

August 26, 1976
**Telegram from Pyongyang to Bucharest, SECRET,
Urgent, No. 067.219**

Citation:

"Telegram from Pyongyang to Bucharest, SECRET, Urgent, No. 067.219", August 26, 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 by Eliza Gheorghe.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/114119>

Summary:

The Embassy of Romania in Pyongyang conveys the remarks of Han Sihae, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, on 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: Pyongyang

CLASSIFICATION: SECRET

Urgent

Date: 26.08.1976/03:00

No.: 067.219

To: Comrade Constantin Oancea, First Direction - Relations

On August 25th, Han Si-hae [Han Si Hae], Deputy Foreign Minister of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, at a meeting with the heads of diplomatic missions from socialist countries, offered a broad overview on the August 18th incident, which took place in the neutral area of Panmunjeom. The entire overview, which detailed all moments of the incident, pointed to the American side as the one to blame for attacking the North Korean sentinel.

Subsequently, Han Si-hae showed that the incident was planned and premeditated by the Americans. Therefore, although the Americans knew that in order to cut the respective tree it is required to get the accord of the North Korean side, being aware of this following a similar attempt on August 6th, on August 18th, the Americans took unilateral action and did not take into account the warning given by the North Korean sentinel. Moreover, close to the spot where the incident took place, on a mound, recording cameras and photo-cameras were installed. Immediately after the incident, the US authorities, amongst whom was President Gerald Ford and Henry Kissinger, released some ultimatum-sounding declarations towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, trying to place all the blame on the North Koreans.

On August 19th, the US Department of Defense ordered American troops in South Korea to assume the state of emergency and, moreover, to transfer military forces and weapons, including the F-111 and F-4 aircraft, to Okinawa and from the United States, the arrival of the aircraft carrier Midway in the waters of South Korea, etc.-all demonstrate that the incident was premeditated by the United States to aggravate the situation in the region and it therefore found the necessary pretext to provoke a war of aggression against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Subsequently, Han Si-hae showed that the provocation of this incident also aimed at a political target, namely to dent the international prestige of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, to undermine the support and the international solidarity towards the position of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at the Conference in Colombo, after having submitted the resolution draft on the Korean matter to the United Nations. On top of these is the request of the Commandment of US Forces in South Korea that the matter of the Panmunjeom incident be discussed by the Security Council.

Out of a desire to provoke a large-scale military conflict, said Han Si-hae, on August 21st the Americans uprooted the tree which represented the trigger of the incident, and demolished the outpost of the North Korean sentinel, while mobilizing a large number of military (300 military personnel; 26 helicopters, 3 B-52 bombers, F-111 bombers. The North Koreans, to avoid a large-scale war, showed patience and restraint regarding retaliation.

In conclusion, the North Korean official, pointing out that the situation thus created is serious, requested that brotherly socialist countries undertake a vast international political campaign, to condemn the American imperialists who are committing acts meant to provoke a new war in Korea; to firmly support the position of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the struggle of the Korean people for the unification of the homeland. He asked that the media in socialist countries publish a declaration of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea government, condemning

the provocative acts committed by the United States in Korea, solidarity and supportive articles towards the position of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as well as the governments of these countries to undertake certain political measures. Moreover, mass organizations in socialist countries [were requested] to organize various manifestations of a similar nature.

Given the general state of tension, the Deputy Foreign Minister said that the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea decided not to receive foreign delegations for a while, and not to send North Korean delegations to other countries. He also asked that in the future, on the occasion of celebrating the national day of other countries, [diplomatic missions] do not organize actions which gather a large number of people.

Signed: Dumitru Popa