

Remember the Pueblo

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The photographs circulated by Pyongyang purporting to show Pueblo log entries within North Korea's territorial waters suggest that a new approach by Washington may be in order to seek release of the ship's 82 surviving officers and crew.

North Korea insists on an American apology for espionage and an assurance that it won't happen again. Members of the crew have been told they will be released if the apology is made.

Although former Secretary McNamara has said that there was a period of radio silence from about Jan. 12 to 21 during which Washington lacked knowledge of the ship's location, Washington has demanded that the crew be released first and interrogated free of duress before it would agree to acknowledge a violation of North Korea's twelve-mile limit, if such has in fact occurred.

Surely the time has come to introduce greater flexibility into the American position. The alleged photographs of the Pueblo log could well be taken as new evidence, justifying a new proposal, such as neutral examination of the captured documents and a pledge to apologize publicly if such impartial investigation confirmed North Korea's claims. After all that has happened, there will be no added loss of face for the United States in an apology based on such an inquiry. The chief objective now is to free the Pueblo crewmen.