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Pueblo Inquiry Postponed a Week After Plea by Bucher's Counsel

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By John Maffre
Washington Post Staff Writer

Defense Secretary Clark Clifford is still pondering a report on the mistreatment of the Pueblo crew in captivity that might become ammunition in the cold war with North Korea.

After the anger that radiated downward from the White House when the brutality was first revealed, there was a feeling the North Koreans had overplayed their hand after 11 months of humiliating the U.S. in general and the Navy in particular.

This was part of the reason for the order to Navy Secretary Paul R. Ignatius to produce an urgent interim report of the mistreatment aspects of the crew's captivity. It was ready on Friday's deadline but it has not yet gone to the White House or to the State Department.

The top-level concentration on the mistreatment aspect had priority over normal interrogation, to the annoyance of Navy intelligence officers anxious to finish a broader de-

briefing of 82 men whose chief interest was to go home.

Sources who have seen some of the material that went into the report said it would be more than just an "elaboration" of the brutality revealed in a number of press conferences.

Administration sources were a bit more reserved on what use could be made of this additional material, but they mentioned that the record would hardly make pleasant reading for other Communist governments in contact with both Washington and Pyongyang, or with such respected agencies as the International Red Cross in Geneva.

"We couldn't believe they could be this stupid where their own interests were concerned," one source said, "especially after all their planted publicity that the men were being treated like kings".

The Administration is also anxious to get the maximum mileage out of the record of North Korea's mistreatment of the prisoners before the Navy court of inquiry convenes, probably not before the end of

the month as the debriefing process stretches out.

That inquiry will concern itself not only with treatment given the prisoners, but with their conduct in captivity and whether Cmdr. Lloyd Bucher or any members of his crew left themselves liable to prosecution under the Unified Code of Military Justice.

Already some questions have been raised publicly about the propriety of the Pueblo crew's actions, notably by Sen. Richard B. Russell (D-Ga.). Although most editorial comment in the U.S. has been sympathetic to the Pueblo crew, there have been some sharp barbs at the Navy for the procession of admirals who have extolled their heroism.