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PUEBLO  
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The North Koreans continue to act on the assumption that they can prolong the impasse over the Pueblo incident without incurring serious risks of US military pressure to secure the release of the crew. Pyongyang's most recent maneuver to extract a formal US apology was to broadcast an open letter to President Johnson, purportedly written by the entire Pueblo crew, urging the President to take the "necessary measures" to obtain their release.

The main thrust of the letter was to emphasize the futility of denying that the Pueblo had violated North Korean waters because Pyongyang has "irrefutable evidence" from the ship's documents and charts. The letter claimed for the first time that the Pueblo had operated within North Korean waters for ten days, and disclosed that the crew had "confessed everything truthfully" and had apologized to the North Korean Government. Finally, the letter endorsed Pyongyang's right to insist on an apology and a guarantee against further in-

trusions as the price for returning the crew.

The Soviets promptly reported on the open letter to the President, but commentary on the Pueblo incident is now quite sparse, reflecting Moscow's continued desire to play the affair in low key.

In South Korea, tension resulting from the capture of the Pueblo and the North Korean raid on the presidential palace is gradually easing. The process has been aided by the Vance visit and by US offers of increased military assistance. Seoul last week attempted to quiet criticism of the government and generally to tighten internal security by appointing a new defense minister, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Choe Yong-hui. President Pak had earlier reshuffled top-level security officials. The new defense minister is likely to have a closer working relationship with US officials than his predecessor, and no change in South Korean policy is likely.

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