

(b) (3)

~~SECRET~~

SNIE 14.2-69  
30 January 1969



SPECIAL  
NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE  
NUMBER 14.2-69

# Confrontation in Korea

Submitted by

DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

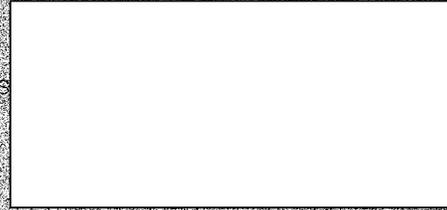
Concurred in by the

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

As indicated overleaf

30 January 1969

APPROVED FOR RELEASE  
DATE: JUN 2005



Authenticated:

  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, USIB

~~SECRET~~

Nº

336



~~SECRET~~

*The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate:*

The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State and Defense, and the NSA.

**Concurring:**

Dr. R. J. Smith, for the Deputy Director, Central Intelligence

Mr. Thomas L. Hughes, the Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State

Lt. Gen. Joseph F. Carroll, the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency

Lt. Gen. Marshall S. Carter, the Director, National Security Agency

**Abstaining:**

Dr. Charles H. Reichardt, for the Assistant General Manager, Atomic Energy Commission and Mr. William O. Cregar, for the Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.

~~WARNING~~

This material contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States within the meaning of the espionage laws, Title 18, USC, Secs. 793 and 794, the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited.

~~GROUP 1  
Excluded from automatic  
downgrading and  
declassification~~

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
CONCLUSIONS .....	1
DISCUSSION .....	3
I. INTRODUCTION .....	3
II. CONVENTIONAL WAR .....	3
III. KIM IL-SONG AND "PEOPLES' WAR" .....	5
A. Motives and Intentions .....	5
B. North Korean Capabilities for Rear-Area Operations .....	7
C. South Korean Capabilities .....	9
IV. THE OUTLOOK .....	10
ANNEX: OPPOSING FORCES IN KOREA .....	13

~~SECRET~~



~~SECRET~~

## CONFRONTATION IN KOREA

### CONCLUSIONS

A. We have reviewed the evidence on North Korea's intentions and capabilities vis-a-vis South Korea. We conclude that, under present circumstances, Pyongyang does not intend to invade South Korea; nor do we believe that Pyongyang is deliberately trying to provoke the Republic of Korea (ROK) (and/or the US) into a resumption of major hostilities. We do believe, however, that North Korean Premier Kim Il-song is committed to a strategy of developing a "revolutionary struggle" in the South and that his campaign will continue to include harassment of ROK and US forces in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and armed infiltration of rear areas.

B. In our view, North Korea's prospects for establishing guerrilla bases in South Korea or developing significant political support among the populace are quite poor, at least over the next two years or so. Communist violence will, however, continue to be a costly distraction for the ROK Government and a potential cause of public dissatisfaction with the Pak administration.

C. In pursuing its campaign of violence, Pyongyang seems willing to live with a situation that presents a continuing danger of retaliatory attack by ROK forces. Kim Il-song is apparently confident that he can control the situation, stopping short of actions certain to provoke a major reaction. If ROK reactions to North Korean provocations continue to be almost entirely defensive, Pyongyang might be tempted at some point to go well beyond incidents along the DMZ and occasional rear-area operations. We cannot rule out such efforts, but whether they take place would depend on how the North Koreans judged the probable reactions of the ROK and the US.

D. Thus, the danger over the next year or two is not that war will arise from a deliberate decision of one side or the other, but that it

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

might result from miscalculation—for example, in the process of probing for weaknesses and testing ROK and US resolve, North Korea may overplay its hand and lead the South Koreans to retaliate heavily.

E. We believe that, even in these circumstances, North Korea would wish to avoid full-scale war. In a crisis, decisions in Pyongyang—as in Seoul—would be affected, perhaps decisively, by the attitudes of major allies. In our view, given no major change in Soviet or Chinese attitudes, both Moscow and Peking would probably urge North Korea to avoid a full-scale war. Yet despite these considerations, Kim Il-song's manner of thought and action is such that the North Korean response would be difficult to predict with confidence. A critical element in both North and South Korean thinking during any crisis would be the US posture, or what they believe it to be. But we believe that North Korea would feel that the initiation of major hostilities against the South would bring about US military response, particularly while US ground forces are stationed in South Korea.

F. We cannot say exactly how a Vietnamese settlement would affect Kim's current course. It would depend primarily on how he interpreted the outcome in terms of US willingness to take a firm stand against further North Korean provocations. Thus, he could become somewhat more aggressive or more cautious. Given his strong public commitment to the promotion of revolution in the South, however, it is unlikely that he will abandon his objectives, even though he may modify his tactics.

~~SECRET~~

## DISCUSSION

### I. INTRODUCTION

1. North Korea's persistent campaign to undermine the security of South Korea entered its current phase in October 1966, when armed harassment of Republic of Korea (ROK) and US forces in the area of Korea's Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) increased sharply. In May 1967, the North Koreans began to infiltrate small armed reconnaissance teams into rear areas of South Korea by sea; and in September 1967, the first acts of behind-the-lines sabotage were committed. In late January 1968, seizure of the *Pueblo* and the abortive North Korean raid on the presidential mansion in Seoul provided evidence of Pyongyang's willingness to run high risks in carrying out its new policy. During the spring and early summer of 1968, however, the North Koreans lowered the pitch of their campaign of violence: DMZ actions were fewer and generally less aggressive than in the corresponding months of 1967; there was no evidence of Communist-directed sabotage; and there were no known rear-area guerrilla infiltrations (though a few agent landings on the pattern of earlier years were detected). The decline in violence probably reflected a decision to keep tensions under control following the *Pueblo* and Blue House provocations.

2. This period of relative quiescence ended in September 1968, when North Korean incursions in the DMZ area became unusually numerous. The DMZ activity, perhaps designed as a distraction, subsided in early November just after an estimated 120 heavily-armed North Koreans, in several groups, were landed at points along South Korea's eastern coast near Ulchin, more than 100 miles below the DMZ. So far, ROK military and police forces have killed 107 and captured seven of these infiltrators. ROK losses, including civilians, total 63 killed and 60 wounded. Immediately after landing, one group of Communists succeeded in holding a "village propaganda meeting" of a type common in South-east Asia. Since then, the various infiltration groups have apparently been pre-occupied with survival under winter conditions while attempting to escape northward by way of the sparsely-populated mountain ranges which parallel the coast in this region. Their path has been marked, however, by numerous instances of deliberate terrorism and an evident determination not to be taken alive. North Korean propaganda has portrayed this activity as part of an indigenous revolutionary movement which is rapidly gaining active support among South Korean workers and peasants.

### II. CONVENTIONAL WAR

3. These developments raise serious questions about North Korea's intentions. It is possible, for example, that the various incidents are a prelude to the re-opening of major hostilities by the Communists. The landing of guerrilla teams and the attendant publicity could be part of a plan to claim the existence of a revolutionary uprising in the South which would then appeal to North Korea

~~SECRET~~

for assistance. It is also conceivable that North Korea hopes to provoke a major retaliation by the ROK Government, so that the war which ensued would appear "defensive" and the 1961 treaties with China and the USSR could be invoked.

4. There is insufficient intelligence to rule out totally such hypotheses, but we continue to believe that the North Korean regime does not now want another war. This judgment rests in large measure on our view of how leaders in Pyongyang would assess their prospects of winning it. Despite the heavy emphasis in recent years on modernizing its armed forces, on training reserves and increasing local militia, and on the protection of key military and industrial installations against air attacks, Pyongyang almost certainly would not expect to crush its opponents and overrun the South as it very nearly did in the summer of 1950. The ROK Army has become an effective force and is substantially larger than the North Korean Army; it is capable of a successful defense of the country against North Korean forces given US logistical and air support.<sup>1</sup> Pyongyang almost certainly believes that the presence of US forces in South Korea, quite aside from US public commitments, would virtually assure US participation in any new war. And such participation, in Pyongyang's view, would almost certainly mean serious damage to the North itself.

5. The North Koreans almost certainly calculate that they could not achieve a rapid and decisive victory over ROK/US forces without heavy and continuing outside logistical support, and probably manpower, from the USSR, China, or both. Indeed, without advance assurance of such support, they would not count on being able to sustain offensive operations in the South beyond a month or two. Under present conditions, it is extremely doubtful that Pyongyang would receive any such assurance in advance from either Communist power. Since neither Moscow nor Peking exerts control over the North Korean regime, there would be little disposition for either to offer open-ended commitments carrying the danger of direct involvement in war with the US. It is unlikely, too, that Pyongyang's leaders now expect to receive advance assurances of unstinted military support from Moscow or Peking. North Korean Premier Kim Il-song has said as much, privately and publicly, in recent years. Indeed, Kim has chosen to build his reputation as a global Communist strategist on the theme that, in view of the timidity demonstrated by the Russians and Chinese in recent years, only small countries—e.g., North Korea, North Vietnam, and Cuba—are able effectively to challenge and roll back US power and influence.

6. For similar reasons, we think it unlikely that Pyongyang is bent on provoking the ROK into a resumption of major hostilities (in hope of activating its defense treaties with the USSR and China). Moscow and Peking would almost certainly respond with materiel and perhaps with men to North Korean requests for assistance against an invading force. On the other hand, we think it unlikely that either of them would provide support on a scale necessary for a "counter-attack" designed to overrun the South.

<sup>1</sup> See ANNEX: Opposing Forces in Korea.

~~SECRET~~

### III. KIM IL-SONG AND "PEOPLES' WAR"

#### A. Motives and Intentions

7. Kim Il-song has always held a militant viewpoint on the global Communist struggle against the US. After the Korean War, however, he was cautious and avoided any direct challenge to US and ROK forces; propaganda and political subversion were his principal tactics against a succession of anti-Communist governments in South Korea. By 1965, however, Kim began to move toward a more adventurist policy. We cannot say with certainty what factors weighed most heavily in the timing of this decision. Kim may have felt that the North was losing ground in the unification struggle to an increasingly stable and progressive South. It is possible that Kim was concerned with the growing apathy among his own people and hoped, by stimulating a war psychology, to stir them to greater economic efforts, particularly in the realm of heavy industry. Developments in Vietnam probably also played a role. Kim may have believed that a higher level of defense readiness and a more belligerent posture would not only provide aid and comfort to Hanoi, but might help deter US military action elsewhere in East Asia. With the US becoming more heavily engaged in Vietnam, he may have felt that the risk of US and ROK retaliation to a more aggressive campaign against the South had been reduced.

8. Whatever the original motivation, Kim's growing commitment to revolution in South Korea has given the North Korean program of violence a momentum of its own. This is not to say that he could not curtail or even abandon his now heavily publicized campaign if it seemed advisable. Kim appears to be fully in command in Pyongyang and, over the past two years, has easily purged high party and government officials who opposed his more aggressive policies and promoted those, including a number of professional soldiers, who supported the stress on defense spending and militarization of the populace.

9. More critical perhaps than Kim's public commitment in any estimate of the situation is his own state of mind. Though he has been North Korea's leader for more than 20 years, the 56-year-old Kim is among the least known of high Communist personages in the world. But in his performance of recent years, qualified observers have perceived an extreme and growing egoism, expressed in a craving for self-assertion and the limelight, and a proclivity toward wishful thinking. This is the sort of man who tends to brush aside or explain away any setbacks and to persist in a chosen course of action—though freely improvising his tactics—so long as he receives personal gratification from the effort.

10. What then is Kim Il-song's present strategy vis-a-vis the South? Is there a firm plan with a fixed schedule? Short of all-out war, how far is he prepared to go?

11. Although the North Korean regime is committed to the strategy of developing a "revolutionary struggle" in South Korea, it is not in our view tied to any firm timetable nor to any particular sequence of moves. The Communists probably believe that the development of an effective movement with a political apparatus

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

and a guerrilla capability will require many years. Their theoreticians emphasize that the basis for revolutionary action in the South is still inadequate and that considerable time and energy will be required to develop one; the phrase most often used is "within our generation." Kim Il-song, however, has apparently decided not to wait for objective conditions to develop spontaneously, but to utilize violence and intimidation in the belief that this will somehow serve to create a revolutionary potential in the South.

12. Kim seems to have decided to try a variety of tactics, exploiting whatever breaks may occur. He may hope that one of his infiltration operations will uncover a pocket of exploitable dissension in some rural area. In his view, a few successful and flamboyant sabotage, assassination, or terrorist missions might cause serious civil unrest, severe political bickering, and upset the economic stability upon which the Pak government is building its acceptance. He may also calculate that his new tactics, coupled with the continuing Communist effort to build a covert political apparatus in the South, will generate substantial civil unrest there. In any case, he seeks to exploit the political maneuvering likely to precede the 1971 South Korean elections—maneuvering that will intensify if Pak seeks to amend the ROK Constitution in order to obtain a third term as president.

13. Meanwhile, of course, the tactics of violence may be intended to serve other, less visionary, purposes: to embarrass and distract the ROK Government; to undermine the confidence of the ROK populace in its leaders; to impair the presently favorable climate for economic growth and foreign investment; to encourage Communist agents in the South; and to gain support for propaganda claims of serious political unrest there. Pyongyang also hopes to exacerbate South Korea's relations with the US. In addition, Communist operations in the DMZ area provide useful intelligence on ROK and US defenses, while rear-area activities gain information on ROK capabilities and vulnerabilities in the countryside.

14. Thus, while Pyongyang's longer range strategy may be heavily influenced by the degree of success achieved in its various operations, in the short term, tactics of violence are likely to go on whether operations are successful or not. Pyongyang seems willing to live with a situation which involves substantial casualties and presents a continuing danger of retaliatory attack. Kim is apparently confident that he can control the situation, stopping short of actions certain to provoke a full-scale ROK reaction. He almost certainly expects the US to act as a restraint on the South Koreans. And he probably relies on his treaties with Moscow and Peking to deter the US.

15. Thus, the danger over the next year or two is not that war will arise from a deliberate decision of one side or the other, but that it might result from miscalculation—for example, in the process of probing for weaknesses and testing ROK and US resolve, North Korea may overplay its hand and lead President Pak to order major retaliation. The events of 1968, particularly those of January, demonstrated that fear of reprisal will not necessarily deter Kim and his aides

~~SECRET~~

from pursuing a highly provocative policy. Nor have the North Koreans been deterred by their losses along the DMZ and the virtual obliteration of their rear-area infiltration groups during 1967 and 1968.

#### **B. North Korean Capabilities for Rear-Area Operations**

16. To carry out activities in rear areas of the South, Pyongyang has in recent years revamped and greatly expanded its various agent and guerrilla training organizations. The Korean Labor Party's Liaison Department was once Pyongyang's primary agency for intelligence and subversive operations in South Korea. In 1965 and 1966, however, guerrilla operations were added to its responsibilities, and its members were involved in some of the armed infiltrations of the countryside in 1967. The Liaison Department continues to handle infiltration of small agent teams for recruiting and other political tasks, but perhaps because its armed reconnaissance teams have had little success, the primary responsibility for such operations has been shifted to the North Korean Army's Reconnaissance Bureau (RB).

17. Interrogation of captured North Korean personnel has revealed details concerning the organization and recent activities of the RB. Originally, its most active elements were the Foot Reconnaissance Stations which dispatched small agent teams for military reconnaissance in the DMZ area. Since 1965, this component has expanded in size and has added harassment, ambush, sabotage, and terrorism to its former role. Each of the three North Korean Army Groups along the DMZ has a Foot Reconnaissance Station. The most active one is attached to the North Korean 2nd Army Group area along the western end of the DMZ; it may have as many as 3,000 men.

18. The largest component of the RB is the 17th Reconnaissance Brigade, an elite unit activated in 1961 and trained for airborne infiltration and guerrilla warfare in the event of war. The brigade has a modest airlift capability provided by some 30-50 AN-2 Colt light transports, each of which can drop about 10 men. The current size of the brigade is difficult to determine because it continuously funnels trainees to units more actively involved in infiltration operations.

19. The 283rd Army Unit of the RB was activated in mid-1965. At first, it competed with the Party's Liaison Department in rear-area agent recruitment and similar missions, but soon focused on training for armed infiltration. In early 1967, apparently because of its very limited success in the clandestine political field, leaders of this unit were dismissed and the bulk of its personnel and responsibilities were absorbed by an offshoot, the 124th Army Unit. This unit carried out the Blue House operation and also the recent terrorist activities in the eastern highlands, and is currently the principal arm of the North Korean guerrilla effort. The 124th has been organized into platoon-sized units for training in long-range penetration and guerrilla warfare. Its overall strength may run as high as 5,000. Units of the 124th are reportedly training for attacks on major ROK and US military installations, including surface-to-air missile sites. One report indicates intensive training for an attack on Seoul's Kimp'o Airfield.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

20. The number of North Korean personnel available for armed infiltration is expanding rapidly; there is an increasing number of training bases; and regular military units, particularly the Reconnaissance Brigade, are being tapped for experienced personnel. Casualties so far have been small relative to the manpower available for further operations and, at least in the short term, are unlikely to become a limiting factor. In psychological terms too, personnel losses are unlikely to have any short-term impact on the availability of infiltrators. Compartmentalization of the guerrilla effort and restrictions on the dissemination of information help protect the morale of guerrilla trainees who, in any case, appear to be a heavily indoctrinated, highly motivated, and select group.

21. The more important consideration for the North Koreans at this time is the delivery of these men to the target areas. The physical environment in South Korea provides a number of advantages for guerrilla operations. One of the most important is the 1,500-mile-long coastline with its thousands of islands, many uninhabited, and a myriad of fishing boats at most seasons. This makes it almost impossible entirely to prevent infiltration of guerrilla units by sea. North Korea appears to be focusing on this avenue of approach to the South; unlike Vietnam, there is no easily exploitable overland route to "peoples' war" in the Korean peninsula. North Korea has high-speed craft for this purpose and facilities for producing more; it has given priority to acquiring, chiefly from Japan, high-performance marine engines and sophisticated electronic gear, particularly ship radars.

22. Once landed, however, the North Korean infiltrators have relatively few advantages. They are apparently expected to live off the country; we have seen no evidence of attempts to resupply them from North Korea. Though rugged terrain predominates throughout South Korea, vegetation in these highlands is generally sparse even in the warmer months; in the winter, of course, concealment is even more difficult and snow and freezing temperatures make even survival a problem, as in the case of the recent Ulchin infiltrators. Such factors contributed to the failure of Communist guerrilla movements in South Korea in 1949 and 1951-1952.

23. The Communists have other, more basic handicaps. They may be able to count on assistance from their established agents in the South and in some cases from relatives.<sup>2</sup> But the overwhelming majority of South Koreans are unlikely to assist them in any way. In the adult population, there is widespread dislike of the Kim Il-song regime based on bitter memories of its brutal conduct in the South during the Korean War. In addition, there are broad anti-Communist laws rigidly enforced; and liberal cash rewards are given to those who assist the authorities. Whatever the motive, over the past two years, South Koreans seem generally to have informed the authorities following contacts with Com-

---

<sup>2</sup> But captured infiltrators have revealed that the 124th Army Unit does *not* accept recruits with relatives in South Korea. This limited piece of evidence points toward a tactic of terrorism rather than political persuasion, at least for this unit.

~~SECRET~~

munist infiltrators. The Communists are trying to meet this problem with terror tactics, but this may only further inflame sentiment against them. On the other hand, if South Koreans, particularly those in isolated hamlets, become uncertain of their government's ability to protect them, tendencies toward passive cooperation with the guerrillas could develop. At this time, the prevailing mood is one of strong support for the government in its counterinfiltration activities. Indeed, as a result of their response to North Korean intrusions of the past two years, the South Koreans may be much better equipped psychologically to meet the Communist threat than in 1965 or 1966.

### C. South Korean Capabilities

24. The ROK is certainly better prepared militarily to respond to Pyongyang's new tactics. Over the past 12-18 months, a comprehensive counterinfiltration system has been developed and implemented. At the national level, there is a Cabinet-level coordinating committee chaired by the Prime Minister. The Director of the Joint Staff (Ministry of National Defense) acts as Secretary of the committee and directs a Special Operations Center for counterinfiltration activities which has been set up within the Joint Staff mechanism. At the provincial level, there are coordinating committees with similarly broad representation acting under guidance from Seoul. Military operations in the countryside are coordinated by nine Provincial and six Special Military Sector Defense Commands.

25. A key element of the new system is the strengthening of DMZ defenses, including the training of quick-reaction forces, the use of sophisticated surveillance equipment and explosive devices, the construction of barrier fences, and a defoliation program. To improve coastal surveillance and defense, ROK Navy and Coast Police patrols have been increased, offshore air patrols commenced, and a coast-watch system, with shore-based radars and manned observation posts, has been vastly expanded. The ROK Army has organized 20 special Counterinfiltration Battalions, and the National Police have trained and deployed 37 Combat Police Companies. A Homeland Reserve Force, drawn primarily from an army reserve in excess of 2 million men, has been established as a militia force to assist army and police units in guarding installations and apprehending rear-area infiltrators. Homeland Reserve personnel, however, are issued arms only when training or on duty.

26. The performance of ROK (and US) security forces against North Korean probes in the DMZ area during 1968 has been good. Fewer Communists appear to have penetrated beyond the southern limit of the zone than was the case in 1967.<sup>3</sup> North Korean casualties have increased considerably in proportion to those of ROK and US forces. In 1967, both sides had approximately equal numbers known to be killed in action in the DMZ area—89 North Korean to 91 US/ROK troops; in 1968, the corresponding figures were 163 and 95.

<sup>3</sup> The DMZ is two kilometers wide on either side of the demarcation line between North and South Korea.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

27. It is more difficult to evaluate ROK performance in the rear areas. Virtually all the armed infiltrators of 1967 and 1968 were ultimately killed or captured. But operations against them revealed problems and deficiencies. Dramatized by the Ulchin episode is the failure to detect and intercept the infiltration craft. Another problem is the high expenditure of manpower by the ROKs relative to the infiltrators; at the peak of the Ulchin operations, as many as 15,000 regular troops and substantially greater numbers of militia and police may have been involved. In the "command and control" of this varied force, there has been much confusion as to lines of jurisdiction, particularly when the action involved crossing district, province, or army boundaries. A plan is under consideration to establish a "unified command" of all security forces on the eastern coast.

28. Another major problem, one common to almost all recent counterinsurgency strategies in Asia, is the inability of the lightly-armed and inexperienced Combat Police Companies to cope with North Korean units comprised of selected military personnel armed with modern automatic weapons. Police units were supposed to bear the major burden of any initial operation against armed infiltrators, but now there are plans to place certain particularly vulnerable areas, such as the eastern highlands, under the permanent operational control of the ROK Army. The ROK Government is also thinking of dissolving the Combat Police entirely or, at a minimum, restricting its operations to the least strategic areas of the country. The performance of the Homeland Reserve, on the other hand, appears to have pleased Seoul. Of the 25,000 or more mustered along the eastern coast this fall, however, only about one-half had rifles; the government is moving to secure more and better arms and equipment for the reservists, as well as pay and rations for them when on duty.

29. Talk of "civic action" as a response to North Korean infiltrations has also begun in South Korea. Because of the apparent lack of adequate protection for remote villages and farmsteads, the government intends to stress the building of access roads and the relocation of selected homes to "defensive hamlets," though not on any massive scale. The many new internal security measures being implemented could cause resentment among the populace in the affected areas, but, so far at least, authorities have been extraordinarily sensitive to local feelings.

#### IV. THE OUTLOOK

30. *DMZ Operations.* North Korea will probably continue its campaign of military harassment in the DMZ area, though the timing, frequency, and boldness of its actions will continue to be difficult to predict. It is already apparent that the winter season can no longer be viewed as a slack period along the frontier. The North Koreans have avoided major sabotage and attacks against military installations in the DMZ area for over a year, possibly because ROK and US countermeasures have been effective, but such attacks may be undertaken soon again. In any event, the Communists can maintain tensions along the DMZ at little cost in lives and materiel, and will probably continue to do so whether

~~SECRET~~

individual operations are successful or not. So long as incidents are well-publicized, they will continue to serve many of Kim Il-song's basic purposes.

31. *Guerrilla Operations.* The North Koreans will probably also continue their paramilitary and terrorist activities in the South. In the short term, they doubtless hope that the net effect of such activities, whatever the casualties, will be sufficient to generate serious political unrest, cause economic losses, and sharpen differences between the ROK Government and its US ally. For the longer pull, North Korea will be seeking to establish revolutionary base areas from which it can expand its political proselytizing and guerrilla warfare capabilities. The recent Ulchin landings were in part a further test of the feasibility of doing so. We believe that over the next year or two Pyongyang will continue and may increase its efforts to develop a viable guerrilla presence in South Korea. In our view, however, its prospects in this regard are quite poor. It is highly unlikely that the North Koreans can succeed in establishing and maintaining base areas under their control on any significant scale. And even if isolated bases could be created, the North Koreans would be highly unlikely to gain any significant degree of local support.

32. *Contingencies.* Especially if ROK reactions to its provocations continue to be almost entirely defensive, Pyongyang might be tempted at some point to go well beyond incidents along the DMZ and occasional guerrilla operations. It might, for example, stage a raid across the line with fairly large forces, carry out a commando raid on a coastal installation, or a major guerrilla attack on a sizable town or industrial plant in the interior. Another contingency, suggested by the January 1968 attempt on Pak's life, is that the North Koreans may attempt another assassination or some other such dramatic incident, though they have not done so during the last year. In view of the highly emotional reaction in South Korea at the time of the Blue House affair, the North Koreans may consider such incidents too risky for the psychological or propaganda gains. We cannot rule out any such actions in the future, though whether they take place would depend primarily on the North Korean judgment as to the probable reactions of the ROK and the US.

33. In the event that Pyongyang did challenge the ROK in some such fashion, the ROK may respond. We cannot say precisely what the flashpoint would be, but the ROK policy of restraint is not likely to be maintained indefinitely in the face of continued provocations, especially in view of their cumulative effect. ROK troops have already made several unpublicized forays into the northern side of the DMZ in response to particularly obnoxious North Korean activities.

34. Overall, however, ROK leaders have shown themselves willing to listen to counsels of restraint in the face of Communist provocations and they have focused on defensive measures. The populace has been similarly restrained, at least until the recent terrorism in the eastern highlands. Nor does Seoul appear eager to seize upon some Communist move as a pretext for a new Korean War. If and when South Korea does respond, therefore, it is likely that it would do

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

so in a manner roughly proportionate to the provocation, hoping that Pyongyang would accept the rebuke without raising the stakes. Although we believe that Pyongyang would also wish to avoid actions certain to provoke a full-scale war, the dangers of miscalculation by either side are apparent and substantial.

35. In a crisis of this sort, decisions in Pyongyang—as in Seoul—would be affected, perhaps decisively, by the attitudes of major allies. In the case of South Korea, a great deal would depend on the nature of the dialogue between the US and the ROK, and the degree to which the latter felt it could rely upon the US. In our view, given no major change in Soviet or Chinese attitudes, both Moscow and Peking would probably urge North Korea to avoid a full-scale war.

36. A critical element in North Korean thinking during any such crisis situation—and indeed it has been so throughout the current campaign against the South—will be the US posture or what Pyongyang believes it to be. Kim Il-song, if we are correct in our earlier interpretation of his state of mind, could conclude at some point that the US was constrained by a variety of factors from involving itself again in an Asian “peoples’ war” and this could make him increasingly adventurous. But Kim is likely to assume that major hostilities against the South would bring a direct US military response, particularly while US ground forces are stationed in South Korea.

37. We cannot say exactly how a Vietnamese settlement would affect Kim’s current course. It would depend primarily on how he interpreted the outcome in terms of US willingness to take a firm stand against further North Korean provocations. Thus, he could become somewhat more aggressive or more cautious. Given his strong public commitment to the promotion of revolution in the South, however, it is unlikely that he will abandon his objectives, even though he may modify his tactics.

38. *The Longer Term.* Even if war does not come again to South Korea, a tense and risky situation is likely to persist there for several years, at least so long as Kim Il-song’s hard-line views hold sway in the North. Under such conditions, perhaps the most critical factor will be the South Korean people, particularly their ability to withstand Communist psychological pressures and to maintain confidence in their leaders. While the postwar record in the South is mixed in this regard, we believe that in recent years the nation and its people have achieved a degree of viability sufficient to make South Korea an unpromising subject for “peoples’ war.” South Korea has strengths never enjoyed by South Vietnam, and the appeal of North Korea is substantially less than Hanoi was able to exert in South Vietnam in the early stages of its effort there.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

## ANNEX

### OPPOSING FORCES IN KOREA

#### *Ground Forces*

1. *North Korea.* Our knowledge of North Korean Army strength is derived indirectly, largely from Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) calculations; it is estimated at about 350,000 men. This force is organized into 19 infantry divisions, each with a strength of about 9,200 men; and five infantry brigades, each of which is a division equivalent by virtue of its personnel strength of 8,300 men. The North Korean force has a larger proportion of its men in combat units than do ROK forces, and North Korean infantry units have a higher proportion of automatic weapons than ROK Army units. The AK-47 assault rifle, domestically produced and in general use, is superior to any hand weapon in general use by the ROK Army in South Korea. North Korea has a larger inventory of field and antiaircraft artillery than does South Korea, but ROK and US capabilities for ammunition resupply are probably better. ROK and US forces have about 900 tanks; the North Koreans may have some 400 tanks and some 400 assault guns. We do not know to what extent, if any, North Korean heavy ground equipment has been replaced or augmented by the Soviets since 1965. With the exception of the AK-47 and some multiple-tube rocket launchers, Soviet-designed weapons of World War II continue to predominate.

2. *South Korea.* The ROK Army has some 535,000 men, and the ROK Marine Force numbers about 32,000. The army has 19 infantry divisions, each numbering some 13,000 men, and two armored brigades of about 1,800 men each. The marines have one division and two provisional brigades; (one of the marine brigades is in South Vietnam). Of the total ground force—army and marines—some 50,000 are in Vietnam. The main weaknesses of the ROK Army are a shortage of heavy equipment and technical specialists, and a lack of experience in logistical operations. In addition, war reserves are at very austere levels. There are two US divisions in Korea, but both are under strength because of austere manning levels; moreover, their logistic posture in equipment, maintenance, and combat service support is below par.

3. Any comparison of ground combat power between North and South is difficult. On balance, however, we estimate that neither side has the ability to conduct a sustained campaign or achieve a decisive advantage without substantial and continuing outside logistical support.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

### *Air Forces*

4. *North Korea.* The North Korean Air Force has been greatly reinforced by the Soviets since 1965. So far as is known, all of the increase has been in Mig-21s (of which an estimated 50 were supplied during 1968); and such defensive weapons as surface-to-air missiles (SA-2s), radars, and possibly some antiaircraft artillery. In addition, the North Koreans have been emphasizing the construction of caves and revetments at major military airfields, and some alternate airfields and landing strips are being prepared. The North Koreans now have close to 500 jet fighters—more than 75 Mig-21s, 7 Mig-19s, and the remainder, Mig-15/Mig-17s. This force is organized into four fighter divisions, each with three regiments. The number of SA-2 sites, only two in mid-1965 and 14 at the beginning of 1968, is now about 35 of which about one-half are occupied. North Korea's IL-28 jet light bombers give it an offensive capability unmatched by the ROK Air Force; the original force of 80 may have been diminished somewhat by attrition. The North Korean Air Force could provide a strong defense against air attack, it could mount a surprise attack against South Korea, but it could not long sustain effective operations without outside support.

5. *South Korea.* The ROKs have about 215 jet fighter aircraft, predominantly F-86s, but 73 F-5 supersonic fighters have been introduced in recent years. The ROK Air Force has been heavily reinforced since the *Pueblo* incident by the temporary basing of some 150 US Air Force supersonic jet fighters in South Korea. ROK and US Air Forces presently in South Korea could not long sustain defensive or offensive operations without substantial support and further reinforcement. These forces are vulnerable to air attacks: airfields lack the revetments, bombproof support facilities, and antiaircraft defenses commonly found in the North.

### *Naval Forces*

6. *North Korea.* The North Korean Navy has been greatly strengthened in recent years. Its main offensive capability lies in antishipping operations by its 4 "W"-class submarines and 11-12 guided missile boats ("Osas" and "Komars") with associated Styx missiles. Of these, four "Osas" were provided by the USSR in late 1968. The submarines and "Komars" were delivered during the 1963-1967 period. These units, based on North Korea's eastern coast, give it a tactical advantage over South Korean naval forces. North Korea also has 2 or 3 patrol escorts, 12 subchasers, about 30 motor gunboats, some 25-30 motor torpedo boats (including 3 "Shershens" provided since 1965 by the USSR), and about 25 minesweepers; there are at least 2 cruise missile coastal defense complexes. In keeping with its emphasis on hardening key installations, Pyongyang is building extensive underground facilities at certain of its patrol boat and submarine bases. The North Koreans have also recently accelerated domestic production of small naval craft—fast patrol boats and torpedo boats—and are seeking to import suitable marine engines and electronic gear from Japan.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

7. *South Korea.* The ROK Navy is primarily a coastal patrol force. Its strength includes 6 destroyer types, 6 amphibious transports (small), and 12 mine warfare, 20 patrol, and 19 amphibious ships.

***Prospects***

8. Major changes in North Korea's conventional military capabilities over the next year or two are largely dependent upon Soviet policy. The USSR will probably continue to provide major defensive weapon systems, but not the types and quantities of equipment which would encourage the North Koreans to launch offensive operations against the South. Pyongyang's domestic military output, already respectable, will continue to increase in scope and quantity, probably branching into such items as artillery ammunition and less sophisticated electronic equipment. But its ground forces are unlikely to expand significantly. They will remain basically dependent on outside aid for the conduct of sustained, large-scale combat.

~~SECRET~~



# CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

## DISSEMINATION NOTICE

1. This document was disseminated by the Central Intelligence Agency. This copy is for the information and use of the recipient and of persons under his jurisdiction on a need-to-know basis. Additional essential dissemination may be authorized by the following officials within their respective departments:

- a. Director of Intelligence and Research, for the Department of State
- b. Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, for the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
- c. Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army, for the Department of the Army
- d. Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Intelligence), for the Department of the Navy
- e. Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, for the Department of the Air Force
- f. Director of Intelligence, AEC, for the Atomic Energy Commission
- g. Assistant Director, FBI, for the Federal Bureau of Investigation
- h. Director of NSA, for the National Security Agency
- i. Director of Central Reference Service, CIA, for any other Department or Agency

2. This document may be retained, or destroyed by burning in accordance with applicable security regulations, or returned to the Central Intelligence Agency by arrangement with the Central Reference Service, CIA.

3. When this document is disseminated overseas, the overseas recipients may retain it for a period not in excess of one year. At the end of this period, the document should either be destroyed, returned to the forwarding agency, or permission should be requested of the forwarding agency to retain it in accordance with IAC-D-69/2, 22 June 1953.

4. The title of this document when used separately from the text should be classified: ~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

### DISTRIBUTION:

White House  
National Security Council  
Department of State  
Department of Defense  
Atomic Energy Commission  
Federal Bureau of Investigation