

Physicals, Interrogation Await Pueblo Crewmen

Whether Korean Waters Violated, Question

By FRED HOFFMAN

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pueblo crewmen will be flown to the United States for interrogation and medical checkups, probably at San Diego Naval Hospital, soon after North Korea frees them.

The families of the 82 officers and men will be reunited with them there, sources said. The government will pay the cost.

The intelligence "debriefings," which may last for weeks, will give authorities their first opportunity to ask the crewmen whether the spy ship ever entered North Korea's claimed territorial waters during a nearly two-week cruise prior to its capture last Jan. 23.

High-ranking American officials insisted the Pueblo was in international waters at the time of the seizure. But there was a

10-day radio silence during the cruise and officials conceded they could not be sure the ship remained beyond the 12-mile limit at all times.

NO CREDENCE

The men also will be questioned about the validity of North Korean statements that, while in captivity, the crewmen had confessed intruding into North Korean waters.

The interrogators will want to know whether the captive crewmen signed such statements and, if they did, whether it was under threat or any other kind of pressure.

The State Department has said it places no credence in "alleged confessions" produced under circumstances constituting "a form of duress."

American authorities are anxious also to find out what happened to secret code machines and other sensitive equipment aboard the Pueblo.

To be on the safe side, sources

said, "there was a lot of code and cipher changing right after the Pueblo was captured."

It is unclear when the American public will receive the crewmen's story of their capture and 11-month ordeal.

It is possible, sources said, some crewmen will complete their interrogations earlier than others and might be made available to newsmen before the entire process is complete.

But because of security reasons and possible legal questions, the amount of information made available to the public could be restricted.

After the repatriated men undergo interrogation and whatever medical treatment they may need, sources indicated, there probably will be a formal Navy court of inquiry to determine whether any action might be taken against members of the crew, including Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher, the ship's captain.

APPARENTLY SEPARATE

Sources suggested the inquiry would be entirely separate from the questioning by intelligence officers.

In these circumstances, the sources said, the court might develop its own evidence without access to the results of the intelligence debriefing where men conceivably could compromise themselves by speaking frankly.

A Pentagon memorandum set-

ting policy for handling returned U.S. prisoners of war, including Pueblo crewmen, stated:

"Returnees will be accorded all of the legal rights and privileges to which they are entitled as military personnel at every stage of processing, including intelligence debriefings.

"In view of the physical and or psychological pressures to which they may have been subjected, particular care must be taken to insure that their rights and privileges are in no way comprised or diluted."

That memorandum, signed by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul H. Nitze, provides the general guidelines for the repatriation. Specific details of the Pueblo plan have been withheld.

If there is evidence of misconduct, Nitze said, it will be referred to the Navy and "disposed of in accordance with normal practices."

The memorandum declares "the welfare and morale of returned personnel shall be of prime importance," adding:

"All reasonable efforts will be made at all stages to provide for their personal, psychological and spiritual needs."

The Nitze memorandum states also: "factual information will be made available . . . subject to appropriate consideration (1) security requirements, (2) the welfare of the returned personnel and their families and (3) the safety and interests of other personnel who may still be detained."

The Nitze memo indicates crewmen will get legal and public affairs counseling before they are made available to newsmen.

Officials said no man will be required to submit to interviews or news conferences unless he wishes.

I
M
C
p
q
w
b
fl
s
h
l
l
c
t
i
E
o
e
s
ft
b
le
sc
th
B
er
Mi
Ge
A
Bei
nan
\$2,3
in
crar
F
owi
FB