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25 January 1968

STATEMENT REGARDING PUEBLO

For Staff Meeting on 26 January:

You have all received copies of the memorandum appointing Ben Price to head a Task Team which will prepare a report for me on the PUEBLO incident. I chose Ben because I wanted someone who not only had experience in this kind of study but was also reasonably familiar with both the kinds of operations involved, the area, and the policies and regulations under which we operate. I also wanted someone who is not operationally connected with this specific incident. As Deputy ADPM, Ben is in precisely such a position at present.

I think you all realize the almost endless number of implications which this incident holds for the Agency and the entire SIGINT and COMSEC business. I could be called upon virtually at any moment to report fully on this matter to the Secretary of Defense, the JCS, or the White House itself. Inevitably, I will have to report to USIB not only on the compromise aspects of the incident, but also on whether or not the incident may cause a significant alteration in U.S. collection and intelligence production capabilities. It is almost certain that I will be asked to report on the PUEBLO to the PFIAB at its regular meeting in a couple of weeks, if not at some sort of special meeting which might be called beforehand. Finally, our experience with the LIBERTY would indicate that I will be called upon to testify before Congress even though this was essentially an all Navy affair. You may remember that it was I who spoke to Congress on the communications aspects of the LIBERTY incident even though the communications problems involved in that affair were not really NSA's problems at all.

I will expect each of you to provide your very best people to the Task Team, or in the case of those elements which are not directly involved, to provide whatever assistance might be required of you.

There will, of course, be only a certain limit to which we can go in our present study; obviously, the full impact of the incident

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will not be known until we recover the ship or the crew or until we see reflections of compromise in target communications. Obviously also, the military situation which has evolved since Tuesday is pregnant with the most grave possibilities.

What I envision, then, is a full report prepared as quickly as possible on the situation, and all of its broadest policy implications, as we know them now. We will then supplement that report as new circumstances develop.

I personally have questions which go to the heart of some rather profound matters, not the least of which is how do my national responsibilities for the protection of SIGINT impinge upon direct support and other mobile SIGINT operations.

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

QUESTION: What was the mission of the Pueblo?

ANSWER: The Pueblo's primary mission was direct support for Navy. NSA was not directly involved in either the planning or the execution of the mission.

QUESTION: What, if anything, did NSA have to do with the operation?

ANSWER: NSA was advised on the 13th of December that the operation would be conducted in support of Navy requirements. NSA, taking advantage of the opportunity to levy tasking on a not-to-interfere basis, levied tasking to the Navy. Since the Pueblo was in Mode 1 operation, it was not available for primary NSA tasking. NSA did not have anything to do with the tracking of the Pueblo, the time frame, etc.

QUESTION: Why was the Pueblo so close?

ANSWER: In order to intercept HF and VHF signals effectively the closer the intercept platform is to the source of intercept the greater the quality of intercept. Since VHF is line of sight and the North Koreans are known to use low-power communications, it was probably considered necessary by the Navy to position the platform as close as possible for optimum collection capability.

QUESTION: How many of these ships are there?

ANSWER: There are seven ^{Technical} ~~technical~~ research ships and three AGERS. The ^{Technical} ~~technical~~ research are the OXFORD, GEORGETOWN, JAMESTOWN, BELMONT, LIBERTY, VALDEZ and the MULLER. The three AGERS are the BANNER and the PUEBLO in the Pacific and the PALM BEACH

QUESTION: In view of the recent provocative acts by the North Koreans what action did NSA take, if any, to advise the Navy of the danger involved?

ANSWER: As soon as NSA became aware of the mission, consideration was given to the possibility of advising the JCS of past experience regarding harassment, etc., by the Koreans. On the 29th of December NSA did advise the JCS of the past history regarding reconnaissance efforts against the North Koreans. This information was based on SIGINT.

QUESTION: Was this the first operation of this kind against the North Koreans?

ANSWER: Yes, to my knowledge this was the first mission directed against North Korea. ✓

QUESTION: What experience have we gained from harassment tactics on the part of the Soviets, Koreans and Chinese.

ANSWER: The BANNER, the first AGER to deploy, is subjected to harassment usually on every deployment by either elements of the Navy or fishing vessels whether by the Soviets, Chinese or whatever.

QUESTION: Who approved this mission?

ANSWER: The JCS approved the mission of the Pueblo on 3 January.

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(b) (3)-50 USC 403
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QUESTION: What sensitive equipment was on board the Pueblo?

ANSWER: The Pueblo contained numerous receivers and recorders and ancillary equipment designed to monitor high frequency, very high frequency [redacted] [redacted]. It also had a direction finding capability, an electronics intelligence analysis capability and a position devoted to monitoring of Soviet telemetry. The communications equipment in support of the monitoring effort included the latest and most sophisticated communications systems available to the U. S. Government.

QUESTION: How much of the equipment and material was destroyed to our knowledge?

ANSWER: We do not know for sure. We do know that destruction was accomplished, however, we do not know the extent of the destruction. I might say, Mr. Chairman, that we took immediate action to prevent further compromise by changing and superceding keying material known to have been aboard the Pueblo.

QUESTION: How many crew members had access to this highly classified material.

ANSWER: Of the 83 crew members aboard the ship, 31 possessed special intelligence clearances. Included are the 29 Naval Security Group personnel who had intensive exposure to signals intelligence. ✓

QUESTION: Do we know how the four crew members were injured?

ANSWER: No. Injury could have been as a result of the destruction of equipment or North Korean action.