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PUEBLO NL SUB 250

CORONADO, Calif. - Pueblo NL Bjt A258, to fix sequence, sub for 6th graf which first graf of add A263 : trial.

Newsome made his statement as Bucher was saying North Koreans boarded the Pueblo on the high seas while escorting her into a harbor t to 10 miles north of Wonsan.

Bucher said the North Koreans came alongside, boarded while carrying shoulder weapons and ordered his men at gunpoint to sit blindfolded and with hands tied on the fantail and well deck.

They then ordered him to march into the communications room, containing code machines and a tele-printer for messaging Naval headquarters in Japan, he said.

"At the time, etc. 7th graf

"At the time the North Koreans first set foot on your ship did you any longer have the power to resist?" asked Bucher's civilian attorney, Miles Harvey.

"No, I did not," Bucher replied.

After Bucher was advised of his right to remain silent, Harvey said: "Cmdr. Bucher remains fervent in his desire to tell this court the full details of 23 January and thereafter," referring to the date of the capture last year.

"Cmdr. Bucher, am I reciting your wishes correctly and that you were apprised of your right to remain silent?" the civilian attorney asked.

"Yes," Bucher said. "You have."

Bucher described for the court details of the ship's capture and his attorney read into the record messages between the Pueblo and Navy headquarters in Japan in which the Pueblo radioed repeated pleas for help.

At one point, Japan headquarters radioed that word of the attack "has gone to all authorities" and "we figure by now the Air Force has got some birds winging your way."

Bucher said he felt until the moment his ship was boarded that it was possible, just possible, help might arrive. It didn't. There was no explanation.

SUB for 14th graf: your way.

Bucher said he was hit by members of the boarding party when he refused to disconnect the Pueblo's radio or uncover her guns.

He said he was still hoping that the U.S. or South Korean Air Force would arrive and that he planned to "grab the communications microphone and tell the men to attempt to resume control of the ship."

A senior North Korean colonel Bucher nicknamed "Scar," and an interpreter he called "Max," arrived on another patrol boat, as Bucher said he asked unsuccessfully for medical help.

As they toured the ship, Bucher said they found that the most severely wounded crewman had died and discovered "two mattress covers full of classified material."

"I was rather surprised," Bucher said. "No prior report had been given to me that the material had not been jettisoned or destroyed in some way."

Bucher said he was struck several times but repeated that the Pueblo's mission was to make hydrographic tests of the ocean and survey sun spots.

He said that when the Pueblo was tied up north of Wonsan, about 2,000 North Koreans were shouting and spitting at the crewmen.

"I was told we were espionage agents, had none of the rights of military men, would be tried in Korean court and assured we would all be shot," Bucher said.

Under questioning, etc 15th graf.

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Under questioning by Newsome, the Navy attorney, Bucher conceded that in giving up his men he yielded some of the most highly classified secret material on his ship.

He said he gave priority during the attack to, first, radioing his situation to higher authorities and, second, to destroying secret equipment and documents.

The court's president, Vice Adm. H. G. Bowen Jr., asked at one point: "Did you ever consider the possibility of an attack, and what you would do?"

"No sir," Bucher said. "It never occurred to me. It was not in any of the reports from the Banner (a sister intelligence ship), nor had I received any briefing along the way that would have indicated any danger of ever coming under attack."

Bucher, in his third day on the stand in the inquiry which could recommend anything from medals to courts martial again spoke calmly but seemed under strain. At one point he said he was "tied up in knots."

He said that at no time did he receive advice or guidance from superiors about action to take regarding North Korean gunboats that captured the ship. He and the crewmen were held captive 11 months before being freed last month.

His narrative included new detail on shelling of the Pueblo.

Bucher said the crewman killed, Fireman Duane Hodges, of Creswell, Ore., was hit by a 57-millimeter cannon shell that exploded in his upper thigh and abdomen.

"He could not possibly have survived even if there had been a team of expert surgeons aboard," Bucher said.

He said a shell smashed through a window on the bridge and hit his captain's chair only three feet from where he was shouting instructions into a communications tube.

As he scampered down a ladder, machine gun bullets spattered on both sides of him, he said, and moments later a cannon shell shattered a window in the pilot house and sailed past the head of a junior officer.

Bucher testified earlier he was hit by shrapnel in the buttocks, leg and ankle before he left the bridge but was able to continue commanding.

Highlights of the Pueblo's message exchange with headquarters in Japan, as read into the record, were:

Pueblo: Got company outside and more coming.

HQS: Know what you mean 'bout that company.

P: Plan to open fire on us now. (repeated three times)

P: We need help. We are holding emergency destruction. We need support. SOS. SOS. SOS...

P: Now being escorted into probably Wonsan, Wonsan, Wonsan. Are you sending assistance?

Hqs: Word has gone to all authorities. The commander of Naval forces in Japan is requesting assistance. What key list (of classified material) do you have left?

P: Are you sending assistance?

HQS: Please advise . . . if it appears that your communications bases will be entered.

P: Have been requested to follow into Wonsan. Have three wounded and one man with leg blown off. Have not used any weapons nor uncovered 50-caliber machine guns. Destroying all key lists and as much electronic equipment as possible. How about some help? These guys mean business. Do not intend to offer any resistance . . . and do not know if communications bases will enter.

HQS: Roger, Roger, we doing all we can. Commander of Naval Forces for Japan on hotline. Last I got was Air Force gonna help you with some aircraft but can't really say as commander coordinating with I presume Korean force on F105s, but this unofficial...

HQS: Commander Naval forces Japan advises Fifth Air Force alerted...

P: Sure could use some help now.

HQS: Roger, Roger. We still with you and doing all we can. Everyone really turning to (trying) and figure by now Air Force got some birds winging your way.

P: Sure hope so. We pretty busy with this destruction right now. Can't see for the smoke.

P: Have been directed to come to all stop and being boarded, being boarded. And got four men injured and one critically and going off the air now and destroying this gear.

HQS: Can you transmit? Can you transmit?

There was no reply.

At that point, Bucher said, the Pueblo was being escorted by five Korean warships into the Wonsan Harbor and a torpedo boat was backing up to his vessel with a boarding party.

"I thought possibly, just possibly, the Air Force might come," Bucher said, and he worried about how he would get the word of that possibility to his men.

He said a junior officer asked whether word should be passed to the men to follow the military code of conduct demanding that they give nothing more than name, rank and serial number.

"I gave this order," Bucher said, "and the order was passed."