

STATES-ITEM

MAY 7, 1969

**PUEBLO SKIPPER PLEASED****Bucher Assigned to Classes**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Navy today announced that Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher, skipper of the *Pueblo*, has been assigned to the Naval Postgraduate School, which prepares officers for future senior posts in management.

Bucher was described by the Pentagon as "very pleased with this assignment."

Word that the 41-year-old Bucher would be sent to the one-year graduate course at Monterey, Calif., came a day after Secretary of the Navy John H. Chafee ordered dismissal of all charges against him and others involved in capture of the intelligence ship by North Korea nearly 16 months ago.

NAVY sources described the postgraduate billet as "very highly sought after."

"Cmdr. Bucher had expressed a desire to receive postgraduate training," said the Pentagon's top spokesman, Daniel Z. Hendkin.

He will report there in July, after completing his leave.

Officials said the school presents a management course, including such fields as mathematics and statistics, and offers a master's degree.

SUCH an assignment is normal at this stage of a naval officer's career, they said, add-

ing that lieutenant commanders, commanders and some captains usually are picked for the course.

What Bucher's future will be beyond this next assignment only time will tell.

Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird said Tuesday Bucher's future "does look good to me,"

and Chafee said he didn't think the *Pueblo* affair would cast a lifelong cloud on the officer's career.

Bucher himself expressed the opinion that "his success will depend on how well he performs" in future assignments, his attorney, E. Miles Harvey, told newsmen.

**Wise Decision for Pueblo Crewmen**

John H. Chafee, secretary of the Navy, has ended the *Pueblo* episode, one of the most lamentable chapters in American military history, on a wise and just note.

His decision — presumably also President Nixon's — not to court martial Comdr. Lloyd Bucher, *Pueblo* captain, and crew members reflects the sentiment of the vast majority of Americans, we believe.

That the Navy's court of inquiry even recommended court martial for the *Pueblo* skipper and his chief executive officer, Lt. Stephen Harris, is slightly incredible.

Much of the responsibility for the seizure of the intelligence ship by the North Koreans on Jan. 23, 1968, and the subsequent 11-month ordeal of Comdr. Bucher and his crew, clearly belonged up the Navy chain of command and even into the Johnson administration.

The Navy court indicated as much in recommending letters of reprimand for Rear Adm. Frank L. Johnson, commander of United States naval forces in Japan; and Capt. Everett B. Gladding, now retired, who was director of the naval security group in the Pacific when the *Pueblo* was seized.

The Navy court found both derelict in their duties. Why not, then, recommend court martial for them?

Unfortunately, the suspicion will linger with most Americans that the Navy was on trial, not just the *Pueblo* crew; and that under the circumstances the temptation to select a scapegoat proved irresistible.

With his wise and merciful decision, Secretary Chafee has rescued Comdr. Bucher and his crew from further abuse and, simultaneously, the Navy from compounding tragedy.