

SENATORS ASSAIL POLICY ON PUEBLO

Mundt Charges 'Bungling'—

Rusk Is Said to Promise
Review of Spy Ship Use

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 26 — The Administration ran into criticism and charges of "bungling" today in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for permitting the intelligence ship Pueblo to operate off the North Korean coast at a time of political tension in the Far East.

As a result of the criticism, Secretary of State Dean Rusk was reported to have given assurances that the Administration would reconsider its policies governing the operation of electronic spy ships off the shores of Communist nations.

Meanwhile, in New York, Senator Jacob K. Javits called for Congress to conduct an inquiry into the Pueblo incident and other foreign policy issues.

Mr. Rusk, who appeared before the committee in executive session for a secret briefing on the Pueblo incident, obtained the unanimous support of the committee members for the Administration's diplomatic efforts to obtain from North Korea release of the Pueblo and her crew.

The committee members were reported to have stressed that the Administration should not rush into any military action.

Committee Is Critical

But when Mr. Rusk asked for committee advice on how to handle the incident, he was reported to have received instead criticism of the Administration for permitting the incident to develop.

The sharpest criticism was reported to have come from Senator Karl E. Mundt, Republican of South Dakota, who is normally one of the more militant conservatives on the committee.

In response to the Rusk request for advice, Senator Mundt was understood to have complained that the Administration had "bungled very badly" in permitting the Pueblo to operate off the North Korean coast.

Senator Mundt was reliably reported to have told Mr. Rusk that "we should not be running spy ships into controversial areas in a provocative manner unless it is highly important that we get information that is not otherwise available."

If such missions are absolute-

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ly necessary, Senator Mundt was understood to have suggested, the ships should not be sent into such sensitive areas unless protected by air cover or by "naval power over the horizon."

Similar criticism, in somewhat less blunt terms, was understood to have come from other committee members, such as Senator Frank J. Lausche, Democrat of Ohio, and Senator Stuart Symington, Democrat of Missouri.

In response to the criticism, Mr. Rusk was reported to have told the committee members that the Administration "might have to rethink" its past policies on the operations of intelligence ships and take steps to see that such incidents as the seizure of the Pueblo did not recur.

From the criticism, it was apparent the Pueblo incident was having the significant political effect of producing a coalescing of views between liberals and conservatives on the committee, between critics and supporters of the Administration's Vietnam policy.

Their new common ground is a desire for a Congressional restraint on the foreign policy commitments undertaken by the Administration and a concern that as a result of Vietnam the nation is in danger of becoming militarily and politically overextended.

'Uneasy Truce'

The latter concern was reflected in the comments of Senator Mundt, who in the past has been a supporter of the Administration's Vietnam policy. Mr. Mundt was understood to have advised Mr. Rusk that the Administration should not undertake such intelligence patrols "in a period of uneasy truce, when you already have more war on your hands than you can handle and when you shouldn't be looking for more."

The common ground of criticism being assumed by liberals and conservatives was underscored by the similar comments of two individuals who are on opposite political poles—Senator Strom Thurmond, Republican of South Carolina, and

John Kenneth Galbraith, national chairman of the Americans for Democratic Action.

"To send poorly armed surface reconnaissance ships into dangerous waters without air cover, naval escort or emergency plans for adequate support was a serious error in judgment," Senator Thurmond said in a statement.

'Risky Business'

"Responsible liberals will all wish to remind the Administration that sending intelligence gunboats into the immediate neighborhood of a presumptively hostile country is an inherently risky business," Mr. Galbraith said in a statement.

After the Rusk briefing, some committee members privately expressed some doubts that high authorities in the executive branch and the military were aware of the mission of the Pueblo.

The effect of the Pueblo incident, in the opinion of some committee members, will therefore be to reinforce a move within the committee to investigate the Administration's handling of the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incidents, in which two American destroyers were reported to have come under attack by North Vietnamese PT boats.

The Rusk briefing was understood to have put to rest the suspicions of some committee members that before the seizure, Pueblo might have intruded into North Korean territorial waters, as has been charged by North Korea.

Territorial Waters

Asked by reporters after the hearing whether the Pueblo had at any time entered North Korean territorial waters before her seizure, Mr. Rusk replied:

"We have no information whatever pointing in that direction. The ship was in international waters at all stages, according to every indication we have. And there are indications that the other side also knew that."

When pressed on this point within the committee, Mr. Rusk was said to have explained that he could not be categorical because the Pueblo,

until the time of her seizure was maintaining radio silence and was not reporting her position. But he was said to have emphasized that the ship was under strict orders not to come any closer than 13 miles from the North Korean shore. North Korea claims a 12-mile territorial sea.

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