

INQUIRY ON PUEBLO SET FOR THURSDAY

Intelligence Debriefings to
Be Ended Over Weekend

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SAN DIEGO, Calif., Jan. 10—The Navy announced today that the court of inquiry into the capture of the intelligence ship Pueblo would start next Thursday in an amphitheater on the sprawling Naval Amphibious base across San Diego Bay in Coronado.

The court of inquiry is expected to deal publicly for the first time with the confused and still mysterious details surrounding the capture of the Pueblo by North Korean vessels last January.

The five-man board—composed of admirals—will also question Comdr. Lloyd M. Bucher and crewmen who issued confessions while in prison to the effect that the 906-ton ship, on her first surveillance mission, had been engaged in espionage in North Korean territorial waters.

After the crew's release two weeks ago from 11 months of captivity, Commander Bucher said that "at no time" had the Pueblo come within the 12-mile territorial waters claimed by North Korea.

Further Delay Possible

"We anticipate that the court will begin on the 16th," said Capt. Vincent C. Thomas, the public affairs officer for the commander in chief of the Pacific fleet. He indicated, however, that Commander Bucher's military or civilian attorneys could ask for a further delay in the hearings.

At a news conference at the naval hospital here, Captain Thomas said that the intelligence debriefings of Commander Bucher and the 81 other survivors of the Pueblo would be completed this weekend. The questioning this week of Commander Bucher by teams of civilian and military intelligence officers had delayed the start of the court of inquiry.

"Commander Bucher was exhausted, extremely wound up," Comdr. E. Donald Kaufman, the chief of the medical team treating the Pueblo crewmen, said at the news conference. "His emotional condition is now good. The psychiatrists released him for [intelligence debriefings some time ago. He's responding certainly normally."

Commander Kaufman said that the 41-year-old skipper had apparently lost 100 pounds after his third month in captivity. His weight before captivity was 210. Upon his release however, Commander Bucher's weight had climbed to 165 pounds.

"All the men were suffering from malnutrition," said the pudgy dark-haired 39-year-old doctor. "We were somewhat surprised at the relative physical well-being of the men medically, compared to what we expected prisoners of war to show."

"From our talks with the men," he continued, "we have deduced that their diet in captivity was about 2,000 to 2,200 calories a day, but low in proteins and vitamins. It was obvious, however, that all of the men did not consume all of the food offered them, as many found it unpalatable."

Terms Are Extended

Captain Thomas and Commander Kaufman said that the Navy, for medical reasons, was extending the period of service three months for the 25 Pueblo crewmen whose enlistments have expired. The extension can be rejected by any crewman who signs a waiver of naval medical benefits as well as claims against the Government.

"It's highly desirable to medically follow these people closely for an additional period of time to insure that there is no recurrence of previous symptoms," Commander Kaufman said. "There are people we're treating who have eye problems, foot drops, and peripheral neuropathy [a burning and pain in the hands and lower extremities]. It's all due to vitamin deficiencies. These people must be followed

closely.

"This [extension] is really for their own benefit," he said. Navy officers said that "about two" of the 25 enlisted men had indicated disagreement with the extension and would probably sign a waiver and obtain a discharge.

The Navy said that the extension for the enlisted men was unrelated to the impending court of inquiry—in which some enlisted men are expected to be called. All the Pueblo crewmen are on "limited duty status" and have been ordered to remain in the San Diego area, apparently until the court of inquiry ends.

Since the court of inquiry has subpoena powers, any crewman who is discharged from the Navy can be called to testify.

The court was called by the United States Pacific fleet commander, Adm. John J. Hyland, to "inquire into all the facts and circumstances" involving the capture of the ship and the subsequent imprisonment in North Korea of the Pueblo crewmen.

Such questions as the surrender of the Pueblo, apparently without a fight, and the confessions, are expected to be the focus for the court of inquiry.