

Defects as Bullets Fly**N. Korea Newsman Flees
Panmunjom in U.S. Car**

From News Dispatches

SEOUL, March 22—A high North Korean press official jumped into a United Nations Command car occupied by a U.S. Army colonel at Panmunjom Truce Village today and fled to South Korea. Communist guards fired at least 40 shots at the speeding car.

Lee Soo Keun, 44, crouched in the rear seat of Lt. Col. Donald E. Thomson's Army sedan as the car crashed through a wooden barrier hastily lowered by a Communist guard at the truce camp's southern exit.

Thomson, of Chelsea, Iowa, said the barrier struck "the front fender and bounced, smashing the windshield, and then hit the top of the car." Thomson was slightly cut by flying glass.

Lee was identified as vice president of the official North Korean Central News Agency.

A North Korean broadcast later charged Lee had been kidnapped as "part of the aggressive maneuvers of the U.S. imperialists to undermine the Korean armistice agree-



Associated Press

LEE SOO KEUN

... defects

ment and ignite a new war." It demanded Lee's prompt return.

Lee had gone to cover the 242d meeting of the Joint Military Armistice Commission, at which the North Koreans

charged the U.N. Command with armistice violations and the U.N. side charged the Communists with firing on U.S. and South Korean troops in the Demilitarized Zone Monday night.

While the recriminations were taking place in the drab, one-story conference building, South Korean sources said, Lee approached U.N. officials and said he intended to defect.

Thomson, who commands the advance camp on the South Korean order, about a mile from Panmunjom, brought his car to the front of the building when the meeting ended. As about 50 Communist guards and newsmen watched, Lee jumped into the car.

Two North Korean guards tried to force their way into the car, but were shaken off as it sped away. They then opened fire and were joined by other guards, as the car raced downhill toward South Korea.

At the advance camp, Lee

transferred to a helicopter, in company with U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Richard G. Ciccollella, senior U.N. Command delegate to the truce talks. Gen. Ciccollella took Lee to the U.S. Army Hospital in Seoul, 33 miles

away, for a medical examination. Lee was then released to South Korean security officials.

Lee is the third North Korean to defect through Panmunjom. In 1959, Lee Dong

Joon, a reporter for the Soviet Communist Party newspaper Pravda, defected after covering an armistice commission meeting. Later, a Communist guard killed a fellow soldier at Panmunjom and defected.