~~SECRET//COMINT~~

(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

FROM: B1113 [redacted] 31 JANUARY 1968

TO: B1112 [redacted]

SUBJ: [redacted] DURING PERIOD THAT USS PUEBLO WAS ON STATION NEAR NORTH KOREA.

[redacted]

(b)(1)
(b)(3)-50 USC 403
(b)(3)-18 USC 798
(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

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Approved for Release by NSA on 05-28-2013, FOIA Case # 63391

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(b)(1)
(b)(3)-50 USC 403
(b)(3)-18 USC 798
(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

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THE FOLLOWING SUMMARIES ALL SIGINT REFLECTIONS RELEVANT TO THE NORTH KOREAN CAPTURE OF THE USS PUEBLO ON 23 JANUARY 1968, AND CONSOLIDATES ALL PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED INFORMATION ON THIS SUBJECT.

ACCORDING TO HER OWN POSITION REPORTS, THE USS PUEBLO ARRIVED OFF WO'NSAN ON 22 JANUARY. SHE WAS SUBSEQUENTLY APPROACHED ON 23 JANUARY BY A NORTH KOREAN NAVY (NKN) SO-1 AND SEVERAL TORPEDO BOATS, APPROXIMATELY 16-17 NM FROM THE NEAREST NORTH KOREAN LAND.

AFTER TRYING TO LEAVE THE AREA, NKN VESSELS FIRED SEVERAL WARNING SHOTS, AND SHE HEAVED TO APPROXIMATELY _____ NM FROM LAND. THE NKN VESSELS THEN BEGAN TO ESCORT HER BACK TOWARD WO'NSAN BUT WHEN SHE BEGAN DESTROYING GEAR, AN ARMED NKN BOARDING PARTY BOARDED HER APPROXIMATELY 16-17 NM FROM THE NEAREST LAND. SHE WAS THEN TOWED (WITH THE ARMED PARTY ABOARD) INTO WO'NSAN HARBOR.

PRIOR TO THE CAPTURE OF THE USS PUEBLO, RADAR STATIONS INTERMEDIATELY TRACKED AN UNIDENTIFIED SHIP OF UNIDENTIFIED NATIONALITY BEGINNING AT 22/7##Z THROUGH THE MORNING OF 23 JANUARY. THIS VESSEL STAYED IN A GENERAL AREA OF 39-19N AND 39-1-N LATITUDE AND 128-#-E TO 128-13E LONGITUDE. DURING THIS

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PERIOD THERE WERE ALSO SEVERAL TRACKING REPORTS ON NORTH KOREAN FISHING BOATS AND OTHER UNIDENTIFIED NORTH KOREAN VESSELS IN THE SAME GENERAL AREA.

IN ADDITION, SEVERAL NKAF MIG-17'S WERE ACTIVE OVER THE TONGJOSO'N BAY NEAR THE AREA WHERE THE ABOVE MENTIONED UNIDENTIFIED VESSEL WAS BEING TRACKED BY NKN RADAR. THE TIME FRAME AND THE AREA OF THIS ACTIVITY SUGGESTS THAT IT MAY HAVE BEEN RELATED TO THE PRESENCE OF THE UNIDENTIFIED SHIP.

AFTER APPARENTLY DRIFTING ALL DURING THE NIGHT OF 22 JANUARY THE UNIDENTIFIED SHIP WAS REFLECTED TURNING AND MOVING NORTHWEST TOWARD THE AREA THAT IT HAD BEEN REFLECTED THE DAY BEFORE.

AT 230155Z AND 0200Z NKN SO-1 SUBMARINE CHASER (SC) NUMBER 35 PASSED TWO POSITION REPORTS PLACING HER AT [illegible] APPROXIMATELY 39-01N 128-11E AND 39-02N 128-11E, RESPECTIVELY. AT 0157Z MINESWEEPER NUMBER 11 PASSED A POSITION REPORT OF 38-56N 128-13E. SC-35 THEN PASSED A POSITION AT 0227Z THAT APPARENTLY WAS ERRONEOUS. A SOMEWHAT LENGTHY CONVERSATION BETWEEN KUKCHI-BONG AND SC-35 FROM 230226Z TO 0240Z CONCERNING SC-35'S POSITION INDICATES THAT HER POSITION WAS POSSIBLY REPORTED WRONG AT BOTH 0227Z AND AT 0240Z. AT [illegible] MINESWEEPER 11 REPORTED A POSITION OF 39-03N 128-09E. AT

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[illegible] SC-35 PASSED ANOTHER POSITION REPORT PLACING HER AT 39-24N 127-58E. FOLLOWING THIS, KUKCHI-BONG EXPERIENCED DIFFICULTY IN MAINTAINING VOICE CONTACT WITH SC-35 AND ALL FURTHER CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN SC-35 AND KUKCHI-BONG WERE RELAYED VIA ONE OF THE TORPEDO BOATS IN THE AREA AT THE TIME.

IN ADDITION TO THE SC-35, THERE WERE AT LEAST FOUR TORPEDO BOATS, THREE POSSIBLE MINESWEEPERS, ONE POSSIBLE FISHING BOAT AND TWO UNIDENTIFIED VESSELS IN THE GENERAL AREA DURING THE TIME OF THE INCIDENT. THERE WERE ALSO THREE FLIGHTS OF NORTH KOREAN AIR FORCE (NKAF) 2ND DIVISION MIG'S ACTIVE DURING THE CAPTURE OF THE USS PUEBLO.

AT 23#30#Z AND 23#31#Z SC-35 PASSED POSITION REPORTS OF 39-25N 127-58E AND 39-26N 127-58E. AT #31#Z SC-35 ALSO STATED THAT SHE HAD APPROACHED THE TARGET, IDENTIFYING IT AS "GER 2", AND INDICATING IT WAS ABOUT 3#0 TONS. AT #312Z SC-35 (STILL RELAYING ITS MESSAGES THROUGH ONE OF THE TORPEDO BOATS) REPORTED THAT SHE THOUGHT IT WAS A "RECONNAISSANCE RESEARCH SHIP". SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN SC-35 AND THE TORPEDO BOAT RELAYING MESSAGES TO KUKCHI-BONG DURING #316Z-#318Z INDICATE THAT SC-35 HAD IDENTIFIED THE TARGET AS BEING AN UNARMED AMERICAN HYDROGRAPHIC MARRIER

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MAPPING SHIP. AT #324Z SC-35 ASKED THE TORPEDO BOAT IF IF HE HAD RECEIVED A DECISION CONCERNING "COUNTERMEASURES". THE TORPEDO BOAT INDICATED HE HAD NOT AND INSTRUCTED SC-35 TO WAIT. AT #330Z SC-35 FURTHER IDENTIFIED THE TARGET AS AN AMERICAN SHIP WITH "A LOT OF RADAR AND RADIO ANTENNAS". SC-35 ALSO REPORTED THAT SHE THOUGHT IT WAS "A SHIP FOR DETECTING SOMETHING". AT APPROXIMATELY #335Z SC-35 ALSO ASKED THE TORPEDO BOAT WHICH WAS RELAYING MESSAGES FOR KURCHI-BONG TO "GET A DECISION QUICKLY." BETWEEN #340Z AND APPROXIMATELY #343Z KURCHI-BONG INFORMED MINESWEEPER 11 THAT SC-35 HAD APPROACHED THE TARGET AND INSTRUCTED NUMBER 11 NOT TO MOVE. BETWEEN #340Z AND #400Z ONE OF THE TORPEDO BOATS WAS APPARENTLY INSTRUCTED TO APPROACH SC-35 (AND APPARENTLY THE TARGET), AND TO TIE ON TO SC-35 WHILE TWO OTHERS WERE TO STANDBY. AT APPROXIMATELY #356Z MINESWEEPER 11 WAS ALSO INSTRUCTED TO MOVE TOWARD SC-35. AT #350Z AND #400Z TORPEDO BOAT 604 GAVE POSITIONS OF 39-20N 127-45E AND 39-21N 127-50E AND AT #404Z VESSEL NUMBER 11 GAVE A POSITION OF 39-25N 127-56E. BETWEEN #356Z and #400Z AN UNIDENTIFIED VESSEL DISCUSSED PLANS TO TRANSFER ARMED PERSONNEL FROM SC-35 TO A TORPEDO BOAT. THE PLAN WAS FOR [illegible] BOARDING PARTY TO TIE ONTO T[illegible]

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AND FOR SC-35 TO TOW IT BACK TO WO'SAN. AT THIS POINT THE SC-35 WAS TRANSFERRING AN ARMED BOARDING PARTY OF 5 MEN AND A UNIT COMMANDER TO ONE OF THE TORPEDO BOATS. SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATIONS FROM 0412Z TO 0421Z BETWEEN SC-35 AND THE TORPEDO BOAT RELAYING MESSAGES INDICATE THAT THE TRANSFER WAS COMPLETED, BUT THEY WERE RELUCTANT TO BOARD THE PUEBLO AND THAT THEY WERE "GOING IN A LITTLE" AND THEN "TAKE THAT ACTION." AT 0415Z MINESWEEPER 11 AGAIN GAVE A POSITION REPORT OF 39-25N 127-56E.

A FLIGHT OF TWO WO'SAN-BASED 56TH REGIMENT MIG-17'S WAS FIRST NOTED AT 0406Z COMMUNICATING ON THE NEAR-WIDE VOICE COMMUNICATIONS FREQUENCY. AT 0407Z, THE FLIGHT LEADER WAS INSTRUCTED BY THE 2ND FIGHTER DIVISION CONTROLLER AT SO'NDO'K TO PERFORM A DEFENSIVE PATROL 15.2 NM EAST OF 39-21N 127-35E AT AN ALTITUDE OF 8,202 FEET. KOREAN AIR SURVEILLANCE FACILITIES REFLECTED THIS FLIGHT ORBITING OVER THE TONGJOSO'N BAY WITHIN A 10 NM RADIUS OF 39-37N 127-55E DURING THIS PERIOD. AT 0445Z THIS FLIGHT WAS INSTRUCTED TO RETURN TO WO'SAN, AND IT LANDED THERE AT APPROXIMATELY 0456Z. OVER-ALL ALTITUDES DURING THIS FLIGHT RANGED BETWEEN 3,281-26,247 FEET.

BETWEEN 0424 AND 0427Z SC-35 ASKED A TORPEDO BOAT IF

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RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS (PROBABLY FROM KURONI-DONG), AND IF HE COULD FIRE, SINCE THE TARGET WAS RUNNING AWAY. BETWEEN 0427 AND 0436Z VESSEL NUMBER 11 STATED THAT AIRCRAFT WERE TO PREPARE FOR COMBAT. SC-35 STATED THAT SHE WAS GOING TO FIRE WARNING SHOTS, AND INSTRUCTED THE TORPEDO BOATS TO CLEAR THE AREA. FOLLOWING THIS SC-35 ALSO INSTRUCTED UNIDENTIFIED VESSELS TO USE NIONAL FLAGS AND INFORMED THEM THAT SHE WAS GOING TO CONTINUE FIRE WARNING SHOTS. AT 0436Z SC-35 REPORTED THAT SHE HAD BROUGHT THE TARGET TO A STOP BY FIRING WARNING SHOTS AND THAT IT WAS NOT MOVING. AT 0440Z SHE REPORTED THAT SHE INTENDED TO FIRE A FEW MORE ROUNDS AND MAKE THE TARGET "COME IN."

BETWEEN 0438-0445Z, NKAF PILOTS ENGAGED IN STEADY COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE GROUND CONTROLLER CONCERNING THE NUMBER OF BOATS GATHERED TOGETHER AND THE DIRECTION IN WHICH THE BOATS WERE PROCEEDING. THE PILOTS variously REFERRED TO [redacted] PROBABLY SIX ~~(THREE PEOPLE AND TWO SAMPAN VESSELS)~~ NORTH KOREAN VESSELS as both four small and two large types and as three small and three large types. ONE OF THESE VESSELS WAS ALSO REFERRED TO AS A WARSHIP. ANOTHER possibly amongst the six and evidently ~~[illegible]~~ representing ~~[illegible]~~ VESSEL, ~~[illegible]~~ THE PUEBLO, WAS REFERENCED AS A TARGET. BETWEEN 0428 AND 0434Z THE TARGET WAS REPORTED TO BE MANEUVERING TO THE SOUTHEAST ON A HEADING OF 165 DEGREES AT ~~[illegible]~~ SIX NORTH KOREAN ~~[illegible]~~

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#434Z SIX NORTH KOREAN VESSELS WERE REPORTED TO BE IN "FRONT" OF THE TARGET.

AT #450Z SC-35 GAVE A POSITION REPORT OF 39-29N 128-68E.

AT #451Z AN UNIDENTIFIED VESSEL APPARENTLY WAS CONTINUING TO FIRE AND THE TORPEDO BOAT RELAYING MESSAGES ASKED IF SC-35 INTENDED TO CONTINUE FIRING.

AT APPROXIMATELY #456Z SHE ALSO INSTRUCTED ONE OF THE TORPEDO BOATS TO HOLD THEM ON BOTH SIDES AND SIGNAL THEM (PROBABLY THE TARGET) TO SPEED UP. AT APPROXIMATELY #458Z SC-35 REPORTED THAT THERE "HAD THE BOAT" AND SHE WAS FOLLOWING FROM THE REAR. AT APPROXIMATELY THE SAME TIME, THE TORPEDO BOAT WITH THE BOARDING PARTY REPORTED THAT THEY HADN'T BOARDED YET, BECAUSE "CONDITIONS ARE NOT RIGHT." AT #500Z SC-35 INSTRUCTED TWO TORPEDO BOATS TO GO ON BOTH SIDES (OF THE TARGET)AND SIGNAL HER TO GO FAST. BETWEEN #501Z-#502Z SC-35 REPORTED IT WAS GETTING LATE, SO SHE WOULD GO IN A LITTLE FURTHER AND "DO IT." BETWEEN #502Z AND #508Z THE TORPEDO BOAT RELAYING MESSAGES TO KUKCHI-BONG INSTRUCTED THAT THEY WERE TO BOARD AND "TAKE ACTION", BUT LATER RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS FROM KUKCHI-BONG THAT THE ORDERS "FROM THE SOP" WERE TO TELL SC-35 TO "GO IN A LITTLE FURTHER" BEFORE BOARDING, BECAUSE "THE DISTANCE IS TOO FAR NOW!".

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THE TORPEDO BOAT WHICH WAS APPARENTLY CARRYING THE BOARDING PARTY INSTRUCTED ANOTHER VESSEL TO APPROACH AND WATCH FOR ARTICLES BEING EXERTHROWN OVERBOARD. AT 0515Z SC-35 REPORTED A POSITION OF 39-25N 128-06. BETWEEN 0515Z AND 0526Z SC-35, THE TORPEDO BOAT WITH THE BOARDING PARTY, AND ONE OTHER VESSEL OBSERVED THAT THE TARGET'S CREW WAS DROPPING GEAR OVERBOARD AND THAT A FIRE HAD BEEN STARTED. SC-35 ASKED THE VESSEL RELAYING MESSAGES TO REPORT "TO THE TOP" AND ASK IF IT WOULD BE ALL RIGHT TO BOARD.

AT 0439Z, PRIOR TO THE FIRST HKAF FLIGHT BEING ORDERED TO RETURN TO BASE, A SECOND FLIGHT OF TWO 56TH REGIMENT MIG-17'S TOOK OFF FROM WO'NSAN AND PERFORMED A DEFENSIVE PATROL IN THE AREA EAST OF TONGCH'O'N (38-54N 127-54E). THESE MIG'S WERE AIRBORNE THROUGH 0526Z AND FLEW EAST AND WEST FLIGHT PATTERNS IN THE AREA BOUNDED BY 38-52N 39-00N AND 127-50E 128-20E. DURING THIS FLIGHT ALTITUDES RANGED BETWEEN 4,921 AND 8,202 FEET WITH THE MAJORITY OF THE PATROL BEING FLOWN AT 6,562 FEET.

BY APPROXIMATELY 0518Z, THE THIRD AND FINAL FLIGHT OF 2ND DIVISION MIG'S WERE ACTIVE IN PATROL FLIGHTS OVER THE TONGJOS[illegible] BAY. THE FIGHTERS, TWO 58TH [illegible] MIG-17'S

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AREA BOUNDED BY 39-47N 39-20N AND 127-52E. SURVEILLANCE FACILITIES REFLECTED THIS THIRD FLIGHT AIRBORNE THROUGH 0600Z AT WHICH TIME THEY RETURNED TO SO'NDO'K AIRFIELD. ALTITUDES REFERENCED BY THE PILOTS DURING THEIR PATROL RANGED FROM 1,969 TO 9,843 FEET. AT 0526Z ONE OF THE 58TH REGIMENT PILOTS STATED THAT "THERE IS ONE ~~[illegible]~~ BOAT IN FRONT AND THERE ARE (A TOTAL OF) FOUR (BOATS) ON THE LEFT AND RIGHT SIDE NOW". ~~TO THE LEFT NOW~~". AT 0529Z THE SAME PILOT STATED THAT "THE BOAT IN FRONT IS NOW TURNING TO HEADING 270 (DEGREES)."

AT 0520 AND 0525Z TORPEDO BOAT 604 GAVE POSITIONS 39-21N 128003E AND 39-19N 127-58E. AT 0530Z, PROBABLY ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM KUKCHI-DONG, SC-35 INSTRUCTED (PROBABLY THE TORPEDO BOAT WITH THE BOARDING PARTY) TO "TAKE ACTION QUICKLY." THE TORPEDO BOAT WITH THE BOARDING PARTY REPORTED AT 0531Z THAT SHE WAS "DOINT IT NOW." SOMETIME BETWEEN 0532Z AND 0555Z THE PUEBLO WAS BOARDED BY NEW PERSONNEL. SC-35 GAVE HER POSITION AT REPORT AT 0540Z AS 39-24N 128-01E, AND TORPEDO BOAT 604 GAVE A POSITION OF 39-24N 127-56E.

BEGINNING AT 0540Z NAIGOCH'I-RI RADAR STATION (39-19N 127-34E) BEGAN TRACKING A TOTAL OF SIX VESSELS (PROBABLY THE PUEBLO, SC-35, THE TORPEDO BOAT WHICH HAD [illegible]

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BOARDING PARTY, MINESWEEPER 11, AND POSSIBLY TWO OTHER TORPEDO BOATS) BACK TOWARD WO'NSAN.

THE INITIAL REPORT PLACES ALL VESSELS AT APPROXIMATELY 39-24N 127-55E. TRACKING REPORTS WERE SUBSEQUENTLY PASSED APPROXIMATELY EVERY FIVE MINUTES. IN ADDITION, TORPEDO BOAT 604 SAILED BACK TO WO'NSAN DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF THE OTHER SHIPS AND LED THEM INTO THE HARBOR.

AT APPROXIMATELY #556Z SC-35 INSTRUCTED THE PATROL BOAT WHICH HAD CARRIED THE BOARDING PARTY TO REQUEST THE BOARDING PARTY (WHICH WAS ON THE PUEBLO) TO MOVE QUICKLY. PROBABLY ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM KUSCHI BOND, MINESWEEPER 11 DREW NEAR TO SC-35 AND BEGAN CONDUCTING AN UNIDENTIFIED OPERATION.

AT #601Z THE BOARDING TORPEDO BOAT REPORTED TO SC-35 THAT THERE WERE 64 PEOPLE. BETWEEN #604Z AND #625Z SC-35 INSTRUCTED THE BOARDING TORPEDO BOAT TO INVESTIGATE FULLY, NOT TO LET (THE PUEBLO CREW) TALK OR LOOK OUTSIDE, AND TO REPORT IF ANY WOMEN OR CHILDREN WERE ABOARD. WHEN THE VESSELS WERE AT APPROXIMATELY 39-21N 127-54E, SC-35 #AIRO INFORMED THE BOARDING TORPEDO BOAT THAT "AS FAR AS ENTERING IS CONCERNED, WE ARE COMING TO WO'NSAN." THE BOARDING PARTY I

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PARTY CONFIRMED THAT THERE WERE NO WOMEN OR CHILDREN ABOARD AT 0627Z. AT APPROXIMATELY 0634Z SC-35 INSTRUCTED THE BOARDING TORPEDO BOAT TO "QUESTION THEM" AND DETERMINE THEIR UNIT. AT APPROXIMATELY 0635Z SC-35 REPORTED POSSIBLY TO THE TORPEDO BOAT RELAYING MESSAGES THAT THEY HAD VERIFICATED "SHIPING" AND OTHER UNIDENTIFIED WEAPONS. BETWEEN 0636Z-0642Z SHE ASKED THE PROBABLY BOARDING TORPEDO BOAT TO QUICKLY CONFIRM THE NUMBER OF UNIDENTIFIED WEAPONS. AT 0643Z SC-35 REPORTED THAT BOARDING PARTY WAS IN THE PROCESS OF COLLECTING ALL THE WEAPONS AND THAT THEY WERE PHYSICALLY SEARCHING THEM ONE AT A TIME. AT 0656Z, WHEN SHE WAS AT APPROXIMATELY 39-19N 127-47E, SC-35 REPORTED THAT SHE HAD ALMOST "COME IN" AND ASKED IF IT WAS ALL RIGHT TO CONTINUE TO "GO IN" UNDER THE PRESENT CONDITIONS. PRIOR TO 0750Z SC-35 MADE AN UNIDENTIFIED REPORT ON FOUR AMERICANS (POSSIBLY REFERRING TO THE WOUNDED). AT 0713Z SC-35 REPORTED IN HER LAST COMING-INSPECTED VOICE TRANSMISSION THAT SHE WAS CONTINUING TO "GO IN." TRACKING REPORTS CONTINUED TO REFLECT THE VESSELS MOVING TOWARD WO'MIAN AND THEY WERE ALL LAST INSPECTED IN COMMT AS MOVING INSIDE WO'MIAN HARBOR AT 0800Z. Torpedo boat 4 left area

from 37-17N 125-30E to 37-14N 125-27E at 0400

POSSIBLY RELATED TO THE CAPTURE WERE POSITION REPORTS

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