

Meeting Set With N. Korea

U.S. Agrees To Panmunjom Talk on Plane

4/15/69
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The United States agreed yesterday to meet North Korea at Panmunjom for the first direct confrontation over the shooting down of a U.S. Navy reconnaissance plane over the Sea of Japan on Tuesday.

The 290th meeting of the Korean Military Armistice Commission—at 11 a.m. Friday, Korean time—was not viewed as an ideal forum for presentation of the American case. It was expected that President Nixon, in his televised news conference at 11:30 this morning, would make a strong statement aimed at persuading world opinion that the EC-121 was shot down by North Korean Migs without provocation.

The State Department planned to distribute the American Panmunjom statement in Washington as soon as it was read there by Air Force Maj. Gen. James B. Knapp, senior member of the U.S. Armistice team.

At the White House yesterday morning, presidential press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler, after two days of noncommittal replies to reporters' inquiries about the incident, declared:

"It's becoming very clear that this unarmed plane on a routine reconnaissance mission was attacked in international airspace. There could have been no mistake on the part of North Korea as to the location of the aircraft. It had

not been in, nor had it intruded upon, the airspace of North Korea.

Early yesterday, the Pentagon reported recovery of two bodies from the 31-man crew of the EC-121.

"We are now gravely concerned about the chances of finding any survivors," the Defense Department said. It withheld names of the two confirmed dead—one officer and one enlisted man—until next of kin were notified.

The bodies were found by the destroyer Tucker "about 17 miles north of the site where the debris was originally discovered," the Pentagon statement said. That site originally was described as 90 to 100 nautical miles southeast of the North Korean port of Chongjin.

In a second statement, issued last night, the Pentagon said: "A five-square-mile area containing aircraft debris is being covered by the search vessels and aircraft at a point approximately 60 miles from the North Korean coast. No survivors have been seen."

See **PLANE, A11, Col. 1**

PLANE, From A1

In a speech before the American Society of Newspaper Editors yesterday, Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird said the EC-121 mission "was essential to our national security."

He said there was "absolutely nothing unusual about this mission"—an electronic intelligence flight out of the U.S. Navy base at Atsugi, Japan.

Such missions, he said, constitute "a lawful use of international airspace." But he declined to go into any further detail "until the President makes his statement."

In his first news conference after taking office as Defense Secretary, Laird had announced that his deputy, David Packard, would review last year's North Korean seizure of the U. S. spy ship Pueblo "to see that incidents like this cannot happen again."

Asked yesterday what had happened to that review, Daniel Z. Henkin, Pentagon press chief, said it was still in the works and had not yet been submitted to Laird.

On Capitol Hill, members of

the Senate Foreign Relations Committee spent two hours questioning Under Secretary of State Elliot L. Richardson in closed session without reaching any consensus on whether flights such as the EC-121's should be continued.

"Nothing was said that would indicate to me that the information obtained would in any way justify taking this kind of risk," Committee Chairman J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark.) told reporters after the session.

But Sen. Karl E. Mundt (R-S.D.) said he thought "most of the Committee agree with the position of the Government" on the need for such flights. Mundt referred to a new reconnaissance plane "coming off the production line this year which will move fast enough to protect themselves."

The Committee members who heard Richardson agreed that the plane clearly was well outside the 12-mile offshore limit claimed by the North Koreans, but that the incident

Mundt and Fulbright said Richardson told them the

President had not yet made up his mind on what the U.S. would do. Other sources said that a possible protest to the United Nations Security Council was still under consideration late yesterday.

Mr. Nixon met yesterday with his national security adviser, Dr. Henry A. Kissinger.

The U.S. decision to attend the Panmunjom meeting was a difficult one, officials acknowledged. It was assumed in Washington that the North Koreans had issued the invitation in order to insult the United States with a propaganda tirade. But it was decided, after almost 48 hours of discussion, that keeping open channels of communication

with North Korea justified the risk of polemics at Panmunjom.

Last Friday's meeting of the armistice commission ran 11 hours and 35 minutes, with Gen. Knapp and North Korea's Maj. Gen. Ri Choon Sun glaring at each other wordlessly for the final 4½ hours as Knapp waited for Ri to propose a recess.

Early yesterday, Pyongyang's

Korean Central News Agency, in a broadcast monitored in Tokyo, quoted North Korean Defense Minister Gen. Choi Hyun as warning that "a war may break out again at any moment, owing to the aggressive maneuvers of the U.S. imperialists."