

## U.S. Concerned

By Warren Unna

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President Johnson yesterday ordered an "urgent investigation" into Pueblo Comdr. Lloyd M. Bucher's claim that the North Koreans had beaten and brusied his crew.

Tom Johnson, acting White House press secretary, announced that the President and the government were so "seriously concerned" with reports of the crew's treatment that they wanted the matter pursued.

As a practical matter, however, U.S. officials saw little chance of anything coming of it. An "investigation" implies an official protest to North Korea if there is evidence for charges.

But since the Administration sees little hope of even getting the North Koreans to meet again to discuss the return of the Navy intelligence ship Pueblo itself, North Korea is not expected to make any apologies for its 11-month treatment of the Pueblo's captive crew.

In another aspect of the Pueblo case yesterday, it was learned that a secret Presidential fact-finding committee told Mr. Johnson earlier this year that there was "no evidence" that the Pueblo had been within North Korea's 12-mile territorial water limit when North Korea captured the ship last Jan. 23.

The committee, in its oral report to the President, also found the chances "99 to 1" against the Pueblo ever having intruded within that 12-mile limit during the two weeks it was probing off the North Korean coast prior to its capture.

The committee was headed by George W. Ball, former Under Secretary of State and Ambassador to the United Nations. Other members were: Army Gen. (Ret.) Mark W. Clark, former commander of U.N. forces in Korea; Adm. (Ret.) David L. McDonald, former Chief of Naval Operations; And Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Laurence S. Kuter, former commander in chief of the Pa-

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## Ordeal Over

SAN DIEGO, Dec. 24 (UPI)

—The 82 men of the USS Pueblo, some smiling and waving, others with tears in their eyes, finally reached home today and ran into the embraces of thier loved ones.

The crewmen held captive in North Korea for 11 months filed in single line from the two Air Force transports along a red carpet while a Navy band played "California Here I Come." The crewmen were immediately engulfed in the 200 wives, children, mothers, and fathers assembled at the Miramar Naval Air Station.

Cmdr. Lloyd Bucher, limping and appearing gaunt and gray, walked first off the plane, waved briefly as he strode along and then headed straight into the arms of his wife, Rose, who grabbed him and held him for a full minute before she would let go.

The other men followed quickly behind him and within a few moments they were bouncing children, some they had never seen before, and reassuring mothers that they were all right.

The overall mood was one of restraint and joyfulness that the men had been freed after their months in a North Korean prison.

California Gov. Ronald Reagan, Mayor Frank Curran of San Diego, Sen. Margaret Chase Smith of Maine and Navy brass were on hand for the welcoming ceremony.

"I just want to say how proud all of us here are," said Gov. Reagan. He expressed joy and sympathy to the mothers and fathers of the crewmen "who knew the full measure of enemy brutality."

Bucher's two sons, Mark, 16, and Michael, 14, stood proudly alongside their father and mother, who wore a white orchid, as Reagan welcomed the skipper of the Pueblo back to its home port. The two boys broke into tears as the Governor shook their father's hand.

Mrs. Smith said what the men of the Pueblo needed most now was the "therapy of being with their loved ones."

Shortly after the men aboard the two giant jets had debarked, an honor guard

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went to the rear of the plane and stood at attention while the casket of Seaman Duane Hodges was lowered to the ground and escorted away.

The seaman's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jesse C. Hodges of Presswell, Ore., watched as their son's body was carried to the ground with full honors.

When Bucher arrived, he embraced Mrs. Hodges, then put his arms around both parents and spoke to them at length.

### 'Absolutely Thrilled'

Later, turning to newsmen, Bucher said: "It's so great to be home. You'll never know. Jesus, I'm absolutely thrilled. How great it is to be a citizen of the United States. It's the greatest country."

President Johnson sent a "heartiest welcome home" message to the crewmen.

His message, transmitted while they were flying to San Diego, read:

"It is a source of the deepest satisfaction to me and to all of your fellow countrymen that you have returned to your families and to your homeland in time for this holiday season.

"We are all aware of the ordeal through which you have passed, and we thank God it has ended.

"We extend our heartiest welcome home and I wish you and your loved ones a joyous Christmas and a happy New Year."

The families had heard since they were brought here at Government expense of the stories of beatings and constant threats as related by Cmdr. Bucher, who called the North Korean captors "apes."

The Navy set aside a luxurious lounge with big Christmas trees for a long afternoon and evening of reunion and thanksgiving at the Balboa Naval Hospital rounds.

### Hospital Stay First

The men will be housed in newly decorated quarters in a four-story former nurses' home. The length of their stay at the hospital was not known

but it was expected some would be given extended leave in a few days after debriefing and medical tests.

During the first 36 hours of debriefings, or intensive interviews, Navy authorities are especially anxious to learn full details of the seizure of the intelligence ship and which components of its sophisticated electronic gear were destroyed and which fell into North Korean hands.

At the last stopover on Midway Island, Bucher praised his crew and said he felt the purpose of the capture of the ship

last Jan. 22 was "to embarrass the United States government more than anything else."

The commander said that during the entire 11 months there was always the threat of beating and for the younger members of the crew threats of death. The people who were strongest received the worst beatings, he said.

Bucher said their captors threatened to kill him and to commence shooting the most junior members of the crew in his presence.

He said he was "rarely beaten in the face because I was subjected to a lot of camera ordeals. They wanted me to look at least presentable to the cameras. But this didn't keep them from caving in my ribs or kicking me in the tailbone."

The 41-year-old commander and the crew were "subjected to various forms of physical and mental torture." But, he stressed, "We were not brainwashed."

Adm. John J. Hyland, Pacific Fleet commander, addressing the crew at Midway, told them: "You are regarded as a group of young heroes and we are very proud of the way you stuck it out for such a prolonged period."

### Probe Ordered

President Johnson has ordered an investigation of the beating charges, but State Department officials said in Washington that about all could be done would be to publicize the beatings.

The return to their homes and loved ones began Monday morning when they walked across the Bridge of No Return from North Korea, ransomed by a U.S. apology for "acts of aggression" that was repudiated before it was issued.

Quartermaster I.C. Charles Law Jr. of Tacoma, Wash., summed up his crossing over the bridge as "like climbing out of hell into heaven."

Before departing for the mainland the crew members were treated to the American favorites of cheeseburgers, hamburgers and hot dogs, with cheeseburgers a 2-to-1 favorite.

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cific Air Force and now a vice president of Pan American.

Reached for comment yesterday, Ball said the Pueblo incident red-letters the need for updating international law.

"I don't blame anybody for pursuing a course which we'd followed a long time because we never had gotten into trouble," Ball declared. "From an intelligence point of view, I think it is justified. And the reason we've never had any problems with the Soviet Union is that there is a tacit reciprocity: They don't do anything to our ships and we don't do anything to theirs."

But, Ball emphasized, since spy ships like the Pueblo represent neither "innocent passage" nor warlike attempts at invasion they pose a problem for a country, like North Korea, which is on the receiving end.

"An argument could be made," Ball declared, "that the only purpose for gathering intelligence is contemplation of the remote possibility of the need to invade. So the question is whether we don't have to sit down and do some rethinking about international law."

Ball was adamant against sending spy ships on their mission accompanied by a war vessel escort. Both President-elect Nixon and leading members of Congress have urged such a course in the future.

"The automatic reflex that these ships have got to be accompanied by an escort of two or three destroyers would be highly provocative," Ball declared.

He illustrated this by saying that either North Koreans or New Yorkers, spotting such an armada heading toward them—even outside their territorial water limit—would automatically assume an invasion was under way.

Retired Marine Corps Colonel Luther A. Brown, of 6099 Wilson blvd., Arlington, yesterday cited an earlier instance in which U.S. officials signed an enemy statement in order to obtain relief for captives.

Brown said that at the beginning of World War II when he was commander of the U.S. Legation forces in Tientsin, China, and the late Marine Col. William W. Ashurst was senior officer at the U.S. Embassy in Peking, both felt themselves forced to sign the document thrust upon them by the Japanese commandant

of their POW camp in Shanghai.

"We wrote over our signatures, 'Signed in compliance with a direct order, under duress with threat of punishment.' The Japanese commandant had said, 'Write anything on the document you want, but sign it.' And after we did the mass punishment was lifted and our bedding and baggage returned," Brown recalled.

He termed it "a precedent for signing a document and at the same time repudiating it."

Last Monday, in order to obtain the release of the Pueblo crew from the North Koreans, U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Gilbert H. Woodward first delivered a mutually agreed upon "repudiation" and then signed North Korea's prepared "confession" of territorial invasion and espionage.

In the case of the Marine colonels, they had to act on their own in time of war as they were POWs isolated from their government. In the Pueblo's case, Maj. Gen. Woodward signed as a negotiator under authorization from Secretary of State Dean Rusk.