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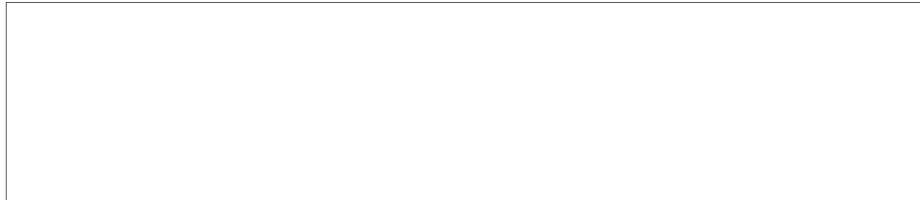
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Korea: Peking's belated comment on the shoot-down of the US aircraft has avoided giving direct support to Pyongyang.

On 21 April Peking broke its week-old silence over the incident with an official news release attacking Moscow's "collusion" with the US following the shutdown. While denouncing the Soviets' assistance and cooperation during the past week as "active service provided to US imperialism," the article cited a "news report" source stating that the US plane "intruded" into North Korean airspace. The dispatch made no mention, however, of who shot down the plane.

Peking's statement contrasts with its announcement last year concerning the seizure of the Pueblo. At that time, China promised "firm support" for Pyongyang's "just stand." Sino - North Korean relations have been poor for several years, and Peking's ambivalent response may reflect a decision to withhold significant propaganda coverage of the incident, at least until the North Koreans make further statements.

In Japan, opposition parties have shifted their attacks from the plane incident itself to the US naval deployment. Socialist, Communist, and other opposition Diet members belabored Foreign Minister Aichi yesterday with demands that the government ask the US to "stop raising tension in the Sea of Japan." Aichi turned aside these demands as well as opposition insistence that any port calls by task force units be made subject to the prior consultations clause of the US-Japan security treaty.

Japanese news media have also reacted strongly against the US naval buildup in the Sea of Japan. One leading newspaper questioned US intentions, and observed that the task force was larger than was needed for protecting reconnaissance aircraft. Assurances from official spokesmen that the escort

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aircraft would not be flown from US bases in Japan
have not assuaged popular fears that Japan might be-
come involved in any US - North Korean clash.

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