

April 9, 1971

**Letter, UNCURK Principal Secretary Kuzbari to UN
Chef de Cabinet Narasimhan, 'Report on the Case of
the North Korean Pilot, Major Pak Song Guk'**

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Summary:

After the UN Command's failed attempt to exchange Major Pak with the remaining KAL passengers, determining and handling the repatriation of Major Pak is said to be in UNCURK's hands.

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NATIONS UNIES

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION FOR THE UNIFICATION AND REHABILITATION OF KOREA
(UNCURK)

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CONFIDENTIAL

Seoul, 9 April 1971

Dear Mr. Narasimhan,

... Upon your request in the letter dated 1 April 1971, I have the pleasure to forward herewith a copy of the report on the North Korean pilot, Major Pak Song Guk, whose case has recently been brought to the attention of UNCURK.

The report is based on information provided by the U.N. Command and other sources.

With warmest personal regards,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Zouheir Kuzbari".

Zouheir Kuzbari
Principal SecretaryMr. C.V. Narasimhan
Chef de Cabinet
United Nations
New York

CONFIDENTIAL

Report on the case of the North Korean
Pilot, Major Pak Song Guk

1. On 3 December 1970, the Republic of Korea National Defence Vice Minister, General Yu Kun Chang, announced that a North Korean Air Force officer, identified as Major Pak Song Guk, age 33, defected to the Republic of Korea aboard a MIG-15 jet fighter and landed at 14:27 hours on the same day on a seaside sand beach near Kansong, Kangwon Do, about 30 kms. southeast of the eastern edge of the Demilitarized Zone.
2. At the same time, the Government of the Republic of Korea officially welcomed his "defection" and promised that at a later date the major would appear at a press conference to state the reasons for which he had defected to the south.
3. On 4 December 1970, a meeting took place between the Chief of Staff of the U.N. Command, Lt-General R.M. Smith, and the Republic of Korea Defence Minister, Mr. Jung Hae Hiuk, to discuss this case. Sources close to the U.N. Command stated at that time that, according to its radar network, Major Pak appeared to have lost his way during a training flight and ran out of fuel. He was then forced to land on the East Coast of the Republic of Korea, south of the Military Demarcation Line. The question, therefore, was not related at all to any "defection" and it was the view of the U.N. Command that the Government of the Republic of Korea had made a premature statement regarding this defection, and that Major Pak should be returned to North Korea after discussing this matter through the Military Armistice Commission.
4. During the 309th meeting of the Military Armistice Commission held on 5 December 1970, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea side stated that Major Pak Song Guk had been instructed to make an emergency landing at Tong Chon, north of the Military Demarcation Line, but he had mistakenly landed about 20 kms. south of the Military Demarcation Line near Kansong. The aircraft had taken off from the airbase in Wonsan (North Korea) and was on a high-altitude training flight. Later on it ran out of fuel

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and informed its home base that it was circling around in order to make an emergency landing near Tong Chon (North Korea). The Democratic People's Republic of Korea side then demanded the immediate return of Major Pak and its aircraft. The U.N. Command side stated during the meeting that it had taken note of the statement of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on this incident and, after studying it, would inform the latter of the result of its investigation.

5. At the 385th meeting of the Secretaries of the Military Armistice Commission on 8 December 1970, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had again raised this question and reiterated its view that Major Pak was not a defector, but had astrayed to South Korea during a high-altitude training flight.

6. At the 310th meeting of the Military Armistice Commission on 16 December 1970, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea again demanded the immediate return of the North Korean pilot and its aircraft. The U.N. Command side stated during the meeting that the return of Major Pak should be dealt with on the basis of the long-standing principle of "freedom of choice".

7. Following these public meetings at the Military Armistice Commission, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea called for a private meeting to discuss this issue with the representatives of the U.N. Command. Consequently, a meeting was held at Panmunjom between the senior member of the U.N. Command, Major-General F.M. Rogers, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea senior member, Major-General Han Yong Ok. During this meeting, General Han insisted upon the immediate and unconditional return of Major Pak to North Korea in accordance with the terms and provisions of the Armistice Agreement. The U.N. Command senior member stated that he was ready to cooperate on this issue, but on the understanding that both Major Pak and the 11 South Korean passengers, who have been detained in the North following the hijacking of the Korean Air Lines' YS-11 aircraft, be allowed to appear before representatives of an international body, like the International Committee of the Red Cross, to ascertain any statements they may wish to make regarding their freedom of choice. However,

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the proposal was turned down by the North Korean senior member who asserted that there is no link between the two cases because, in the case of the "hijacked" South Korean Air Lines plane, "it went over" to the north and its crew members and the remaining passengers chose to stay in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Therefore, the Military Armistice Commission has no jurisdiction over the case whereas in the case of Major Pak it is dutybound to return him to North Korea in accordance with the provisions of the Armistice Agreement.

8. Following the rejection of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to accept the U.N. Command's formula to exchange Major Pak with the remaining Korean Air Lines passengers, an informal proposal was made by the U.N. Command to the Chairman of the Committee of UNCURK, Ambassador A.H. Loomes of Australia, whereby Major Pak who has been in the custody of the Government of the Republic of Korea could be turned over to UNCURK in order to verify any statement he would like to make regarding his wish whether to stay in the Republic of Korea or go back to North Korea. The informal proposal was made on the basis that, since the North Korean side had rejected the U.N. Command's earlier proposal for the International Committee of the Red Cross to handle the case, it would only be appropriate that UNCURK, as representative of the United Nations General Assembly, assume such a responsibility.

9. Ambassador Loomes of Australia, who was the Chairman of the Committee of UNCURK in March, informed his colleagues about this informal proposal by the U.N. Command and the prevailing view of the members is that, should such a request falls within the mandate and terms of reference of the Commission, they would have no objection against it. However, they sought instructions from their governments on this issue.

10. In the meantime, sources at the U.N. Command stated that the Representative of the United States to the United Nations, Ambassador Bush, was requested to bring the question of UNCURK's role in this case to the attention of the Secretary-General and to seek the latter's views accordingly.

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11. At the present, the matter seems to be temporarily shelved because the Government of the Republic of Korea has deferred to make any decision with regard to the turning over of Major Pak to UNCURK in order to verify his statement until the presidential election is over by the end of April 1971.

12. It appears that the U.N. Command is anxious to return Major Pak to North Korea, only after ascertaining his real wishes in the presence of representatives of an international body, but since it has no custody on him it is pressing on the Republic of Korea Government to hand him over to UNCURK for the verification of any statement he may wish to make. Should he state that he wishes to return to North Korea, the U.N. Command will take the necessary measures to hand him back immediately.

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