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Pueblo Lead

By RICHARD E. MEYER

Associated Press Writer

CORONADO, Calif. AP - The captain of the Pueblo said today he knew, when he permitted North Koreans to board his intelligence ship, that not all its secret items had been destroyed.

Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher, told Wednesday he was suspected of violating naval regulations by surrendering and that anything he said might be used against him, was on the witness stand at a court of inquiry for the fourth day.

The 41-year-old officer, who said after the warning he would give "full details" of his experiences, was asked by Navy counsel Capt. WILLIAM Newsome: "Had you made a decision that you would accept incomplete destruction when you authorized a boarding party to come aboard?"

"Yes, sir, I did," Bucher said. "I assumed it had all been jettisoned with the exception of a few things Lt. Harris told me about in phone calls to the bridge."

The Pueblo had secret electronic equipment, codes and documents.

Bucher had said earlier that some equipment was smashed and some papers burned or jettisoned before he surrendered his ship without a fight to North Korean gunboats exactly a year ago.

When he toured the ship with the boarding party, Bucher said, he saw that destruction of electronic equipment was "very close to 100 per cent."

Newsome asked if, after being boarded, Bucher gave his crew any orders not demanded by the North Koreans.

Bucher said he gave orders at his captors' command, "pródded by bayonet or at pistol point. I was concerned with keeping my crew from being additionally or unnecessarily beaten."

Bucher said Wednesday he gave up the Pueblo without uncovering its guns and was boarded about 20 miles outside North Korea's Wonsan Harbor.

After thos, Bucher's face tensed as he heard Newsome say: "Cmdr. Bucher, it is my duty to tell you that facts revealed in this court of inquiry render you to be suspect of a violation of USNR Article 0730."

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 By RICHARD MEYER  
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CORONADO, Calif. AP - A Navy court told Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher Wednesday that he was suspected of violating naval regulations in surrendering the intelligence ship Pueblo to the North Koreans. He was informed by the five admirals constituting a court of inquiry that anything he said from now on might be used against him in court-martial proceedings.

But Bucher, obviously shaken by the statement, said he would continue to give "full details" of the Pueblo's capture and of the 11 months he and his 81 surviving crewmen spent in captivity.

Bucher resumes his testimony today—the first anniversary of the seizure of the ship by the North Koreans.

Wednesday Bucher, 41, described how he gave up the Pueblo with her guns still covered. The court recessed briefly after he told of "receiving" aboard a party of North Korean riflemen about 20 miles off Wonsan Harbor and how they prodded his crew to sitting positions on the deck.

After their return, his face tensed as he heard counsel for the Navy, Capt. William Newsome declare: "Commander Bucher it is my duty to tell you that facts revealed in this court of inquiry render you to be suspect of a violation of USNR Article 0730.

"And you are further advised that you don't have to make any further statement on it and any further statement on it may be used as evidence against you in a subsequent trial."

A court of inquiry is not a military trial, like a court-martial, but only an investigative hearing. Nevertheless Bucher's status suddenly had changed from "a party to the court" to "suspect." Shortly after the crew's release just before Christmas at least two Navy admirals had called Bucher and his men heroes.

With a Brooklyn twang, Newsome quoted regulations:

"The commanding officer shall not permit his command to be searched by any person representing a foreign state nor permit any person representing a foreign state nor permit any other personnel under his command to be removed from that command by such a person, so long as he has the power to resist."

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

"No, I did not," Bucher answered.

"Commander Bucher remains fervent in his desire to tell this court the full details," Harvey said.

"Commander Bucher, am I reciting your wishes correctly and that you were apprised of your rights to remain silent?"

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

The Navy, through Wednesday, had raised these points against Bucher:

1. That he failed to comprehend fully the possibility of an attack. For example:

Q. Vice Admiral Harold G. Bowen Jr.: "Did you ever consider an attack and what you would do?"

A. Bucher: "No sir, I never considered I would ever be attacked on this mission. It never occurred to me. . . . It never occurred to me nor did it cross my mind that I would ever be put in the position I found myself in that afternoon."

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2. That his men weren't issued small arms.

Q. Bowen: "How about small arms for the men?"

A. Bucher: "Small arms were issued in drills in port and under way, but not on the day of capture."

3. That Bucher waited too long to order destruction of classified equipment and documents.

Bucher testified that he waited until after one boarding attempt by the North Koreans, a sea chase and their first salvo of cannon fire before giving the order.

Until then, Bucher said, he had only ordered preparations for destruction.

He said at least two mattress covers full of documents fell to the Communists.

4. That Bucher failed to realize his incinerator was too small to burn all the documents and he didn't sail into water deep enough for jettisoning them.

"It was a complete oversight on my part," Bucher said.

5. And finally, that he surrendered 81 of the most classified items on his ship when he turned over his men.

Q. Newsome: "Isn't it true that in deciding to surrender your vessel you also decided to surrender some of the most classified items on your ship, your personnel?"

A. Bucher: "Yes sir, that's right."

Explaining his decision, Bucher said he "decided that if the destruction of secrets was progressing satisfactorily. . . I would surrender the ship.

"Any further resistance would have meant complete slaughter of the crew."

Bucher, in the first four days, raised these points against his superiors:

1. That they sent him on a dangerous intelligence mission without giving him the explosives he asked for to destroy secret equipment in case he had to.

2. That they failed to meet his request for adequate mounted cannon and gave him two machine guns instead, along with the mount for a third gun he never received.

3. That he messaged repeated pleas for help when he was attacked—even directed messages to the White House—without getting any aid.

4. That at no time did he receive radioed advice or guidance from superiors about what action to take.

5. That he was given inadequate communications, both on the ship in the form of an Army telephone system insufficient in emergencies, and between his ship and Naval headquarters in Japan because of improper radio frequency synchronization.

"I had no confidence in it," he testified.

6. That he was given a steering system that failed more than 60 times in two weeks before it was finally repaired in Hawaii.

Bucher's testimony on Wednesday gave new details about the shelling of the Pueblo and indignities to her men when they were finally taken on shore in North Korea.

He said the crewman killed, Fireman Duane Hodges, of Creswell, Ore., was hit by a 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.

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He added that Hodges died after emergency first aid as the Pueblo was being escorted to port.

Bucher and two other of his men were wounded.

Bucher said he was struck several times by his captors when he refused to disconnect the Pueblo's radio or uncover her guns.

From messages indicating help might be on the way, Bucher said he still had hope that U.S. planes might arrive in time to permit his men to try to resume control of the ship.

The skipper said he repeated to the North Koreans that the Pueblo's mission was to make hydrographic tests of the ocean and survey sound spots, but "I was told we were espionage agents and had none of the rights of military men, would be tried in Korean court and assured we would all be shot."

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