Richard A. Mobley. **Flash Point North Korea, The Pueblo and EC-121 Crises.**
Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, November 2003. 240 pages, 11 photos, 2 maps,
notes, bibliography, index, $29.95, ISBN 1-55750-403-2.

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This outstanding contribution to the Cold War scholarship considers what might the United States done differently during these crisis and what can be learned from them. Mobley argues that these crises did not have to happen and that the country's response to the capture of PUEBLO may have made the North Korean's more confident about shooting down the EC-121. The North Koreans embarrassed two American presidents, their intelligence specialists, and their defense advisors twice within eighteen months, in part, because they underestimated the risk assessment of these missions; had difficulties gathering, interpreting, and sharing the available data; and underestimated the North Korean's capability and agenda. This study also reveals how the agencies' priorities and philosophical commitments hindered their ability to work together and how difficult it can be to plan when the persons involved cannot think beyond what's expected. The reader also sees how strong disagreement between the president and his closest advisors about appropriate action and miscommunication also delayed important decisions. For example,

> Nixon, Kissinger, and Haig all faulted the National
> Command Authorities' decision-making process.
> Their memoirs paint a picture of a secretary of
> Defense who was not forthcoming and was
> sometimes obstructionist. The national security adviser

had difficulty getting updates on the status of

carrier task force movements and, Laird did not

inform the cabinet that his suspension of PARPRO

missions was worldwide, not just off Korea. (p. 139)

It would be wrong to suggest that Mobley's account is not balanced. *Flash Point* also recounts those areas where the U.S. responded well and explains how these incidents led to improved approaches to contingency planning, assessment methods, and communication between agencies. For instance, after the loss of EC-121, the military began using EA-3s because they were smaller and had jet engines.

This book reminds readers how unexpected military engagements during a war can limit the United States' response time and options. Presidents Johnson and Nixon had to reassign forces supporting the Vietnam war to the Sea of Japan. The author describes the real dangers and costs involved in intelligence collection and makes a case for why North Korea should stay on the United States' radar screen.

Mobley used a rich variety of primary and secondary sources at repositories around the world as well as oral interviews with significant participants. He drew heavily from the United States' Chief of Naval Operations' analysis these incidents. The book is well illustrated with useful tables, maps, photographs, and lists of abbreviations.

Mobley does a superb job of putting these incidents in the larger context of the United States fighting the Vietnam War, the Cold War, especially the Russian-United States relations, and the "wars" between the intelligence gathering agencies. The author is an intelligence analyst and former naval officer, yet, unlike many authors, Mobley does not write for his peers or loose his readers in familiar jargon. He presents a very clear, concise, and engaging analysis that can be understood and enjoyed by specialists, veterans, and the general public a like. This provocative study should be required reading for civilian policymakers and at the military academies, Reserve Officer Training Corps programs and senior enlisted training schools. Even though the Cold War is officially over, there is much to be learned from Mobley's systematic interpretation of these events.

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