

# Sato Lauds U.S. Stand, Blames N. Korea

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TOKYO, April 17—Prime Minister Eisaku Sato praised the United States today for responding in "a cool, quiet and serious way" to the North Korean shooting of a Navy reconnaissance plane and said he did not think "this will escalate into a confrontation of serious proportions."

Sato told a plenary session of the lower house of the Japanese Diet that he accepted U.S. assurances that the plane had gone no closer than 40 miles off the North Korean coast. North Korea had "clearly" violated international law by downing the plane, he said in reply to a question from a Socialist deputy.

The Prime Minister made a veiled allusion to published comments emanating from unnamed foreign ministry sources here suggesting that

North Korea had shot down the plane as a response to the recent "Focus Retina"—U.S. paratroop airlift exercises in South Korea.

### Deliberate Tension

North Korea is deliberately seeking to maintain an atmosphere of tension as part of its drive to reunify Korea, Sato declared, "and it is against this background that the EC-121 incident broke out."

Japanese Foreign Minister Kijichi Aichi yesterday had urged the United States to refrain from any military action in retaliation for the plane downing, reliable sources said.

The unequivocal stand by the Prime Minister came in the face of a major effort by opposition political groups to exploit public uneasiness over the shooting in their campaign against U.S. bases in Japan. Leaders of the Socialist Party, the Buddhist Komeito, the Communist Party and other

groups are warning that Japan's security treaty with the United States might involve the country in a needless war.

### Criticism on Bases

Responding to a barrage of questions from deputies representing urban areas where major U.S. bases are located, Sato said in a Diet committee session today that the government would seek to remove

U.S. bases from near large cities and would ask the United States to move hospital and recreation facilities from midtown areas of Tokyo and other urban centers.

Japanese criticism of U.S. bases has become sharply focused on the use of Japan as a jumping-off point for intelligence missions.

The Asahi Shimbun newspaper front-paged a survey today quoting government defense officials as saying that the United States maintains 28 reconnaissance planes at other bases in addition to the 18 RF-101's and the three remaining EC-121's at Atsugi.

### U-2 Remembered

Recalling the 1960 U-2 affair, Mainichi said that residents near Atsugi base did not know of the existence of U-2's at the base until the Soviet Union shot one down focusing attention on worldwide U.S. intelligence activities. Once they found out that there were also U-2's in their own area, Mainichi stated, Atsugi leaders formed a civic committee to press a successful campaign for withdrawal of the planes.

"It is also still remembered," added Mainichi, "that Nikita Khrushchev threatened to strike base installations harboring such aircraft in retaliation. Residents protested that they did not want to be exposed to such danger, and now once again a similar mood of restlessness and uncertainty has been aroused throughout the nation."