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Pueblo Crew Said Doing Okay

EDITOR'S NOTE—Foreign newsmen visiting North Korea for the Communist regime's 20th anniversary celebrations were invited to attend a news conference Thursday at which Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher of the captured U.S. ship Pueblo and crewmen were presented. Here is the account of a reporter for the Japanese news service, Kyodo.

By TAMAO YOKOTA

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP) — Crewmen of the North Korean-seized U.S. naval intelligence ship Pueblo, in a concentration camp in the outskirts of Pyongyang, capital of North Korea, appear to be in good health and longing to be returned home as soon as possible.

This correspondent was among a large group of Japanese and other foreign newsmen allowed to inspect the inside of the camp and meet some of the detainees Thursday following an international press interview of part of the ship's crew at the same place.

economic problems, may not be able to carry out development fast enough for the impatient Papuans.

Secession would touch off a political explosion which could seriously threaten Suharto's government. A large number of Indonesian nationalists and rightists violently oppose the Act of Free Choice in what they consider part of Indonesia. The loss of West Irian would upset the delicate political balance.

The Pyongyang-arranged foreign press interview was the first permitted since the Jan. 23 capture of the Pueblo. So also was the visit to the camp.

Located in a picturesque rural section of Pyongyang's suburbs, only about 40 minutes by motorcar from the city's center, the camp consists of a modernistic four-story main building, a two-story annex, a spacious playground and other facilities.

The Pueblo crewmen, all 82 survivors, it appeared, have quarters on the second and third floors of the main building.

The treatment of officers and sailors was found to conform to international regulations concerning war prisoners. The officers wear light khaki-colored uniforms and the sailors light blue ones.

The living quarters are divided—single units for officers and eight-man units for sailors. Meals are also of two classes.

One officer told the visiting newsmen that all detainees were being treated equally and none has complained.

Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher's room is one with about 15 square meters (160 square feet) of floor space. There is a wooden bed on the right side and a small round table and the bed seems passably comfortable to sleep on. Each unit of the sailors' quarters has four beds on each side. Everything looked clean.

There is a barber shop on the second floor and a dispensary on the third. Above the staircases leading to the second and

third floors there are table tennis facilities. A revolutionary slogan inscribed in bold white letters on a red background is on a placard above each table tennis table.

Some detainees were found playing table tennis and others volleyball and football in the playground. But there was no yelling or laughter. Exercising was said to be permitted for half an hour in the morning and one hour from noon.

Every detained crewman interviewed by the first foreign newsmen to visit the camp voiced a desperate appeal for early freedom or regret over the American authorities attitude toward their predicament.

PO 2. C. (Wayne) Anderson claimed that those who had given orders to the Pueblo should be more responsible for the incident than the detainees.

He complained of unbearable homesickness.

PO 1. C. (Lawrence) Mack voiced an appeal to President Johnson to arrange quickly to meet his wish to rejoin his wife and four children at home.

Petty Officer (Charles) Law wished to be home by Christmas. He said he was to be married by November.

All the detainees interviewed also seemed to be haunted by the fear that if the U.S. authorities did not take proper action to obtain their freedom, they might be individually subjected to retaliatory penalties. They were thus unanimous in hoping for the earliest possible official apology by Washington for the

incident, as demanded by Pyongyang.

Some expressed wonder why Washington was hesitating to apologize when, they said, there was every proof of the Pueblo's violation of North Korea's territorial waters. Others likewise expressed dissatisfaction over what they considered the incomprehensible impact of politics on the problem of their release.

Laughter broke out twice during the newsmen's meeting with the detainees. The cause on one of the occasions was the remark by a detainee that he was going to be a clergyman, when asked about his plans for the future. He himself never laughed. He claimed that the Pueblo incident was intolerable from the religious angle as well and added that he wanted to go about peacefully in the future.

On the other occasion a crewman identified as Petty Officer (Michael) Barrett, said nobody was ill in the camp but everybody was quite homesick.

There was an unmistakable look of grief in the eyes of the younger sailors when they glanced at the newsmen.

Anderson is from Waycross, Ga.; Mack from Detroit, Mich.; Law from Tacoma, Wash.; Barrett from Kalamazoo, Mich.