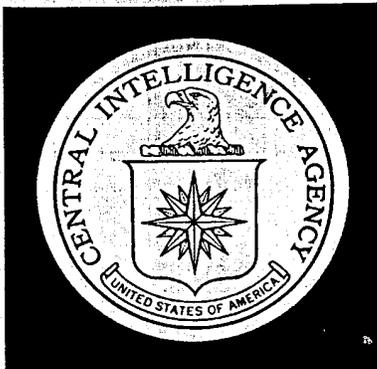


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27 December 1968



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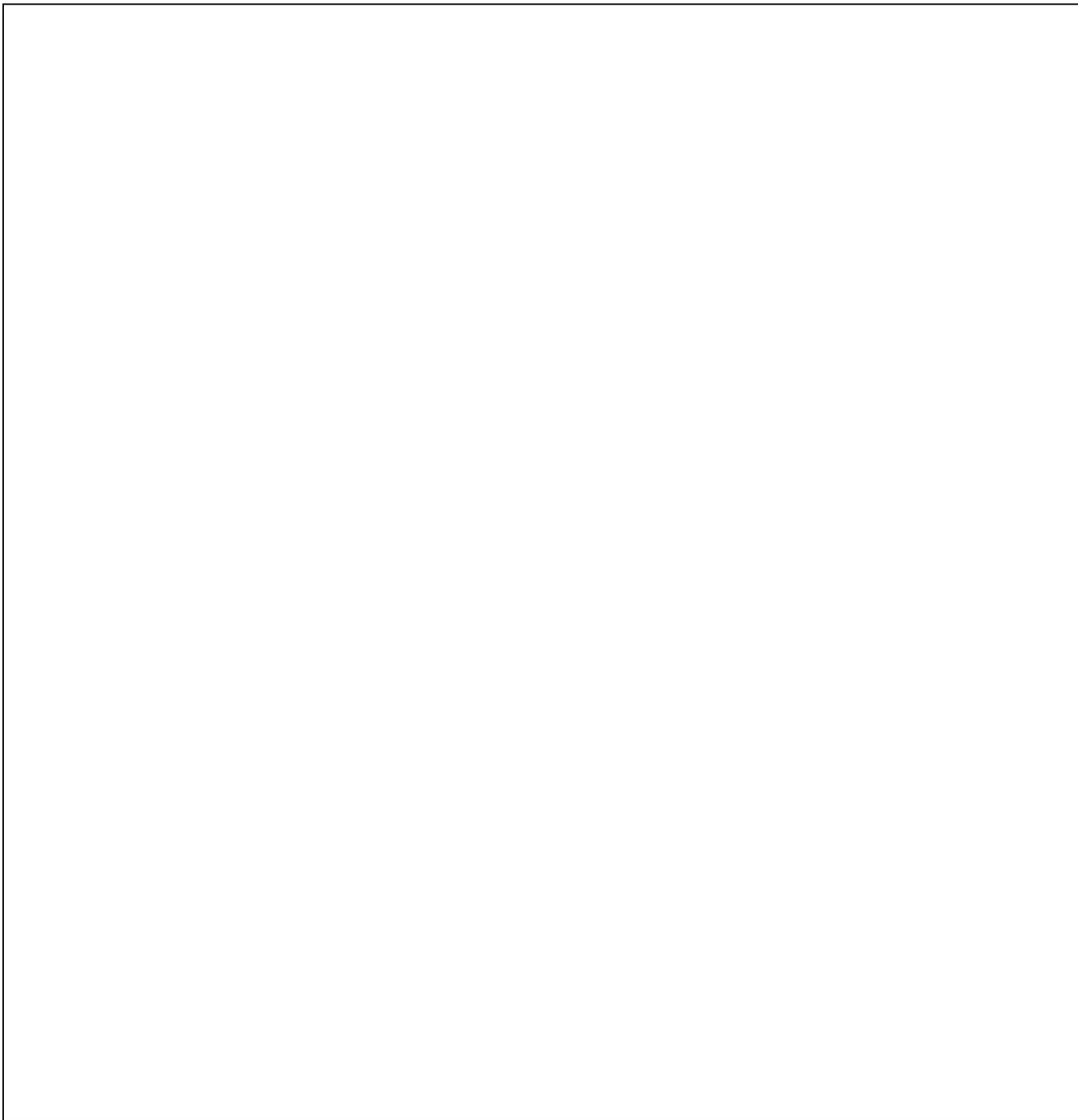
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(Information as of noon EST, 26 December 1968)

Far East

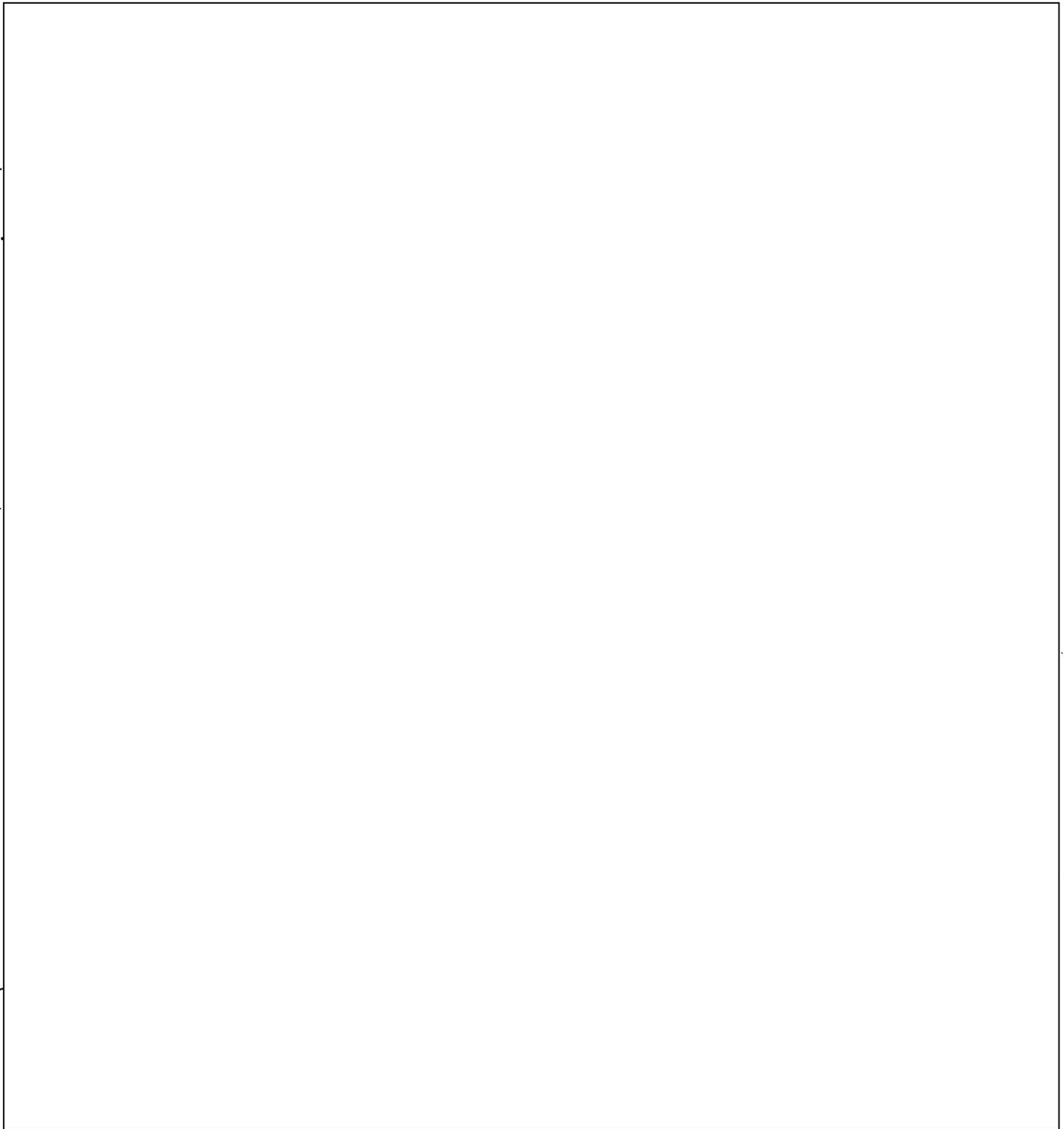
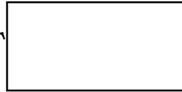
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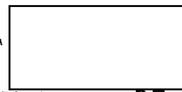


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REACTION TO THE RELEASE OF THE PUEBLO CREW

The North Koreans have, as anticipated, given heavy propaganda play to the US "apology" for the Pueblo incident, portraying it as a major victory of the Korean people over "US imperialism." On 23 December, the day the crew was released, Pyongyang made five separate broadcasts on the subject, including alleged new statements by the crew members expressing thanks for their "humanitarian" treatment during detention. The propaganda drumfire has continued in succeeding days, with little or no variation in content.

The major theme in all the North Korean broadcasts is that the US was forced to "kneel to the Korean people in front of the world," and that the Pueblo incident is further proof that a determined small nation can defeat a "mighty imperialist." Present "humiliation" of the US is being compared to the "abject surrender" of United Nations Command forces at Panmunjom in 1953. Pyongyang has not dealt directly with the US repudiation of the apology document and has maintained that the ship will not be returned.

So far commentary by other Communist countries has been predictable. The Soviet Union and the Eastern Europeans recounted the North Korean version of the incident. East Germany and Bulgaria charged that the US breached international standards of diplomacy by repudiating its signature. Yugoslavia inter-

preted US signature of the apology as another sign of a new US policy of relaxing tensions in Asia. Communist China has not commented.

Japanese reaction generally has been hopeful that the release will relax tension on the Korean peninsula and facilitate removal from Okinawa of US B52s that were deployed there in the aftermath of the seizure of the Pueblo.

In South Korea, the foreign minister issued an official statement expressing sympathy for the crew and mild approval of the US action securing their release. Initial South Korean public reaction has been generally critical of the US and probably more closely reflects true South Korean feelings. Some newspapers have characterized the US apology as "humiliating" and as contradicting previous US positions. Two government-influenced newspapers, quoting official sources, have taken the US to task for signing the apology, calling the action "tantamount to a breach of faith" with South Korea and indicative of a "low US posture toward North Korea." Spokesmen for both major political parties have generally echoed press reaction.

The Seoul government reportedly is deeply concerned about the possible impact the wording of the apology might have on the constitutional claim of the Republic of Korea to the whole Korean peninsula. [redacted]