

ARCHIVES PROCESSING NOTE

The folder containing these notes was originally incorrectly entitled “January 26, 1968 – 7:29 p.m., Pueblo backgrounder with Hugh Sidey and Jack Sutherland.”

On this date, Archives staff corrected the folder title to ““January 26, 1968 – 7:29 p.m., Pueblo backgrounder with Hugh Sidey and **Jack Horner**,” because Jack Horner attended the meeting, not Jack Sutherland.

Regina Greenwell
Senior Archivist
November 12, 2014

WITHDRAWAL SHEET (PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARIES)

FORM OF DOCUMENT	CORRESPONDENTS OR TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
#23 notes	Meeting with Hugh Sidey, etc. Conf. 7 p. <i>Open NLJ 92-142 10-5-99</i>	1/26/68	A

FILE LOCATION

Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings, Box 2

RESTRICTION CODES

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PUEBLO

January 26, 1968

. Meeting with Hugh Sidey and
Jack Horner

Meeting Began: 7:29 p. m.
Meeting Ended: 8:45 p. m.

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NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH
HUGH SIDNEY OF TIME
AND
JACK HORNER OF THE WASHINGTON STAR

January 26, 1968
President's Office

The President: There should be no attribution to anybody on this. I do not want any stories attributed to the President or to the White House. Is that clearly understood?

Hugh Sidney: Yes Sir.

Jack Horner: Yes Sir.

Hugh Sidney: What is the mood and the reaction to the North Korean ship seizure? What are our options?

The President: This is a very serious situation. It is very grave. It does not lend itself to emotion or irresponsibility. At the same time you must do the thing most calculated to get the men back alive and the ship out.

On the matter of options, we are looking at what is best to do to get the ship and the men back. Intemperate statements and massive steps endanger the man and the country.

Our first option is diplomatic. We have taken our case to the UN. We have heard everybody out, including Ambassador Goldberg. We have gone to our allies. All of this culminated with Ambassador Goldberg's presentation today.

In addition, as I said this afternoon, we have and we are taking the necessary precautions in order to be prepared for any contingency.

That involves much, none of which can be spelled out here -- any of which can be misunderstood.

We must be careful. We must not win the argument and lose the sale.

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NLJ 92-142

By CB, NARA Date 9-10-99

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So each day and night we have the best minds and the best planners thinking and saying how we can do it. The British, the Japanese, the Indians and other allies will know of our diplomatic actions.

We recognize that North Korea has a very adequate air force. They have filled the skies with modern planes.

If we had gone in, there would have had to be a clear superiority. We are moving very quietly into the area.

As I said, we have and we are taking steps to be prepared.

We want to keep our hands out and our guard up. We are going to defend our allies from aggression.

This is not an unusual thing --- the harassment itself. What is unusual is the wanton capture of this ship on the high seas and the seizure of the men.

We know the ship was in international waters because we have our own fix on it.

We have intercepts of North Korean ships radioing their location back to their base which conforms with the location given by the Pueblo.

The Communists are in real trouble in North Vietnam. This action may be tied to that in an effort to draw away forces or attention from Vietnam.

These various groups have tried to win a political victory here in the United States with their slogans of stop the bombing and the massive protests throughout the country. But they haven't been able to win. In fact, it looks as though support is growing for the war as reflected in the polls.

Now they are trying to win militarily in Vietnam. They have poured 40 to 50 thousand men in to mount what appears to be a major offensive. This action in Korea could be a diversion or a distraction from that. They are sure heating things up. We have had hundreds of harassments in the past few years. You will remember that we brought some Soviet ships off Alaska when they violated territorial waters. They were fined and released. It is almost constant harassment on the seas.

The Russians do not put aircraft over their ships. Neither do we.

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The Pueblo was not over the territorial line. It was definitely in territorial waters.

Hugh Sidey: Did the commanders in the field do all they could do?

The President: All we know is what we have in their messages. I read the press conference of the commander.

Three or four things could be true. It could start with the most serious, which is that Bucher could be a traitor. I do not think that is true. He could be trying to save those 83 men. He could be doped up. Our intelligence people tell me that this happens often. Bucher may have made a deal with the North Koreans in order to get them to turn back the ship and the man.

He may very well be using his very best judgment in this matter. We will not know until we get him back.

From what I can see of the actions taken by his superior officers in the field, I can find no fault. You could have sent 200 or 300 aircraft into that area, but the time of day and the fact that they have massive air defenses led the field commanders to conclude that this was not a wise course of action. You could lose this ship like we have lost so many planes over Vietnam. We don't want to lose it. We do not plan to lose it, but this is an eventuality that we must consider.

Hugh Sidey: When the message got here, the ship seizure was an accomplished fact, wasn't it?

The President: That is right.

While I know the press and some members of Congress always like to place the blame on their country, this incident looks to me like banditry on the high seas. There have been many new incidents in Korea lately. The squad of North Koreans sent to assassinate President Pak had literal orders to cut off Pak's head and throw it into the street.

For your private information, there are some embassies here in Washington which are pouring out money to some of these protest groups.

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There may be some connection.

The North Korean squad which made the abortive attempt on Blue House wanted to cut off Pak's head. Then came this incident where the North Koreans seized the ship on international waters. All of this may fit together. As to the question of why did the captain of the Pueblo wait so long before sending a distress signal.

The answer is this. These ships are habitually harassed. One of them, the Banner, was recently surrounded by 11 patrol craft before it was let go. In one year the Banner was harassed 7 times.

What about the question that everybody is asking: Why the Naval Base at Yokohama did not react until they seized the Pueblo?

The answer to that is the same as the answer to the first. These ships are habitually harassed.

Why was there no Naval protection available for the Pueblo?

The answer to that is simple. The Soviet Union and the United States have many such ships at sea and conduct literally thousands of flights to collect intelligence by aircraft. Neither currently provide protection. If they did so, they would require navies and air forces enormously greater than their present forces.

Why didn't the Fifth Air Force report when the Pueblo knew it was in serious trouble?

The Pueblo did not ask for help until it was almost too late to respond. There was snow falling. Darkness was close at hand. The operation was evidently preplanned, with MIGs on station which might have endangered the aircraft we might have sent in. Those are the reasons why the commander of the Fifth Air Force decided not to go in.

Hugh Sidey: How much time do we have, Mr. President?

The President: We must continue to keep our cool. We must not lose our heads. I do not know how long we have. I know we must keep our

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hands out and our guard up. Confidentially, Russia told India today that they are going to try to help. We cannot publish that that the Soviets will help us. If we do, there will be less incline to help.

The President showed the alleged confession by Commander Bucher to Hugh Sidey and Jack Horner. That confession is attached at APPENDIX A.

We do not know whether or not the Soviets knew about or prompted this incident.

The President showed the correspondents a dispatch from Adam Clymer, correspondent for the Baltimore Sun. That item is attached at APPENDIX B. Clymer said that one of the Soviet delegates traveling with Chairman Kosygin in New Delhi, India, sought him (Clymer) out. They told him that the Soviets are privately seeking to get the ship released.

Jack Horner: Mr. President, let us assume the worse for the moment. If our diplomatic efforts fail, how do we face up to the question then?

The President: We will have to work on this while we are pursuing our diplomatic efforts.

I hope it will not be necessary to use military force. I am neither optimistic or pessimistic about this.

It may be that we will lose the ship and the men, although I do not want to even think about that. We are weighing this matter very carefully.

Jack Horner: What about the intelligence gear which was aboard the craft?

The President: We honestly do not know how much of it was destroyed.

Hugh Sidey: How closely related is all this to what's happening in Khesanh?

The President: We do not know. We do know this. As they (the enemy) go down in Vietnam, the incident rate in South Korea goes up.

Hugh Sidey: What additional steps are we taking?

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The President: This is extremely confidential, and you cannot in any way attribute it to the White House or to me. You must write it on your own. We are sending some planes out there starting today. We will send some of our strategic reserves to South Korea.

This is not unusual in a crisis. You will recall that Kennedy called up planes twice. All the reserves want to be called up. Russell and Rivers are making speeches about the fact that we should be using the reserves.

You should keep in mind that the South Korean Air Force does not compare very well with the North Korean Air Force. The South Koreans do not have much protection if North Korea goes for a major air offensive.

By sending in U. S. planes to bolster the situation, we may keep Pak from going off on his own and doing something rash.

Hugh Sidey: Can we (U. S. forces) do anything to match their seizing our ship?

The President: We are looking at this. They do not have a fleet. They have only 4 small ships and we cannot get to them. I do not think they will kill our men. You should know one thing, I am going to be very careful on any action I approve for execution. I would rather all of you say that I was too slow rather than quick, smart and dead.

I am going on the best judgment of the best people in and outside of government. Tommy Thompson and Chester Bowles have been very valuable in this. I have informed about 50 to 100 Congressmen.

I do not know what options you would exercise, but there is nobody who is out of their mind around here.

Mrs. Johnson said, "He is a good man to have around in a crisis." So I am trying to do the very best I can.

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It has been one unusual week.

-- Some of our troops got 75 yards over the Cambodian border this week.

-- One of our planes crashed when it was on fire with nuclear weapons aboard.

-- The North Koreans tried to assassinate Pak.

-- The North Koreans seized the Pueblo.

-- The North Vietnamese are mounting a major offensive in South Vietnam.

Hugh Sidey: Why was help not sent in?

The President: What would you do if you sent them in? They had air coverage, the elements were with them, and anything we would have sent probably would not have been much against this.

We have the very best minds working on this matter.

Jack Horner: Mr. President, what can we say about these front groups here which are foreign financed?

The President: There is nothing we can say at this time. When I get the facts and all we need on this, we may try to expel some of the embassy representatives. But some front groups are foreign financed.

We have recent intelligence information which shows that the ship appears to be in good shape and base patrol authorities think the Pueblo is in good shape. You can say authorities indicate that some U. S. planes will probably be moving. We do not want any great drama.

You can say that there has not been any panic buttons pushed.

The Enterprise is in that area. We believe at all times the USS Pueblo was operating in international waters.

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SECURITY SET

EEE 1

NORTH KOREA

25 January 1968

CAPTAIN OF CAPTURED ARMED SPY SHIP CONFESSES

Pyongyang in Korean to South Korea 2200 GMT 24 Jan 68 B

[Verbatim text of statement ascribed to Commander Lloyd Mark Bucher, captain of USS Pueblo, broadcast in English following introduction in Korean: "Commander Lloyd Mark Bucher, captain of the captured U.S. imperialist aggressor forces' armed spy vessel Pueblo, made the following confession regarding the perpetration of criminal espionage activities after intruding into the coastal waters of the DPRK." The radio does not state that the following is in Commander Bucher's own voice.]

[Text] I am Commander Lloyd Mark Bucher, captain of "USS Pueblo" belonging to the Pacific Fleet U.S. Navy, who was captured while carrying out espionage activities after intruding deep into the territorial waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. My serial number is 58215401. I was born in Pocatello, Idaho, USA. I am 38 years old.

The crew of our "USS Pueblo" are 83 [pause] in all including five officers besides me, 75 servicemen, and two civilians. My ship had been sent to Sasebo, Japan, to execute assignments giving by--given by--the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

On 2 December last, we received assignments from your--port [Pyongyang KCNA at 1702 GMT 24 January says "assignments at the port"] of Sasebo from Rear Admiral Frank A. Johnson, U.S. Navy commander in Japan, to conduct military espionage activities on the Far Eastern Region of the Soviet Union and then on the off shore areas and coastal areas of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. [Pyongyang KCNA International English at 1702 GMT on 24 January uses the initials "DPRK"]

My ship had conducted espionage activities on a number of oc--[stammer] occasions for the purpose of detecting the territorial waters of the socialist countries. Uh [stammer] Through such espionage activities, my ship detected the military installations set up along the coasts of the socialist countries and submitted [stammer] the materials to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. [Pyongyang KCNA International English at 1702 GMT on 24 January uses the initials "CIA"]

Recently, we were given another assignment--mission--by the U.S. Central [brief pause] U.S. Intelligence Agency. [Pyongyang KCNA International English at 1702 GMT on 24 January said "another important mission" and uses initials U.S. "CIA"], that is, to detect the areas along the far east of the Soviet Union and North Korea. [Pyongyang KCNA International English at 1702 GMT on 24 January uses "Democratic People's Republic of Korea." Pyongyang International English to Southeast Asia at 0805 GMT on 25 January uses "Democratic People's Republic of North Korea," and the phrase "Democratic People's Republic of" may have been dubbed in on the original tape since the volume of this phrase is noticeably lower than the rest of the statement.]

The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency [Pyongyang KCNA International English at 1702 1702 GMT on 24 January uses the initials U.S. "CIA"] promised me that if this task should be done successfully, a lot of dollars would be offered to the whole crew of my ship and particularly I myself would be honored.

Soon after that I rein--[stammer] reinforced the arms and equipment of the ship and made detailed espionage [KCNA omits "espionage"] preparations for espionage activities. Then we disguised my ship as one engaged in researches of--on--oceanographic [Pyongyang KCNA International English at 1702 GMT on 23 January uses "oceanic". Monitor advises that oceanic and oceanographic may both be translated from the Korean word used] electronics [Pyongyang Domestic Korean at 2000 GMT on 24 January and at other times uses "oceanic electronic research"] and left the port of Sasebo, Japan, and conducted espionage acts along the coast of North Korea [Pyongyang KCNA International English at 1702 GMT on 24 January uses "Democratic People's Republic of Korea." Pyongyang International English to Southeast Asia at 0805 GMT on 25 January uses "Democratic People's Republic of North Korea," and the phrase "Democratic People's Republic of" may have been dubbed in on the original tape since the volume of this phrase is noticeably lower than the rest of the statement] via the general area off the Soviet maritime province. We pretended ourselves to conduct the observation of oceanographic conditions on high seas, electronics, research and on electronic [Pyongyang KCNA International English at 1702 GMT on 24 January uses "electric"] waves, magnetic conditions, and exploitation [Pyongyang International English to Southeast Asia at 0805 on 25 January uses "collection"] of oceanic [stammer]--oceanographic [Pyongyang KCNA International English at 1702 GMT on 24 January uses "oceanic." Monitor advises that oceanic and oceanographic may both be translated from Korean word used] materials.

It was on 16 January 1968 that we entered the North Korean [Pyongyang International English to Southeast Asia at 0805 GMT on 25 January uses "Democratic People's Republic of North Korean". The phrase "Democratic People's Republic of" may have been dubbed in on the original tape, since the volume of this phrase is noticeably lower than the rest of the statement] coastal waters via the Soviet maritime province.

In accordance with the instructions which we had received, my ship was on the utmost alert and was observed and observed and ascertained the depth of water, current, water temperature, sea basin, salt [stammer] condensity and water transparency of the territorial waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with radars [as heard] and various kinds of observatory instruments in a clandestine manner at Chongjin, Wonsan, and several other points, and detected the radar network, accommodation capabilities [Pyongyang KCNA International English at 1702 GMT on 24 January uses "capacities"] of the port, and the number of incoming and outgoing vessels and maneuverability of the naval vessels of the Korean People's Army.

Furthermore, we spied on various military installations and the distribution of industries and the [brief pause] deployment deployment [repeat] of armed forces along the east coast areas and sailed up to point--7.6 miles off Rodo [Pyongyang Domestic Korean at 2000 GMT on 24 January and at other times used a word sounding like "Yodo" which would be closer to the coordinates cited], 39 degrees 17.4 minutes north, 127 degrees 46.1--point nine--east, when the navy patrol crafts of the Korean People's Army appeared.

We were on the alert instantly and tried to escape, firing at the naval patrol crafts of the people's army. But the situation became more dangerous for us and thus one of my men was killed, another heavily wounded, and two others lightly wounded. We had no way out and were captured by the naval patrol crafts of the people's army.

I say frankly that, having been captured now [Pyongyang KCNA International English at 1702 GMT on 24 January uses "having been captured now, I say frankly that"], our act was a criminal act which [stammer] flagrantly violated the armistice agreement, and it was a sheer act of aggression.

25 January 1968

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NORTH KOREA

For the purpose of disguising the activities of my ship throughout the whole period of espionage activities, we used cunning methods, namely, we did not hoist the U.S. flag and sailed and sailed at the highest speed when running out of the territorial waters after the espionage activities, having intruded into territorial sea waters from [pause] high seas.

I have no excuse whatsoever for my criminal act as my ship intruded deep into the territorial waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and was captured by the naval patrol crafts of the Korean People's Army in their self-defense action while conducting the criminal espionage activities.

The crime committed by me and my men is entirely indelible. [Pyongyang Domestic Korean at 2000 on 24 January omits this statement] I and my crew have perpetrated such grave criminal act [as heard] but our parents and wives and children at home are anxiously waiting for us to return home and safe.

Therefore, we only hope, and it is the greatest desire of myself and all my crew, that we will be forgiven leniently by the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. [Pyongyang Domestic Korean at 2000 on 24 January and at other times adds "for our criminal espionage activities perpetrated after deep intrusion into the coastal waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea."]

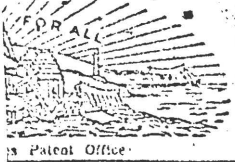
DEFENSE MINISTER GREETES CAPTORS OF SPY SHIP

Pyongyang KCNA International Service in English 1658 GMT 24 Jan 68 B

[Text] Pyongyang--Gen Kim Chang-pong, minister of national defense, warmly greeted personnel of the naval unit of the Korean People's Army who meted out a stern punishment to the U.S. imperialist aggressors, who are engrossed in new war provocation maneuvers, by capturing the armed spy ship of the U.S. imperialist aggressor army and all of the aggressors on board the ship who were perpetrating outright provocative acts after intruding into the sea off Wonsan, the coastal waters of the northern half of the republic, on 23 January.

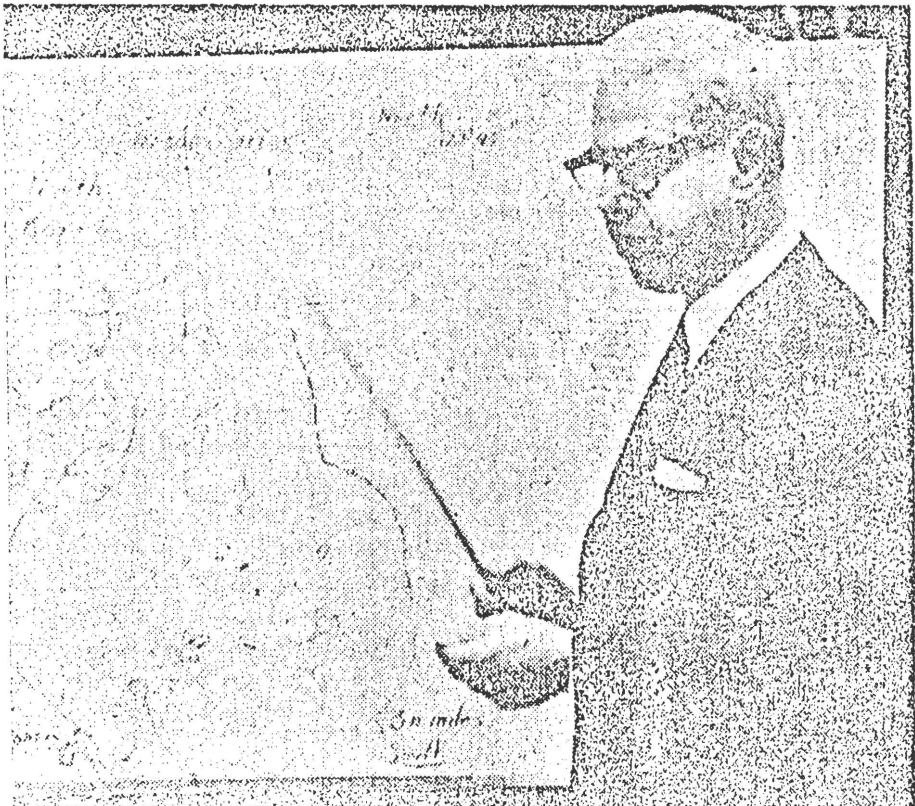
Gen Kim Chang-pong laid stress on further heightening revolutionary vigilance and militant (?spirit) and maintaining a fully prepared posture for resolutely smashing any vicious provocative machinations of the enemy under the acute situation in which the U.S. imperialist aggressors, driven into utter confusion in face of the intensified activities of the armed guerrillas in all parts of South Korea, are further stepping up reckless provocative maneuvers along the military demarcation line and in the eastern and western coastal areas.

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APPENDIX B

ng For U.S. On Pueblo; ver Ship Koreans Seized



PRESENTATION—Ambassador Goldberg uses map to illustrate charges at U.N. Council.

PRIVATE BID INDICATED AT NEW DELHI

Kosygin Keeping In Touch With Moscow On Ship Issue

By ADAM CLYMER
(New Delhi Bureau of The Sun)

New Delhi, Jan. 26—Responsible Soviet sources said today the Soviet Union is privately seeking release of the intelligence ship Pueblo despite formally negative responses to United States requests for such action.

They spoke in fairly general terms, but made an insistent effort to get that message across. They also stressed that Soviet Premier Alexei N. Kosygin, here on a week's visit, was in touch with Moscow on developments involving the North Korean seizure of the electronic intelligence ship.

(In Washington, the Government showed intense interest in the report that Soviet sources might be privately seeking the Pueblo's release. A spokesman said more evidence of it is awaited).

To Preserve Influence

Today's comments, to diplomats and correspondents, followed the announcement of a call-up of American military reservists. That news had not reached here yesterday when Kosygin brushed off a question on the Pueblo, saying, "Ask the Koreans."

The Soviet sources indicated that rejection of direct American requests for intercession with North Korea, along with attacks by Radio Moscow and Pravda, the Soviet Communist organ, were necessary moves to preserve the Kremlin's influence in Pyongyang.

They noted that North Korean Communists often were unsympathetic to the Soviet view of world problems.

But the Russian comments generally were devoid of harsh criticism of the Pueblo, unlike today's Pravda, which referred to the electronic listening ship's "criminal mission."

But they did suggest that if the United States were to admit a violation of North Korean territorial waters, it might simplify release of the vessel and crew. They recalled a case last winter, when a Soviet fishing vessel was seized in Alaskan waters.

hun Ship Case, Russia Tells U.N.

By PAUL W. WARD
(Sun Staff Correspondent)

New York, Jan. 26—North Korea's seizure Tuesday of the U.S. Pueblo was defended today by a Soviet spokesman simultaneously warned the United Nations Security Council to help the United States in release of the ship and

neuver" stemming from a "war psychosis building up in the United States."

Withdrawal Demand

2. Asserting repeatedly that "only" immediate withdrawal of "United States and other foreign troops" from South Korea will produce a "true relaxation of tensions in that part of Asia."

3. Charging that the American Ambassador, Arthur J. Goldberg, had lied when he told the Council that messages radioed to their base by the Pueblo's captors showed they knew

it had not ventured into North Korean territorial waters.

Goldberg, who said Morozov's speech was "largely irrelevant" to the issue before the Council, countered the Russian's charge with an assertion that the spokesman for a Government that once had denied planting mines in Cuba was "hardly able to raise a question about the veracity of anyone at this table."

The Soviet-American exchange occurred near the end of a 2-hour-and-20-minute Council session.

asserting the North Koreans "good reason" for their action, Platon D. Morozov, Soviet delegate, countered Washington's petition for United States assistance by: Denouncing it as a "ma-

S. Clarifies Its Conditions for Vietnam Bombing Halt

By PHILIP POTTER
(Washington Bureau of The Sun)

Washington, Jan. 26—The United States now has made it clear that it is prepared to stop the bombing of North Vietnam as an initial step for the start of negotiations, if assured the Hanoi regime will not take advantage" of it by increasing its own level of war activity.

Both Vietnam would not be included, nor would the United States, from continuing "to support the normal amount of arms, munitions, men to South Vietnam" while discussions leading toward a cease-fire and settlement were initiated. What the United States would

advantage of our restraint as they have in the past. This nation simply cannot accept anything less without jeopardizing the lives of our men and of our allies. If a basis for peace talks can be established on the San Antonio foundations... we would consult with our allies and with the other side to see if a complete cessation of hostilities—a really true cease-fire—could be made the first order of business."

"Reciprocal Action"

At his confirmation hearing yesterday before the Senate committee, Clifford said he was opposed to negotiations "just

PUEBLO SKIPPER QUOTED ON SPYING

Admits Sailing Soviet, China Waters, Broadcast Says

Tokyo, Jan. 26 (AP)—A North Korean broadcast said today the skipper of the Pueblo told a news conference his ship had entered the coastal waters of the Soviet Union and Red China, as well as North Korea, on spy missions.

A broadcast by the Korean Central News Agency said the skipper of the Navy intelligence ship, Cmdr. Lloyd Mark Bucher, made the statement at a "certain spot" in North Korea.

Reply To Question

In general, the remarks followed those of a "confession" by Bucher that North Korea

Soviet Reported Interceding For U.S. In Pueblo Dispute

By ADAM CLYMER

(Continued from Page A 1)

waters and freed after paying a \$5,000 fine.

Diplomatic observers here were unable to evaluate confidently the substance behind the Soviet hints. Some felt they could accurately represent Soviet actions. Others believed they were intended simply to create an impression of understanding without necessarily being supported by any concrete Soviet steps.

2 Circuits To Moscow

The Pueblo incident may have come up tonight when Kosygin, Yugoslav President Tito, and Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi met for about 75 minutes. Officials of Mrs. Gandhi's staff anxiously have been seeking recently developments in the case. But the substance of the three-way talks was not disclosed. Kosygin and Mrs. Gandhi meet at length tomorrow, while Tito leaves early in the morning.

Russian diplomats add Kosy-

gin had two direct telephone-teleprinter circuits to Moscow, one from the Soviet Embassy and one from the Ashoka Hotel, where many members of his party are staying. Kosygin himself is staying at Rashtrapati Bhavan, residence of the President of India and formerly the home of the British viceroys of India.

Reporters were unable to reach Kosygin to question him directly this afternoon when he attended Indian President Zakir Hussain's annual "at home," a vast outdoor tea party.

Kosygin and Tito were the guests of honor and sat for nearly three quarters of an hour as an assembly line of greeters passed by them at a rate reaching 47 per minute. The guests nodded or folded their hands in the Indian "namste" greeting, but did not exchange any conversation.