

January 24, 1968
Telegram from Pyongyang to Bucharest, TOP SECRET,
No: 75.015, Flash

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Summary:

The Embassy of Romania in the DPRK offers a summary of a meeting hosted by Kim Jae-bong, the DPRK Deputy Foreign Minister, in the wake of the Blue House Raid and the capture of the USS Pueblo.

Credits:

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- English Translation

On January 24 at 9:00 pm, Kim Jaebong, the DPRK Deputy Foreign Minister, summoned the chiefs of all diplomatic missions from socialist countries accredited to Pyongyang and the representative of the National Liberation Front (NLF) from South Vietnam to the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs to inform them of the capture of the American military ship USS Pueblo weighing 1000 tons by the North Korean coastguard after [the ship] ventured deep into North Korean waters. The Deputy Foreign Minister explained that the ship was observed at a distance of 10 miles away from the coast and was captured after it advanced up to 7.6 miles away from the coast in the waters of the bay formed by the Hodo Peninsula and the Yeodo Island.

Kim Jaebong informed the diplomats that the ship was meant exclusively for intelligence gathering (focusing in this case on the military bases on the coast), having, at the same time, a great quantity of arms on board. The crew numbered 83 people, of whom six were officers, 75 were sailors, and two were civilian technicians. One member of the crew died following fire exchanges, which resulted from the crew resisting measures undertaken by the North Korean military; three people were injured, one of whom was gravely injured.

Judging this provocative act directed at gathering intelligence as the most outrageous one [committed by the United States] since signing the Armistice [in 1953], the Deputy Foreign Minister asked the chiefs of diplomatic missions to report back to their governments on this new and serious provocative action undertaken by the American imperialists and expressed his conviction that the governments [of socialist countries] would take the appropriate actions and vehemently condemn these pirate-like acts.

He laconically added that it was likely for the situation to become worse because the American imperialists had already deployed an important unit from the Seventh Fleet to the seas neighboring the DPRK.

Answering the questions of certain ambassadors, Kim Jaebong declared that although the DPRK had not publicly announced the width of its territorial waters, he said, for the personal use of those present, that the DPRK had a territorial waters width of 12 miles.

He added that his government was going to release a declaration on this matter.

Judging from the sources of the Czechoslovak Embassy, which was promptly informed by its delegation in the Armistice Commission, we know that the USS Pueblo was captured by the North Korean coastguard when it was 16 miles away from the DPRK shore, while press agencies stated that the ship had been 25 miles away from the shore when it was captured.

We believe that, owing to the uncertainty around the conditions in which the incident took place, it is not advisable for us to take any particular measures. Nevertheless, we suggest that our press organs publish the news issued by the Korean Central News Agency, quoting the sources it uses, as well as inserting a line about the forthcoming declaration of the North Korean government.

Signed: N. Popa.