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Bucher Says North Koreans Beat Guards if They

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—For 11 months, the crewmen of the intelligence ship Pueblo lived in a shadowy prison world of confusion and fear. They slipped notes to one another in guarded barracks near Pyongyang and whispered while cutting grass and waited.

They waited for beatings.

"The bulk of the beatings were by enlisted men, and they actually had a note in their hands which indicated the man who they were to beat and how hard and how long they were to beat him and what physical appearance the man was to exhibit after the beatings," recalled Comdr. Lloyd M. Bucher in recent testimony before the court of inquiry here.

"Whenever a guard got exuberant and beat someone too hard or left the man with a physical appearance which was other than what had been dictated by his officers, that man himself received one hell of a beating, and I heard them beat-

ing their own people for having overstepped their bounds in beating our people."

The beatings, the detention and the confessions of the Pueblo's 83 surviving crewmen is the focus for the final phase of the inquiry, starting tomorrow at the naval amphibious base here.

The first two phases of the investigation by five admirals dealt with the mission of the electronic intelligence ship and the decision by Commander Bucher to surrender the Pueblo without a fight.

Navy officials say that the final phase—the imprisonment of the crewmen—may take an unexpectedly long time, possibly three more weeks.

"The admirals are planning to go into this extensively and could call more than half of the crewmen," said a Navy official close to the case. "At the same time they're still going to summon witnesses who are involved in the first two phases of the inquiry."

The first scheduled witness tomorrow afternoon is Lieut. Edward R. Murphy Jr., the ex-

ecutive officer and navigator of the Pueblo. North Korean soldiers beat and kicked him in the head and stomach for hours in the first days of imprisonment to gain a confession.

Confessions Recalled

Ultimately, the North Koreans announced that the entire crew — including Commander Bucher and Lieutenant Murphy — had confessed to "espionage and intrusion" in North Korean waters. A similar confession was made by the United States Government to free the Pueblo crew—but repudiated before it was signed.

The crewmen were imprisoned for the bulk of their 11-month detention in barracks six miles outside Pyongyang.

"During the summertime we were out to cut grass in the morning," Commander Bucher recalled for the court. "As they have not invented the lawn mower yet, we cut it with a penknife. This was exercise and great fun, at least to be outside."

During the imprisonment, Commander Bucher and his crew apparently lived in a vaguely Kafkaesque atmosphere of unexpected beatings for unknown reasons.

"This went off and on," Commander Bucher recalled. "Even if I really offended them by saying things I could not possibly get away with without being punched, they would say, 'Well, that's all right, we completely understand you have every right to feel that way.'"

"On another time it wouldn't matter what I said. Even if I said nothing whatsoever I might get punched in the nose."

Commander Bucher spoke with respect about the North Korean officer in charge of the crewmen's detention.

"He was very intelligent,"

said the Pueblo's 41-year-old skipper. "I later found out that he was well read, that he knew Shakespeare, he knew Greek and Roman mythology."

The North Korean colonel also read with interest about the United States.

"They read every scrap of

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Beat Americans Too Hard

news that comes out of the United States, and they read it voraciously," Commander Bucher said.

"They watch it like a hawk, and they subscribe to every possible periodical. They gave us what news they wanted to give us that would

discourage us from a moral point of view.

"For example, they told us that Robert Kennedy had been killed and had been killed by the President of the United States. They told us, the colonel did, that he had proof of things that are too abominable to mention, and I won't tell you."