

November 24, 1955

**Letter, Kim Yong-shik of the Korean Mission in Japan
to President Syngman Rhee**

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Summary:

Report on the conversation with the vice foreign minister of Japan regarding fishery issue

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REPUBLIC OF KOREA

KOREAN MISSION IN JAPAN

Tokyo, November 24, 1955

Excellency:

SUBJECT: My Meeting with Japanese Vice Foreign Minister

When the statement concerning the firing upon Japanese fishing boats violating the Peace Line (issued by our Joint Chiefs of Staff on Nov. 17) was reported here last Friday, the Japanese Foreign Office called a special staff conference to discuss on the said statement and also formulate possible 'counter-measures'.

Apparently the said staff meeting finally reached a decision to obtain clarification of our side from me and to protest against our action. Thus, the Foreign Office asked me to visit Vice Minister Suemitsu Kadowaki Friday afternoon, as reported briefly by cable already.

The followings are details of my conversations with the Japanese Vice Foreign Minister, supplementing the gist thereof which was sent by cable last week.

Reading from the draft which was apparently prepared by the said staff meeting, the Vice Foreign Minister said as follows:

1. The statement in question issued by the Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff runs counter to international custom and practices and gives threat to international peace and, therefore, the Japanese Government has a serious concern over it.
2. If the statement reflects the established policy of the Government of the Republic of Korea and is going to be put into practice, the Korean side is responsible for the consequence arising from such firing.

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105

His Excellency
President Syngman Rhee

Handwritten notes in the left margin:
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3. The Japanese Government wants clarification if the said statement represents the policy of the Korean Government and if it will be put into practice.

I reminded the Japanese Vice Foreign Minister that Japan was obligated under Article 9 and 21 of the San Francisco Peace Treaty to conclude a fishery agreement with the Republic of Korea and as a matter of fact, such proposal was made by the Korean side in 1951, to which Japan merely answered: "we are not ready yet."

I went on to say that Japan showed no sincerity to settle the pending problems between the two countries and, on the contrary, encouraged her fishing boats to actively engage in fishing operations inside the Peace Line which was established for sufficient reasons.

I also stated that Korea was still at war against the Communists and was exposed to constant infiltration from the sea under which circumstances continuous invasion into our side of waters by a large-scale fishing fleet by Japan offered us immense threat, therefore, the best way to settle the issue was for Japan to stay away from the said zone. And I firmly requested that the Japanese Government take appropriate measures to prevent further violation of the Peace Line by Japanese fishing vessels. I told Kadowaki that as to the statement issued by the Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff I would reply to him after referring it to the Government.

In the course of bitter arguments, Kadowaki said, "How can Korea fire upon unarmed vessels in the high seas?" I retaliated: "Well, how can Japan permit a vast fleet of fishing boats to engage in fishing inside the Peace Line to the detriment of our fishery resources, in that case?" Thus, our talk on this subject ended in a tense atmosphere.

I then turned on to the subject of the detainee case, asking Kadowaki why the Japanese Government denied the fact that the agreement had been reached on the issue between Justice Minister Hanamura and myself. I added that as far as we were concerned, the case was concluded and we were only waiting for Japan to proceed with the release.

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106



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After enquiring the Justice Ministry for the details of my conversation with Hanamura, Kadowaki stated that his Ministry had not been consulted in this connection and that the final decision must await approval by the Cabinet.

I made it clear to him that the negotiations on this matter had been underway, with full knowledge of the Foreign Ministry, between the Jap Justice Ministry and this office and that my talks with Justice Minister Hanamura finalized such negotiations. I further said that whether such decision required the Cabinet approval or not was not a concern of our side and that as far as our side was concerned, we expect that Japan carry out her commitment. I added that I was under the impression that Japan was again playing duplicity and trying to reverse her commitment.

Since the arrangement in this issue was of reciprocal nature, our side is under no obligation to return Japanese fishermen unless Japan carries out her part of the commitment. It appears certain that the Japanese Foreign Office is opposed to such arrangement and is dissatisfied with Hanamura's action in this regard. In fact, Hanamura was not reappointed when the third Hatoyama Cabinet was inaugurated this week.

Kadowaki finally told me that after necessary consultation with the Ministries concerned, Japan would settle the issue as soon as possible. It is my feeling that if we had not released the full fact on my talks with Hanamura, Japan could have easily retracted her commitment, however, it would not be possible for her to retract her commitment now that the press had already gotten knowledge thereof. In this sense I am confident that Japan will carry out her commitment in the near future, as long as our side sticks to its original stand.

With sentiments of loyalty and esteem, I remain,

Most respectfully,

Syngman Rhee

cc Foreign Minister

107