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## World News:

### North Korea Downs U.S. Helicopter

North Korean gunners July 13 shot down a U.S. Army helicopter that was said to have strayed mistakenly into North Korean airspace near the demilitarized zone that divided the two Koreas. Three crewmen were killed and a fourth was wounded and captured. The North Koreans July 16 returned the three bodies and the surviving crewman. [See 1976 [World News: Korean Truce Village Partitioned](#)]

The incident was first disclosed July 14 by President Carter at a White House meeting with seven senators. "Our primary interest is in having the incident not escalate into a confrontation and also to account for the crew members," Carter said.

Accompanying White House and Defense Department statements said the aircraft had taken off from Pyongyang near Seoul, carrying construction material for a South Korean observation post at Pangnung, at the southeastern edge of the DMZ. The copter was supposed to have picked up a South Korean navigator at Pangnung, but it never landed at its destination, the White House said.

According to the Defense Department, as the copter approached the observation post, "apparently because of a navigational mistake, it flew north of the DMZ." South Korean forces had fired warning shots to alert the Americans that they were intruding into Communist airspace.

Carter told the senators that **the crew landed in North Korea and then took off after inspecting their craft. "After it took off, the North Koreans, who were approaching, apparently shot the helicopter down."**

The following account was provided by the North Korean news agency:

**The helicopter was first forced to land in North Korea after North Korean antiaircraft gunners fired shots to warn the aircraft that it had crossed the demarcation line. The gunners had been "compelled to fire again" when the copter tried to take off and flee. Two of the crewmen "fell and died while attempting to escape when the helicopter was crashing. Another one staying with the aircraft died from the shock and the other survived but was wounded."**

**After the incident, American forces in South Korea had been placed on special alert**, the Defense Department said. The emergency lasted for a few hours, and covered only limited forces.

**The North Koreans July 16 returned the bodies of three crewmen and the lone survivor** after a meeting earlier in the day between U.S. and North Korean negotiators at the Panmunjom truce site on the DMZ. The North Koreans were said to have been unusually cooperative in contrast to their hostile behavior at previous Panmunjom meetings. The North Korean senior delegate, however, said the damaged helicopter would not be returned because it had "violated" his country's airspace.

A White House statement said President Carter welcomed the release of the Americans. But it said he "deplored the loss of life and excessive reaction to an unarmed and inadvertent intrusion."

The dead crewmen were identified as the pilot, Chief Warrant Officer Joseph A. Miles (Washington, Indiana); Sergeant Robert Haynes (Anniston, Alabama), and Sergeant Robert E. Wells (El Paso, Texas). The wounded crewman was Chief Warrant Officer Glen W. Schwanke (Spring Green, Wisconsin).

Since the 1953 truce ending the Korean war, there had been 2,000 shooting incidents in which about 50 Americans and more than 450 South Koreans had been killed. In the worst episode, 31 Americans had died when their reconnaissance plane was shot down in April 1969 over the Sea of Japan. [See 1969 [Korean Communists Down U.S. Aircraft; Plane Attacked Over Sea](#)]