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Pueblo Bjt 400, 2 Takes, 600 Total

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CORON DO, Calif. AP - The admiral who had operational control of the USS Pueblo told his story of the intelligence ship's seizure behind closed doors Monday. The Navy then said he would repeat in public Wednesday the unclassified parts of it.

There was no hint of what Rear Adm. Frank L. Johnson, former commander of U.S. naval forces in Japan, testified during an afternoon-long appearance before a Navy court of inquiry.

A Navy spokesman, briefing newsmen, said the testimony was classified but that Johnson would appear at the open hearing for at least two hours and answer questions from attorneys for the Pueblo skipper, Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher.

"He will go over what he said in the closed session with classified matter taken out," the spokesman said.

As North Korean gunboats closed in on the Pueblo, Bucher radioed Johnson's headquarters at Yokosuka, Japan, with urgent pleas for help.

"These guys mean business" was one of Bucher's messages.

Johnson will have an opportunity to say publicly whether he considered the Pueblo adequately armed. Bucher said he got .50-caliber machine guns for his ship when he wanted larger .20-millimeter cannon.

"Two .50-caliber guns sound awful big to a lot of people," says one of Bucher's close friends, Lt. Cmdr.

Alan P. Hemphill, "but in the Navy we call them 'spitball guns'."

Johnson's former chief of staff, Forrest A. Pease, spent the morning in closed session.

During the noon recess, Bucher's attorney, E. Miles Harvey, called a news conference to say Bucher thinks the public is wrong in getting indignant over his treatment by the court.

The court warned Bucher last week that he is suspected of breaking military regulations by surrendering the Pueblo and could be court-martialed.

"The court of inquiry has been completely fair," Harvey said.

"We have received hundreds of telegrams from people indignant with the court. This is simply wrong. It is not a big thing."

Harvey also said Bucher wants to command another ship, adding that Bucher "embodies to me everything you want in a commander and a commanding officer." He said Bucher was in good physical condition, that the hearings "have not been taxing on either his physical or mental health."

Harvey said Bucher has received 300 to 400 telegrams and "we have yet to receive one telegram adverse to the commander's position." In addition, it was disclosed that Bucher has been given a private note of support from some members of his crew, written on a piece of the Pueblo's stationery.

"Captain, we made it this far together and we'll finish it together, the note said. It was signed, 'Bucher's Bastards,' the name the Pueblo crewmen gave themselves during captivity."

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