

Reds Desired War, Pueblo Court Told

CORONADO (UPI). — Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher faced a Navy court of inquiry today as a volunteer witness after an admiral testified he believes North Korea wanted a war over the USS Pueblo affair.

Vice Adm. J. Victor Smith, who negotiated with the Communists after the vessel's capture, called the North Koreans "mad dogs."

Smith described North Korean Premier Kim Il Sung and his advisers as "intelligent people but completely without scruple or conscience."

"I felt that Kim Il Sung welcomed, perhaps wanted, war at that time," Smith said. "Seizure of a vessel on the high seas has in the past been an occasion for war."

Smith said the Pueblo's capture occurred shortly after North Korean efforts to assassinate South Korean President Park Chung Hee, which Smith called another grave provocation.

Bucher went before the court in the afternoon to answer unfavorable testimony about the way he commanded the Pueblo.

The aim of his civilian at-

torney, C. Miles Harvey, was to put Bucher's case into sound shape before the court begins its deliberations. It could recommend Bucher for anything from a court-martial to a decoration.

Smith, a former member of the United Nations negotiating team at the Korean armistice center at Panmunjom, told the five-admiral court of inquiry: "What do you say to a Mongolian savage who holds 82 of your countrymen hostage?"

He denied the North Koreans had ever warned the Pueblo was subject to capture. Smith said also that confessions extracted from Pueblo crewmen that the ship had been in Korean waters hurt his position at the negotiating table.

Smith was followed by Cmdr. Peter F. Block, under whom Bucher served as executive officer of the submarine USS Ronquil in 1963-64.

Block called Bucher's performance on the Ronquil "extremely good, constantly good."

"I have seen him under unusual stress. He is cool and collected," Block said. "He is a very good officer under strain."