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Pueblo and NL 180

by RICHARD A. MEYER

Associated Press Writer

CORONADO, Calif. AP - A captain told a Navy court of inquiry Friday a course in his mock prison camp would have helped crewmen of the USS Pueblo resist physical and mental torture.

Capt. John R. Strane, commander of the Pacific Fleet Airborne Electronics Training Unit and its Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape SERE School, testified secretly.

The Navy released a summary of his statements after censoring them for classified material. The summary said: "One area of stress in the SERE training program is the attempt to escape.

"It is actually hoped that the students, when undergoing intensive training, will attempt to escape and if an escape is completed successfully they are rewarded."

Pueblo crewmen have testified they discussed plans to escape from their North Korean prison-but no escape attempt was ever actually made.

The court adjourned for the weekend and its president, Vice Adm. Howard G. Bowen Jr., and several staff members left for Honolulu to confer with Adm. John J. Hyland, commander-in-chief of the Pacific Fleet, who ordered the Pueblo investigation.

A Navy spokesman said they would confer on court procedure.

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Pueblo NL 200

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CORONADO, Calif. AP - A captain told a Navy Court of Inquiry investigating the Pueblo incident Friday how his mock prison camp teaches men to resist physical and mental torture.

Capt. John R. Strane, commander of the Pacific Fleet Airborne electronics training unit and its Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape SERE school, testified secretly.

The school tries to break men down physically and mentally, find their weaknesses and prepare them for the prison camp ordeal that met the officers and men of the USS Pueblo.

The Pueblo's skipper, Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher, takes the stand again Monday, the Navy said. He follows Vice Adm. John V. Smith who helped with negotiations for release of Bucher and his crew.

Bucher, Smith and Cmdr. Peter F. Block, Bucher's commanding officer when he served on the submarine Ronquil, were asked to testify by Bucher's attorney, E. Miles Harvey.

Bucher's reappearance to answer questions from the five admirals on the court and presentation of the two witnesses on his behalf signaled the final phase of the inquiry.

Monday begins the eighth week of the court's investigation into the capture of the Pueblo last year and the conduct of its crew in a North Korean prison.

Bucher has testified twice, once to present a narrative of the capture and his torture in captivity and then to answer questions about the capture.

Two Pueblo crewmen, Communications Technician 1.C. Don Bailey, 29, Portland, Ind., and Chief Communications Technician James Kell 22, Honolu, testified they had SERE training.

Both said it helped them and recommended it for all military men.

Strane is commander of a SERE school in nearby San Diego. Navy SERE schools are coordinated with Air Force training for pilots in case of capture.

The training at SERE school, complete with a prison camp to teach resistance, is directed by Cmdr. Earl Stanley, who emphasizes: "Don't get caught!"

But should a man get caught, Stanley told newsmen outside the inquiry, the school teaches the enemy's ways of interrogating and torture so a man will know "what to expect if he gets caught."

The school teaches adherence to the military code of conduct, prohibiting a prisoner from giving more than his name, rank, serial number and date of birth.

Standing by the code, said Stanley, maintains a prisoner's self-respect.

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