

February 7, 1968
**Telegram from Pyongyang to Bucharest, TOP
SECRET, No. 76.035, Urgent**

Citation:

"Telegram from Pyongyang to Bucharest, TOP SECRET, No. 76.035, Urgent", February 7, 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.
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/113954>

Summary:

The Embassy of Romania in the DPRK reports on U.S.-North Korean negotiations over the USS Pueblo and tensions between the United States and South Korea over the response to North Korea's recent provocations.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Romanian

Contents:

Translation - English

With respect to the secret negotiations which are currently taking place in Panmunjeom between the North Koreans and the Americans on the USS Pueblo military vessel seized by the DPRK on January 23, we would like to inform you about the following matters:

The central press agencies released a brief statement revealing that, due to the persistent requests of the Americans, the North Koreans have agreed to enter into talks at Panmunjeom on the USS Pueblo incident.

We know that the Koreans are usually extremely calm in their discussions and they are trying to drag their feet as much as possible to extend the length of these talks. One of the signs of the DPRK's malleability is the fact that on February 6 it returned the bodies of the two USS Pueblo crew members who died during the incident while also expressing its intent to release the two or three wounded members of the crew.

As far as we know from what the Press Director of the DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs told us on February 6, the Americans are searching for the best possible pretense to excuse themselves in front of the North Korean authorities and international public opinion, putting all the blame on the USS Pueblo commander who 'lacked the consent of his superiors and, acting upon his own judgment, violated the territorial waters of the DPRK.'

The fact that the Americans started their secret talks with the DPRK and that they are strictly discussing the USS Pueblo incident without linking it to the incidents in South Korea (the infiltration from the North on January 21), together with the tendency of the Americans to admit their guilt in one way or another in front of the North Koreans, gave rise in South Korea to the biggest repulsion towards the United States of America in the last twenty years.

The South Korean authorities and all parties and organizations in South Korea laid official complaints and openly condemned the meek attitude of the United States, which is manifested in their willingness to enter secret talks with the DPRK on the USS Pueblo incident.

Over the last few days, intense anti-American demonstrations have taken place in Seoul and in all urban centers in South Korea, underlining the dissatisfaction with the secret negotiations in Panmunjeom and asking Park Chung Hee's government to revisit its position vis-à-vis the United States of America (which is discounting South Korea's ability to pursue its own interests); in order to enhance its self-defense capabilities (given that the United States of America is no longer offering the appropriate guarantees), it was asked to withdraw South Korean troops from South Vietnam, to take serious measures to prevent such incidents from occurring in the future, etc. Under these circumstances, it has become even more obvious why the DPRK is extending its negotiations with the United States as much as possible.

The diplomatic corps in Pyongyang believes that the South Koreans are intensifying this anti-American campaign so that after solving the USS Pueblo incident, they will be able to obtain more substantial military aid from the US.

We think that irrespective of the means the US will use to draw closer to South Korea, the prestige and reputation of the Americans in the eyes of the South Korean people has been seriously undermined. In this respect, we take into account the fact that the United States accepted to sit down and talk to the DPRK, to whom they will apologize, as well as the fact that the majority of the infiltrations from the North are being carried out through the perimeter guarded by the American Second division, which has generated a lot of mistrust in the way the US is ensuring South Korea's security.

Due to the instability, confusion, and dwindling trust of the support offered by the US, South Korea adopted a series of serious measures to strengthen its self-defense capabilities. Thus, President Park Chung Hee ordered the mobilization of 2.5 million people on February 7, pausing all retirements in the armed forces and creating armed self-defense units (troops) in every large village.