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MEETING AT THE STATE DEPARTMENT  
ON THE PUEBLO

January 24, 1968

Attending the meeting:

Secretary McNamara	Samuel Berger
Secretary Katzenbach	Paul Warnke
Paul Nitze	Bromley Smith
General Wheeler	George Christian
Richard Helms	
Walt Rostow	
Clark Clifford	

Secretary McNamara: There are three points to consider:

What was the objective of the North Koreans in seizing the Pueblo;

What will they do in the future; and

How do we respond?

We ought to respond promptly and in a firm manner.

Walt Rostow: We should examine whether this is really a Soviet job. The North Koreans expect an air strike on Wonsan.

Richard Helms: This is part of a well-calculated program, first the Blue House and now the ship. It is designed to harass both the ROK and the United States. They are prepared to be as hard on us as they think they can get away with.

Secretary McNamara: I suggest there may be a more significant objective -- to tie down the United States. There is quite a bit we can do, such as putting in embarrassing blockade-type measures.

Secretary Katzenbach: This was a calculated move on a target of opportunity.

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General Wheeler: From the time the Pueblo was seen on the 22nd, they went back and laid on it.

Secretary McNamara: Maybe from the 10th.

Secretary Katzenbach: They waited until they got into the easiest place to knock it off. I don't think they have any intention of returning the ship or the crew. They held our helicopter pilots a year.

Paul Nitze: This could be pressure for negotiations on Vietnam.

Secretary Katzenbach: I don't think Kim Il Song wants negotiations in Vietnam. This is a monkey wrench. Isn't the most plausible conclusion but this is simply a North Korean action.

Walt Rostow: I don't think so. They were going for a vessel in which the Russians are much interested.

Secretary McNamara: They will hold the ship and the people indefinitely.

Richard Helms: But the Russians don't want it to get out of hand.

Walt Rostow: Goldberg thought he would ask U Thant to seek the good offices role. Rusk told him not to commit. Goldberg could take it to the Security Council. A letter to the Secretary General may be good. Or we could go back to the highest level -- the President to Kosygin.

General Wheeler: We can pull up our sox in Korea -- military and naval. Reinforce the Air Force. We will have question on how much we can use Japanese bases.

Possible military-type actions:

1. Naval preponderance. If we can find their shipping, seize or sink it. They don't have much, but they do have a fish cannery ship. We can see if they have anything going to Vietnam and grab it.
2. Undertake a blockade by mining selected harbors.
3. Engage in punitive activities against any shipping along their coast. I am attracted by the utility of using submarines and mines.

4. Air strikes and naval strikes. Lower the boom on Wonsan. It is well defended and we will have losses.

5. Select an isolated outpost on the DMZ, raid it in force and seize troops.

6. Before we do anything we need reconnaissance.

Secretary McNamara: I would recommend a build up of forces, including authority from Congress to call up Reserves, and extend terms of service. We should call up Air Reserves.

Walt Rostow: We might take the unusual move of getting the South Koreans to pick up the Soviet ship that has been shattering the Enterprise. (Others expressed opposition to this.)

Secretary Katzenbach: We might stick another such boat out there, with protection. We have got the power to put it there and keep it there.

In summation, the meeting resulted in 10 possible pressure actions:

1. Indirect leak of materials to Soviets indicating U.S. determination to use dire actions to get the ship back.

2. Air reconnaissance

3. Replace Pueblo with the Banner.

4. Salvage Operations

5. Mining Wonsan Harbor

6. Forcible retention of North Korean vessels.

7. Air strikes by United States on ROK.

8. Raids across the DMZ by U.S. or ROK.

9. Quarantine or blockade of one or more ports limited to their naval units.

10. Free world breach-of-trade sanctions especially Japanese.

George Christian

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