

U.S. TO EMPHASIZE DIPLOMATIC STEPS ON LOSS OF PLANE

Administration, While Sure
There Was No Intrusion,
Seeks to Avoid Reprisal

SEARCHERS FIND DEBRIS

All of Crew Is Presumed to
Have Perished — Demand
for Apology Is Weighed

4/17/69

Text of Pentagon statement
will be found on Page 14.

By MAX FRANKEL

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 16 — Diplomatic action rather than military retaliation will be the Nixon Administration's essential response to North Korea's shooting down of a United States reconnaissance plane, officials indicated today.

Though confident — in the words of the Pentagon — that the Navy intelligence aircraft was "at all times" on its mission yesterday "far outside" the 12-mile territorial limit and air space claimed by North Korea, the Administration was said to be in no mood to invite further military conflict.

Instead, officials left the impression that they would mount a diplomatic campaign to caution the North Koreans against further incidents, perhaps including a request for an apology for the apparent loss of the crew of 31. The precise form and forum for this action had not been determined by evening.

The armed forces ordered a variety of alerts and preparations for action in and around Korea, but only against the contingency, it was said, of a further deterioration in the sit-

uation.

U. N. Move Considered

Analyzing the available evidence, officials established to their own satisfaction that the lost plane had been shot down by North Korean aircraft that flew in pursuit from a North Korean base. Some of this evidence was said to be the debris gathered by two Soviet destroyers that joined the vain search for survivors. Military sources reported that the lost plane had not called for help or indicated the approach of hostile fighters.

In the diplomatic area, moves in the United Nations or at the Mixed Armistice Commission at panmunjom, Korea, were under consideration, as well as indirect communication to the North Koreans through the Soviet Union. But none of these was without a drawback, in the Administration's view.

President Nixon, who strongly committed himself during the political campaign to a policy

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that would make a "fourth-rate military power" such as North Korea regain "respect" for the United States, presided over several high-level discussions of the incident today. But his spokesmen added nothing to the Pentagon's factual reports and worked hard to avoid any suggestion of crisis.

After concentrating yesterday on the search for survivors of the Navy EC-121 aircraft, the Government devoted most resources today to a systematic effort to reconstruct the incident. Only diplomatic action received serious consideration and the prevailing mood here was contained in a general statement of international affairs made by Secretary of State William P. Rogers. He said:

"The weak can be rash; the powerful must be more restrained. Complexity in world affairs should teach us the need to act responsibly, to substitute cooperation for coercion and to move from confrontation to negotiation on the issue that divide nations."

Mr. Rogers appeared here

before a meeting of the American Society of Newspaper editors. His call for restraint was in a speech written before this morning's White House meeting on the plane incident. To a question about the incident, he said only that President Nixon planned to comment publicly at his previously scheduled news conference Friday morning.

None of the 1,000 editors pressed the Secretary any further. In fact, they used up only about half of the 20-minute question period.

From this and other evidence, the Administration appeared to have concluded that there was no great popular pressure for strident talk or action against North Korea.

In fact, the dominant concern in the Administration was to devise a diplomatic response that would not advertise its essential impotence. Persuaded that there were no survivors, officials concluded there was nothing significant that they wanted North Korea to do.

They did wish to warn the North Koreans of what they should not do against either United States or South Korean installations, ships, planes or personnel. Washington was in close touch with South Korean authorities to make certain that other possible attacks could be dealt with.

The Administration has also

been in touch with the Soviet Union, but so far only to arrange the remarkably cooperative rescue effort in the Sea of Japan. The Russians may later be used as a channel of communication with North Korea, but only if this would not embarrass them.

The Soviet Union, whose own reconnaissance and intelligence operations also extend around the world, has taken a liberal attitude toward United States missions and even tried last year to help arrange the release of the Pueblo. To the extent that such planes and vessels function as part of a worldwide alert system, they are regarded by the two nuclear powers as defensive and stabilizing rather than provocative.

The mission of the lost plane has not been disclosed officially, although the Defense Department today called it "routine" and similar to 190 other flights in the same general area this year.

In private comments, some officials said that the plane was monitoring North Korean radio messages and radar frequencies and, at other times, perhaps also listening for messages along the Soviet frontier with China.

The Soviet Union, while insisting privately that it knew nothing about the facts of the case, responded readily to appeals for help in the rescue area.

Two of its destroyers—429 of the Kotlin Class and 582 of the Kashin Class—were guided to some floating debris by a Russian - speaking American guide aboard a Navy plane. One destroyer fished out a wheel and ladder from the lost aircraft and laid them on its deck so that a low-flying United States plane could photograph them in detail. The Russians reported no sign of survivors but remained in the search party.

The incident recalled American help extended a year ago in the Norwegian Sea to Soviet ships gathering the wreckage of a plane that crashed after repeatedly buzzing United States ships.

Concern about embarrassing the Soviet Union was said to be the drawback also of a public airing of the incident in the United Nations. The State Department may yet compose a circular letter "informing" the it gathers about the incident, but a formal debate might force the Russians to come to the defense of their Korean allies.

Text of the Defense Department Statement on Plane

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 16—Following is a statement issued today by the Defense Department on the American reconnaissance plane lost yesterday off North Korea. All times mentioned are Eastern standard time.

On Monday, April 14, at approximately 5 P.M., a four-engine propeller-driven Navy EC-121 aircraft took off from its base at Atsugi, Japan, for a reconnaissance mission in the Sea of Japan. The aircraft had 30 Navy personnel and one Marine enlisted man aboard. It was unarmed and its mission was a routine reconnaissance track over international waters.

During the first three months of 1969 there were 190 flights similar in nature flown in this general area. Standing instructions for this kind of mission were that the aircraft was not to approach closer than 40 nautical miles to the coast of North Korea. In this particular instance the aircraft commander was under orders from CINCPACFLT (Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet) to approach no closer than 50 nautical miles to the coast of North Korea.

Communication With Base

During its mission there were communications between the aircraft and its base. From a variety of sources, some of them sensitive, we were able to confirm that at all times during its mission

the aircraft was far outside any claimed territorial air space of North Korea.

All evidence now available to us, including North Korean claims and debris sighting, leads us to believe that the aircraft was shot down by North Korean aircraft. As of this hour regretfully there has been no report of survivors.

Shortly after the Department of Defense received its first report that this reconnaissance aircraft may have been downed over the Sea of Japan by North Korean aircraft, a United States Air Force C-130 search and rescue aircraft departed Tachikawa Air Force Base, Japan.

At 1:41 A.M. a flight of United States Air Force F-106 aircraft departed Osan Air Force Base, Korea, for the area of the incident to perform the mission of combat air support for the search and rescue aircraft. A United States Air Force KC-135 tanker aircraft from Kadena Air Force Base, Okinawa, was also launched to provide air refueling support for the F-106 aircraft.

Other Planes Sent Out

The HC-130 search and rescue aircraft was relieved by a U.S. Navy P-3 from Iwakuni Marine Corps Air Station, Japan, and another HC-130 from Tachikawa Air Force Base, which departed about 7:30 A.M. The rescue aircraft ran search patterns



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Cross marks the area where plane wreckage was found.

in the area and dropped flares during the night. Crew members reported dim lights but there was no confirmation of any survivors. The aircraft were searching in an area approximately 90 to 100 nautical miles southeast of Chongjin, North Korea.

Other aircraft, including HC-97's, C-130's and HU-16's, H-83 helicopters, another P-3 and additional HC-130's from Tachikawa Air Force Base, Japan; Anderson Air Base,

Guam; Clark Air Force Base, the Philippines; Naha Air Base, Okinawa, and Iwakuni Marine Corps Station in Japan joined the search.

The U.S. Navy also dispatched the U.S.S. Dale and the U.S.S. Henry W. Tucker at 8:30 P.M. Tuesday from Sasebo Naval Air Base, Japan, to assist in the search and rescue mission. They are in the search area now.

Soviet Aid Obtained

At noon on Tuesday Secretary of State Rogers talked with Ambassador Dobrynin of the Soviet Union and requested his Government's assistance in search and rescue efforts. Subsequently on Tuesday it was reported from the search area that two Soviet destroyer-type ships were operating in the immediate vicinity of the search area where a U.S. P-3 patrol aircraft had sighted debris in the water. U.S. aircraft assisted in directing the Soviet ship to the scene and in the recovery of some debris.

Reconnaissance missions of this type have been flown for more than 20 years in the Sea of Japan. There was nothing unusual about the mission. In recent years these missions have been approved by high Government authorities in the State and Defense Departments, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the White House. Each of these missions constitutes a lawful use of international air space.

Seoul Is Tense but Avoids Hysteria

By PHILIP SHABECOFF

Special to The New York Times

SEOUL, South Korea, April 16 — The mood of this city following the downing of a United States reconnaissance aircraft off North Korea yesterday is a curious mixture of tension, belligerence and a kind of "we've been through all this before" attitude.

The tension was signaled by the sudden silence of Government and military officials particularly by the United States Embassy and the Eighth Army headquarters. It is the same sort of nervous reticence that followed the capture of the intelligence ship Pueblo by North Korean gunboats on Jan. 23, 1968.

South Korea's press and politicians were not reticent, however, in demanding that the United States respond quickly and sharply to the North Korea attack on the reconnaissance plane.

All of Seoul's six evening

newspapers, which generally reflect Government views, urged the United States to take resolute steps for retaliation.

The Seoul Shinmun, a newspaper closely identified with the South Korean Government, said in an editorial that "the Nixon Administration should take decisive and effective retaliatory measures for the grave incident as soon as possible, otherwise the prestige of the United States will be hurt seriously."

Another newspaper, the Daihan Ilbo, said: "Offense is the best means of self-defense. The peace of northeast Asia can be secured by giving a decisive blow to North Korea."

In general, the downing of the United States Navy plane is regarded in this capital as the first real test of President Nixon's Korean strategy and of his administration's will to defend South Korea. Some officials privately expressed their belief that the President's response to this incident would

be a key to his entire Asian security policy.

But if the reaction of Seoul to the downing of the plane was strong, it was also devoid of the sort of hysteria that followed the Pueblo seizure last year.

After the Pueblo incident and the attempted assassination of President Chung Hee Park two days before that, Seoul was in the grip of war fever. At the time that war with the North Koreans was imminent.

Today, no such alarm or excitement is evident here. The South Korean Government has indicated that it will make use of the incident to press Washington for more military aid, but there is no sense of immediate threat.

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the United Nations command said this afternoon that no decision had been reached yet on the North Korean proposal for a meeting of the Korean Military Armistice Commission in Panmunjom on Friday.

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