

GOVERNMENT



OF CANADA

## STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 54/59 COMPLAINT OF DETENTION AND IMPRISONMENT OF  
UNITED NATIONS MILITARY PERSONNEL IN VIOLATION  
OF THE KOREAN ARMISTICE AGREEMENT

Statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, and Chairman of the Canadian Delegation to the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. L.B. Pearson, made in a plenary session of the General Assembly on December 8, 1954.

On the eve of Thanksgiving in the United States and at a time when the international climate seemed to be improving, at least in some respects, the Chinese Communist Government in Peking saw fit to announce that they had sentenced to long prison terms eleven United States airmen. These airmen, as has been pointed out, had fallen into Chinese hands almost two years ago when they were serving in the United Nations command in Korea, and their aircraft was attacked while on a United Nations operational mission some fifteen miles south of the Yalu River. They were shot down on January 12, 1953 and for 18 long months the Chinese Communist authorities did not even carry out the elementary humanitarian and international obligation of notifying the International Red Cross or any government that they were even alive. It took the Peking Government a long time to convince itself that they were spies. Military judicial procedure in Communist China has been known to work more speedily on other occasions. There were no doubt special reasons for delay on this occasion.

Eight months after these airmen were shot down, senior military representatives of both sides in Korea were discussing the final arrangements covering the repatriation of prisoners of war on both sides. At the sixteenth meeting of the Military Armistice Commission at Panmunjom on August 31, 1953, the official record makes it quite clear that the Chinese representatives said they would repatriate all personnel that wanted to be repatriated including those who had committed crimes before or after the agreement.

This statement must be read in the context of the Armistice Agreement which had already been concluded between the two sides on July 27, 1953, and which stated categorically that "the release and repatriation of all prisoners of war held in the custody of both sides at the time this Armistice Agreement becomes effective shall be effected in conformity with the following provisions agreed upon by both sides prior to the signing of this Armistice Agreement".