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WASHINGTON AP - Reports that the United States paid North Korea a ransom for the release of the crew of the USS Pueblo were denied Wednesday by a State Department spokesman and other officials.

The officials, who spoke to a group of newsmen under rules forbidding direct quotation, said also that they do not consider the Pueblo incident closed. They still want the ship back, they said.

The ransom report was made in Chicago by the Rev. Paul D. Lindstrom, national chairman of the Remember the Pueblo Committee.

In making the denial, the officials said no concessions had been made for the return of the crew.

They said also the United States has made representations for return of the Pueblo. They said they anticipated an announcement concerning the matter shortly, but did not disclose what it would be.

The Pueblo was seized off the North Korean port of Wonsan in January, 1968. U.S. negotiators pressed for release of the vessel and its crew during long-drawn-out talks.

The Reds finally freed the Pueblo sailors last December, but held on to the ship.

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CHICAGO AP - The Rev. Paul D. Lindstrom, national chairman of the Remember The Pueblo committee, said Wednesday that the United States paid a ransom to North Korea for the release of the Pueblo's crew.

Lindstrom also said that "a State Department source informed our committee that there will be no attempt on the part of our government to return the ship."

Lindstrom said the ransom "was not handled by the State Department. Information we received Dec. 20 stated that the CIA was involved in the ransom and we know now this was true. The exact nature of the ransom, money or some other type of financial arrangement, was carried through by the CIA."

"The ship has been transferred," Lindstrom said, "to a northernmost port of North Korea near the Russian border."

"We have also learned," he said, "from our government sources that the ship is proving of great propaganda value for the North Koreans and the Soviet Union as they have been making widespread use of it (the story of the capture) in the Middle East, particularly Egypt, and in African countries."

Lindstrom initially made his statements about the ransom in a telephone interview with the Norfolk, Va., Virginian-Pilot.

Sen. Stephen M. Young, D-Ohio, said Friday that Lindstrom is a John Birch Society supporter and called for an investigation of Lindstrom's "security leaks."

Lindstrom is head of the Independent Conservative Church of Christian Liberty in Prospect Heights, a northwestern suburb of Chicago.

Lindstrom said the news of the impending release of the Pueblo crew, the proposals for the ransom and the U.S. agreement to relinquish claims to the ship was released by the Remember The Pueblo committee at 2 a.m., EST, news conference Dec. 21.

"We know now from our government sources that what we said at that news conference has indeed become a reality," he said.

Lindstrom added that the committee announced at 7:30 a.m. EST, Dec. 22 that the Pueblo crew would be released at 9 p.m., EST that day and that the State Department would make the announcement at 8 a.m.

"We made our announcement because we knew the agreement was unalterable at that time," he said.

Lindstrom added that the committee has also learned from government sources that the CIA "was instrumental in the release of 12 Americans from Cambodia at the same time of the Pueblo crew's release."

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