

Pueblo Probe Says Military Is Deficient

By Richard Homan

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The massive high-level confusion and indecision that followed attacks on the USS Pueblo and the EC-121 spy plane lead to the "inescapable conclusion" that the U.S. "military command structure is now simply unable" to respond swiftly to a major crisis, a House subcommittee said yesterday.

In an era of nuclear missiles, the subcommittee warned, the shortcomings brought to light by the two incidents have "frightful implications."

The special Armed Services subcommittee formed to investigate the two incidents said the inquiry "has resulted in the unanimous view that there exist serious deficiencies in the organizational and administrative military command structure of both the Department of the Navy and the Department of Defense."

"The absent or sluggish response by military commanders to the emergencies evident in the Pueblo and EC-121 incidents demonstrate the need for a complete review of our military-civilian command structure and its capability to cope with emergency situations."

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PUEBLO, From A1

In a scathingly-worded and painstakingly-documented 77-page report, the Committee also:

- Accused the entire intelligence community of making no more than a "token effort" to scrutinize the potential hazards involved in the Pueblo mission and said its "failure . . . to provide essential and available information to potential consumers in a timely fashion necessarily raises serious questions concerning the effective operation and administration of these organizations."

- Recommended immediate steps to modify the rigid Code of Conduct governing activities of U.S. servicemen held prisoner, providing "clarifica-

tion and latitude."

- Went far beyond official Pentagon statements in disclosing that the capture of the Pueblo resulted in "a serious compromise of our Nation's intelligence capability" and the "compromise of a great deal of classified information involving naval operations."

- Recommended that the full Armed Services Committee "monitor more closely" the Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency, requiring that each "provide the Committee with a detailed report concerning the scope of their activities, their personnel and their total expenditures." Because of their super-sensitive activities, both have been spared close scrutiny in the past.

- Accused the Defense Department of a "demonstrated lack of candor," of making "a deliberate effort to bury and obfuscate," of giving the subcommittee "half truths" and of being "less than forthright" in their testimony about the Pueblo incident.

- Acknowledged the need to continue such missions but said it was "not convinced that the magnitude of this intelligence reconnaissance activity is completely justified."

Scuttling Devices

Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird announced yesterday that U.S. spy ships, under new orders, are now directed to use "all measures available to protect the ships from search and seizure," and have been given "new scuttling devices," smaller crews and a lesser amount of classified material.

The report of the nine-man subcommittee's findings and recommendations were released a day after transcripts of its hearings.

The committee warned that major weaknesses exist in the U.S. military's ability to transmit operational messages rapidly to commanders with authority to act, in the commanders' willingness to act decisively and in the procedures for prior approval of intelligence-gathering missions.

Charts in the report show that the message from the

Pueblo reporting it was being boarded reached the Pacific Command headquarters 1 hour, 17 minutes after it was sent and notification of the downing of the EC-121 did not reach Washington—either the Pentagon or White House—until more than an hour elapsed.

Because of communications delays, lack of readiness and proper equipment, indecision and uncertainty about U.S. treaty restrictions at Japanese bases, no combat aircraft were available to aid the Pueblo until several hours after it was seized.

"The advantages of speedy, modern and sophisticated communications equipment were often more than offset by the indecisive and inefficient handling of these communications by the various commands involved," the report said.

No Time

The committee noted that President Nixon recently said, "when a war can be decided in 20 minutes, the nation that is behind will have no time to catch up."

"The reluctant but inescapable conclusion finally reached by the subcommittee is that because of the vastness of the military structure, with its complex division into multiple layers of command, and the failure of responsible authorities at the seat of Government to either delegate responsibility or in the alternative provide clear and unequivocal guidelines governing policy in emergency situations—our military command structure is now simply unable to meet the emergency criterion outlined and suggested by the President himself."

The report disputed a U.S. Navy decision after the release of the Pueblo's crew that no changes were needed in the code of conduct.

"At the very least, clarification is required as to the applicability of the code of conduct in those instances in which detainees are not prisoners of war and are not accorded the protection of the Geneva Conventions," the report said, and when a prisoner is not given such protection, "the code of conduct should provide some latitude for the detainee."

The report itself did not judge Cmdr. Lloyd Bucher's decision to surrender the Pueblo without a fight Subcommittee chairman Otis G. Pike (D-N.Y.) and Rep. they were not pleased with it.

Subcommittee chairman

Otis G. Pike (D-N.Y.) and Rep. William G. Bray (R-Ind.), the ranking Republican, indicated in a press conference that they were not pleased with it.

"I believe I would not have reacted in the same way," Pike said, but he would go no further.

"Very frankly," Bray said, "I would have shot it out. Cmdr. Bucher simply did not want to take the responsibility that the old-time kind of officers took."