

Pueblo Crew Has Signs of Physical Maltreatment

Mental Fatigue, Malnutrition Seen in Check

By DON HORINE

SAN DIEGO, Calif. (AP) — All of the USS Pueblo's 82 freed crewmen show signs of mental fatigue, malnutrition and physical maltreatment, the commander of the U.S. Naval hospital said Thursday.

Rear Adm. Horace Warden, head of the hospital, reported on preliminary medical examinations for the crew, just released from 11 months of North Korean captivity, at a news conference during which the Pueblo's executive officer denied the intelligence ship was captured inside North Korean waters. Left hanging was the question of what happened to the Pueblo's super-secret electronic gear in the hour between her capture and actual boarding.

Warden reported "no signs of psychiatric disturbance at this time" among the crew, but that all "show effects of malnutrition, instability in balance, and, no doubt, other deficiencies" and all "have a history of physical maltreatment."

CHARGE REFUTED

There is no evidence of serious injuries, Warden added.

Lt. Edward E. Murphy Jr., 31, the executive officer, told the news conference North Korean intrusion claims were a "complete fabrication" and that a detailed study—including messages from North Korean ves-

sels involved in the capture—confirm the ship "did not enter North Korean territorial waters."

His comments amplified by those of the Pacific Fleet's public affairs officer, Capt. Vincent Thomas, were the most detailed denial yet by the United States that the Pueblo was in waters claimed by North Korea. Much of what they said, however, had previously been released by then Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara, in testimony before a congressional committee.

DEBRIEFING TO START

Murphy, the Pueblo's second in command, and the other freed crewmen arrived here Christmas Eve. Man-by-man interrogation of the crew by Navy intelligence debriefing officers is to start Friday.

Thomas said the best evidence indicates that North Koreans did not board the Pueblo until "roughly an hour after she was captured."

But any details about the capture, said Thomas, could only be told by Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher, the ship's skipper, who was not present.

Bucher is the only crewman "who is actively under medical attention as of now," said Warden, the hospital chief. He said Bucher is suffering from "respiratorial infection."

BUCHER WAS WOUNDED

He said weight losses of 30 to 40 pounds were common among crewmen and one, John Charles

Higgins, a fireman, had lost 70 pounds. Higgins is the son of Mr. and Mrs. John C. Higgins, of St. Joseph, Mo. Warden didn't specify a former or current weight for Higgins.

Earlier Thursday, the State Department in Washington disclosed for the first time that Bucher had been wounded in the legs when a North Korean sub chaser, later joined by several speedboats, fired at the Pueblo. North Korea captured the Pueblo Jan. 23 and took her and her crew to Wonsan Harbor, claiming the ship was inside North Korea's 12-mile territorial limits.

'NO QUESTION'

"There is absolutely no question in my mind and the minds of the crew or of the captain that during no time did we intrude into the territorial waters of North Korea at absolutely no time," Murphy said.

Thomas read a statement from Adm. Thomas I. Moorer, chief of Naval operations, that Moorer was "confident that the commanding officer of the Pueblo would not knowingly violate" his orders.

The orders, previously released, said that the ship was to operate no closer than 13 nautical miles from the nearest North Korean land. The ship was under orders to intercept broadcasts on the East Coast of North Korea.

NAVY NEVER DOUBTED

Thomas said that the Navy never doubted that the ship was outside North Korean waters when seized. He said the result of a full study of the ship's position had not been released until now for fear that it might hinder the release of the crewmen.

He said North Korea's "evidence" presented after the capture—which alleged to show the ship's position as inside North Korea's claimed 12-mile limit—contained "a number of inconsistencies."

He said all U.S. evidence places the Pueblo when it first reported the North Korean sub chaser as 16 nautical miles from Yo Do Island.

At that time, he said, the sub

chaser reported her own position as 17.9 nautical miles from On Do and reported that the Pueblo was 18.3 miles from the island.

HYDROGRAPHIC TESTS

Thomas said the first indication of North Korean vessels came shortly after noon when the Pueblo radio operator in a "chit-chat" message reported "more company."

At 1 p.m., he said, the ship filed a formal message saying that the sub chaser had been encountered. He said the Pueblo at the time was dead in the water conducting hydrographic tests of water temperature below the surface which he said required the ship's position to be known extremely accurately.

The sub chaser requested the Pueblo to identify itself and a U.S. flag was hoisted, Thomas said. The sub chaser then ordered, "Heave to, or we'll fire," he said.

"I am in international waters," Thomas said the Pueblo signaled back.

TORPEDO BOATS, MIGS

He said the Pueblo also radioed that three North Korean torpedo boats were now in the area and that Communist Mig's were flying overhead.

The Pueblo reported that one of the smaller boats was backing toward the Pueblo with an armed boarding party, Thomas said. At that point, he said, the Pueblo was 16.8 miles from the nearest land.

At 1:15 p.m., Thomas said, a radio message from the ship said, "They plan to open fire on us."

He said the firing started shortly after.

The Pueblo also sent three messages within 10 minutes beginning at 1:28 p.m. that she was being boarded. Thomas said the Navy discounted these messages and "the actual boarding probably took place later." He did not immediately explain.

MOST DETAILED DENIAL

The Pueblo was then escorted to Wonsan Harbor, he said, and the first North Koreans proba-

bly came aboard the ship at 2:32 in the harbor as the Pueblo radio sent it's last message:

"Going off the air now, destroying this equipment."

Much of Thomas' information had previously been released by former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in testimony before a congressional committee.

Thursday's news conference, however, was the most detailed denial yet by the United States that the Pueblo entered waters claimed by North Korea.

—As executive officer, Murphy served as the ship's navigator.

Before the news conference, the Navy announced a one-day day — until Friday — of its man-by-man interrogation of the Pueblo crew to allow further medical testing.

PHYSICAL CHECKUPS

Eight hours of physical examinations began at 8:30 a.m., immediately after the crew had breakfast. They included tests for the Pueblo's skipper, who, it was disclosed for the first time, was wounded when his ship was captured.

The State Department revealed in Washington that North Koreans shot the skipper, Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher, in the legs when they fired several salvos at the Pueblo just before seizing it last Jan. 23.

Seaman Duane Hodges of Creswell, Ore., was killed and three other crewmen were wounded in the same attack, said State Department officials who talked to crewmen after their release Tuesday.

North Korean authorities had concealed the fact that Bucher was wounded, although the death of Hodges and the injuries to the others were reported, the officials said.

JETS MASSED

The State Department report accompanied another from Sen. George D. Aiken, R-Vt., that North Korea massed about 400 warplanes along its frontier after seizure of the Pueblo in antic-

ipation of a retaliatory attack from the United States.

Aiken, a ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee who gets periodic briefings from the State Department and the Pentagon, said he felt North Korea would have seized the Pueblo whether or not it was in North Korean water because it was an effective intelligence ship.

The physical examinations for the crewmen were delayed by family reunions over Christmas. From now on, there will be less time for such reunions.

Families were to see their fathers, sons and brothers only at lunch and dinner — and some relatives started returning home. By Thursday morning, nine families had left and others planned to leave shortly, the Navy said.

REPORTS OF BEATINGS

From the relatives, meanwhile, continued to come reports from the crewmen of beatings and fear of beatings during their imprisonment.

Mrs. Jean Langenberg of Clayton, Mo., said her son, Communications Tech. Peter M. Langenberg, told her, "The frightening thing was you never knew when your turn for

a beating was. It was the fear of not knowing. Some guys really got it."

Mrs. Langenberg said North Korean guards asked Peter what his father did for a living. "He told them his father was a broker. But he couldn't get through to those idiots," she said.

"Finally, he said 'Wall Street' and they knew what that was. From then on, his father was known as 'The Wall Street War Monger.'"

PANGS OF HUNGER

Leo McClarren of Johnstown, Pa., said his son, Communications Tech. 2-C Donald R. McClarren, told him he had been beaten, but added, "I've got better ones in a barroom; some of the guys took terrific beatings."

The family of Yeoman Armando Caneles, 31, of Fresno, Calif., said he reported crewmen suffering from hunger at times during their captivity.

"He said when they got home they promised they'd fill their mouths up with food, and if necessary would shove a finger in to make room for more," said his brother Emilio.

TREATMENT CHANGED

Communications Tech. Brad-

ley Crowe, 21, of Island Pond, Vt., said he was treated relatively well by the North Koreans until a rumored apology from the United States failed to materialize.

"Then things got real bad," Crowe's sister, Sandra McKee of Newport, Vt., reported him as saying. "The beatings became more frequent and all mail was stopped."

RETURN OF CREW HELD REHEARSAL

Talks May Trigger Re-
lease of War Captives

By BARRY KRAMER
SAN DIEGO, Calif. (AP) —

The return of the 82 crewmen of the USS Pueblo is providing a rehearsal at the giant U.S. naval hospital here for the care of Navy servicemen who may be released from captivity in Vietnam.

The Paris peace negotiation and the release by North Korea of the Pueblo crew have raised hopes for an eventual release of Americans held by the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese. There are, however, no indications this may come soon.

A Navy spokesman said Thursday the naval hospital "has been designated as a primary evacuation facility for Navy prisoners of war." This means, he said, that the sprawling hospital complex would be the place where released Vietnam war prisoners spend their first days back in the United States, undergoing extensive medical testing and treatment.

A Navy brochure describes the facility as the largest military hospital in the world. It

contains more than 1,000 inpatient beds and several outpatient clinics.

By being on the West Coast, it is among the closest to Vietnam. And giant C141 Skyliifter jet transports—the same ones that brought the Pueblo crewmen home from Korea—can land at nearby Miramar Naval Air Station.

At last report, 336 U.S. servicemen were listed as captured or interned in the Vietnam war, most of them Navy, Marine and Air Force pilots downed over North Vietnam since early 1965. But the Pentagon acknowledges that it does not really know how many Americans are prisoners of the North.

International Red Cross requests to visit the captives have been denied by Hanoi. North Vietnam has not provided a list of the Americans it holds.

The Pentagon considers that of the 876 servicemen in Vietnam listed as missing in action, "a considerable number have been captured."

Like the Pueblo crewmen, Navy men released in Vietnam would go first to a hospital in the Far East for immediate medical treatment until they are ready to fly home. In the case of the Pueblo crew, that took only 24 hours.