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# Navy Curbed Bucher Role As Skipper

By a Washington Post Staff Writer  
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— The Navy provided fresh evidence here today of the peculiar command setup on the Pueblo by confirming that the ship's skipper had no authority to write fitness reports on the intelligence officer aboard.

In response to a query by The Washington Post, the Navy said Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher of the Pueblo did not write the fitness reports on Lt. Stephen R. Harris who was in charge of the secret intelligence rooms aboard the Pueblo.

Instead, the Navy said, those reports were prepared by "his superior, Naval Security Group, for whom he works." The most Bucher could do along that line was file what are called "supplemental reports" on Harris.

Bucher's limited authority over the officer in charge of the intelligence section of the Pueblo contrasts with that of Cmdr. Charles R. Clark, formerly skipper of the Banner, sister spy ship of the Pueblo.

"The officer in charge of the research detachment reported to me directly," Clark testified before the Naval Court of Inquiry here last week. "I wrote his primary fitness report, and he was completely under my military command."

Clark also said he had no trouble getting the men in the research center to perform tasks on the ship outside their specialities. "I was able to use them in any capacity that I desired while we were on station," he said.

Bucher, in his testimony,  
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portrayed a situation where he had to knock to get into the locked rooms of the Pueblo's intelligence center and had to use the force of his personality to persuade men in there to perform other duties aboard his ship.

### Session Is Closed

Harris gave his side of the Pueblo story today to the five admirals sitting as a Court of Inquiry. But he testified in closed session with no date yet set for a public appearance.

The Navy is already re-examining its command and control procedures in light of the Pueblo experience.

Bucher raised intriguing questions in some of his testimony on the public record.

"To the best of my knowledge," Bucher said, "all the classified material assigned to

the ship that I had signed for had been destroyed . . . I did not know, nor was I privy to, the vast amount of material that was aboard the ship . . . in the form of publications with the detachment."

"I had not been made aware of that amount of material nor was there any reason that I should have been made aware of it," Bucher said.

### Destroying Material

Of the furious effort to destroy secret equipment and papers aboard the Pueblo when it became obvious the North Koreans were going to seize the ship, Bucher said: "The way he was conducting his destruction of his classified publications was left entirely up to his discretion. He was attempting to jettison or to destroy the equipment in accordance with the standing

orders for destruction of classified material."

However, Bucher said he became anxious about how Harris and his men (Harris and 28 enlisted men were assigned to the intelligence center closed off from the rest of the ship by a triple-locked door) were progressing with the destruction as the Koreans closed in.

Bucher said he was admitted to the research center and took a look for himself. "I was, to say the least," the skipper testified, "quite surprised" to see three large naval mattress covers full of what "I presumed were all classified documents."

The Koreans captured two, or perhaps all three, of the mattress covers. Bucher said when he re-entered the room under guard 20 to 40 minutes later "a couple of mattress covers" were still there.

### Captain's Responsibility

When the Court of Inquiry pressed Bucher, he conceded that as captain "I was ultimately responsible" for all the secret material being destroyed "because that material was aboard my ship."

He raised yet another question about the division of authority, however, when he said "I was not cleared" for some

of the materials the ship carried.

Rather than have an independent research detachment aboard his ship, Bucher told the court, "I wanted a department so I would have positive control over them in all areas, not only in military but in operational and administrative as well."

His superiors at Cincpacflt (Commander in chief of the Pacific fleet) felt "it would be much better for the detachment to remain a detachment instead of a department," Bucher said. "This was a very tender area and Cincpacflt representatives for the research detachment on occasion made it known to me that these people were not working for me."

### Remains Unclear

Just who Harris was really working for is not clear from either the testimony or the Navy response to the query. The hush-hush National Security Agency certainly had a hand in equipping the black room of the Pueblo and processing the information.

Harris is a 30-year-old graduate of Harvard and the International Language Institute. He speaks several languages fluently, including Russian. This background would seem

to qualify him for the "spook" role of assessing communications the Pueblo was intercepting on its eavesdropping mission off North Korea last January.

Harris's relationship with his skipper, especially in those crucial moments before the Pueblo was captured, is one of the significant aspects of the case still to be developed by the court here.