

August 25, 1976
Telegram from Washington to Bucharest, SECRET,
Flash, No. 084.527

Citation:

"Telegram from Washington to Bucharest, SECRET, Flash, No. 084.527", August 25, 1976, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Archives of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Matter 220 - Relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 1976. Obtained by Izador Urian and translated for NKIDP by Eliza Gheorghe.
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Summary:

The Embassy of Romania in Washington, D.C., assesses the United States response to the Panmunjeom or "Axe Murder" Incident of August 1976.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Romanian

Contents:

Translation - English

TELEGRAM

Sender: Washington

CLASSIFICATION: SECRET

Flash

Date: 25.08.1976/19:00

No.: 084.527

Regarding: The Incident between the American Military and the North Korean One in the Demilitarized Zone

In political-diplomatic circles in Washington, the following assessments are being made:

1. The US administration avoided to take any measures that could have led to the aggravation of the situation between the two Koreas, on the one hand, and between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on the other hand. It is believed that the reaction of the United States towards the incident in the demilitarized zone was moderate and somehow ambiguous, which generated discontent at the level of the South Korean government and in some American circles hostile to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, especially in the Pentagon.

2. The moderate reaction of the US administration is justified as follows:

□□ President Gerald Ford is not interested in the emergence of a Korean crisis in which the United States become directly involved, during the electoral campaign.

. The United States are interested in promoting the idea of organizing a four-party conference on the Korean matter, [a proposal] recently launched by State Secretary Henry Kissinger, and subsequently, the American administration is therefore interested not to aggravate its relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

. Within the American government there is the belief that a US retaliation against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea could give birth to negative reactions from the People's Republic of China, leading even to a deterioration of Sino-American relations, which President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger do not want.

□□

3. The fact that the American administration viewed as a positive step the message sent by president Kim Il Sung through which he was expressing his regret that the aforementioned incident led to the death of two American military personnel is interpreted as the desire of the US to overcome the difficulties created by this incident and to avoid a military confrontation between the two Koreas.

4. It is believed that the measures taken by the United States along the line of strengthening the US armed forces in South Korea, following the incident, are mainly aimed at demonstrating to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that the American administration is not willing to give up under duress. At the same time, through these measures, the American administration is aiming to show to the South Korean regime that the United States are ready to resort to appropriate military measures to counter potential military attacks against South Korea.

Note: This telegram was written using the information gathered through the talks held by Comrade Gheorghe Ionita with Joe Waggoner, Congressman, R. Petcovic, Minister-Counselor at the Yugoslav Embassy and A.P. Venkateswarn, minister in the

Indian Embassy.

Signed: Nicolae M. Nicolae