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Moorer
Adv. 6:30 p.m. EST
Moorer-Pueblo 250
By FRED S. HOFFMAN
AP Military Writer

WASHINGTON AP - Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, the Navy's chief, said Saturday "The Navy is searching for facts—not scapegoats—in its inquiry into the surrender of the spy ship Pueblo to the North Koreans.

Moorer pledged as chief of naval operations, to ensure full protection of the rights of Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher, the Pueblo's captain, and of all others appearing before a Navy court of inquiry now sitting in California.

He appealed to the American people "tt be patient, not to prejudge, and to have full trust and confidence" that the inquiry is "being carried out by experienced men of great integrity who have only the welfare of our country at heart."

The four-star admiral described himself and the Navy as deeply troubled that legal procedure in the court proceedings "has been widely misinterpreted."

Moorer referred to the rising controversy in Congress and elsewhere which developed this week when the lawyer for the Navy court warned Bucher he was suspected of violating a Navy regulation prohibiting ship commanders from permitting their vessels to be searched or seized "as long as they have the power to resist." The possibility of a court martial was raised by this official.

Bucher received this formal warning Wednesday, two days after he had testified that Navy superiors had turned down his request for a system to destroy his ship's secret equipment quickly.

He testified he recommended this and other improvements for his ship before sailing from the United States for duty in the Western Pacific—a voyage which ended Jan. 23, 1967, with the seizure of the Pueblo and the 82 officers and men aboa

d and their captivity for 11 months.

Moorer said the timing of the warning was dictated by legal requirements and did not reflect any official judgment on Bucher's conduct.

Sen. Peter Dominick, R-Colo., a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, accused the Navy Friday of "trying to assess blame on the commander, whereas the blame ought to be on the people who did not supply equipment . . . and who did not have contingency plans to back him up."

The Pentagon distributed Moorer's statement as he was flying to Chicago to speak before the American Bar Foundation. He planned to tack the statement on to his prepared speech dealing with the rise of Soviet naval power and what he sees as an urgent need to modernize the U.S. Fleet.

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The Pentagon xxx U.S. Fleet.

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At a Chicago press conference before delivering his speech, Moorer said current U.S. spy ships "have the best equipment we can supply them." This is different, in some cases, from the equipment carried by the Pueblo, because it is a year later, he said.

H WOULD NOT SAY IF THIS DIFFERENT EQUIPMENT HAS SELF-DESTRUCT CAPABILITIES.

A ship's orders and equipment are "designed to cover the mission the ship is on, whatever that might be," Moorer said.

Moorer said Russian spy ships are deployed around the world in large numbers, are not armed and make no effort to hide since all operate "on the high seas as the Pueblo did."

A top Navy spokesman said Moorer decided Friday to speak publicly on the Pueblo issue and that he was not prompted in this by higher authority.

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