



# Adm. Johnson Says He Had No Force to Help Pueblo

## Testimony Is Given in Open Session

By RICHARD E. MEYER  
CORONADO, Calif. (AP) —

The admiral who supervised the Pueblo said Wednesday he had no ships to help when North Koreans attacked the intelligence vessel and planes and ships in other commands were unavailable or too far away.

The Pueblo's two .50-caliber machine guns, he added, "did not appear to me to provide a significant defense capability."

Rear Adm. Frank L. Johnson, commander of naval forces in Japan when the Pueblo was seized a year ago and its crew imprisoned, testified at a court of inquiry—first open session after three days of secret testimony.

After Johnson was excused and admonished not to talk to anyone about his testimony, Cmdr. Charles R. Clark, skipper of the Pueblo's sister ship, the Banner, described harassment encountered on similar missions.

### TELLS OF COLLISION

Most of it came from Chinese Communist and Soviet ships, he said. In one instance, he said one ship pretended to ram the Banner, swerved to avoid her at 20 yards off his bow, and, with its crew waving and shouting goodbye in English, collided with one of its own sister ships.

Like Bucher, Clark said he could not have scuttled his ship in less than two hours and said that if he had to rely on the ship's incinerator to destroy classified material, "Well, I spent about three days burning (secret material) after the 7th Fleet?"

Pueblo incident." Clark also said he felt the concept of the intelligence ship operation was good.

### HELP ASKED

In earlier sessions the Pueblo's skipper, Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher, had said he asked for help after North Korean gunboats opened fire but got none; that he had asked for bigger guns but got none; and that facilities for destroying secret papers and gear were inadequate.

Johnson said the Navy checked the Pueblo's system of destroying classified material in the event of attack, but it was only "informal."

Johnson, now commander of the 13th Naval District in Seattle, Wash., told the five-admiral court—which can recommend anything from decorations to courts-martial—that even the nuclear powered aircraft carrier Enterprise couldn't help the Pueblo.

### TOO FAR AWAY

It was too far away, he said, and her planes couldn't operate out of Japan because of an agreement with that country that forbids using Japan-based aircraft in engagements with unfriendly forces.

Rear Adm. Marshall White of the court said: "Then we really had a contingency plan to use forces that didn't exist. There was no help available for her?"

Answer: "No forces were available to me."

Q. "Then there were no forces readily available to come to the Pueblo as I understand your on call arrangement with the 5th Air Force and the 7th Fleet?"

A. "They (the forces) were instructed to go into action any time they received word from any source that assistance was needed. But each command had to go back as far as CINCPAC (Commander in chief for the Pacific) to get final authorization to use these forces at the time of an incident. The 5th Air Force was the only military organization which had available within a reasonable distance any aircraft—not from Japan but primarily from Okinawa and possibly from South Korea, although it was somewhat difficult at least at my level to determine what availability there might be in South Korea."

Q. "Okinawa was so far it would not have been too feasible?"

A. "As you are aware, the distance is 500 miles from Okinawa."

Q. Rear Adm. Edward Grimm: "Were there any communications . . . with CINCPAC during the incident?"

A. "The telephone was used. I believe the first call was about 2:20 p.m. to CINCPAC, and I was advised that the 5th Air Force reported delay of possibly about three hours before they could have aircraft in the area."

Johnson told the court he was not in favor of arming intelligence ships.

"We had successfully carried out 16 missions in unarmed status and I considered this a good basis for continuing this type of mission unarmed," he said. "I did consider they (the guns) might well be provocative . . . I was concerned about the re-

action to this armed status. "And the addition of two .50-calibers did not appear to me to provide a significant capability."

### INSPECTION MADE

Johnson said the "informal" inspection of the Pueblo's ability to destruct secret material was made by Lt. E.A. Brooks, who the Navy has said will testify at the inquiry.

Bucher has testified that his destruct equipment was fire axes and sledge hammers, instead of explosives he wanted.

Johnson was asked whether he was satisfied with the action taken by his staff at the time of the incident.

"I was satisfied with the action taken by my staff," he said. "We never had such an operation before." Of Bucher's statement that communications with Japan were sometimes difficult, involving delays of hours, Johnson said he was aware of "certain difficulties," Japanese mountains, he said, make it hard to link frequencies.

### 'NOT CRITICAL'

Asked if he considered this critical, he said: "I did not . . . There was no instance that any time this created a critical problem in operations."

Johnson said that to support intelligence missions he "requested that the 5th Air Force provide aircraft assistance, a special alert of aircraft on the runways and that the commander of the 7th Fleet assign me a destroyer to remain about 30 miles distance over the horizon."

The Air Force provided the special alert, he said, but in at

least one instance, for an intelligence mission off Shanghai, the destroyer was not provided.

"They directed a destroyer from the Taiwan defense patrol to remain in the northern sector of this Shanghai patrol area," he said. "It had a reaction time of 16 hours. This then became more or less the standard procedure for requesting special air-surface support."

To get the support, he said, he had to ask it from the commander of the 7th Fleet, who would relay it to the commander of the Pacific Fleet, who had to go to the commander of Pacific Forces to get final authority.

The destroyer usually was started during the message exchange and recalled if approval wasn't given, he said.