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DIRECTORATE OF
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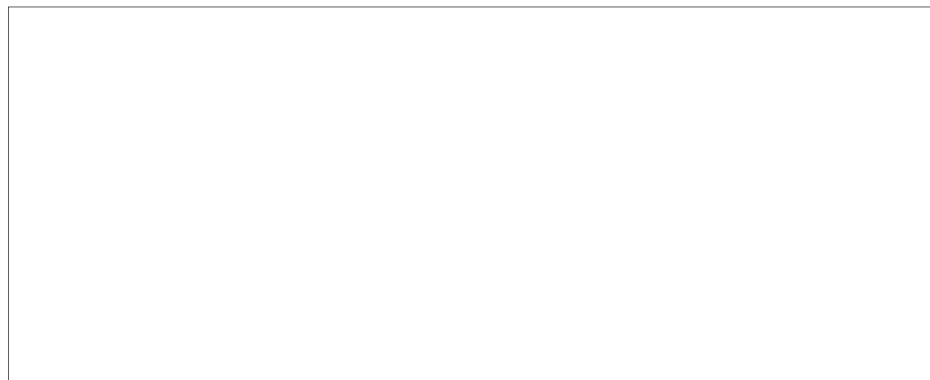
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Korea: Pyongyang has adopted a defensive yet defiant stance in its first formal pronouncement on the EC-121 incident.

The North Koreans clearly have been playing for time in which to assess US intentions. The defensive tone of the government statement on 23 April suggests that the North Korean leaders are well aware of their weak international position and are fully conscious of the hazards in any further military provocations against heavily defended US fleet units and installations.

The North Koreans made a feeble attempt to link the EC-121 with the Pueblo affair, but the weakness of their case is evident in their failure to cite a precise location for the alleged intrusion of the US plane. The omission of details contrasts sharply with the elaborate attempt to "document" the Pueblo's violation of North Korean waters.

The statement attempts to offset the weakness of the North Korean claim by adopting a defiant stance with regard to any future US intrusions. In an obvious attempt to play upon foreign uneasiness regarding US intentions, the statement claims there is no "guarantee" that US flights "will not intrude again." It further seeks to cast doubt on US intentions by warning that the US will exploit any North Korean defensive reaction as a pretext to "commit full-scale attack" which may lead to another "total war" in Korea.

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An incident along the central sector of the Demilitarized Zone on 23 April apparently was not directly related to Pyongyang's response to the resumption of US reconnaissance flights. The North

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Koreans fired on a UN Command guard post, probably in order to cover the retreat of reconnaissance personnel who had stumbled into a nearby minefield two hours earlier.

The North Koreans presumably were attempting to collect information on South Korean and US force deployments since the shutdown on 15 April. Similar probes and encounters along the Demilitarized Zone occurred in the period immediately following the Pueblo seizure. The fire fight was cited by a Pyongyang domestic service broadcast as a serious "new provocation" by the US.

* * * *

South Korea appears to be continuing to make a deliberate effort to keep in step with the US position. [redacted]

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