

February 25, 1974
**Hungarian Embassy in the DPRK, Telegram, 25
February 1974. Subject: Naval incident between the
DPRK and South Korea.**

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Summary:

The telegram from the Hungarian Embassy in Pyongyang concerns a naval incident at the Northern Limit Line, straining inter-Korean relations.

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In the view of General Smoldas, the head of the Czechoslovak delegation in the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission in Panmunjom, the spy ship incident that occurred on February 15 is more advantageous to Park Chung Hee than to the North. In the recent months, Park Chung Hee's political position has become more unstable. He could expect a rift within the establishment. By launching a massive campaign over the incident and appealing to the emotions [of the South Korean population], Park Chung Hee might be able to achieve a temporary re-stabilization of his rule.

Both sides are interested in keeping the tension alive, but, in the view of Smoldas, the northerners made a great tactical mistake when they got involved in the incident in such a political situation that was more advantageous to them [than to Park Chung Hee]. The general also considers it possible that the incident occurred by accident, in the sense that the commander of the northern ship might have lost self-control, and presumably opened fire at the spy ships disguised as fishing boats at a time when they were still on the high seas.

[no signature]