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ADMIRAL TO FACE 3 PUEBLO QUERIES

Open Testimony Today May
Shift to Top Navy Role

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—After four days of closed hearings, the court of inquiry into the capture of the Pueblo moves into a new and possibly dramatic phase tomorrow with open testimony by Comdr. Lloyd M. Bucher's naval superior.

The first—and pivotal—witness scheduled tomorrow is Rear Adm. Frank L. Johnson, who was commander of the United States naval forces in Japan at the time that the Pueblo was seized by the North Korean gunboats last Jan. 23. Admiral Johnson is now commandant of the 13th Naval District in Seattle.

Commander Bucher said last week that Admiral Johnson had told him before the Pueblo's mission that the ship's two .50-caliber machine guns were to be kept covered "unless it was absolutely necessary."

"Nor was I to provoke anyone by the use of these guns or by practicing with them or even having them in the presence of foreign shipping," said Commander Bucher.

He [Admiral Johnson] was quite sure that they would never be needed."

Commander Bucher added that Admiral Johnson's headquarters had "never" indicated that "there was any danger of my coming under attack."

Closed Sessions on Seizure

"Providing that we carried out our orders by Admiral Johnson," Commander Bucher testified, "there was nothing I could think of or give me cause for concern that we would come under attack."

Navy attorneys say Admiral Johnson will be faced with three key questions in his testimony: What were his orders to Commander Bucher in the event the Pueblo was attacked? What was his role when the Pueblo sent feverish pleas for help to naval headquarters in Japan? What was the deployment of American planes and ships to support a ship under sudden attack?

Admiral Johnson has spent nearly four hours in closed session with the five admirals on the court of inquiry at the Naval Amphibious School here. Exactly how much of that testimony will emerge when he appears at the open session tomorrow is unclear.

The closed sessions dealt with the mission and operation of the Pueblo, which collected electronic intelligence, particularly of radar installations

along the North Korean coast, and checked on the movements of submarines in the area. Navy officials said the closed hearings were essential because secret data were under discussion.

Today's session—held in a classroom guarded by armed marines—heard three officers linked to the Pueblo's intelligence mission.

They are Capt. James W. Pearson, who was described only as serving "in a security capacity in Japan," at the time of the capture; Capt. Everett B. Gladding (ret.), a former special assistant for security on the staff of the Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet, and Capt. John L. Marocchi, then and now the senior intelligence officer on the staff of the Commander in Chief United States Pacific Fleet.

With the court of inquiry now expected to last four more weeks, Navy officials predict that dozens of witnesses will be heard at the open hearings, including Commander Bucher's superiors and numerous members of the Pueblo crew.

Commander Bucher has testified that there was no dissension among the 82 surviving crewmen of the Pueblo, either at the time of the boarding or in North Korean prison.

The 41-year-old Pueblo skipper made the point vehemently last week in reply to a question from his civilian attorney E. Miles Harvey.

"Commander Bucher," Mr. Harvey asked, "did anything, at

anytime, during the period of detention come to your attention, one way or another, that would indicate any misconduct on the part of any member of the crew?"

Commander Bucher replied intensely:

"At no time during the period

of the capture—the day of the capture or the entire period of the captivity did anything come to my attention. I knew everything that was going on that would indicate that any member of my crew, officer, civilians or enlisted had committed any act which could be construed to be misconduct."