

NORTH KOREAN SOLDIER FLEES TO S. KOREA VIA DMZ

YONHAP (21.12.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2BgpgcD> – A North Korean soldier fled to South Korea through the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), the inter-Korean land border, Thursday, followed by gunfire from both sides, the South's military said.

The “low-ranking” soldier appeared in front of a guard post on the mid-western front at around 8:04 a.m. amid thick fog, according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS).

After the defection, the North's border guards approached the military demarcation line (MDL) apparently in search of the defector, a JCS official told reporters.

In response, the South's troops fired some 20 warning shots at around 9:30 a.m., he said.

Roughly 40 minutes later, there was the sound of several gunshots from the North but no bullets were found to have crossed the border, he added.

In a separate announcement, the Unification Ministry said two North Korean people aboard a small wooden boat defected to the South on Wednesday.

“The Navy found it in waters about 100 kilometers north of Dokdo during a patrol mission,” a ministry official said at a press briefing. “A joint probe into the details of their identities is under way.”

The North Korean men expressed their intent to defect and agreed to abandon the aged and apparently damaged ship, added the official.

Last month, a North Korean soldier made a successful dash to the South

via the truce village of Panmunjom after suffering multiple gunshot wounds fired by the communist nation's border guards.

An official tally of the JCS shows that 15 North Korean people, including four soldiers, have fled to the South this year, versus one soldier and four civilians in 2016.