

U.S. IS CONTINUING MILITARY BUILD-UP IN PUEBLO CRISIS

Administration Still Hopeful
of Diplomatic Support for
Return of Ship and Crew

2D TASK FORCE SHIFTED

Pentagon Declines to Name
Units Alerted—Chinese
Back North Koreans

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 28—The Johnson Administration, confident that it has a strong legal case in the capture of the intelligence ship Pueblo by North Korea, solicited diplomatic support today but continued its military build-up in case no diplomatic solution materialized.

The Department of Defense reported that the United States "is taking certain precautionary measures to strengthen our forces and to reinforce our tactical air capabilities." It added, "Certain units have been alerted for possible movement."

A Pentagon spokesman declined to identify the units under alert or to discuss their deployment.

[In Seoul, South Korea, an official source confirmed reports that a second United States Navy task force, consisting of an aircraft carrier, destroyers and other escort vessels, had been assigned to the Sea of Japan, where the carrier Enterprise is already stationed.]

Signs of Support Awaited

Administration officials were looking to the private consultations under way at the United Nations for signs that other countries were beginning to accept the United States assertion that the Pueblo was in international waters when she was boarded and captured last Tuesday.

Administration spokesmen allow for no doubt in making that assertion. To defend their case both publicly and in diplomatic approaches they have cited intelligence information that, in lesser circumstances, the Government would not acknowledge that it possessed.

That was the pinpointing of coordinates on the location of the Pueblo, as defined by the North Koreans themselves in their own naval communications. Such information shows a hostile Government how effective United States radio monitoring and intercepting actually are.

The day after the Pueblo was seized, American officials insisted that private North Korean signals had located the Pueblo at almost the same spot as the one designated by the United States—and this was 15 to 16 miles from the nearest North Korean coastline. North Korea claims a 12-mile limit.

Officials declined to say how the North Korean signals

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were intercepted. The monitoring of such signals was one of the missions of the Pueblo, but United States intelligence systems have other means since this interception continued after the Pueblo's capture.

North Korea has insisted that the Pueblo was seized in territorial waters, an assertion supported in public statements by the Soviet Union.

Communist China issued an official statement today condemning United States "intrusions into territorial waters for espionage activities." It warned that "should United States imperialism dare to embark on a new war adventure, it is bound to taste the bitter fruit of its own making and to receive even more severe punishment."

Analysts here noted that the statement stopped short of promising Chinese assistance to the North Koreans in the event of a military clash. Both China and the Soviet Union have mutual defense treaties with North Korea, providing for military support in the event of attack.

State Department officials expressed interest in press reports from New Delhi, where Premier Aleksei N. Kosygin is visiting, that the Russians had not ruled out using their influence secretly to moderate the crisis. This impression is borne out in official exchanges with the Soviet leadership, though no concrete intervention has been detected.

No Prisoner Figure

The officials declined to speculate about the possibility of a prisoner exchange with North Korea, mentioned in reports from New Delhi by The Washington Post and The Baltimore Sun. These reports suggested that North Korea might hand over the 83 crewmen of the Pueblo in exchange for North Korean prisoners held by South Korea.

It could not be established here whether there are enough North Korean prisoners in the South to make such an exchange attractive to the regime in Pyongyang.

One of the 31 guerrillas who infiltrated Seoul last week has been captured. Twenty-five members of the group have been killed and five remain at large.

The Defense Department issued the statement on the alerting of units after The Las Vegas Review-Journal published an article today, quoting "reliable sources" as saying that nine F-105 fighter-bombers of the 90-man 37th Air Force Fighter Weapons Squadron had left Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, this morning for South Korea.

The Democratic and Republican leaders of the Senate supported Mr. Johnson's diplomatic initiatives. But they differed on how to proceed if there is no early resolution of the crisis.

"I don't disdain the diplomatic approach," said the Republican leader, Senator Everett McKinley Dirksen, in a telephone interview, "but if that fails then we are going to have to put our foot down. What would our troops fighting in Vietnam think if we let these fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-rate Communist countries kick us around?"

However, Senator Mike Mansfield, the majority leader, warned, "If we want to save the lives of the 83 Americans we had better move circumspectly—as we are, with patience—as we are, because this is a time of testing."

"Any rash action would not only, in all likelihood, seal the doom of the 83, but also bring about another bloody and prolonged involvement in Korea, and perhaps even a direct confrontation between this country

on the one hand and China and Soviet Union on the other," he said in a telephone interview.

"The situation in Vietnam is difficult and dangerous," the Montana Senator added. "The situation developing in North Korea is dangerous and difficult—and far more delicate."

Senator John C. Stennis, chairman of the Senate Preparedness Subcommittee, said he would be willing to wait "a few weeks to get diplomatic channels aroused."

Then, if no results have emerged, Senator Stennis said, military steps should be taken. "If diplomacy doesn't win, we can't let it stop there," he said in an interview on the American Broadcasting Company's program, "Issues and Answers."

Asked if he would advocate the use of nuclear weapons against North Korea, Senator Stennis said, "I wouldn't rule anything out."