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DATE: SEP 2001

19 FEB 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: William C. Trueheart  
INR/DDC  
Department of State

SUBJECT : Comments on Draft Contingency Plan  
for Airborne Reconnaissance of  
North Korea

1. We have examined the Draft Contingency Plan attached to your memorandum of 14 February 1968. The following comments represent the coordinated views of the responsible components of this Directorate.

2. We believe the initial assumption -- that increased airborne reconnaissance over North Korea will put pressure on Pyongyang to release the Pueblo and its crew -- is at least dubious.

3. A veiled threat of "US preparations for further military actions of an indeterminate nature" as represented by photo reconnaissance aircraft is unlikely to be viewed seriously by the North Koreans. At the least, it would have to be backed up by tangible evidence in the form of highly visible air and naval preparations that would suggest the seriousness of the US purpose. This has already been attempted in some degree and was not productive. Since then, the US has reduced this more tangible threat by falling back from some of its more northern positions in the Sea of Japan.

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4. The North Koreans must be aware that the present US commitment in the Far East has placed strains on the US military structure and has reduced available military reserves. The North Koreans probably calculate that the US would be extremely reluctant to engage in any military action that would risk the establishment of another area of conflict.

5. Moreover, even assuming that airborne reconnaissance would constitute a pressure or threat, however minimal, there would be at least an even chance that the North Koreans would react by becoming even more obdurate on the Pueblo issue. What we know of the North Korean mentality suggests a pronounced tendency toward increased obstinacy and belligerency in the face of pressures, even in their dealings with their Communist neighbors, the Soviet Union and China.

6. It seems unlikely that the South Koreans, if they were to be informed and possibly to participate in the planning, would take much reassurance from the project. The South Koreans appear more interested in guarantees from the US and in taking some form of active retaliation against the North. Cutting them in on the project would accomplish little if not followed up by some action. [REDACTED]

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7. The Draft Contingency Plan makes the point that the aircraft's presence at Kadena has been reported in the Okinawan and Japanese press. [REDACTED]

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9. The other options -- tactical recce, jamming, and peripheral reconnaissance -- are even less desirable tactics than airborne reconnaissance. All would be ineffectual. The first two run the risk of significant conflict, and the third is probably not worth doing. The net intelligence take would be low in comparison with that routinely collected by peripheral flights [REDACTED]

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10. We would of course welcome any intelligence on North Korean military forces, capabilities, and reactions that photo reconnaissance could provide. We do not believe, however, that its value at this juncture would outweigh the considerations above.

/s/ R. J. Smith

R. J. SMITH  
Deputy Director for Intelligence

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