 burlap-wrapped bales of marijuana under bags of cement.

Ottinen said he spotted the coastal freighter about 10 p.m. on Dec. 9 and "we spent the night of the ninth attempting to contact the vessel in both English and Spanish."

The next morning, while continuing to try to make radio contact, the Unimak maneuvered close to the vessel so that crew members could also use a bullhorn, Ottinen said.

He said he asked the Adina's crew "if they could hear us, to stop" and "finally, around 10 o'clock, they did come to a stop. . . . Shortly thereafter, we did get a response on the radio."

But Ottinen said there was no response after that so he and other crew members went to the vessel in a small boat and talked to Eduardo Peterson, who "acted in charge."

Ottinen said Peterson invited them to come aboard to see the ship's papers but the captain of the Unimak advised them to first "explain the meaning of a consensual boarding to the master and not to go aboard at that time."

He said the meaning of a "consensual boarding" — that the Coast

Guard was on the ship at the master's pleasure and would leave when told to leave — was subsequently explained to the ship's master, identified as Fernando Anastasio Palacios-Bonilla.

The Adina's crew members helped the Coast Guardsmen onto the ship, where they looked at its papers and then asked for permission to inspect it, Ottinen said.

On descending into the ship's hold, he said he saw what he estimated to be 1,033 burlap-wrapped bales, one of which had been opened, showing "green vegetable matter" inside.

As a result of a chemical test done by the chief boarding officer, the master was told in Spanish that "he was carrying a substance that reacted to a chemical test . . . and it was possibly marijuana," Ottinen said. "Mr. Palacios expressed surprise that there was marijuana aboard the vessel."

Because the crew was "getting a little restless," Ottinen said he asked for directions from the Unimak and received instructions to get Palacios' approval for them to stay on the ship.

"At that point, Mr. Palacios said 'go' and we left," he said.

Ottinen said Palacios and Peterson were told that if permission were received from the Haitian government to testify the ship, "we would do so."

The ship was subsequently seized after a chase in which the Coast Guard fired warning volleys across its bow. Its 17 crew members were deported in March after serving three months at the Cumberland County Jail.

Ottinen was the 14th witness to testify in the U.S. District Court trial of 11 persons — including two alleged Colombian organizers — who are accused of conspiring to smuggle 25 tons of marijuana to Rockland.

The trial, which began in mid-September, is expected to continue for at least two more weeks before Judge Edward T. Gignoux. It resumes at 9:30 a.m. today.

