

## GENERAL REPORTS ON AID TO PUEBLO

### Tells Congress of Air Force Attempt to Save Ship

WASHINGTON, March 20 (UPI) — An Air Force general said today that he had dispatched United States fighter planes "with orders to attack" and considered seeking assistance from the South Korean Air Force in an attempt to halt the seizure of the Pueblo.

But the American planes could not reach the captured intelligence ship in time and higher authorities directed him not to make the request of the South Koreans, said Lieut. Gen. Seth J. McKee.

For his efforts at helping the Pueblo, General McKee was praised by members of a special House Armed Services subcommittee investigating North Korea's capture of the Pueblo and its 83-man crew Jan. 23, 1968.

"I feel pretty good about somebody who sticks his neck out and says, 'I'm going to try to do something,'" the



United Press International  
Lieut. Gen. Seth McKee

subcommittee chairman, Representative Otis G. Pike, Democrat of Suffolk told General McKee.

"It's kind of nice to see someone making a decision," said Mr. Pike. "I think the Air Force has come off pretty well."

General McKee, then commander of the Fifth Air Force, said he had ordered F-105 fighter-bombers scrambled from a base on Okinawa to try to help the Pueblo. He said he had ordered the planes to get ready within five minutes of receiving word of the Pueblo's seizure and ordered them aloft within 33 minutes of his notification.

But it took an hour and 23 minutes to get the planes ready, General McKee said, because the Navy had not asked that any aircraft be placed on stand-by alert for the Pueblo's protection.

The Navy had officially considered the Pueblo's communications monitoring mission off the coast of North Korea to be a "minimal risk" operation.

#### If There Was Alert . . .

Had there been an alert, said the three-star General, he would have had conventionally armed fighters positioned in nearby South Korea, ready to speed to her aid.

Testimony so far has shown that it was about two hours from the time the Pueblo sent her first message indicating she was being harassed by North Korean patrol boats and her message that she was being boarded — the point at which the Navy began taking action. Representative Lucien N. Nedzi, Democrat of Michigan, estimated that it was about 2½ hours "after the Pueblo's first brush with the North Koreans" before General McKee was notified and scrambled the FSO5's "with orders to attack."

Soon after the first planes were in the air, General McKee said, the Navy sent word that a plotted estimate of the Pueblo's position placed the ship and the North Korean patrol boats surrounding her in Wonsan Harbor.

In addition, General McKee said he had determined that his planes would not have been able to refuel in South Korea and arrive on the scene until after sunset, making it virtually impossible to distinguish the Pueblo from her surrounding captors.

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