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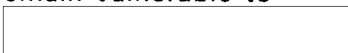
South Korea: Terrorist Threats to the Seoul Olympics



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Summary

P'yongyang's public threats against the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics and its sabotage of a South Korean airliner last November clearly point to North Korea as the greatest challenge to the security of the Games. Several other groups have the capability and perhaps the motivation to stage a terrorist incident in Seoul--including the Japanese Red Army, Palestinian groups, and terrorist organizations with ties to Iran. Seoul is taking extensive precautions to prevent violence and agent infiltrations, but international air links to South Korea remain vulnerable to sabotage or to serving as transportation for terrorists.



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The Obvious Threat: North Korea

We believe that violence perpetrated by North Korea is the highest security threat to the Games. In the mid-1960s, the North executed a violent campaign against the South, and in the 1970s and early 1980s P'yongyang sponsored assassination attempts against South Korean leaders (see appendix). In 1984, North Korea began focusing on a broad-gauged effort to open dialogue with the South to appear eager to alter the dangerous military standoff on the peninsula. Even so, P'yongyang continued to publicly warn of the dangers to the Olympics if its efforts to arrange a cohosting deal with Seoul failed. [redacted]

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In November 1987 the North moved from rhetoric to action when it sabotaged a Korea Air Lines jet over the Andaman Sea near Burma. A confession by the captured saboteur left no doubt of P'yongyang's responsibility and identified disrupting the Olympics as its motivation. More recently, P'yongyang issued public--though veiled--warnings to its allies not to participate in the Games, citing the potential threat to foreigners, which heightens our concern that North Korea may attempt additional violence. [redacted]

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If the North chooses this course, it will have several options for disrupting the Games by fostering an impression that Seoul is unsafe. More airliner sabotage would heighten concern over the safety of travel to Seoul. The North could infiltrate agents into South Korea by sea--or use its existing agent network--to carry out terrorist incidents around Seoul. Or it could raise tension by creating incidents along the Demilitarized Zone. The North might also facilitate attacks against Olympic targets by third-country terrorist groups. [redacted]

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The Threat from Third-Country Groups

Several international terrorist groups, either bankrolled by the North or working on their own, have the capabilities and perhaps the motivation to disrupt the Summer Olympics. [redacted]

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Japanese Red Army. Perhaps the most worrisome is the Japanese Red Army (JRA), which has become increasingly active and apparently has targeted the Games. When Japanese police arrested the second-ranking member of the group--Osamu Maruoka--in Japan in November 1987, he was carrying documents discussing plans to disrupt the Olympics and airline tickets to South Korea. The documents have given us some clues to the extent of the JRA's capability to conduct terrorism worldwide. The papers indicate that JRA members were involved, either as active participants or in a support role, in mortar and car bombing attacks against the US and Japanese Embassies in Jakarta in 1986 and the US and British Embassies in Rome in 1987. (The Anti-Imperialist International Brigades (AIIB), which may be a JRA offshoot or cover name, claimed credit for the attacks.) [redacted]

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted] Maruoka may have been planning a trip to Seoul to lay the groundwork for a terrorist support network. His arrest does not necessarily reduce the threat. The JRA has issued a communique stating it will retaliate for his seizure. In the past, the group has carried out attacks specifically aimed at pressuring governments to release its imprisoned members. We estimate the JRA has 20 to 40 hardcore members, including some non-Japanese. In addition to ties with to AIB, it has contacts with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. [Redacted]

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Palestinian Groups. Palestinian groups, which continue to use terrorism to press their case against Israel, also could pose a threat to the Olympics, as in Munich in 1972. Attacks by Palestinians outside Israel and the occupied territories have dropped over the past year, but, when they have occurred, a growing number have been in Asia rather than "traditional" West European venues. [Redacted]

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We judge the most serious Palestinian threat to the Olympics would be from the Abu Nidal organization. From its inception, the group has demonstrated an ability to operate beyond the Middle East, having staged armed attacks and bombings in Karachi, Islamabad, New Delhi, and Bombay. US, Israeli, and moderate Arab interests probably would be the targets of any operations by Abu Nidal. [Redacted]

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Iranian-Connected Groups. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] terrorist groups supported by Tehran could use the Games to conduct a bombing or hostage-taking operation against US, Iraqi, and Saudi or other moderate Arab targets. Iranian-backed terrorist groups also could act as surrogates for North Korea, although we view this as a long shot. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] Iran has contacts with the North Koreans and assets in South Korea it could use in terrorist operations. Tehran has an embassy in Seoul, and [Redacted]

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[Redacted] several hundred Iranians transit the South weekly. Most apparently come to shop, but these travelers will be difficult to watch when Seoul is inundated with foreign dignitaries and visitors for the Games. [Redacted]

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Seoul's Security Response

The South Koreans are taking extensive precautions to prevent violence during the Olympics. The Agency for National Security Planning (NSP)--South Korea's major intelligence organization--is coordinating security and counterterrorism measures with the Korean National Police, the South Korean military, and foreign police and security services. Military and police counterterrorism units, explosive ordnance disposal teams, and bomb-detection dogs will be positioned in advance at Olympic-related locations throughout South Korea. Security will be tight at all hotels and Olympic sites. Seoul will augment military forces to counter any aggressive North Korean action along the DMZ or South Korea's coastlines. [Redacted]

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South Korea also is focusing on preventing terrorist infiltrations via international airlines. Security in and around Kimpo International Airport in Seoul--where nearly all scheduled foreign flights to South Korea arrive--is excellent. Disembarking passengers are subject to extensive immigration and Customs controls. Airport officials have

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tightened checks on passenger belongings, and ordinary items such as toothpaste and cosmetics are removed and examined. Sniffer dogs are used to locate explosives. This comprehensive program should make it difficult for terrorist groups to smuggle hardware into South Korea before or during the Olympics. 

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Olympic officials are also attempting to sensitize Korea Air Lines and other carriers with regular flights to Seoul to the need for thorough screening at points of departure and at stopovers. Nonetheless, we believe this will be the weak link in the security effort. Although airports have machines capable of detecting weapons made of metal, devices that can discover explosives made of other materials are still largely in the development stage, and many airports do not have such sophisticated equipment, particularly those in the Third World. Consequently, detection of explosive devices often depends upon time-consuming and personally intrusive hand searches of passengers and their baggage. Many commercial airlines are reluctant to use these measures because they slow flight departures. In our view, security will be weakest on Japan Air Lines commuter flights between Japan and South Korea and commercial flights originating in or transiting Third World countries. 

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The increased numbers of commercial charter flights as the Olympics approach could also offer a particularly good opportunity for terrorists. These flights provide less security than regularly scheduled flights, with charters sometimes loading passengers and baggage at locations outside an airport's main security network. 

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APPENDIX

During the mid-1960s, North Korea carried out a campaign of violence against the South. North Korean guerrilla forces, up to company-size in strength, deliberately sought to engage US and South Korean military forces inside the South. The attacks were well planned, swiftly executed, and designed to produce heavy casualties. The campaign of terrorism came to a head in January 1968, when about 30 North Korean commandos made a bold but unsuccessful attempt to storm the Blue House--the presidential mansion in Seoul. In late 1968, a 120-man guerrilla force landed on the east coast of South Korea some 160 kilometers south of the DMZ. They tried to establish control over several villages and attempted to organize a popularly supported insurgency. The effort failed, and the entire force was eliminated as it attempted to return overland to North Korea. [REDACTED]

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P'yongyang ended this policy of intimidation by the early 1970s, apparently because it had worked against the North's interests--far from stirring up domestic unrest, the North's violence had a unifying effect on the South Korean population. Less blatant forms of violence did not end, however, as the North has since made several attempts to assassinate South Korean presidents:

- At a cemetery near Seoul in 1970, a North Korean agent was killed when a bomb he was planting detonated accidentally. The detonation occurred shortly before President Park Chung Hee was scheduled to arrive for a ceremony.
- In 1974, another North Korean agent fired a pistol at President Park during an appearance at the National Theater in Seoul. The assassin's shots missed the president, but killed his wife.
- In 1981, North Korean agents offered two Canadian criminals large sums of money to assassinate President Chun Doo Hwan when he made an official visit to the Philippines. The Canadians, however, absconded with the North Korean cash advances. Some of the meetings with North Korean agents took place in Vienna.
- P'yongyang failed again in October 1983, when its agents tried to kill President Chun during a visit to Rangoon. Eighteen other senior South Korean officials died when the agents mistakenly triggered their radio-detonated bomb before Chun's arrival at a ceremony site. [REDACTED]

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