

No. 2521

DEF. DOC. #136

EX 2521

NOTE OF THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT TO THE U. S. GOVERNMENT
DATED DECEMBER 14, 1937.

The Spokesman of the Foreign Office made public today the contents of the Official Note which the Foreign Minister, Mr. Koki Hirota, sent on 14th December to Mr. Joseph C. Grew, the American Ambassador at Tokyo, with respect to the incident of the sinking of the American gunboat Panay and three vessels of the Standard Oil Company, in which he requested Ambassador Grew to convey the sincere apologies of the Japanese Government to the American Government.

TEXT OF THE NOTE

December 14, 1937.

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur:

Regarding the incident of the 12th December in which the United States gunboat Panay and three steamers belonging to the Standard Oil Company were sunk by the bombing of the Japanese naval aircraft on the Yangtze River at a point about twenty-six miles above Nanking, I had the honour, as soon as unofficial information of the incident was brought to my knowledge, to request Your Excellency to transmit to the Government of the United States the apologies of the Japanese Government. From the reports subsequently received from our representatives in China, it has been established that the Japanese naval air force, acting upon information that the Chinese troops fleeing from Nanking were going up the river in steamers, took off to pursue them, and discovered such vessels at the above mentioned point. Owing to poor visibility, however, the aircraft, although they descended to fairly low altitudes, were unable to discern any mark to show that any one of them was an American ship or man-of-war.

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Consequently the United States gunboat Panay and the vessels of the Standard Oil Company, being taken for Chinese vessels carrying fleeing Chinese troops, were bombed and sunk.

While it is clear, in the light of the above circumstances, that the present incident was entirely due to a mistake, the Japanese Government regret most profoundly that it has caused damages to the United States man-of-war and ships and casualties among those on board, and desire to present heroby sincere apologies. The Japanese Government will make indemnification for all the losses and deal appropriately with those responsible for the incident. Furthermore, they have already issued strict orders to the authorities on the spot with a view to preventing the recurrence of a similar incident.

The Japanese Government in the fervent hope that the friendly relations between Japan and the United States will not be affected by this unfortunate affair, have frankly stated as above their sincere attitude, which I beg Your Excellency to make known to your Government.

I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the expression of my highest consideration.

signed: KOKI HIROTA

His Excellency

Mr. Joseph C. Grew,

Ambassador of the United States to Japan.

C E R T I F I C A T E

Statement of Source and Authenticity

I, HAYASHI, KAORU, Chief of the Archive Section, Japanese Foreign Office, hereby certify that the document hereto attached in English consisting of 2 pages and entitled "Note of the Japanese Government to the U.S. Government dated December 14, 1957" is an exact and true copy of an official translation of the Japanese Foreign Office.

Certified at Tokyo

on this 3rd day of December, 1946.

K. HAYASHI
Signature of Official

Witness: Nagaharu ODO