

PRESS RELEASE

USS Pueblo

COMMAND INFORMATION BUREAU

U.S. NAVAL AMPHIBIOUS BASE, CORONADO, CALIFORNIA

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CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS - FROM OPEN SESSIONS OF TESTIMONY

December 1966

Commander Lloyd Mark Bucher receives orders as Prospective Commanding Officer, USS PUEBLO.

January 30, 1967

Commander Bucher reports to Commandant, Thirteenth Naval District. Received briefings in Japan and Hawaii en route in connection with his duties and assignments aboard PUEBLO.

May 13, 1967

USS PUEBLO commissioned.

May 13 to
September 11, 1967

Sea trials for USS PUEBLO.

November 6, 1967

PUEBLO departs for the Western Pacific.

November 11, 1967

PUEBLO arrives off Hawaii. Routine at-sea drills conducted during this transit period. Commander Bucher receives briefings from Commander Service Force, Pacific Fleet, and Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet. Briefings covered administrative, operational areas.

November 18, 1967

PUEBLO departs from Hawaii.

(more)

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS FROM OPEN SESSIONS OF TESTIMONY - 2

December 1, 1967

PUEBLO arrives at Yokosuka, Japan, in evening. Here at-sea drills conducted during this period.

January 3, 1968

Rear Admiral Frank L. Johnson, Commander, Naval Forces Japan, inspects PUEBLO at request of Commander Bucher. Admiral Johnson happy with condition of ship, with exception of stowage of testing equipment in its area.

January 3 to
January 10, 1968

Commander Bucher submits requests to ship repair facility for repair of ship's steering mechanism. Commander Bucher and officers familiarize themselves with Soviet and North Korean vessels PUEBLO might encounter. Installation of two 50 caliber machine guns on PUEBLO, in accordance with CINCPAC directive. Commander Bucher requests fifty-pound cans of TNT, primer cords and fuses for destruct purposes. Discusses matter with Captain Forrest A. Pease, USN, Chief of Staff to Admiral Johnson. Referred to Commanding Officer of Naval Supply Depot. Ordnance expert at supply depot suggests use of thermite bombs. Thermite bombs specifically forbidden to be carried on board. Cdr. Bucher decides they would be too dangerous to carry even if not forbidden. Commander Bucher recommends reduction of amount of classified material on board. Recommendation turned down by Commander Service Force, U. S. Pacific Fleet.

January 11, 1968
6 a.m.

PUEBLO sails from Sasebo, Japan. Cdr. Bucher sails without being able to get any destruct devices of an explosive nature.

Mission of PUEBLO's voyage: (1) To collect information on Soviet naval activities in Suruhima Strait area. (2) To observe North Korean naval activity in the port areas of Chonjin, Songjin, Nan Do and Wonsan.

January 16, 1968

PUEBLO sails to a position off the coast from Cojin.

(more)

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS - FROM OPEN SESSIONS OF TESTIMONY - 3

January 18, 1968 PUEBLO takes up surveillance in the Songjin area. Temperature below zero, causing severe icing problems on ship. Difficulty encountered in removing tape from weapons during exercise with 50 caliber machine guns 18 to 20 miles out to sea.

January 19, 1968 PUEBLO sails to the vicinity of Mayang Do.
Night

January 21, 1968 North Korean submarine chaser sighted, first naval ship sighted on cruise. Designated a modified SO-1. Ship passes at 500 to 1000 yards range to PUEBLO, showing no apparent interest.
Twilight

Night PUEBLO departs Mayang Do area for Wosan area.

January 22, 1968 PUEBLO operating 18 to 20 miles north of nearest land. Surveillance and oceanographic tests conducted.
Morning

Afternoon Two North Korean fishing vessels approached PUEBLO; circled at 100 yards. Government fishing vessels; painted gray; no arms visible. Two North Korean vessels returned and circled PUEBLO at 30 yards.

3 p.m. Cdr. Bucher prepares and releases first situation report. Considers PUEBLO definitely detected. Communications not established with Japan until between 3 a.m. and 5 a.m. on following day (12 to 14 hour delay).

Evening PUEBLO sails to about 25 miles from Korean coast. 18 contacts made, no identification.

January 23, 1968 Second situation report transmitted by PUEBLO.
10 a.m.

Noon Cdr. Bucher first inferred that North Korean ships on the scene. Own ship reported seven miles from PUEBLO and closing. PUEBLO's position put at 15 to 16 miles from Ung Do Island.

(more)

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS - FROM OPEN SESSIONS OF TESTIMONY - 4

January 23, 1968
12:15 p.m.

North Korean ship, tentatively identified as SS SO-1, subchaser, closes distance to PUEBLO to from between 500 to 1000 yards. Ship circles PUEBLO. North Korean ship at General Quarters, all guns manned, pointed at PUEBLO.

12:20 p.m.

Cdr. Bucher assumed the conn of PUEBLO. Quartermaster First Class Charles Law ordered to hoist international signal for hydrographer. NANSEN CAST begun by oceanographers.

12:30 p.m.

North Korean vessel hoists signal flags asking PUEBLO's nationality.

Cdr. Bucher orders National Ensign hoisted. Ensign Timothy L. Harris ordered to keep a running narrative on the incident. Engine room ordered to light off two main engines; reported within seconds they were prepared to answer all bells.

Warrant Officer Gene H. Lacy sights three North Korean torpedo boats heading for PUEBLO, identified later as P-1a.

North Korean subchaser signals "Heave to, or I will sink." PUEBLO's position verified as 15.8 miles from nearest land.

12:50 p.m.

Cdr. Bucher personally checks position of PUEBLO. PUEBLO hoists signal "I am in international waters," in reply to North Korean subchaser's demand "Heave to."

12:52 p.m.

First message of incident is transmitted to Japan with listing of "CRITIC", ensuring its deliverance to White House.

Three P-1a torpedo boats close in and circle PUEBLO. Machine guns on torpedo boats manned.

12:57 p.m.

Cdr. Bucher asks CWO Lacy about possibility of scuttling PUEBLO. Mr. Lacy states scuttling couldn't be done quickly. Soundings taken. Ship in 30 fathoms of water (150 feet).

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CHRONOLOGICAL OF EVENTS -- FROM OPEN SESSIONS OF TESTIMONY - 5

January 23, 1953

1:00 p.m.

Word passed to prepare to destroy classified material.
Fourth P-4 North Korean patrol torpedo boat arrives.
Torpedo boats surround PUEBLO.

1:05 p.m.

Two MIG aircraft pass over PUEBLO. They circle area.
Torpedo boats aiming accurately point-blank at PUEBLO.
SO-1 hoists signal: "Follow in my wake; I have a pilot aboard."

1:10 p.m.

North Korean subchaser and torpedo boat communicate between themselves by semaphore, megaphone.
One P-4 backs toward PUEBLO, stops at starboard quarter.
Has landing party on board, ready to board PUEBLO.
PUEBLO gets underway and heads for open sea. One-third speed.

1:15 p.m.

Signal hoisted by PUEBLO meaning: "Thank you for your consideration; I'm departing the area."

1:20 p.m.

PUEBLO gets underway at full speed.
North Korean P-4s cross within 10 yards of PUEBLO's bow.
SO-1 lying astern of PUEBLO.
Communist machine guns are distance of 30 yards from exposed machine guns of PUEBLO.
PUEBLO opens distance between it and the North Korean subchaser to 3000 yards.
SO-1 raises signal "Hove to, or I will fire on you."
PUEBLO ignores signal, continues to run at full speed.
SO-1 starts pursuit of PUEBLO, closes gap to 1500-2000 yards.

1:30 p.m.

SO-1 opens fire on PUEBLO. First salvo passes over the ship. One shell strikes signal mast. Cdr. Busher, Signalman Wendell G. Leach and Communications Technician Stephen J. Robin wounded.
Emergency destruction of classified material begun.
North Korean torpedo boats open fire, pepper PUEBLO with between 1000 and 2000 rounds.
SO-1 commences firing salvos, containing between 6 and 10 shells each; firing continues at 30 second to one minute intervals.
P-4 on PUEBLO's starboard quarter uncovers torpedo, and points it in PUEBLO's direction.

(more)

CIRCUITRY OF EVENTS -- FROM OPEN SESSIONS OF TESTIMONY -- 6

January 23, 1968
1:20 - 1:45 p.m.

PUEBLO receives air salvo.
PUEBLO continues at full speed.
Flying bridge cleared.
Classified material orders.
Contact made by Cdr. Bueker with Lt. Stephen H. Harris on destruction of material in research spaces. Lt. Harris reports publications being gathered together and tagged, equipment not used for contact with Japan being searched.
Lt. Harris states rather treacherous to comply with regulations in destroying publications by throwing them overboard.
SOC-1 releases four rockets on pass over PUEBLO, which land approximately 30 miles ahead of PUEBLO.
Cdr. Bueker orders international signal for protest heeded.
PUEBLO brought to all stop.
SOC-1 resumes his firing.
Cdr. Bueker states, if it looked like complete destruction of classified material could not be carried out, he would again run at full speed and risk any fire encountered.
PUEBLO at this time 20 to 25 miles from nearest land.
Cdr. Bueker goes to captain's cabin, orders classified material thrown over side along with personal effects.

1:50 p.m.

SOC-1 closes to 500 yards. Hoists signal "Follow us, I have a pilot aboard."
Cdr. Bueker declines to surrender ship, providing destruction of classified material could be accomplished completely.
PUEBLO proceeds ahead at one-third speed.

1:50 - 2:30 p.m.

Cdr. Bueker stops ship and the SOC-1 and four torpedoes begin open fire. PUEBLO hit in three areas. Fire on Deck B. Hit on Deck during this firing.
PUEBLO resumes one-third speed, following SOC-1 into HONOLULU.
Cdr. Bueker goes to research spaces, orders Lt. Stephen Harris to get rid of three large antennas containing classified material.
Cdr. Bueker sends message to Commander Royal Hansen, Japan, informing him of his decision to offer no resistance, and asks plea for help.

(over)

January 25, 1968
2:50 - 2:30 p.m.

Mr. Harris takes call to Japan regarding that that is about history with the publicists in the news with the British in contact with Japan please situation reported. Ten minutes after Mr. Harris made his last contact with Japan, word is passed to stand by to receive a boarding party of Koreans.

2:32 p.m.

North Korean boat carrying landing party drops alongside PUEBLO. Cdr. Bucher personally himself as commanding officer of PUEBLO.

North Korean party consists of two officers and two enlisted men.

North Koreans demand PUEBLO, force Cdr. Bucher to pull down around ship.

The North Korean enlisted man directed to unblock PUEBLO's radio room. It takes about 30 minutes to ship away the boat and remove the covers.

PUEBLO communications are ordered to the specific areas of ship. They are forced to sit on the deck, hands are blindfolded and have their hands tied.

2:34 p.m.

PUEBLO flying protest signal and request signal for medical assistance.

Boat comes alongside PUEBLO and another North Korean boat, with an interpreter, comes aboard.

Civilian pilot also comes aboard, takes helm of PUEBLO from Boatman Dan Wade Powell L. Beard, who is ordered below where he joins rest of crew in forward deck compartment, forward part of ship.

Captain Beard, senior North Korean officer aboard, orders Cdr. Bucher to take him as a tour of PUEBLO.

2:36 - 2:40 p.m.

Cdr. Bucher conducts Captain Beard through passageway where Hodge is lying wounded. Cdr. Bucher, through interpreter requests medical assistance for Hodge and other wounded men on ship. His request is ignored. A couple of substances are full of apparatus. Medical aid is still in command area on deck. Cdr. Bucher surprised to see this, after he had on board destruction of this medical gear 20 to 40 minutes previously.

(over)

January 23, 1965
3:10 - 5:00 p.m.

Doorway to space jammed with papers left in such a way that door could only stand ajar.
Cdr. Bucher had against bulkhead in Colonel Galt's room through material inside and close door.
Cdr. Bucher ordered to sit outside his room when team completed.

Hospital Corporal Warren P. Fairbridge officially informed Cdr. Bucher of Hedger's death upon ship's arrival in Wonsan.

North Koreans collected and ordered to haul down American flag and flag of PURBLO arrived in Wonsan.

5:30 p.m.

PURBLO tied up to WONSAN pier.

Cdr. Bucher, along with his crew, taken from the ship to a waiting bus. All of them were blindfolded and their hands were tied either in front of them, behind their backs or around their waists. As they moved the distance from the ship to the waiting bus, Cdr. Bucher's blindfold slipped and he observed hundreds, if not a couple of thousand, Korean civilians lining the side of the road. The civilians were shouting at the aircraft, in Korean, and whittling at them. Korean Army personnel lined the road and restrained the civilians.

A short time after boarding the bus, Cdr. Bucher was removed and taken back to the ship where he was instructed to open the door to the rear deck area. He stated that he didn't know how to open the door, at which time he received a few kicks, and was returned to the bus.

Cdr. Bucher was once again removed from the bus and placed in a staff car. During the ride in the staff car Cdr. Bucher was asked why he and his men were staying on the North Koreans, and he continued to deny this allegation.

Some 20 minutes later, the car stopped at a building and Cdr. Bucher was taken inside and at that time, he could hear evidence of the crew being beaten, but he insisted that the beatings stop. His demands were met with even rougher treatment, and he was put in a room and could no longer hear any beatings being heard at all. After a short period of time at this first building, where Cdr. Bucher was questioned by the North Koreans, he was taken from the building and placed on a bus with several members of his crew.

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CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS - FROM OPEN SESSIONS OF TESTIMONY - 9

January 23, 1968
8:30 p.m.

Following a short bus ride the men were placed on a train, still blindfolded and tied. The train, as far as could be determined by Cdr. Bucher, was the usual type of passenger train found in the Far East, and during the train ride which lasted until about 4:30 or 5:00 the next morning (January 24th), Cdr. Bucher was taken to a forward car several times and questioned by the North Koreans. On occasion, Cdr. Bucher would receive from one of the guards a blow to the back with the guard's rifle butt.

January 24, 1968
4:30 - 5:00 a.m.

Upon arrival of the train at their unknown destination, Cdr. Bucher and the crewmen were told to depart the train with their hands held up in the air. Their blindfolds were removed, and their hands were untied. As they stepped from the train, they were met with a great number of lights and they could hear cameras clicking and movie cameras whirring. At one point in leaving the train, Cdr. Bucher lowered his hands, but was quickly prodded with the butt of a gun and forced to raise his hands again.

During the train ride, many of the men were asked their rates, and they only identified themselves as petty officer first class, petty officer second class, et cetera. When they left the train, three officers, Cdr. Bucher, Warrant Officer Gene H. Lacy and Lieutenant (j.g.) Fredrick C. Schumacher, Jr., were headgear that would identify them as officers. Following their departure from the train they were placed aboard buses that, as the train, had all windows covered to prevent the crewmen from viewing any of the surroundings. Following the bus ride, which lasted from a half hour to an hour, they again arrived at an unknown destination and were taken into a building. They were marched to the third floor of the building and Cdr. Bucher was placed in a room by himself.

8:30 a.m.

Cdr. Bucher was taken to a room where a North Korean officer had Cdr. Bucher's officer's jacket on a desk and the officer started asking Cdr. Bucher questions about his personal history. Cdr. Bucher noticed that the Korean officer had the personal history page open and saw no point in denying any of the questions asked him as being true.

(more)

January 21, 1968
8:30 a.m.

The first entry in Gdr. Bucher's journal noted that he had contacted CBO school. The North Koreans equated this to mass Cavalry Intelligence School, and accordingly, they accused him of being a spy for the CIA. During this interrogation period, which lasted some 30 minutes, Gdr. Ueber denied being with the CIA and continued to insist that the ship was nothing more than an astronomical research and oceanographic research ship. He received a number of blows for this.

9:45 a.m.

Gdr. Bucher and five other crewmen faced a Korean General and approximately 40 other North Korean officers. They were asked why they were trying to start a new war with North Korea and about U. S. troops stationed in South Korea. Gdr. Bucher replied that U. S. troops were in South Korea because the government of that country had asked them to be there in order to provide assistance in the defense of their country. Again at this time, as all the previous night, Gdr. Bucher and his men were informed that they were not prisoners of war, had no rights under the Geneva Convention and would be treated as espionages against the red herring. The general then said that they would be shot, that day.

Following the interrogation period, the men were returned to their rooms, under guard. Gdr. Bucher stated that was the last time he saw any of his men until the 19th of February.

None

Gdr. Bucher was removed from his room and taken to an interrogation room where he was met by "Super U". "Super U" continued to rant and rave against the United States, and as he continued these accusations, Gdr. Bucher continued to deny them. After about 15-20 minutes, "Super U" presented Gdr. Bucher with a typewritten confession and demanded that Gdr. Bucher sign it. Gdr. Bucher refused. He was then taken back to his room by guards and those guards had apparently received orders to again lock him over. He was pushed around and punched against the walls.

1:00 p.m.

Gdr. Bucher was taken to a large room where he observed a large table piled with various and sundry pieces of paper some of which were stamped with classified stamps.

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CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS - FROM OPEN SESSIONS OF TESTIMONY - 11

January 24, 1948
2:00 p.m.

He recognized very little of what was on the table. Some of the materials which he did recognize, were on board the PUEBLO without his knowing of it. One other thing on the table that Cdr. Bucher recognized were copies of the HANSEN reports that he had received in North Harbor. He got checked and overwhelmed to see some publications on that table. The rest of the files of paper that were on that table were not recognizable to him. Cdr. Bucher was asked about some of the documents, and since they had the ship's name stamped all over them, he could not say that they had come from his ship. Once again he was presented with the same typical line confusion. Cdr. Bucher refused to sign it because he totally denied that they were trying to start a war with North Korea. Following this, Cdr. Bucher was returned to his room.

6:00 p.m.

Cdr. Bucher was taken to an interrogation room and was again asked to sign the confession. Once again he refused, and it was during this interrogation period that he was given two minutes to sign, or be shot. After the two minutes the trigger of the gun being held at Cdr. Bucher's head was pulled, and the North Korean officer said that it had misfired, and Cdr. Bucher would be given another two minutes. Cdr. Bucher figured out their game at that time, and figured that they were still playing games with him, but weren't going to kill him. Cdr. Bucher said that he was not going to sign, and the North Korean officer said Cdr. Bucher wasn't worth a bullet, and had him beaten until he lost consciousness. He was carried out of the interrogation room and taken to his room at the other end of the building.

10:00 p.m.

Cdr. Bucher was taken from his room and placed in a car. Following a ten minute drive, Cdr. Bucher was taken into another building where he viewed a South Korean and had been badly beaten. After seeing this, Cdr. Bucher suffered a mental blackout. He did not remember returning to the building where he and his crew were being held. When he came to he was sitting in a chair in his room.

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CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS - FROM OPEN SESSIONS OF TESTIMONY - 12

January 24, 1968
10:00 p.m.

Sometime after being returned to his room, Cdr. Bucher was taken to an interrogation room and again told to sign the confession. He refused. At this time, the North Korean officer told Cdr. Bucher that if he did not sign, his men would be shot, one by one, until he did sign. They had already sent for the first man. Cdr. Bucher was not prepared for this type of mental torture. He was convinced that they would shoot his people, and that they were desperate to get the confession and he told them at that time that he would sign the confession.

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