

A025

25 January 1969

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Pueblo Bjt, 400, 2 takes, 650 total
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CORONADO, Calif. AP - Cmdr. Lloyd Bucher says Pueblo crewmen made hundreds of attempts to let the folks back home know that the spying confessions were phony-but most were intercepted by their North Korean captors and followed by severe beatings.

This testimony by the intelligence ship's skipper was reported by a Navy spokesman who briefed newsmen on Bucher's five hours of closed-door testimony Friday before a Navy court of inquiry.

Capt. Thomas L. Dwyer, chief of staff for intelligence for the commander of U.S. Naval forces in Japan when the Pueblo was seized a year ago, followed Bucher to the stand.

All of Dwyer's and most of Bucher's testimony Friday was described as classified information by the Navy. Bucher had spent the previous four days in frequently anguished testimony in public. He was released from further appearances, subject to recall.

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CORONADO, Calif. Pueblo Bjt A025 to update SUZ 5th graf: to recall.

Dwyer resumed testifying in closed session today and was to be followed today and Monday by Capt. William H. Everett, operations officer for the commander of U.S. naval forces in Japan, Capt. Forrest A. Pease and then Rear Adm. Frank L. Johnson.

Johnson was commander of naval forces in Japan and Bucher's superior at the time of the capture. Pease was the chief of staff.

In Washington 6th graf

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In Washington, Senate Democratic leader Mike Mansfield of Montana and Sen. Peter H. Dominick, R-Colo., talked of committee hearings into all aspects of the Pueblo capture.

Dominick asserted that the Navy was trying to blame Bucher rather than the officials who denied him the means to destroy the ship's secret equipment. He said he felt the armed services committee, of which he is a member should have a hearing.

Mansfield said he thinks the Foreign Relations committee, of which he is a member, and the Armed Services Committee will want to inquire into all aspects of the seizure.

Capt. Vincent Thomas, information officer for the commander of the Pacific Fleet, gave newsmen a briefing of Friday's testimony. He declined to elaborate on the classified material, other than to say it concerned the "mission and operation of the Pueblo."

The unclassified materia, he said, included Bucher's testimony that the North Koreans discovered "hundreds of signals sent home by the crew to tell the United States their spying confessions were phony."

He mentioned a now-famous photo, widely distributed by North Korea and supposedly showing contented prisoners, who actually were giving a well-known signal of contempt.

"Cmdr. Bucher observed that after publication in the U.S. of the photo which showed crewmen making 'the internationally recognized gesture' the North Koreans reviewed all their propoganda films, letters, etc., and discovered hundreds of similar signals" said Thomas.

It was at this juncture that the entire crew received severe beatings.

MORE MORE

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CORONADO, TQAKE 4, Pueblo, AO25: beatings.

Bucher, who wept and broke down as he told an open session Thursday of death threats to himself and his crew before he confessed to spying, was serious and solemn as he entered the closed session.

When he came out during a recess, he said he was "much more relaxed" and that the session "went well."

The court of five admirals could recommend anything from medals to court-martial. Bucher was told Wednesday that he is suspected of violating Navy regulations in surrendering his ship without a fight.

Since the court convened Monday, Bucher has received nearly 200 telegrams—all of them sympathetic, said E. Miles Harvey, Bucher's civilian attorney. A Navy spokesman said the court of inquiry has received a large number of telegrams, but declined to discuss their content.

Thomas, reporting on Bucher's Friday testimony, said: Bucher "said the crew was told by the North Koreans that it was not desired that they become Communists, but only that they understand communism. He said that none of his crew became members of the Communist party.

"He said three or four searches were conducted during the period of confinement to ascertain whether any crewmen were openly practicing religion. He thought the North Koreans did not want their guards to see any evidence of religious practices.

"To pass the time," Thomas said, "the crew members started writing several books. One was a song book of rock 'n' roll songs compiled by the younger members of the crew and passed around during their captivity.

Text books were also written, including language books in Japanese, Russian, Spanish and German."

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