

# Cold War North Korea and United States naval intelligence

## Introduction

On 23 January 1968, the North Korean Navy attacked and seized the USS *Pueblo*, a joint US Navy/National Security Agency (NSA) intelligence collection ship operating in international waters off the coast of North Korea. The story of the *Pueblo*'s capture and resulting fallout are well documented by both participants in the events and by scholars.<sup>1</sup> Mitchell Lerner has argued that the *Pueblo* incident provides insight into 'the underlying source of many of America's policy failures during the Cold War – the inability to recognize the importance of national values and indigenous belief systems in international relations.'<sup>2</sup> Lerner, however, conflates the 'tragic and unnecessary fate' of the *Pueblo* crew with a failure in policy. I agree that the human toll was tragic and the cost to the intelligence community staggering, but I will illustrate that American policy makers had a greater understanding of North Korea's actions than Lerner gives them credit for having.

The Korean War had ended with division and the reasons for conflict intact. In the mid-1960s, as smaller nations like North Korea pulled away from their super-power sponsors, the East Asian theater of the Cold War grew hot, and the United States was in fact marshalling its intelligence forces to monitor and contain this aggression. The *Pueblo* was a representative of a particular US Naval effort – the Auxiliary General Environmental Research (AGER) program—a collaboration of the US Navy and the NSA to gather information on Communist capabilities through signals intelligence (SIGINT) collected from small ships. Following the Korean War, the United States had developed ever-more sophisticated capabilities to monitor potential and actual enemies. One such effort was SIGINT collection, and in particular sea-borne SIGINT. In addition to large naval vessels, the United States embarked on the AGER program of small intelligence gathering ships that could loiter in international waters near targets of interest, collecting data that could not be gained through ground, air, or space-based platforms. When attacked, the *Pueblo* was cruising down the North Korean coast, concentrating its SIGINT efforts on the

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ports of Chongjin and Kimchaek, and on the island of Mayang-do. In these target areas, the *Pueblo* searched for signals from what the NSA believed was a new North Korean communications system, standard communications from the North Korean Air Force, its Army coastal artillery batteries, and its Navy – both ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore. The *Pueblo* also gathered information on North Korean radar installations and emissions related cruise missile deployment.

The US military had a full understanding of the history of the Korean peninsula and the evolving military aggression between its divided nations. Further, recently declassified materials from the NSA and US Navy illustrate the ‘strategic narrative’ of the *Pueblo* mission; how it fit within the Sea of Japan intelligence needs of the United States during the mid-1960s to contain aggression.<sup>3</sup> The demise of the *Pueblo* was fatal to the program in the end, but its mission was only one part of a larger program that initially was a success.

### Part I – Korean aggression

At the close of the Second World War, the Korean peninsula was divided and polarized both politically and geographically.<sup>4</sup> The Soviet Union installed Kim Il Sung – who had fled to Russia in 1941 – as first secretary of the North Korean Communist Party. In South Korea, under anti-Communist Rhee Syngman, the US State Department developed a plan for major economic assistance in 1947. The State Department developed the plan primarily to assist with the economic recovery of Japan by providing South Korea as a food supplier and future market for Japanese finished goods, but South Korea was important for another reason – it ‘was the only country where the Soviets and the Americans confronted each other directly, without the involvement of either an internationally recognized native government or a third foreign power.’<sup>5</sup> Although this bipolar/super-power view of the Cold War was predominant, it would be the actions of Kim Il Sung that would dramatically alter the political and military landscape.

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In March 1949, months before the success of Mao Zedong in the Chinese Civil War, Kim Il Sung visited Moscow and asked Joseph Stalin for permission to invade South Korea, citing the strength of the North Korean army, and adding that the 'population of the South, which despises the pro-American regime, will certainly help us as well.'<sup>6</sup> Stalin turned Kim down as he believed that the United States would perceive an attack on the South as a violation of Yalta, and would intervene.<sup>7</sup> In April 1950, Kim again met with Stalin in Moscow. Stalin agreed that the time had arrived for the North Koreans to unify the peninsula - as the Chinese Communist Party had been victorious over the Guomindang and were now free to supply troops to support Kim, China and the Soviet Union had a treaty of alliance, and the Soviet Union had the atomic bomb.<sup>8</sup> Although Stalin was supportive, he added that 'Koreans should not count on direct Soviet participation in the war because the USSR had serious challenges elsewhere.'<sup>9</sup> Stalin added that Kim needed to consult with Mao, and reiterated that the Soviet Union 'was not ready to get involved in Korean affairs directly, especially if Americans did venture to send troops to Korea.'<sup>9</sup>

Kim did consult with Mao, and received his support prior to and during the war. During the winter of 1949-1950, Mao returned 50,000 to 70,000 North Korean soldiers with weapons that Kim Il Sung had sent to China to assist the Communists against the Chiang Kai-shek Nationalists in 1947.<sup>10</sup> In addition, Mao agreed to assist Kim in May 1950 with the invasion of the South, noting that China was not bound to recognize the demarcation along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>11</sup> On 25 June 1950, the North Korean army invaded South Korea. The United States, with United Nations (UN) backing, intervened to stop the invasion, to deter Communist aggression elsewhere, and to ensure its allies of American reliability.<sup>12</sup> In September, UN forces landed at Inchon and by 25 September had recaptured Seoul. Although the Chinese warned the United States not to encroach above the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, UN troops did so, capturing Pyongyang on 19 October. As the UN troops neared the Yalu River, dividing North Korea and China, Chinese 'Volunteers' attacked, eventually pushing the UN troops back across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, resulting in two years of stalemate, followed by an armistice on 27 July 1953. Unfortunately, the armistice left the

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Korean peninsula divided with the 'nationalistic, ideological, and power realities' in place that had created the war.<sup>13</sup> The peninsula was primed for further conflict.

Following a post-Stalin chill, the Soviet Union wished to rebuild its relationship with North Korea. The United States had been providing South Korea with modern military equipment, and Kim did not want his military capacity to fall behind. He accepted the Soviet thaw, and following the visit of Soviet premier Alexej Kosygin to Pyongyang in February 1965, concluded an agreement for free military aid, including current air defense technology, that was followed by an agreement for economic aid.<sup>14</sup> After the agreement was signed, North Korea became very sensitive to foreign aircraft and vessels operating near its coast, a trend that continued with the North Korean Navy sinking South Korean vessels in the Sea of Japan in 1966 and the subsequent capture of the USS *Pueblo* in 1968.<sup>15</sup>

### Cutting off the Limbs of US Imperialism Everywhere

'Cutting off the Limbs of US Imperialism Everywhere' was the North Korean slogan for the period 1966-1969.<sup>16</sup> Using Kim's public statements, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) would report that the US airstrikes in Vietnam in early 1966 in the vicinity of Hanoi and Haiphong spurred Kim to engage in his escalation of violence along the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Kim further stated that the 'world's people' should escalate their struggle against US imperialism to match the expanding aggression in Vietnam.<sup>17</sup> Scholars at the Wilson Center describe the period as 'The "Second" Korean War.'<sup>18</sup> While the casualties during this period were less than 1 percent of those during the conflict from 1950-1953, there were daily raids, primarily from the North into the South along the DMZ, and even pockets of armed conflict within the interior of South Korea, which left hundreds dead including UN and US soldiers under Commanding General Charles H. Bonesteel.

A US Intelligence Memorandum from 8 November 1966 illustrated the increasingly violent incidents along the Korean DMZ. On 2 November, North Korean troops attacked a US patrol unit south of the DMZ, apparently in retaliation for a South Korean raid a week earlier. The November attack raised

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the number of incidents to 40, with 36 casualties including six Americans. The memo mistakenly surmised that although there had been a marked increase in incursions by North Korea, these actions probably did not reflect a decision to 'engage in wholesale violations of the armistice agreement.' Further, the memo writers believed that Pyongyang was hoping to force the United States to intervene with South Korean forces to prevent a repetition of a 26 October raid of 30 South Korean troops into the DMZ.<sup>19</sup> Two days later, General Bonesteel reported:

*Our ability to effectively cope with the NK aggressive killer-patrol actions in or near the DMZ is not as good as I'd like it to be. There are three major reasons: (a) the NK flagrant violations of the DMZ while we abide by it and require the ROK's to do likewise; (b) the basic military difficulty of reacting effectively against guerrilla hit and run tactics at NK's initiative, usually at night, in a 150 mile band of generally rugged terrain covered now with fairly dense vegetation and natural cover and from which the DMZ offers an immediate sanctuary (this is what is very seriously intensifying ROK frustration, anger and desire to make retaliatory raids); and (c) inexperienced soldiers and junior leaders.<sup>20</sup>*

In May 1966, Mao had instituted his Cultural Revolution to rid China of 'revisionists' and preserve 'true' Communist ideology, which resulted in China's isolation from the Soviet Union and its neighbor, North Korea. Indeed, the North Korean and Chinese brands of communism initiated an open rivalry.<sup>21</sup> In October 1966, a Chinese Red Guard newspaper labeled North Korea 'revisionist' with 'alleged "anti-Chinese" behavior,' 'tantamount to calling the North Korean leadership pseudo-socialist, like its Moscow equivalent, and therefore illegitimate and worthy of being replaced.'<sup>22</sup> On 1 December 1966, the CIA reported to the State Department and US National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy on the political conflict within the Communist nations – the Sino-Soviet split – stating that the North Koreans had recently 'held a congress during which they decided to draw away from the Chinese Communists, but without joining up with the Soviets.'<sup>23</sup> This action by North Korea fit into Kim Il Sung's concept of *Juche*, which he first articulated in 1955, but adapted through the 1960s to instill not only a sense of independent nationalism in the North Korean people, but also an almost deification of Kim as their leader.<sup>24</sup> As an independent, North Korea would be more likely to attempt a military reunification.

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At that same meeting, the CIA presented its analysis of the recent upsurge in North Korean attacks across the DMZ and had come to the conclusion that these attacks might 'signal the adoption of a new North Korean policy which might culminate in an all-out attack.' Bundy disagreed with the analysis, 'believing that the North Koreans were attacking and trying to infiltrate South Korea in order to do what they could to disrupt the April elections.'<sup>25</sup> The South Koreans agreed with Bundy, stating a few months later that, 'there was a danger that the North Koreans would intensify their espionage and other military activities in the pre-election period.'<sup>26</sup> The East German consulate in North Korea confirmed the CIA analysis, writing,

*The U.S. imperialists are expanding war in Asia and will attack the DPRK. We have to be prepared for an attack every hour, there must be no surprise. As the USA is preparing its attack, and is arming the South Korean puppet army with modern aircraft, tanks and missiles, there might occur a situation within the Asian context when we have to preempt an attack by the U.S.*

The author however, noted that neither side had 'intentions to trigger a conflict.'<sup>27</sup>

The rift between the Chinese and North Korean governments continued to widen. In March 1967, the Soviet Embassy in Pyongyang reported that, 'Events in China associated with the so-called "Cultural Revolution" have seriously alarmed the Korean leadership, which has reason to fear its negative influence on the DPRK.' Further, 'The Korean comrades speak of the "thousands of victims" during the so-called "revolution," the "suicides," the "political chaos," and the "chaos in the economy," about Mao Zedong as "an old fool who has gone out of his mind."<sup>28</sup> That fall, following clashes with the Red Guards in China, 'bodies of Korean casualties were displayed on a freight train traveling from the Chinese border town of Sinuiju into the DPRK, along with graffiti such as "Look, this will be also your fate, you tiny revisionists!"<sup>29</sup> Chinese behavior and rhetoric, while anti-North Korean, were inward-focused, and had the effect of diminishing China's overall influence on other Asian countries, creating opportunities for Kim Il Sung to stretch North Korean influence.<sup>30</sup>

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In 1967, North Korea infiltrated South Korea 566 times – a tenfold increase from the previous year – killing 122 UN soldiers and wounding another 279 under the command of General Bonesteel. In addition, 22 South Korean police officers and civilians were also killed and 53 others wounded during the incursions.<sup>31</sup> The authors of a US Air Force report, correctly surmised that in the late spring of 1968, North Korea planned major guerrilla activities against the south – ‘This could take the form of terror attacks, hunter/killer operations, assassinations, (including high ranking US personnel) or sabotage and possibly fairly large (up to 100 men) guerrilla raids against suitable targets including US barracks, air bases, and Hawk [missile] sites.’<sup>32</sup> Even before the year was out, Bundy met with the CIA to discuss the problem. At the request of US Ambassador to South Korea Samuel Berger, the CIA had completed a new analysis of North Korean infiltrations into South Korea and came to the conclusion that the North Koreans were establishing cells not only for intelligence gathering but also to support guerilla warfare, modeling their tactics on those of the North Vietnamese.<sup>33</sup>

On 21 July 1967, General Bonesteel again tried to alert his superiors to the worsening situation. In a telegram to Commander in Chief, Pacific Forces Admiral Grant Sharp, Bonesteel noted that in the last 30 days, provocations from North Korea had intensified, writing, ‘it becomes clearer as time moves on that a significant effort is underway to try to apply subversive war against the ROK.’ Further, that ‘North Koreans are arrogantly disavowing their flagrant and large scale violations of the armistice in what seems to be an effort to build acceptance by world public opinion for their intensification of hostile subversive acts with little or no risk to them for their de facto abrogation of the armistice.’ Bonesteel wrote that along the DMZ, ‘Firefights are occurring almost every night. A few days ago three more US soldiers were killed. This year's score along DMZ to date: firefights 69; NKs 64 KIA, 2 captured; ROK/US 35 KIA, (including 6 US KIA), 87 WIA. Irritating factor is that in last few weeks NK along DMZ are improving their kill ratio.’ Bonesteel also reported that conflicts had developed inside of South Korea,

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*Detected para-guerrilla activity has now developed in three areas: Taebaek-san [on the West Coast], West Chiri-san, and west of Ulsan [both near Busan, on the Tsushima Strait]. Every day there are sightings, contacts and firefights. Box score since 1 January from actions in interior of ROK, excluding DMZ and contiguous areas, is: firefights 63; North Koreans 81 KIA, 33 captured; ROKs (ROKA, KNP and civilians) 40 KIA, (including four or five farmers murdered), 88 WIA.<sup>34</sup>*

Bonesteel requested, and the United States Intelligence Board (USIB) agreed that a Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) be prepared on North Korean intentions and capabilities with respect to South Korea.<sup>35</sup>

The CIA released the SNIE on 21 September 1967, in which they concluded that the motivations for the increased activities by the North Koreans were as follows: 'to create new pressures on the [Park] government; to tie down large ROK forces; to strengthen the Communist clandestine apparatus in the South; and to be in a position to exploit any new and major disruption in the ROK.'<sup>36</sup> The new aggressive tactics by the North, the estimate contends, support Kim's long-term objective, 'the reunification of Korea under Communist rule.'<sup>37</sup> Further, that the incursions were closely tied to the Vietnam War, including the absence of 50,000 ROK troops redeployed to South Vietnam, and the concern that these ROK troops would return to South Korea well-trained and seasoned.<sup>38</sup> The estimate also concluded that hostilities along the DMZ would remain at current or increased levels, but that these activities were not conducted due to pressure from China or the USSR, nor did the North Koreans intend to escalate their actions to the point of open warfare.<sup>39</sup> Further that the North Korean armed forces were inadequate to invade the South, and 'under present circumstances, neither Peking nor Moscow is likely to provide the sort of support which would be required.'<sup>40</sup> Of serious concern to the authors, was the landing by sea of 'guerrilla-type teams,' noting that even 'the most vigilant naval patrol and the most efficient radar network would probably not be able to eliminate a determined effort to infiltrate teams [into the South] by sea.'<sup>41</sup> The SNIE concludes, 'The North might miscalculate, however, and raise the ante along the

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DMZ until the ROK resolves to strike back in force. A series of actions and reactions might ensue which could lead to open hostilities.<sup>42</sup>

On 7 December 1967, Director of Defense Research and Engineering John Foster reported to Secretary of Defense McNamara on a meeting with Bonesteel regarding the military situation in Korea. Foster reported that 'Kim Il Sung has embarked on a course of drastically increased conflict along lines proposed by Che Guevara.' The theory to the course of action was that the 'United States cannot support more than one "Vietnam" at a time.' Kim 'hopes to create a situation that will prevent the ROK from sending more troops to Vietnam, cripple the ROK economy, cause the United States to withdraw, and eventually communize the country.' Further, that North Korea had trained 25,000 special agents that were already operating within South Korea. Plans for these agents 'include severe disruption of our LOC [Lines of Communication], cowing the population by terror, and placing US installations under siege. He then might open the option of conventional air strike and ground attack a la Israel, assuming we would not use nuclear weapons. This is expected to heat up considerably by next summer.'<sup>43</sup>

Bonesteel had submitted through Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) for US\$40m in additional defensive equipment, but Foster was skeptical that these funds would be enough even to start, but that Bonesteel was trying to keep his requests to a minimum. Foster added that the services' Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) was currently designing a counter-infiltration system.<sup>44</sup> Three weeks later, President Johnson met with President Park in Australia, and Johnson agreed to 'the most accelerated possible delivery dates for equipment' to defend South Korea.<sup>45</sup> Walt Rostow summarized the agreements from the Australia meeting for President Johnson: The United States agreed to provide to South Korea with one destroyer as soon as possible, and in 1968, one helicopter company, equipment for a counter-infiltration counter-guerrilla operation, equipment support for eight ROK battalions for use in counter-infiltration activities, one battalion of self-propelled eight-inch Howitzers, and one light division of 11,000 US soldiers.<sup>46</sup> The United States could not afford to

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have open warfare on the Korean peninsula, but there was hope that a military buildup in the South could prevent increased hostilities and a full scale invasion from the North.

The year 1968 was auspicious for a Korean peninsula reunification. It marked the 4300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the legendary founding of the Korean nation and the 1300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Silla Unification that brought the peninsula under a centralized government. Although the ROK's army numbered some 600,000 compared to the 373,000 in the DPRK army, South Korea felt very vulnerable due to the Soviet technology imported into North Korea.<sup>47</sup> The North Korean army used the Soviet AK-47 compared to the US M-1, the DPRK had ten times the number of aircraft including new MIG-19 and MIG-21 fighters and eighty IL-28 bombers. Since 1965, the North Koreans had also installed nine additional surface-to-air missile sites in addition to the two original sites, and the DPRK navy had two WHISKEY class submarines and four KOMAR class attack boats all capable of carrying guided missiles. The DPRK also had 3000 modern artillery pieces, 500 medium tanks, 450 armored cars, and modern radar equipment, making it one of the 'most thoroughly militarized societies in existence.'<sup>48</sup>

Within the first three weeks of 1968, there had been 66 incidents of North Korean operatives infiltrating South Korea, killing 36 and wounding 67 – this includes the disastrous attack on the Blue House, in which 31 heavily armed North Korean commandos invaded Seoul with orders to raid the Blue House, the presidential residence, and assassinate President Park. A captured North Korean revealed that North Korea had trained approximately 8000 commandos for raids into South Korea.<sup>49</sup> The United States had great concern over the aggressive posture and actions of North Korea, and recognized the need for increased intelligence gathering.

## Part II - Intelligence gathering

Citing US military manuals, Matthew M. Aid and Cees Weibes define SIGINT as 'intelligence derived from the intercept, analysis, and parametric exploitation of foreign communications and non-

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communications radio-electronic emissions,' and by 'exploiting an adversary's use of the electromagnetic spectrum with the aim of gaining undetected firsthand intelligence on the adversary's intentions, dispositions, capabilities, and limitations.'<sup>50</sup> During the Second World War, the SIGINT capabilities of the United States grew exponentially. By the end of the war, the combined US Army and Navy SIGINT organizations consisted of 36,000 personnel at 37 listening posts with more than 2500 radio intercept receivers. The majority were located in the Pacific, targeting Japan. Following the conclusion of the war however, the United States drastically reduced funding for SIGINT, but with the North Korean invasion of the South on 25 June 1950, this course was reversed. Intelligence had failed to provide what David Omand calls 'strategic notice' with respect to Kim Il Sung's invasion.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, during the decade of the 1950s, the United States constructed a network of strategic intercept stations around the world surrounding the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea.<sup>52</sup>

On 24 October 1952, President Harry S. Truman sent a memo to the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State on 'Communications Intelligence Activities.' In the memo, Truman wrote,

*The communications intelligence activities of the United States are a national responsibility. They must be so organized and managed as to exploit to the maximum the available resources in all participating departments and agencies and to satisfy the legitimate intelligence requirements of all such departments and agencies.*

Further, the memo created a new organization – the National Security Agency – operating under the auspices of the Department of Defense, 'to provide an effective, unified organization and control of the communications intelligence activities of the United States.'<sup>53</sup>

In 1961, the Navy created the Naval Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC) for preparing 'strategic and operational reports and studies based upon analyses of sensor images derived from subsurface, surface, air, and space reconnaissance systems.'<sup>54</sup> In 1964, NPIC was renamed the Naval Reconnaissance and Technical Support Center directly under the supervision of the Director of Naval

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Intelligence with a new Data Processing Department responsible for intelligence production support. The outcome of this new department was the creation of the Naval Intelligence Processing System (NIPS) designed to provide intelligence database systems for ships at sea. Initially, it would be aircraft carriers that used this system to communicate real-time intelligence with the Fleet Intelligence Centers.

In 1965 the Navy embarked on a large scale SIGINT operation to support the war in Vietnam. Indeed, the operational intelligence needs of Vietnam helped drive NSA and the national SIGINT community into tactical support for the first time.<sup>55</sup> Aircraft carriers and other warships were converted for SIGINT, however these ships were valuable for war, difficult to conceal, bound by maritime regulations, and judged to be threatening to foreign nations. Aircraft were also used for SIGINT, but these aircraft could be shot down - during the first two years of NSA's existence, five SIGINT reconnaissance planes were shot down or diverted including a Boeing RB-50 over the Sea of Japan on 19 July 1953, resulting in the loss of the lives of 16 crewmen.<sup>56</sup> To create a viable intelligence collecting platform, the United States would emulate the Soviet use of converted cargo vessels – Soviet Naval Auxiliary Intelligence Collectors (AGIs).<sup>57</sup> These small ships were relatively inexpensive to convert and operate, they were mobile, generally nonthreatening, and could operate 24-hours a day, for days at a time. These loitering SIGINT collectors could acquire data that ground, air, and space based SIGINT collectors could not. Soviet and North Korean activities in the Sea of Japan would be a prime target for this type of intelligence platform.

## Sea-borne Intelligence

In 1961, the NSA commissioned its first SIGINT ship, the *Private Jose F. Valdez*, which cruised the coast of Africa in the Atlantic Ocean. In 1962, the *Joseph E. Muller* was converted and picked up the first signals regarding Soviet missiles in Cuba. These two ships were operated through the Military Sea Transportation Service (MSTS). This meant that they were staffed by civilians, which 'exempted them from required liberty calls and allowing their home ports to be far from an American naval base.'<sup>58</sup>

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Following the success of the *Valdez* and *Muller*, the Navy took on a large role. The next five ships added to the program were operated by the Navy for the NSA, these ships called Auxiliary General Technical Research (AGTR) ships, they were much larger and faster converted World War II LIBERTY and VICTORY class cargo-ships. These 'research' vessels carried equipment and personnel to conduct oceanographic experiments to create a valid cover for their covert activities. The first was the *Oxford* (AGTR-1), which joined the *Muller* near Cuba, and their intercepts lead to a U2 flyover confirming the installation of Soviet missiles. In 1963, the NSA added the *Georgetown* (AGTR-2) and the *Jamestown* (AGTR-3), and in 1964 added the *Belmont* (AGTR-4) and the *Liberty* (AGTR-5).<sup>59</sup> These seven ships worked almost exclusively for the NSA, and the Navy could rarely use them to collect naval intelligence.<sup>60</sup>

The United States Intelligence Board (USIB) decided that the number of SIGINT resources devoted to the Korean peninsula were inadequate to ascertain North Korean military strengths in the late 1960s. Further, heightened tensions between North and South Korea were a threat to security in the region, and the NSA required intelligence on North Korean military installations, equipment, and movements.<sup>61</sup> To rectify this situation, on 20 April 1965, Assistant Secretary of Defense and Deputy Director of Defense Research and Engineering Eugene G. Fubini met with Chief of Naval Operations Adm David L. McDonald, Director of Naval Intelligence Rear Adm Rufus L. Taylor, Director of Naval Security Group Rear Adm. Leslie R. Schulz, and Assistant Director Defense Intelligence Agency Lt General Alva Fich to establish a small fleet of intelligence gathering ships for the Navy.<sup>62</sup> The group agreed to request funds for small ships to be converted for SIGINT, and Director of Defense Research and Engineering Harold Brown and Deputy Secretary of Defense Cyrus Vance approved the plan.<sup>63</sup>

In August 1965, the Office of the Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet (CINCPACFLT) specified the directives for the new program already underway, Operation CLICKBEETLE, of 'seaborne surveillance by a small ship acting singly.'<sup>64</sup> Each mission would originate and be under the control of the Commander of US Naval Forces, Japan (COMNAVFORJAPAN) at the Yokosuka Naval Base, south of Tokyo.<sup>65</sup> The Joint

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Chiefs of Staff (JCS), the Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), the Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet (CINCPACFLT), and a subcommittee of the National Security Council (NSC) would approve each mission before the JCS authorized COMNAVFORJAPAN to enact the mission.<sup>66</sup> During the 1960s, the Soviet Union had increased its production of submarines, with ever increasing abilities and cruise missiles which were a major threat to the US Navy.<sup>67</sup> Monitoring the Soviet Navy in the Pacific, based in Vladivostok, was difficult, and the United States used submarines to monitor SIGINT and ELINT with minimal success.<sup>68</sup> Following the commission of the first SIGINT collection ship, the USS *Banner*, on 7 October 1965, Secretary of the Navy Paul Nitze contacted Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara for intelligence on ‘the operating capabilities, tactical doctrine, procedures, and state of training of the Soviet Navy,’ and required two additional vessels.<sup>69</sup> The three ships – designated Auxiliary General Environmental Research (AGER) vessels – were all former light cargo-ships, approximately 180 feet long with a top speed of 13 knots, USS *Banner* (AGER-1), the USS *Pueblo* (AGER-2), and the USS *Palm Beach* (AGER-3).<sup>70</sup> Following the guidelines put forth in 1953, NAVSECGRU would have control of the naval component of each ship including personnel, and NSA would be responsible for the SIGINT functions.<sup>71</sup> Due to the small size of the AGER ships, each could only carry small amounts of SIGINT equipment and personnel. This limited the analytic capabilities of the platform, and ‘most intercepted communications were therefore forwarded to NSA for more detailed analysis.’<sup>72</sup> This detail increased the danger of each mission through limiting the intelligence on board the vessel.

On 7 December 1965, with the AGER program underway, Nitze issued a memorandum outlining a new Navy clandestine intelligence collection program. Nitze wrote that ‘the Navy [had] been largely inactive in the field of clandestine intelligence collection’ as a result of the National Security Act of 1947, but the ‘steadily emerging pattern of limited warfare engagements has, however, clearly indicated the need for the development of clandestine assets by the military services in advance of a limited warfare

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engagement.' To fulfill this need, the Secretary of Defense authorized in individual services to engage in clandestine intelligence collection activities. Further that these operations would be designed

*to accomplish intelligence, counter-intelligence, and other similar objectives, planned and executed under the sponsorship of Governmental departments or agencies in such a way as to assure secrecy or concealment of the operation and its sponsor; and to permit plausible denial by the sponsor in the event the operation is compromised.*

Nitze further defined target countries for the program 'as that country or state on which there are significant intelligence gaps. Navy's clandestine intelligence operations will be mounted against a target country only to fill those gaps of interest.' Nitze outlined that the Chief of Naval Operations (Director of Naval Intelligence) would be responsible for the administrative and technical guidance of the program.<sup>73</sup> Nitze reiterated that the 'program will be oriented toward known intelligence requirements which can not [sic] be satisfied by other means.'<sup>74</sup>

The USS *Banner* was the initial AGER vessel, and its mission history illustrates where the Navy and NSA focused intelligence gathering.<sup>75</sup> Following conversion for SIGINT operations, the USS *Banner* arrived in Yokosuka, Japan, on 24 October 1965. Her commanding officer was Lt Robert P. Bishop, assisted by two line officers, a warrant engineer, and 34 enlisted sailors. The Naval Security Group Detachment for the USS *Banner* was directed by Lt William T. Durocher assisted by 28 enlisted men for SIGINT collection. The *Banner's* unclassified mission was to conduct 'technical research operations in an ocean environment to support oceanographic, electromagnetic, and related research programs.'<sup>76</sup> The *Banner's* classified mission was

*to conduct naval surveillance and intelligence collection in international waters contiguous to the Soviet Union in support of high priority national intelligence objectives and to: a) Determine Soviet reaction to a small unarmed naval vessel which is overtly a naval surveillance ship deployed in Soviet Naval Operation areas. B) Test the effectiveness of a small ship acting singly and primarily as a naval surveillance and intelligence collections unit. C) Collect photographic, acoustic, hydrographic and other intelligence materials on targets of opportunity.'*<sup>77</sup>

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As will be illustrated in her missions, *Banner* did not remain strictly in international waters, but crossed into Soviet territorial waters to ascertain Soviet reactions and collect additional intelligence.

The *Banner's* first assignment CLICKBEETLE ONE commenced on 29 October 1965. The *Banner* traveled up the east coast of Japan and entered the Sea of Japan through the Tsugaru Straits, between Hokkaido and the main island of Honshu. Twice, on 13 November and again on 24 November, the *Banner* crossed into Soviet claimed waters near Vladivostok, home of the Soviet Pacific Fleet.<sup>78</sup> The Soviet Union claimed the Tumen-Cape Povorotny Line, protecting Vladivostok from surveillance.<sup>79</sup> On the first instance, the Soviet navy confronted the *Banner* with a KRUPNY class warship – a guided missile destroyer – and the *Banner* withdrew. On the second instance, the *Banner* was monitored by a Soviet SIGINT Trawler but was not challenged to withdraw. Both SIGINT vessels 'gave each other a thorough intelligence inspection,' after which the *Banner* departed from its operational area and arrived back in Yokosuka on 28 November.<sup>80</sup> The *Banner* departed Yokosuka on 6 December 1965 for CLICKBEETLE TWO, a mission to monitor Soviet reaction to the annual Tri-national Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) Sea of Japan Transit – consisting of one US ASW Group operating with units of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force and the Republic of Korea Navy. The *Banner* remained near the Tumen-Cape Povorotny Line to gather intelligence on Soviet surveillance of the exercise, and returned without incident.<sup>81</sup> For CLICKBEETLE THREE, the *Banner* was to return to the coast of Siberia, but entered the Sea of Japan from the south through the Tsushima Strait and conducted surveillance of North Korea on the way, 'loitering' in the vicinity of Tongjosen-man Bay for two days.<sup>82</sup> On the eastern edge of this bay is the small island of Mayang-Do, home of the North Korean submarine base.<sup>83</sup> As discussed in the previous section, the CIA had reported its concerns over the growing threat of North Korean aggression.

During CLICKBEETLE THREE and FOUR, which commenced on 16 April 1966, the *Banner* engaged Soviet Navy vessels with ever greater confrontations. RIGA, PETYA, YURKA, and YUZA class Soviet vessels would physically block, then train guns and fire control radar on the *Banner*, and signal her to depart the

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area. These confrontations allowed the *Banner* to collect data on the Soviet ships and their electronic capabilities. As the authors of the USS *Banner* history write, following the first four operations, 'The amount and quality of intelligence collected during the CLICKBEETLE operations, plus the unprecedented close-up pictures and descriptions of Soviet Naval activities in their home waters caused the US intelligence community to realize the value of the program.'<sup>84</sup> During CLICKBEETLE FIVE, the *Banner* cruised the Belkin Coast of the Soviet Union from north of Hokkaido down to Vladivostok. The *Banner* was sighted by Soviet planes and naval vessels and on 24 May 1966, a KHABOROV Class Soviet SIGINT ship actually collided with the *Banner*, while harassing her to depart the area. This was the first recorded instance of a Soviet and US ship collision. Operations six, seven, and eight were in the same area and concluded without incident.

CLICKBEETLE NINE was the first operation outside of the Sea of Japan. The NSA tasked the *Banner* with the first US overt ship intelligence patrol off the coast of Communist China in the Taiwan Straits. Due to the unknown reaction of the Chinese, the US Fifth Air Force in Japan and the 313<sup>th</sup> Air Division in Okinawa were alerted and US Navy destroyers at Keelung, Taiwan, were put on alert. During the operation, the *Banner* was surrounded and harassed by Chinese trawlers, but escaped the encirclement without incident, and the mission was successful.<sup>85</sup> CLICKBEETLE TEN, from 3 to 23 February 1967, provided the Navy with two remarkable achievements. The *Banner* was the first naval surface ship to have the Bistatic Radar Intelligence Generation and Analysis system (BRIGAND). Charles Crissman of the US Navy Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron (VQ-1) developed BRIGAND and rode on the *Banner* for its first use on the sea.<sup>86</sup> BRIGAND was able to display an image the target radar had acquired on an electronic map, or Planned Position Indicator (PPI), and proved valuable to naval intelligence collection. In addition to the successful use of BRIGAND, the *Banner* engaged a Soviet ECHO class submarine and three Soviet naval vessels engaged in antisubmarine warfare exercises. The Soviet ships

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harassed the *Banner* and threatened to fire on it, but after two days, departed. During this operation, the *Banner* did monitor the coast of North Korea, but was unable to acquire additional intelligence.<sup>87</sup>

Operations eleven and twelve (near Vladivostok from March through June 1967) were uneventful with the exception that the *Banner* observed two new Soviet ships: a Guided Missile Support ship and what was believed to have been a Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical (NBC) Warfare Training ship.<sup>88</sup> CLICKBEETLE THIRTEEN was meant to be back in the Taiwan Straits in early June 1967, but the mission was cancelled. During CLICKBEETLE FOURTEEN, the *Banner* made its most northern patrol, up into the Tartary Gulf in July and August 1967. In August and September, the *Banner* was in the Philippine Sea, then back to Vladimar Bay [north of Vladivostok] in October/November 1967, before returning to the East China Sea in December 1967 for CLICKBEETLE SEVENTEEN. This would be the last complete mission before the capture of the USS *Pueblo*. As US Navy records indicate, the missions of the *Banner* were rough and confrontational.<sup>89</sup>

Before the *Pueblo* embarked on her first mission, her commanding officer Lt Commander Lloyd M. Bucher was briefed on what to expect. Unfortunately, the North Korean Navy began operating under new and violent rules of engagement. Unencumbered by Soviet or Chinese domination, Kim could engage in adventurism and attack 'American imperialism,' elevating his status among the budding global Communist nations.<sup>90</sup>

### ***Pueblo* Mission**

*The operations of the USS Pueblo were part of our national effort to gain information concerning our potential enemies. The security of the United States requires that we be aware of and understand fully the military capabilities of potential enemies. The best means of collecting and analyzing such information must be considered and exploited. Therefore, the United States engages in overt surveillance with aircraft and ships in order to acquire essential technical and operational information. This information is essential to our own self-defense. It is a vital element in the development of plans for contingencies which we must expect to face and in the development of new weapons systems needed to prevail against potential enemy military and technical advances. I believe that the greatest military danger facing our country lies in the*

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*possibility of a major technical surprise. Failure to guard against this possibility would constitute a dereliction of duty to the American people.*

Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, Chief of Naval Operations, US Navy<sup>91</sup>

According to the NSA, 'the US intelligence gap against North Korea was in the area of indications and warning information. US intelligence users also lacked complete information on North Korean military and naval targets,' and the NSA believed that a more mobile platform like the *Pueblo* and *Banner*, would be able to access short-range communications for information needed to fill the intelligence gaps.<sup>92</sup> The North Korean Army used manual Morse, radiotelephone, and radioprinter for communications from the Ministry of National Defense through battalion and lower levels, especially for operational messages.<sup>93</sup> Analysis of this traffic analysis could illustrate impending military action.<sup>94</sup> Additionally, the NSA wanted the *Pueblo* to conduct surveillance along the northern part of the peninsula to ascertain if North Korea had installed additional surface-to-air cruise missile batteries to strengthen its coastal defenses and use intercepted signals to identify their locations.<sup>95</sup> The Navy, according to Lerner, wished to 'obtain details on the North Korean submarine fleet thought to be stationed near Mayong-do [*sic*], and there was also some hope of encountering one of a new class of Soviet submarines' operating along the Korean coast.<sup>96</sup> Lerner continues, correctly, that the *Pueblo* would also 'obtain information on the nature, location, and frequency of DPRK radar, which would be especially helpful in responding to another North Korean attack on the South.'<sup>97</sup>

With a tighter focus on North Korea, the Navy created a new mission, code named ICHTHYIC (PINK ROOT).<sup>98</sup> The mission of the *Pueblo*, ICHTHYIC ONE (PINK ROOT ONE) – was to

*(1) Determine nature and extent of naval activity vicinity of North Korean ports of Chongjin, Songjin [now named Kimchaek], Mayang-do, and Wonson. (2) Sample electronic environment of East Coast of North Korea, with emphasis on intercept/fixing of coastal radars. (3) Intercept and conduct surveillance of Soviet naval units operating in Tsushima Strait in effort to determine purpose of Soviet presence in that area since February 1966. (4) Determine Soviet and North Korean reaction to an overt intelligence collector operating near periphery and conducting*

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*surveillance of naval units. (5) Report any deployment of North Korean/Soviet units which might indicate a change in the WESTPAC [Western Pacific] threat level. And (6) Evaluate USS Pueblo (AGER 2) capabilities as a naval surveillance ship.*<sup>99</sup>

Aboard the Pueblo, the Collection Branch had four men who were responsible for Morse intercept, high frequency direction finding, and radiotelephone intercept that did not require languages other than English. The Intercept Branch had five members with foreign language skills to serve as radiotelephone operators and transcribers. The Technical Branch had 12 men who did the intercepting, recording, processing, and analyzing of all types of non-Morse systems.<sup>100</sup>

On 29 December 1967, the end of a terrible year of violence along the DMZ, the NSA wired the Pueblo's operational orders to the director of Naval Security Group (DIRNAVSECGRU) through Operation Order 301-68. The order remains heavily redacted, but is paraphrased as follows; Part I, COMINT: A) Special Interest – Search for and record any signals emanating from North Korea that may be associated with [redacted]. There is no firm evidence of [redacted] in North Korea. However, in view of North Korea's continuing modernization of its communication systems and the steady decline of communications [redacted]. It is evident that other systems are available. Lengthy periods of adverse weather, often resulting in severe flooding and very rugged terrain features make total reliance upon landline unlikely. Therefore, special efforts to intercept communication signals in the [redacted] should be made. If signals in this range are intercepted, attempts to accurately fix the locations of the emitters should be made. B) General – North Korean Air Force: Coverage of the following cases of North Korean Air Force communications is desired [redacted]. North Korean Army (voice): Intercept all North Korean Army single channel voice communications to include coastal artillery activity. North Korean Navy (voice): Intercept all North Korean Navy single channel voice communications to include ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore communications. General scheduled assignment is desired since little is known about North Korean Army and Navy usage of VHF communications by units located along the eastern coast of

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Korea. Part II, ELINT: A) During normal scheduled operations, coverage of ELINT emissions should be undertaken in accordance with the following signals, listed by priority: 1. New/Unusual/Unidentified signals; 2. Unconfirmed signals; and 3. Land-based/Shipborne/Airborne radars. B) Search for the following special interest signals when the ship is in the approximate interception areas: 1. Cruise missiles and their associated emitters; 2. [redacted] signals associated with the North Korean Navy [redacted]; 3. [Redacted] signals associated with KOMAR class vessels berthed at Wonsan. 4. [Redacted] all coastal areas to determine locations. 5. [Redacted] all areas. C) Attempt to visually correlate airborne/shipborne signals with emitter platform. Obtain direction finder bearings and attempt to determine the locations of all land based emitters heard.<sup>101</sup> The US military believed that 1968 would bring added aggression from North Korea, and the NSA was working to ascertain how that violence would manifest itself.

Before departing from Sasebo, Japan, for its mission, the *Pueblo* received information from US Naval Reconnaissance that one Soviet destroyer and one tanker were operating in the Tsushima Strait, so the *Pueblo* cruised up the coast of Japan to avoid detection until it reached the top of its most northern area of concentration – *Pluto* – between latitudes of 41 and 42 degrees, just south of the North Korea/USSR border. On 16 January 1968, the *Pueblo* reached the 42<sup>nd</sup> parallel and turned toward North Korea, coming within 15 miles of the port of Chongjin. Throughout the mission, the *Pueblo* remained outside of a 13 mile zone from North Korea to ensure that it remained in international waters. Off Chongjin, the crew observed North Korean merchant ships, but none approached the *Pueblo*, and little SIGINT material was collected. After two days, the *Pueblo* moved south to its next area of concentration – *Venus* – between latitudes of 40 and 41 degrees, in which the port of Songjin (Kimchaek) is located. Little was acquired there and the *Pueblo* moved to the third area of concentration – *Mars* – between latitudes of 39 and 40 degrees, to attempt to acquire SIGINT from Mayang-do. On 20 January, the *Pueblo* was southwest of Mayang-do when a North Korean SO-1 class submarine chaser passed at about

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4000 yards but continued on in the direction of Wonsan. Two days later, the *Pueblo* was off the coast of Wonsan, when two North Korean trawlers approached, one within 100 yards of the *Pueblo*. Both trawlers remained near the *Pueblo* for four hours until departing. Unknown to the *Pueblo*, but revealed by subsequent evaluation of data by the NSA, the North Koreans had been tracking the *Pueblo* from two different radar facilities and it was also under surveillance from North Korean MiG-17s. During the night of the 22<sup>nd</sup> and morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the *Pueblo* crew detected 18 different vessels in her vicinity. During this crucial time, poor atmospheric conditions blocked communications between the *Pueblo* and Kamiseya. Finally at 10:54 am on 23 January, the *Pueblo* was able to get a message through to Kamiseya. The crew transmitted all of its SIGINT data, but the log report stated only that their ship had been sighted by North Korean vessels. It would be days after the seizure that the NSA would be able to decipher and analyze the *Pueblo*'s SIGINT data, and a month later that the NSA would learn that the *Pueblo* had been acquired by the North Korean radar station at Kukchi-bong and that the North Koreans had labeled the *Pueblo* an 'enemy ship' and sent North Korean Naval vessels to intercept it. The first North Korean Navy ship reported to its base that the *Pueblo* was an intelligence gathering vessel of the United States, and within hours the *Pueblo* was encircled by North Korean vessels and signaled, "Heave to or I will open fire." Bucher knew that these would be the tactics based on the earlier missions of the *Banner*, and the *Pueblo* informed the North Koreans that they were in international waters and intended to proceed. When one North Korean ship came alongside the *Pueblo* with armed men, the *Pueblo* attempted to maneuver out to sea, but the North Koreans moved in close and began firing on the *Pueblo*'s superstructure, killing one man and wounding Bucher. The *Pueblo* crew began to destroy its intelligence gathering equipment and documents, but the destruction equipment was inadequate. Desperate messages were sent to Kamiseya, but there was no time to send help to the *Pueblo*, and the North Koreans began a slow escort toward Wonsan – to enter North Korean waters prior to boarding. Following the armed boarding, the crewmen of the *Pueblo* were blindfolded and their harrowing months

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of detention and interrogation began – the highest level of NSA intelligence gathering equipment and documents were now in the hands of the North Koreans.<sup>102</sup>

The capture of the *Pueblo* was terrible for the United States. However, its mission was within the parameters set by the Navy and the NSA, and it was there to collect information deemed vital to the US government. Cold War tensions were extremely high, the situation in Vietnam was spiraling into chaos, and North Korea was seemingly moving toward ever increasing hostility toward South Korea. The United States could not be surprised as it had been on 25 June 1950, and needed the *Pueblo* to collecting SIGINT intelligence on North Korea to confirm a crystallization of war on the Korean peninsula, unfortunately the North Koreans found this intolerable and disaster ensued.<sup>103</sup>

## Conclusion

In 1968, the USS *Pueblo* was operating in the Sea of Japan to collect intelligence on an ever more belligerent communist nation – North Korea. At the end of the Second World War, the Cold War battle-line of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was drawn, bifurcating the Korean peninsula and people into North and South. These people held a strong belief in reunification. The Korean War was a violent effort to unify the peninsula under Communist control, which left, in addition to additional super-power hostility, a more polarized Korean people. Following the Sino-Soviet split, North Korea gained the ability to engage in unilateral adventurism in its efforts to fight capitalism and unify the Korean peninsula under its control. The United States and its allies viewed these North Korean efforts as reckless and dangerous for stability in the region, stability that was requisite for the containment of Communism. To combat the devolving situation, the United States marshalled its available military and intelligence collection abilities to better contain North Korean aggression.

The United States had developed increased SIGINT capabilities to monitor potential and actual enemies after the Korean War, and in the 1960s took this technology to sea. The United States used

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large naval vessels, but also followed a Soviet model and created a fleet of three small intelligence gathering ships, the AGERs, which could travel in international waters near targets of interest, engaging potential enemy ships and collecting data on military technology. The program, initiated in the Sea of Japan with the USS *Banner*, was rough and confrontational but provided very useful intelligence to the US military. The *Banner* focused primarily on Soviet targets, but due to the increasing violence of the 'Second Korean War,' the United States transitioned into monitoring North Korea with the *Pueblo*. The *Pueblo* was on its first and only mission. Its small size limited the capacity for detailed analysis of intercepted data, which was transmitted to the NSA. In the 1960s, data analysis took considerable time to complete, and it would be a month after the seizure that the NSA used the *Pueblo's* own transmitted intercepts to illustrate her last fateful days.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup>The prime monographs on the *Pueblo* incident, in addition to Mitchell B. Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident: A Spy Ship and the Failure of American Foreign Policy*, (University Press of Kansas: Lawrence, 2002), include Jack Cheevers, *Act of War: Lyndon Johnson, North Korea, and the Capture of the Spy Ship Pueblo*, (NAL Caliber, New York, 2013); Edward R. Murphy and Curt Gentry, *Second in Command: The Uncensored Account of the Capture of the Spy Ship Pueblo, by its Executive Officer, former Lieutenant Edward R. Murphy, Jr.*, (Holt, Rinehart and Winston: New York, 1971); and Lloyd M. Bucher and Mark Rascovich, *Bucher: My Story*, (Doubleday: Garden City, 1970).

<sup>2</sup> Lerner, p. vii.

<sup>3</sup> 'Strategic Narrative' is a term popularized by Lawrence Freedman. Discussed by David Omand, 'Securing the State: National Security and Secret Intelligence,' *Prism*, vol. 4, no. 3 (September 2013), pp. 14-27, 18. Further, see Lawrence Freedman, *The Transformation of Strategic Affairs*, (International Institute for Strategic Studies: London, Adelphi Paper 379, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Kathryn Weathersby, "'Should We Fear This?'" Stalin and the Danger of War with America,' Working Paper no. 39, *Cold War International History Project*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC, July 2002, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History*, (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1995), p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Weathersby, p. 4

<sup>7</sup> Weathersby, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> Jian, p. 48 and Stueck, p. 37.

<sup>11</sup> Weathersby, pp. 12-13.

<sup>12</sup> William Stueck, 'Ambivalent Occupation: U.S. Armed Forces in Korea, 1953 to the Present,' Robert A. Wampler, ed., *Trilateralism and Beyond: Great Power Politics and the Korean Security Dilemma During and After the Cold War*, (Kent State University Press: Kent, 2012), pp. 13-49, 14.

<sup>13</sup> Stueck, *The Korean War*, p. 46.

<sup>14</sup> Jungwon A. Kim, 'North Korea's New Offensive,' *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 48, no. 1, (October 1969), pp. 166-179, 173; and Sergey S. Radchenko, 'The Soviet Union and the North Korean Seizure of the USS *Pueblo*: Evidence from Russian Archives,' Working Paper no. 47, *Cold War International History Project*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC, July 2011, p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> National Security Agency, 'USS *Pueblo*, AGER-2,' National Security Agency, undated, p. 30, Top Secret – Declassified with redactions 14 September 2012, available at [www.nsa.gov](http://www.nsa.gov).

<sup>16</sup> Bernd Schaefer, 'North Korean "Adventurism" and China's Long Shadow, 1966-1972,' Working Paper no. 44, *Cold War International History Project*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC, October 2004, p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> Directorate of Intelligence, 'Kim Il-Sung's New Military Adventurism,' Intelligence Report, Central Intelligence Agency, 26 November 1968, p. 5, Top Secret – Declassified May 2007, available at [www.foia.cia.gov](http://www.foia.cia.gov).

<sup>18</sup> <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/collection/119/the-second-korean-war-1967-1969>. In particular, see Mitchell Lerner, 'Mostly Propaganda in Nature: Kim Il Sung, the Juche Ideology, and the Second Korean War,' Working Paper no. 3, *NKIDP*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC, December 2010.

<sup>19</sup> 'Armed Incidents Along the Korean DMZ,' Intelligence Memorandum, Washington, 8 November 1966, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-68*, vol. XXIX, part 1, Korea, document 98.

<sup>20</sup> Charles H. Bonesteel, III, Telegram From the Commanding General, United States Eighth Army, Korea, and the Commander in Chief, United Nations Command, Korea (Bonesteel) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Wheeler), Seoul, 10 November 1966, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-68*, vol. XXIX, part 1, Korea, document 99.

<sup>21</sup> Schaefer, p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> 'Memorandum of Conversation,' Washington, 1 December 1966, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-68*, vol. XXIX, part 1, Korea, document 104.

<sup>24</sup> For an in-depth discussion of *Juche*, see Lerner, 'Mostly Propaganda in Nature,' pp. 10-17.

<sup>25</sup> *FRUS*, document 104.

<sup>26</sup> 'Memorandum of Conversation,' Washington, 1 December 1966, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1964-68, vol. XXIX, part 1, Korea, document 110.

<sup>27</sup> 'Letter from GDR Embassy in the DPRK to State Secretary Hegen,' 12 December 1966, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Archives of the Foreign Office, Berlin, Collection MfAA, G-A 316. Obtained by Bernd Schaefer and translated by Karen Riechert. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114569>

<sup>28</sup> 'The DPRK Attitude Toward the So-called "Cultural Revolution" in China,' 7 March 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF f. 0102, op. 23, p. 112, d. 24, pp. 13-23. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114570>

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Schaefer, p. 10.

<sup>30</sup> Schaefer, p. 10-11.

<sup>31</sup> Soon Sung Cho, 'North and South Korea: Stepped-Up Aggression and the Search for New Security,' *Asian Survey*, vol. 9, no. 1, A Survey of Asia in 1968: part I (January 1969), pp. 29-39, 30. See also, B.C. Koh, 'The Pueblo Incident in Perspective,' *Asian Survey*, vol. 9, no. 4, (April 1969), pp. 264-280, 272.

<sup>32</sup> United States Air Force, 'The *Pueblo* Incident,' HQ PACAF Directorate, Tactical Evaluation CHECO Division, 15 April 1968, p. 8, available at [www.dtic.mil](http://www.dtic.mil).

<sup>33</sup> 'Memorandum of Conversation,' Washington, 22 June 1967, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1964-68, vol. XXIX, part 1, Korea, document 119.

<sup>34</sup> Charles H. Bonesteel, III, Telegram From the Commander in Chief, United Nations Command, Korea and the Commander of United States Forces, Korea (Bonesteel) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Sharp), Attachment 3 in, 'Memorandum From Alfred Jenkins of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow),' Washington, 26 July 1967, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1964-68, vol. XXIX, part 1, Korea, document 123.

<sup>35</sup> President Eisenhower set up the USIB in 1957. The body, comprised of the chiefs of intelligence within US government agencies, was to advise the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI). Throughout the 1960s, the USIB worked to streamline intelligence gathering amidst an era of data overload through its Primary National Intelligence Objective (PNIO) program. In addition to Bonesteel's request, a SNIE for North Korea was within the bounds of the DCI, specifically the objective of intelligence on a foreign country's 'preparation for and intention to resort to armed action against other states.' See Allen W. Dulles, 'Comprehensive National Intelligence Objectives,' Director of Central Intelligence Directive No. ½, Revised 15 September 1958, Secret – Declassified 24 March 2005, US Central Intelligence Agency, available via CREST at National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>36</sup> 'North Korean Intentions and Capabilities with Respect to South Korea,' Special National Intelligence Estimate, Washington, 21 September 1967, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1964-68, vol. XXIX, part 1, Korea, document 130.

<sup>37</sup> United States Intelligence Board, 'North Korean Intentions and Capabilities with Respect to South Korea,' Special National Intelligence Estimate, 14.2-67, 21 September 1967, p. 4, available at [www.foia.cia.gov](http://www.foia.cia.gov). [Hereafter SNIE]

<sup>38</sup> SNIE.

<sup>39</sup> *FRUS*, document 130.

<sup>40</sup> SNIE.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *FRUS*, document 130.

<sup>43</sup> John Foster, Jr., 'Korea,' Memorandum From the Director of Defense Research and Engineering (Foster) to Secretary of Defense McNamara, Washington, 7 December 1967, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1964-68, vol. XXIX, part 1, Korea, document 138.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Clark Clifford, Telegram From the Embassy in Australia to the Department of State, Canberra, 21 December 1967, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1964-68, vol. XXIX, part 1, Korea, document 139.

<sup>46</sup> Walt W. Rostow, 'Follow-up to your Canberra meeting with Korea's President Park,' Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson, Washington, 29 December 1967, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1964-68, vol. XXIX, part 1, Korea, document 141.

<sup>47</sup> The CIA reported this North Korean troop strength on 5 February 1968, adding that even with North Korea's manpower shortage, troop strength remained at up to 4 percent of the total population. See Central Intelligence

Agency, 'The *Pueblo* Incident,' Top Secret - Declassified, Briefing Paper, 5 February 1968, Digital National Security Archives: National Security Agency: Organization and Operations, 1945-2009, available at ProQuest.

<sup>48</sup> Cho, pp. 29-39, 30. Aircraft, SAM, and ship numbers from SNIE, Annex, 11. See also, Kim, p. 169.

<sup>49</sup> Cho, p. 30. See also, Koh, p. 272.

<sup>50</sup> Matthew M. Aid and Cees Wiebes, 'Introduction: The Importance of Signals Intelligence in the Cold War,' Matthew M. Aid and Cees Wiebes, eds., *Secrets of Signals Intelligence during the Cold War and Beyond*, (Frank Cass: Portland, 2001), pp. 1-26, 2.

<sup>51</sup> Omand, p. 20.

<sup>52</sup> Matthew M. Aid, "The National Security Agency and the Cold War," in Matthew M. Aid and Cees Wiebes, eds., *Secrets of Signals Intelligence during the Cold War and Beyond*, (Frank Cass: Portland, 2001), pp. 27-66, 35-6.

<sup>53</sup> Harry Truman, President, 'Truman Memorandum,' available at [www.nsa.gov](http://www.nsa.gov). Note that according to Robert Shaw of the NSA, the term "SIGINT" developed after the term "COMINT," and initially the terms were interchangeable. Therefore Truman's use of COMINT did not relegate the NSA to communications intelligence only, but included signals. In March 1962, the USIB formally merged their COMINT and ELINT Committees into a SIGINT Committee, see Item 51, under "Reorganization of the USIB Structure and Strengthened DCI Authority," Secret - Declassified, 24 June 2004, Central Intelligence Agency, USIB Committees, James David Files. Further, see, Robert H. Shaw, "What is Good Traffic Analysis," in Vera R. Filby, ed., "A Collection of Writings on Traffic Analysis," United States Cryptologic History, Sources in Cryptologic History, vol. 4, Center for Cryptologic History, National Security Agency, 1993, pp. 5-9, 5. Secret - Declassified 11 June 2013, available at [www.nsa.gov](http://www.nsa.gov).

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Christopher A. Ford, Lt Comdr, USNR and David A. Rosenberg, Capt, USNR, *The Admirals' Advantage: U.S. Navy Operational Intelligence in World War II and the Cold War*, (Naval Institute Press: Annapolis, 2005), p. 43-4.

<sup>55</sup> Ford and Rosenberg, p. 53.

<sup>56</sup> Nigel West, *The SIGINT Secrets: The Signals Intelligence War, 1900 to Today*, (William Morrow: New York, 1988), p. 265.

<sup>57</sup> According to West, by 1962, the Soviets had four SIGINT-collecting ships, and due to their success had over 160 such vessels within the next 15 years. See West, 277-8. See also, James Bamford, *The Puzzle Palace: A Report on America's Most Secret Agency*, (Penguin Books: New York, 1982), p. 273-4.

<sup>58</sup> Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, p. 8.

<sup>59</sup> For commission dates, see National Security Agency, 'A Review of the Technical Research Ship Program, 1961-1969,' 1970. Partially declassified 2009 and heavily redacted, Mandatory Declassification Request mailed 18 December 2015, available at [www.governmentattic.org](http://www.governmentattic.org).

<sup>60</sup> James Bamford, *Body of Secrets: Anatomy of the Ultra-Secret National Security Agency from the Cold War through the Dawn of a New Century*, (Doubleday: New York, 2001), p. 240.

<sup>61</sup> Newton, p. 13.

<sup>62</sup> Fubini had worked with intelligence collection systems since 1961 and was one of the top authorities on electronic espionage in the United States. Further, see Koebke, p. 3 and Bamford, p. 295.

<sup>63</sup> Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, p. 10. See also, Koebke, p. 3.

<sup>64</sup> Statement of Rear Adm Frank L. Johnson, USN, *Hearings before the Special Subcommittee on the U.S.S. Pueblo of the Committee on Armed Services*, House of Representatives, (US Government Printing Office: Washington, 1969), p. 733. Also quoted in Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, p. 10.

<sup>65</sup> The USS *Oxford* and USS *Jamestown* were also based at the Yokosuka Naval Base.

<sup>66</sup> Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, p. 10.

<sup>67</sup> As Soviet subs began to operate globally, the US Navy began the development of a worldwide Ocean Surveillance Information System (OSIS). Further, see Ford and Rosenberg, p. 41.

<sup>68</sup> Aid, p. 39.

<sup>69</sup> Robert E. Newton, 'The Capture of the USS *Pueblo* and Its Effect on SIGINT Operations,' United States Cryptologic History, Special Series, Crisis Collection, vol. 7, Center for Cryptologic History, National Security Agency, 1992, p. 14, Top Secret/Code Word - Declassified with redactions 14 September 2012, available at [www.nsa.gov](http://www.nsa.gov).

<sup>70</sup> The USS *Palm Beach* was retrofitted for SIGINT duty but due to the capture of the *Pueblo* was never tasked with a mission.

<sup>71</sup> Newton, p. 11. See also, Thomas R. Johnson, 'American Cryptology during the Cold War, 1945-1989, Book II: Centralization Wins, 1960-1989,' *United States Cryptologic History, Series VI, The NSA Period, 1952-Present*, vol. 5,

Center for Cryptologic History, National Security Agency, 1995, p. 395, Top Secret/Code Word – Declassified with redactions 9 July 2007, available at [www.nsa.gov](http://www.nsa.gov).

<sup>72</sup> Newton, p. 12.

<sup>73</sup> Admiral David L. McDonald was Chief of Naval Operations from 1 August 1963 to 1 August 1967. He was succeeded by Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, who served until 1 July 1970.

<sup>74</sup> Paul H. Nitze, 'Instructions for the coordination and control of Navy's clandestine intelligence collection program,' 7 December 1965, Department of the Navy, Office of the Secretary, Washington, DC, Secret – Declassified 13 July 1990, available at National Security Archive.

<sup>75</sup> US Navy, 'History of the USS *Banner* (AGER 1) from September 1965 to December 1968,' 14 November 1969, Secret-Declassified November 18, 2005, *Banner* (AGER 1) 1969 CHR folder, Box 73, Ships History – Decommissioned (Prior to 1 January 2001), *Bamberg County* (LST 209) to *Barataria* (AXP 33), Secret – Declassified, Archives of the Naval History and Heritage Command, Washington, DC [Hereafter, US Navy, History of the USS *Banner*]. The locations of *Banner's* last eight surveillance missions are corroborated by US Air Force documents. See United States Air Force, p. 11.

<sup>76</sup> US Navy, History of the USS *Banner*, p. 2.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Stating the obvious, Lerner wrote that Vladivostok was a major target for the NSA's First Intercept Division stationed at Kamiseya, Japan. What is interesting is that the NSA and Navy worked on land as they did at sea, with the NSA having a field office within the US Naval Security Group base at Kamiseya. See Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, p. 70 and [www.navycthistory.com/kami\\_intro.html](http://www.navycthistory.com/kami_intro.html).

<sup>79</sup> The Tumen-Cape Povorotny Line is a line drawn from the mouth of the Tumen River (the geographic partition between the Soviet Union and North Korea) across Peter the Great Bay to Cape Povorotny. The United States did not formally recognize the Tumen-Cape Povorotny Line.

<sup>80</sup> US Navy, History of the USS *Banner*, p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>83</sup> This is also the area where the USS *Pueblo* would be captured two years later. Mayang-Do is off the coast from the city of Sinpo, East of Hamhung. The North Korean submarine fleet is still based there today and images of submarines are clearly visible on GoogleEarth. In the 1960s, the United States would have had substantial information on North Korean military and naval installations from photographic intelligence gathered via U2, Oxcart or SR-71, and space-based collectors, but this information remains inaccessible.

<sup>84</sup> US Navy, History of the USS *Banner*, p. 6. According to Lerner, after the NSA received copies of the *Banner's* first intelligence reports, the organization 'suddenly demanded a role in the AGER program.' See Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*, p. 13.

<sup>85</sup> US Navy, History of the USS *Banner*, p. 9.

<sup>86</sup> The US Navy created the Electronic Countermeasures Squadron One (VQ-1) in June 1955. There was also a Squadron Two. The Navy changed the name in 1960, but retained the designation VQ-1. Further, see Don C. East, USN, 'A History of U.S. Navy Fleet Air Reconnaissance,' originally printed in *The Hook*, (Spring 1987), <http://www.vq1.navy.mil/history.html>.

<sup>87</sup> US Navy, History of the USS *Banner*, p. 10-11.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>89</sup> Bamford also discusses the hazardous voyages of the *Banner*, see Bamford, *Body of Secrets*, pp. 241-3.

<sup>90</sup> Benjamin Young, 'The Korean War beyond the Peninsula: North Korea in Africa, 1965-1992,' 2<sup>nd</sup> Year PhD Student Research Colloquium, 22 April 2016, History Department, George Washington University, Washington, DC.

<sup>91</sup> Statement by Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, *Hearings before the Special Subcommittee on the U.S.S. Pueblo of the Committee on Armed Services*, House of Representatives, (US Government Printing Office: Washington, 1969), p. 634.

<sup>92</sup> Newton, p. 9.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>94</sup> Shaw, p. 7.

<sup>95</sup> Lerner, p. 69.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Both the *Banner* and the *Pueblo* were tasked with ICHTHYIC missions. The *Banner's* mission, ICHTHYIC TWO was cancelled when the *Pueblo* was captured. There is disagreement in documents on the code word 'Ichthyic.' I have found statements that the word proved to be too difficult a word to pronounce, so the definition of ichthyic – pink root – was added, but also that PINKROOT was used to differentiate Pacific Ocean from Atlantic Ocean SIGINT collection.

<sup>99</sup> National Security Agency, 'USS *Pueblo*, AGER-2.' See also, Cheevers, p. 47-48 and Lerner, p. 1.

<sup>100</sup> Newton, p. 48.

<sup>101</sup> National Security Agency, 'USS *Pueblo*, AGER-2.'

<sup>102</sup> The narrative on the physical mission and capture of the *Pueblo* are from Newton, pp. 45-71.

<sup>103</sup> For a discussion of surprise as a military tactic and the use of intelligence to nullify that tactic, see David Omand, *Securing the State*, (Columbia University Press: New York, 2010), p. 10.