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Dirksen Warns of 'Appeasement' on Pueblo as Other Senate Republicans Call for Inquiry

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 29 — The Senate Republican leader, Everett McKinley Dirksen, cautioned the Administration today against falling into a policy of "appeasement" in its efforts to obtain the release of the U.S.S. Pueblo and her crew.

Other Senate Republicans demanded an investigation of why the Administration had sent the Pueblo on a mission into a sensitive area and then provided no protection when the intelligence ship was seized by North Korean patrol boats. From the Republican comments in the Senate, it was apparent that the Administration might be caught in a political

vice. On one side, it was being criticized for permitting the United States to become involved in the incident; on the other, it was being criticized for being too timid in trying to obtain the release of the ship and her 83-man crew.

In a brief Senate speech, Mr. Dirksen expressed concern that "the clammy spirit of fear and timidity seems to be upon us" at a time when the United States should be demanding an "immediate accounting" from North Korea for its seizure of the ship.

The Illinois Republican did not directly accuse the Administration of timidity, but he made clear that he feared it was drifting in the direction of appeasement. The Republican leader told reporters that he had read the "gist" of his prepared speech to President Johnson and that the President had responded that it was "pretty tough" in tone. Mr. Dirksen said he had hold the President that "it was about time somebody talked tough."

After the conversation with the President, Mr. Dirksen said he had "modified the speech a little" to make clear he was supporting the President's efforts "to bring this matter to a proper and honorable conclusion" through diplomatic means. But he then went on to complain in his speech that "we've been treated to a king-sized dose of caution from some quarters," which he did not identify.

The Dirksen speech was praised by Senator Russell B. Long of Louisiana, the assistant Democratic leader, who suggested that "one of the most obvious courses" of retaliation would be to seize an equal number of North Korean seamen. Mr. Dirksen said the issue was "simply" that a United States vessel and her crew had been "hijacked on the high seas and imprisoned in an enemy land." As a historical precedent to guide present actions, he recalled how Capt. Stephen Decatur in the Barbary wars had forced the Bey of Algiers to stop harassing American shipping, to release enslaved American sailors and to pay tribute.

In rebuttal, Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, the majority leader, cautioned that "the substance of our national interest ought not to be lost sight of in hot pursuit of its shadow."

The problem confronting the nation, he said, is to see that the Pueblo crew is returned alive "and that there is avoided, at the same time, another bloodbath in the model of Vietnam, which, in Korea, could be so much more readily become World War III."

"It may be helpful to bear in mind in this connection," he said, "that the responses in the Barbary wars, a century and a half away, are not necessarily the answers for a time and place when nuclear war is only seconds away."

Senator Karl E. Mundt, Republican of South Dakota, complained in another Senate speech that the Pueblo incident was "a shocking, reckless and needless adventure in this area, imperiling both the peace and prestige of the United States."

Senator Mundt proposed that there be a Congressional investigation to determine "who is responsible for this episode, the reason for it, at what high level the decision was made (to station the Pueblo off the North Korean shores) and what kind of procedures might be established to avert another such situation developing."

Senator Robert P. Griffin, Republican of Michigan, joined Mr. Mundt in suggesting a Congressional investigation of why the Pueblo was sent "into such an exposed position without adequate protection" and whether policy-making circles in the Pentagon were aware immediately that the ship had been seized.