

USS PUEBLO RELEASE SUMMARY

20 November 2012

WHAT IS BEING RELEASED?

The National Security Agency is releasing a rich collection of many types of documents relating to the *USS PUEBLO* incident. This released collection includes internal memoranda, disseminated Executive Branch materials, and intelligence products. The release of these intelligence products and communication intercepts are significant.

In support of the President's Openness and Transparency Initiative and the National Declassification Center's priorities, NSA is releasing the most complete and authoritative communication intercept on the capture of the *USS PUEBLO* and the imprisonment of the crew. This release also includes intercepts of possibly relevant activity before and after the actual event. This is a unique release. This release follows the National Archives and Records Administration's, National Declassification Center theme of "Releasing All We Can, Protecting What We Must."

WHAT IS NEW IN THIS RELEASE?

Scholars will be able to study the original materials directly. Much of the content in the public domain is administrative documents and memoranda. Prior releases were summaries of the contents of these documents, but now original sources are released.

Also included in this new release is the 1992 NSA's Center for Cryptologic History study on the incident with more previously classified material now declassified. This 1992 study includes a lengthy analytic view of the incident and its aftermath, to include details on the interrogation during crew's captivity as well as the U.S. debriefing upon the crew members' return. This study is not an official history; it represents the informed opinion of the author, and may not necessarily reflect the interpretation of the federal government.

This large volume of newly released documents will enable scholars to compile a more detailed chronology of the

events of 1968, and to assess with greater clarity and depth what the U.S. government knew and how the intelligence community acted on that knowledge.

The seizure of the *USS PUEBLO* has been a controversial matter since it occurred. These new releases may not settle any of the questions debated publicly about the *USS PUEBLO* incident, but they will assist in a more informed discussion.

WHAT WAS THE *USS PUEBLO* INCIDENT?

On January 28, 1968, fourteen miles from North Korean land, the *USS PUEBLO* was attacked and captured by overwhelming forces from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The crew was detained and interrogated until their release on December 23, 1968. Despite the crew's valiant efforts to destroy classified materials on board, much was still undestroyed and fell into North Korean hands when the ship was captured.

WHAT EVENTS LEAD TO THE *USS PUEBLO* INCIDENT?

In the 1960s, the U.S. cryptologic community, comprised of NSA and the Service Cryptologic Components, conducted communications intercept via specially-configured ships. These vessels, known as "technical research ships," or TRSs, could respond quickly to crises and provide needed intercept coverage in global regions where there were unanticipated needs for intelligence information.

In 1967, after more than a decade in which conflict on the Korean Peninsula had been relatively muted, North Korea, the DPRK, became increasingly aggressive toward South Korea, the ROK. In fact, at the time the mission of the *USS PUEBLO* was being conducted, North Korean commandos had just invaded Seoul on a mission to assassinate the ROK president.

The United States had a mutual defense agreement with the ROK but was heavily involved in the war in Southeast Asia. U.S. military leaders sought additional information on the DPRK to assist their decision making in this renewed conflict in Northeast Asia.

The intelligence community judged that use of TRSs was an effective way to respond quickly. The *USS PUEBLO*, a converted World War II supply ship, was one of the vessels assigned this collection mission. Although arguably not seaworthy, the *USS PUEBLO* was refitted for a SIGINT mission, sailed to Japan in late 1967, and then to the east coast of the DPRK.

For its mission, the *USS PUEBLO* was instructed to be scrupulous about staying in international waters, which the United States interpreted as twelve miles from land, the international norm at that time. North Korea, however, claimed a boundary of two hundred miles for its national waters.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CREW OF THE *PUEBLO*?

One member of the crew died as a result of injuries sustained during the ship's capture. The North Koreans detained and interrogated the ship's remaining 82-member crew for eleven months. Many among the crew were highly experienced in U.S. SIGINT operations.

On December 23, 1968 after a U.S. military representative signed a formal apology for intruding into DPRK waters -- a statement he repudiated verbally immediately after signing it -- the crew was returned. The *USS PUEBLO* itself is still located in North Korea.

Upon the crew's return, the crew was questioned by experts to determine the extent of compromises of classified documents, equipment, and other information. In addition, reflecting the high emotions prevalent in the time, the crew was frequently tarnished with unfair blame for the incident. Today, history views the crews' valiant efforts as courageous. All crew members, including the civilian oceanographers, who were held prisoner were authorized the Prisoner of War Medal. All military crew members were authorized the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal and the Combat Action Ribbon. The crew are true American heroes.

WHY DOES NSA HAVE DOCUMENTS RELATED TO THE PUEBLO INCIDENT?

The *PUEBLO* mission was undertaken at the request of the U.S. Navy, and the *USS PUEBLO* was subordinate to the Naval Security Command, the service's cryptologic component.

NSA's role was, and still is, to be a technical advisor to such missions. Also, prior to the mission, NSA was asked for its advice on the strategy for the *PUEBLO* mission. These documents show that NSA "signed off" on the mission, but also forwarded a warning statement about the growing aggressiveness of North Korea and expressing reservations about the value of conducting this sort of mission in the winter, when less North Korean activity might be expected. With the known risks, the dangerous mission proceeded.

As the central organization for U.S. COMINT activities, NSA became a repository for administrative documents related to the *PUEBLO* as well as much of the intelligence produced by and about the mission.

WHY ARE THEY BEING RELEASED NOW?

NSA is committed to openness and transparency. NSA recognizes that this release will contribute to the study of a unique event important both to the history of NSA and the history of our nation.

**A Listing of the Valiant Crew Members*, U.S. Heroes, by
name**

CDR Lloyd Bucher
LT Stephen Harris
LT Edward Murphy
LT(jg) F. Schumacher
ENS Timothy Harris
CWO-4 Gene Lacy

CTMCS Ralph Bouden
ENC Monroe Goldman
CTTC James Kell

CT1 Don Bailey
HM1 Herman Baldridge
CT1 Michael Barrett
EN1 Rushel Blansett
YN1 Armando Canales
SK1 Policarpo Garcia
CT1 Francis Ginther
EMI Gerald Hagenson
BM1 Norbert Klepac
QM1 Charles Law
CT1 James Layton
PH1 Lawrence Mack
CT1 Donald Peppard
CT1 David Ritter
EN1 William Scarborough
CT1 James Sheppard

CT2 Michael Alexander
CT2 Wayne Anderson
BM2 Ronald Berens
SGT Robert Chicca
IC2 Victor Escamilla
SGT Robert Hammond
RM2 Lee Hayes
CT2 Peter Langenberg
SM2 Wendell Leach
CS2 Harry Lewis
CT2 Donald McClarren
ET2 Clifford Nolte
CT2 Charles Sterling

GM2 Kenneth Wadley
CT2 Elton Wood

CT3 Charles Ayling
CT3 Paul Brusnahan
BM3 Willie Bussell
RM3 Charles Crandell
CT3 Bradley Crowe
CT3 Rodney Duke
CT3 Joseph Fejfar
CT3 John Grant
CT3 Sidney Karnes
CT3 Earl Kisler
CT3 Anthony Lamantia
CT3 Ralph McClintock
QM3 Alvin Plucker
CS3 Ralph Reed
CT3 Steven Robin
CT3 John Shilling
CT3 Angelo Strano
EN3 Darrel Wright

Steward Rogelio Abelon
Steward Rizalino Aluague
Fireman Richard Arnold
Fireman Richard Bame
Fireman Peter Bandera
Fireman Howard Bland
Seaman Stephen Ellis
Fireman John Higgins
Seaman Robert Hill
Fireman Duane Hodges
Seaman Roy Maggard
Seaman Larry Marshall
Fireman Thomas Massie
Fireman John Mitchell
Fireman Michael O'Bannon
Seaman Earl Phares
Seaman Dale Rigby
Seaman Richard Rogala
Seaman Ramon Rosales
Seaman Edward Russell
Seaman John Shingleton
Fireman Norman Spear
Fireman Larry Strickland
Fireman Steven Woelk

Civilian Oceanographers

Harry Iredale

Dunnie Tuck

* Note all were authorized the Prisoner of War medal and all military crew members were authorized the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal and Combat Action Ribbon.