

February 23, 1968
Telegram from Pyongyang to Bucharest, TOP
SECRET, No. 76.049, Flash

Citation:

"Telegram from Pyongyang to Bucharest, TOP SECRET, No. 76.049, Flash", February 23, 1968, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Political Affairs Fond, Telegrams from Pyongyang, TOP SECRET, 1968, Archive of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Eliza Gheorghe.

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Summary:

The Embassy of Romania in the DPRK reports on General Pak Jeong-guk and his negotiations with the United States over the release of the USS Pueblo crew.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Romanian

Contents:

Translation - English

On February 22, M. Sindler, the attaché of the Czechoslovak Embassy in Pyongyang, told A. Lazar that the head of the Czechoslovak delegation to the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission in Panmunjeom had talked to General Pak Jeong-guk, the head of the North Korean delegation about the following issues:

After the first two or three secret meetings between the North Koreans and the Americans, General Pak Jeong-guk has been avoiding the Czech and Polish generals, or when he does meet them, he does not mention anything about the USS Pueblo incident.

After the eighth secret meeting, Pak told the Czech general that the North Koreans would be willing to free the Pueblo crew members in exchange for some South Korean patriots 'who are imprisoned in South Korea.' The North Korean general said that if the Americans had agreed to this exchange, the North Koreans would have renounced the demand that the United States recognize that they had violated the territorial waters of the DPRK, however they did not wish to get too much publicity on this.

When asked by the Czech general about the position of the US Army on this matter, Pak said that the North Koreans had not discussed this with the Americans because they expected the Americans to come to them with this proposal.

Sindler said that the Czech general realized that Pak told him about this idea so that this proposal, through the Swedish or the Swiss delegations in the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission, immediately reached the Americans, who would then bring it up at Panmunjeom.

The Czech diplomat said that until that moment, discussions at Panmunjeom had been limited to the demands of the DPRK that the United States admits to being guilty of violating North Korean territorial waters. The American representative supposedly asked the North Koreans to allow him to pay a visit to the USS Pueblo crew members in order to corroborate the North Korean version of the story, which would then enable the Americans to admit to having violated North Korean territorial waters.

Taking into account the possibility of talks between the United States and the Vietnamese, which has come up again and again these days, we believe that the North Koreans will try to solve the Pueblo case before the American-Vietnamese negotiations begin and this will be done to refute any speculations that the resolution of the Vietnamese matter depended on ending the row over USS Pueblo.

Signed: N. Popa