

Korean Reds Say Skipper Admitted Deep Incursion

By E. W. KENWORTHY
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 24—The North Korean radio broadcast today a purported confession by the captain of the intelligence ship Pueblo saying that he had violated North Korean territorial waters. The Pentagon denounced the document as a "propaganda sham" and a "travesty of the facts."

The statement attributed to Comdr. Lloyd M. Bucher was

The purported confession and Pentagon comment, Page 14.

broadcast in English by the Korean Central News Agency and monitored in Tokyo.

Commander Bucher was represented as having said that his ship had been disguised in Sasebo, Japan, as a vessel engaged in oceanic research, and that there it had received assignments on Dec. 2 from Rear Adm. Frank A. Johnson, United States Navy commander in Japan, "to conduct military espionage activities on the far eastern region of the Soviet Union and then on the offshore areas" of North Korea.

In carrying out this mission, Commander Bucher was quoted as having said, his ship was captured "after intruding deep into the territorial waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea."

The commander was further quoted as having said that the mission had been assigned by the Central Intelligence Agency, which had promised that on successful completion of the mission, "a lot of dollars would be offered to all crew members of my ship and particularly, I myself would be honored."

"The crime committed by me and my men is entirely indelible," the document said, but it included a plea "that we will be forgiven leniently" since "our parents and wives and children at home are anxiously waiting for us to return home safe."

The Defense Department, in commenting on the document, said, "The style and working of

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the document provide unmistakable evidence in themselves that this was not written or prepared by any American."

Furthermore, the Defense Department said, it is "absolutely untrue" that the Pueblo violated North Korean waters, or that the ship "was in fact violating those territorial waters when the North Korean patrol craft appeared."

North Korea defines its territorial waters as extending 12 miles from shore, in contrast to the "International limit" of 3 miles observed by the United States for its own territorial sovereignty.

In support of its denial, the Defense Department noted that at the time the Pueblo was approached by the North Korean patrol boat, she reported her position as 39 degrees 25 minutes north latitude and 127 degrees 55 minutes east longitude.

At that time, the Pentagon said, the North Koreans, "as determined by the radar track of the North Koreans themselves," observed the Pueblo's position to be 39 degrees 25 minutes north and 127 degrees 56 minutes east.

"These two reported positions are within a mile of one another and both show conclusively that the Pueblo was in international waters," the Pentagon statement continued.

Pentagon officials declined to explain how they knew the radar readings employed by that organization was.

The statement attributed to Commander Bucher said the North Korean craft had appeared when the Pueblo was "7.6 miles off Nodo"—a position 39 degrees 17.4 minutes north and 127 degrees 46.9 minutes east.

The Pentagon statement made no reference to the disparity in the minutes of the position given in the "confession" and the minutes as reported by the Pueblo and also as determined by the North Korean radar tracking.

As for the question whether the Pueblo had at any time violated North Korean territorial waters, the Defense Department said:

"The Pueblo was under orders from the beginning of its mission to stay at least 13 miles from North Korean territory. There is no evidence to suggest that these orders were disobeyed. There is much evidence, both from her own radio transmission and from the information broadcast from the North Koreans themselves in their own internal report that the orders were obeyed."

Not Employed by C.I.A.

The Pentagon dismissed the document's remark about "a lot of dollars" from the Central Intelligence Agency by saying:

"Commander Bucher is a naval officer commanding a naval ship and performing a naval mission. He is not employed by the C.I.A. Nor were any members of his crew. The entire world learned during the

Korean war of the tactics and techniques of Communist propaganda and of North Korean exploitation of men is held captive. This fabrication is but another example."

Some officials suggested that the concluding paragraph of broadcast document, expressing a desire to be "forgiven," indicated that the North Koreans were prepared to free the commander and his crew.