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KIM IL SUNG (NORTH KOREA), ANOTHER SADDAM HUSSEIN (IRAQ)?:
COUNTERING AND DETERRING AGGRESSION IN THE NORTHERN PACIFIC

by

Robert K. Crumplar

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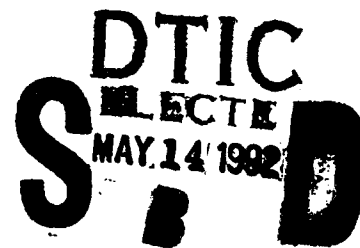
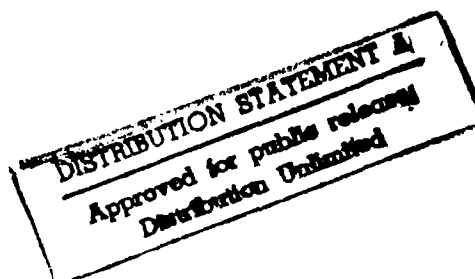
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ABSTRACT

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The most threatening of future regional contingencies are those exacerbated by the "Hostile Proliferator", the radical and unstable regime equipped with weapons of mass destruction.

The regime of Kim Il Sung armed with nuclear weapons has grave and adverse implications for the security interests of the United States and her allies in the Northern Pacific; prospects of war with nuclear overtones, nuclear blackmail and regional destabilization leading to global proliferation. Therefore, U.S. operational forces must be considered for employment in a wide spectrum to counter the threat posed by the next "Hostile Proliferator", ranging from pre-emptive military strikes to supporting sustainment of dialogue and negotiation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The sweeping changes occurring in the world today, including the collapse of communism, the demise of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact has precipitated a major shift in the National Military Strategy of the United States. Events in the last several years have dictated a "... shift in strategic focus from containment of a Soviet threat to the demands of regional contingencies."¹ Employment of U.S. military forces must now be considered in the context of regional issues and conflicts that affect U.S. national security and global stability.

What has propelled the issue of regional contingencies to the forefront is the proliferation and accessibility of weapons of mass destruction to unstable/radical regimes with the willingness to use them (a "Hostile Proliferator"²). While additional nations are thought to be developing or capable of fielding nuclear weapons, this alone does not make them a "Hostile Proliferator." The key point is the willingness and indeed the intent to use the weapons of mass destruction.

Resurfacing regional conflicts and hatreds no longer bound by the restraints of the Cold War coupled with increasing competition for hard currency by economically pressed countries will continue to fuel the thirst for nuclear weapons. The Director of Naval Intelligence, RADM Brooks, echoed this fear during his testimony to Congress during the spring of 1991, "... We have discussed various proliferation problems for some time but it seems that, starting with Iraq, the 1990's will be the decade when we really have to face these threats... sophisticated weapons and delivery systems are being transferred to and/or developed by Third World states that are proving increasingly able to use them effectively."³

The Issue

Scarcely has Operation Desert Storm wound down then another potential "Hostile Proliferator" appears on the horizon. Western intelligence sources are now estimating that the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (D.P.R.K.) under the leadership of Kim Il Sung may be able to produce nuclear weapons in as little as a year. This paper will address (1) Is the D.P.R.K. the next "Hostile Proliferator" threatening international stability and U.S. interests? and (2) If so, how may U.S. forces be employed to counter and deter this threat?

Scope and Limitations

The paper will specifically focus on why the D.P.R.K. is developing nuclear weapons and the implications of such on U.S. interests and those of our allies. In addition, the paper will review several options regarding the operational deployment

of U.S. forces to counter and deter potential North Korean aggression.

The paper will not address the long term prospects for peace or democratic reunification of the Korean peninsula. Nor will specific details of military options or force structure requirements be presented. All sources for this paper will be of an unclassified nature only.

Organization

The paper consists of four additional chapters, including a conclusion and recommendations. The following chapter will present the regime of Kim Il Sung as the next "Hostile Proliferator." The inherent nature of the regime combined with current economic, political, and security issues lead to the conclusion that the D.P.R.K. is developing nuclear with severe implications on U.S. security interests and global/regional stability.

The third chapter will present an alternative view, that the regime of Kim Il Sung is not inherently hostile to the interests of the United States and its allies in the region. This argument maintains that current U.S. policy merely perpetuates the cold war on the Korean Peninsula, and ignores significant signals demonstrating the sincere desire for reconciliation and dialogue from the D.P.R.K.

Operational employment of military forces to counter the nuclear threat of the D.P.R.K. and maintaining deterrence on the

peninsula against aggression will then be presented. These options range from the active removal of the D.P.R.K. nuclear threat to deterring North Korean aggression while simultaneously pursuing military alternatives in reducing tensions along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

The conclusion will summarize the potential threat posed by a nuclear capable D.P.R.K. lead by Kim Il Sung and present several recommendations to counter the threat in the near future.

CHAPTER II

THE NEXT HOSTILE PROLIFERATOR

The Regime of Kim Il Sung

Through four decades of rule, Kim Il Sung has developed a despotic, totalitarian regime through the development of a personal ideology into state dogma (CHUCH'E), highlighted by the most intense personality cult in modern history, a xenophobic fear of foreign influence and a total domination and control of all aspects of society.

The essence of Kim Il Sung's political thought is CHUCH'E, which can be loosely translated into a doctrine of self-reliance. A more formal definition states that CHUCH'E "... approaches revolution and construction by oneself in a self-reliant manner...Trusting in one's strength, relying on one's revolutionary spirit of self-reliance and rejecting dependence on others (author's emphasis)."⁴ At the heart of this theory is the idea of the supreme leader or SURYONG (Kim Il Sung) to guide the nation in the pursuit of CHUCH'E. The SURYONG has given impetus to the development of the most comprehensive personality cult in the world today. Through the idea of the SURYONG, Kim Il Sung has been able to develop a society that obeys his every whim and serves to glorify his every endeavor. In a manner chillingly similar to Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, "Kim's self-esteem is satiated only by unbounded loyalty and absolute submission throughout his regime. His cult of personality eclipses leaders

such as Stalin and Mao in scope and magnitude."⁵ Kim Il Sung has made himself all things to all Koreans.

Like other totalitarian governments, the regime of Kim Il Sung follows the fundamentals for controlling his people; mass participation and elitist control. The society of North Korea is regimented by and mobilized for the desires of the regime. Furthermore, Kim's regime's ability to isolate and control every aspect of North Korean society is seemingly without end. The isolation of the population (all radios are built only to receive the government station), the restriction on mobility (inability to possess bicycles) and the ban on dog ownership in the capital demonstrates the irrational extent to which the regime will go to to hermetically seal off and control its people.⁶

Kim Il Sung has been able to develop a highly centralized power base, with himself at its pinnacle. Like Saddam Hussein, he has insulated himself with an elite inner circle of family and trusted advisers who are expected to carry out orders of the leadership without the slightest deviation. The recent appointment Kim's son as head the armed forces is a clear example of the "great leader's" total domination of the state.

Problems of the D.P.R.K.

The regime of Kim Il Sung today faces a myriad of staggering problems. These include; (1) near economic collapse, (2) diplomatic isolation and (3) declining national security.

The centralized North Korean economy, saddled with an external debt of \$5 billion, plagued by an inefficient, unproductive workforce, upper level mismanagement, and hard currency problems, is nearly bankrupt. Heavily dependent on trade with the former Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact nations (70% of D.P.R.K. trade in 1988 was with socialist countries), the collapse of communism will undoubtedly cause further repercussions on the already teetering North Korean economy. The Soviet policy initiated in early 1991, which requires payment in hard currency for badly needed oil supplies, deals an additional setback to the North Korean economy. Sources estimate as much as 50% of North Korean industry may be consequently idled due to energy shortages, lack of spare parts and raw material shortages. News on the agriculture front has been equally bleak, with numerous predictions for a disastrous harvest. Lack of true economic reform makes the prospect of reversing this downward spiral unlikely.⁷

North Korea prospects are no better on the diplomatic front. The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union has caused the departure of many of Kim Il Sung's most valued allies from the global stage. The demise of the Soviet Union has left a major void in the "patron" security umbrella for the D.P.R.K. The advent of non-communist governments in Germany, Bulgaria and Romania has further isolated North Korea internationally. The People's Republic of China has also taken steps to distance itself from North Korea, and has expanded

economic ties with the Republic of Korea (R.O.K.), much to the chagrin of the regime in Pyongyang.⁸

Perhaps most ominously, the regime of Kim Il Sung perceives a threat posed by increasing military insecurity. The D.P.R.K. has lost its superpower counterbalance to the United States. Kim Il Sung may also fear the prospect that the D.P.R.K. has been bypassed militarily due to the growing economic and military might of the R.O.K. The fear of large South Korean conventional forces combined with the dichotomy in the performance of U.S. and Soviet (i.e., R.O.K. and D.P.R.K.) weapons during the recent Gulf War adds to the dangerous perception "...that failure to keep with the South militarily would make the North vulnerable to its most deadly rival - an unthinkable prospect for Kim Il Sung."⁹ Finally, overshadowing fears of military vulnerability is the brooding issue of Kim Il Sung's son (Kim Jong Il) as heir to the throne. The question of whether a smooth transition of power will occur is one that today remains unanswered.

The myriad of problems only exacerbates the inherent irrationality and xenophobia of the North Korean regime. It is a regime that perceives itself to be on the brink, under siege, threatened and vulnerable.

Nuclear Solution for the D.P.R.K.

The North Korean nuclear program was initiated in the 1960's through the acquisition of a small Soviet research reactor. In the early 1980's intelligence sources detected a

large 30 megawatt "research reactor" at Yongbyon, 50 miles north of the capital. Additionally, two other facilities, one of which would provide the key function of extracting plutonium from the spent natural uranium fuel are currently under construction.¹⁰

Several key factors indicate that the D.P.R.K. nuclear program is strongly oriented toward development of nuclear weapons. The 30 megawatt size is too large for civilian uses (normally ranged from one to five megawatts). Additionally, the simple design of the North Korean reactor negates the requirement for importation of heavy water or highly enriched uranium, thus avoiding the suspicions or oversight of international monitoring agencies. Most important, the lack of a credible use for plutonium in the civilian sector supports the analysis that the program is for weapons development.¹¹ The D.P.R.K. has also further refined their long range missile program. Evidence now shows that they have an upgraded Scud missile (the RODONG 1) which provides them the capability of hitting targets in excess of 500 miles (Japan). Of great concern is the fact that the highly inaccurate nature of this weapon, in the view of one analyst, "makes little sense unless tipped with a warhead of mass destruction."¹²

The physical evidence notwithstanding, there are ample reasons for Kim Il Sung's development of nuclear weapons. These weapons provide a potential solution to many of Kim's dilemmas. The relative low cost of nuclear weapons development, compared with the burden of supporting a large conventional military

force, provides Kim with a possible solution to his economic dilemma. Possession of nuclear weapons would alleviate the requirement for alliances, thus negating North Korean's current diplomatic isolation.¹³

The greatest incentives for obtaining nuclear weapons are the additional security that they provide Kim's regime. The perceived leverage of nuclear weapons is very enticing, providing an offset against the nuclear umbrella of the United States and the highly capable South Korean conventional forces. Kim's perception of the Gulf War may have been that Saddam's fatal mistake was taking on the coalition without nuclear weapons at his disposal. Finally, the development of nuclear weapons will further legitimize Kim Jong Il as heir to the throne, preempting any possible rumblings from the military by enhancing the capabilities of the armed forces.¹⁴

The Quintessential Renegade Nuclear State

The implications of a nuclear armed North Korea are frightening. One has to look no further than the historical use of international terrorism and violence by Kim Il Sung in the pursuit of his objectives. Kim has followed the entire spectrum, from full scale conventional conflict to terrorist infiltration, assassination and sabotage in the pursuit of reunification and liberation of the "fatherland". In the 1980's the regime orchestrated, (1) the Rangoon bombing of 9 Oct 1983 against R.O.K. cabinet members, (2) the bombing of KAL Flight 858 in

1987, and (3) numerous infiltration excursions including attempted sabotage of the Wolsung nuclear plant in 1987. Kim Il Sung's past record of violence and terror can only be enhanced by the possession of nuclear weapons, to become as one analyst put it, "...in light of North Korea's past behavior, the quintessential nuclear renegade state."¹⁵

The worst case scenario is the forcible reunification of the Korean Peninsula by a nuclear armed D.P.R.K. The temptation for North Korea to "use 'em or lose'em" in a preemptive strike against the South is great, negating the ability of the R.O.K. to develop their own counterbalance.¹⁶ Even if the weapons were not actually used, the threat of their employment could negate U.S. forces (conventional or nuclear) and bring a conventional conflict to a favorable conclusion for the D.P.R.K. The threat of nuclear blackmail by the D.P.R.K. against the R.O.K. leading to forcible reunification on Kim's terms is also a possible consequence of a nuclear armed North Korea.

The mere presence of North Korean nuclear weapons will serve to severely destabilize the Korean peninsula. Perceived lack of U.S. commitment in the future may lead to nuclear proliferation amongst other nations in the region, specifically the R.O.K. and Japan.¹⁷ South Korea attempted join the "nuclear club" in the mid-1970's. They presumably have the technical knowledge to do so today, should they perceive the necessity. Meanwhile, Japanese feelings of "acute insecurity" about North Korea's effort to build nuclear weapons are leading them to expand and

improve their own intelligence capabilities, moving away from reliance solely on U.S. data and estimates.¹⁸ Concerns over American commitment in the region aggravated by a nuclear capable may even lead to the heretofore unthinkable prospect of a nuclear armed Japan. The domino effect of nuclear proliferation would send shock waves throughout the Pacific.

North Korean is well known as an exporter of military hardware and technical assistance. Significantly, it has been exporting Scud missiles since 1987.¹⁹ The combination of the ability to develop several weapons annually (forecasted for the plants in Yongbyon)²⁰, with the need for hard currency add up to the explosive possibility of Kim's regime exporting weapons of mass destruction. Thus, a nuclear armed North Korea may lead to global as well as regional nuclear proliferation and instability.

CHAPTER III

NORTH KOREA: AN ALTERNATE VIEW

While it is recognized the D.P.R.K. is not a "Jeffersonian" democracy but a closed society run by a dictatorial government, there is not universal agreement that the regime inherently threatens the national interests of the United States. Indeed, it may be argued that current U.S. policy is unnecessarily perpetuating the cold war on the Korean Peninsula. In this view, the U.S. has consistently failed to recognize valid security fears of the D.P.R.K. Fears of a militarily well-equipped R.O.K. backed by the nuclear umbrella of the U.S. has given Kim no choice but to maintain a vigilant and strong military posture. In addition, the aggressive posturing of U.S. military forces provides Kim a convenient "imminent" threat, validating his oppressive control of society and massive conventional forces.²¹ Despite the "aggressive" American policies, the D.P.R.K. is sending signals for desired cooperation and dialogue. The ongoing talks between the two Koreas (specifically the "historic" agreements of December 13th and 31st 1991), and initiation of dialogue between the U.S. and the D.P.R.K. signify a "new climate" in Pyongyang.²²

Furthermore, it can be argued that development of nuclear weapons are not in the interests of the D.P.R.K. and in fact run contrary to the regime's stated policy and objectives. Why would the D.P.R.K. sign the Treaty for Non-Proliferation of Nuclear

Weapons (NPT) if they were developing nuclear weapons? In July of 1991, Kim Il Sung stated, "The republic has no nuclear weapons and is not producing them. It is our consistent stand to make the Korean Peninsula a non-nuclear zone."²³ North Korean weapons would make a mockery of this statement and the December 31st non-nuclear agreement reached between the two Koreas. A nuclear armed North Korea would also effectively end prospects for a negotiated reunification of the peninsula, one of the most often stated objectives of the Pyongyang regime.²⁴

However, a closer look reveals flaws in all of these arguments.

To assume that the North Korean military is for merely defensive purposes ignores their military doctrine and current force deployment. D.P.R.K. doctrine calls for a "blitzkrieg" type of warfare, overwhelming the R.O.K. forces before U.S. conventional or nuclear forces can intervene. The geographical proximity of Seoul and her twelve million inhabitants to the DMZ (30 kilometers) highlights the vulnerability of the R.O.K. to such a warfare doctrine. The current deployment of 65% of North Korean ground troops along the DMZ with the rapid ability to vastly expand their current force structure (an estimated 500,000 reserves can be mobilized in twelve hours) clearly demonstrates their aggressive intent.²⁵

Is the North Korean willingness to engage in dialogue a sincere effort to lessen tensions on the peninsula or merely a smoke screen to allow the regime to entice western investment and

simultaneously camouflage the continued development of nuclear weapons? The West misinterpreted events and Iraqi intent in the Gulf, with near disastrous consequences; are we likewise misinterpreting events in Pyongyang? The D.P.R.K. has agreed to the principles of inspections of nuclear facilities with the R.O.K. and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Yet the ongoing talks between the two Koreas have so far led to no specific or concrete agreement on disarmament or nuclear facilities inspections, merely vague assurances that inspections will occur of objects chosen and agreed to by each side. Lack of specific agreement in these areas has led Lee Dong Bok, a South Korean delegate to the talks, to classify them as "...little more than expression of principles".²⁶ Likewise, the vagueness of the D.P.R.K.'s assurances regarding agreement to the safeguards of the IAEA leads U.S. analysts to be highly skeptical of their intentions regarding nuclear facility inspections. As they have done in the past, the North Koreans may put up yet another obstacle to the inspections, further delaying any attempt to nullify their weapons program.²⁷

Furthermore, bilateral talks with the U.S. held in June of 1991 revealed an disappointing lack of change in the attitude and philosophy of North Korean officials. One American observer labeled the D.P.R.K. participation in the conference as the "Dialogue of the Deaf", stating that the xenophobia and paranoia of the North Koreans only heightened the fear and mistrust between the two nations.²⁸ Nothing appears to have modified the

policies and outlook of the regime of Kim Il Sung, despite the political upheaval occurring throughout the world.

To assume that the D.P.R.K. is not building nuclear weapons merely because it is a signatory party to the NPT is naive; Iraq not only signed the treaty but also consented to IAEA safeguards.²⁹ Events in Iraq also highlight a regime's ability to produce nuclear weapons in a clandestine manner.

It is true that development of nuclear weapons is contrary to Kim's stated goal of a "nuclear free peninsula". Yet once he has the weapons, he can easily manipulate his stated policy to meet his capability. This is, after all, a regime that has rewritten history deleting the record of Chinese participation in the Korean War.³⁰ Furthermore, in Kim's view, the requirement for a nuclear free Korea (withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons) is negated by the D.P.R.K. possession of the weapons.

Economically outclassed by the R.O.K., and diplomatically isolated, Kim sees the survivability of his regime of greater concern than "reunification of the fatherland". Based on observations regarding events in Germany, Kim may fear that negotiated reunification will only lead to absorption by the larger and more prosperous South Korean state. Illustrative of this concern is seen by Kim's recent acceptance of entry into the United Nations by the two Koreas, reversing the longstanding North Korean policy of opposition to separate membership. Kim saw the separate membership as "...no longer distasteful but highly desirable for the sake of the regime's survival,

notwithstanding Pyongyang's public announcements."³¹ Separate membership provides Kim's government with international recognition and legitimacy that he sorely needs. Reunification is no longer a priority and collapse of the talks would be immaterial to Kim, once he possesses the weapons of mass destruction.

CHAPTER IV

COUNTERING THE THREAT

What is required to effectively counter the threat of a nuclear armed D.P.R.K.? Foremost would be the elimination/dismantling of the plant and related materials. This is an important consideration, because as one U.S. analyst has stated, the clock needs to be turned back on the North Korean nuclear program vice merely stopped. Freezing the program may not work, "because it can always been unfrozen later."³² Operational forces may be employed in several highly different ways with the objective of eliminating the North Korean nuclear program.

Military Strike Against the Nuclear Facilities

Perhaps the most definitive use of operational forces is a pre-emptive strike to destroy the facilities and nuclear related materials at Yongbyon. This would eliminate the North Korean ability to develop and employ nuclear weapons. Although many U.S. and R.O.K. government officials viewed South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong Koo's call for a pre-emptive strike against the facilities in April 1991 as provocative and ill-advised³³, the reasons for serious consideration of this option are threefold. First of all, the nature and historical record of the North Korean regime leads to the belief that the regime has not only the intent to develop nuclear weapons but to also the will to use them. Second, the implications of a nuclear armed

D.P.R.K. are grim; war with nuclear overtones, nuclear blackmail, regional destabilization and nuclear proliferation. Finally, the almost routine discovery by United Nations inspection teams of additional layers in the clandestine Iraqi program graphically reveals the limits of international oversight organizations in countering nuclear proliferation. This is a lesson which at least one U.S. senator assumes has not been lost on Kim Il Sung, "All the recent publicity about the ease with which Iraq was able to develop a nuclear weapon secretly could have well embolden the North Koreans to believe that they can sign on the international proliferation safeguards and still proliferate."³⁴ Destruction of the facilities through a strike also negate Kim's ability to maintain his weapons development while complying with international inspections. It is important to remember that the D.P.R.K. may legally stockpile weapon usable material (plutonium) as long as it is under IAEA oversight.

Dialogue and Negotiation

Military forces may be used in a much different manner, for the development and sustainment of dialogue and negotiations leading to the negation of the North Korean need for nuclear weapons. Historically the arms control initiatives brought forth by the D.P.R.K. and again resubmitted this past December are; the de-nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, including the removal of U.S. nuclear weapons from the R.O.K.; withdrawal of American forces and termination of annual exercises; and reductions in the

standing armies of the two Koreas.³⁵ Although the sincerity of North Korean initiatives has been extensively questioned in this paper, current American responses regarding these proposals provide an opportunity to test the Pyongyang regime without detracting from the security and stability of the region.

President Bush's September 1991 announcement of the worldwide withdrawal of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons is a significant response to the North Korean proposals. Furthermore, the removal of any nuclear weapons from South Korean soil will not terminate the "U.S. protective nuclear umbrella", as deterrence through nuclear weapons can be effectively projected through sea and air platforms. The removal of any nuclear weapons also removes a contentious and sensitive issue with our South Korean allies, thereby contributing to the stability of the mutual alliance and the region in general.³⁶

The Bush administration has also responded through the offer of canceling exercise "Team Spirit". This exercise has been used in the past as a demonstration of resolve and a deterrent against hostilities. However, the joint U.S./R.O.K. exercise has also long been viewed by the North Koreans as nuclear in nature and highly provocative.³⁷ The situation on the Korean Peninsula dictates refraining from such a "show of force". Holding the exercise will exacerbate to the volatility of the region and the North Korean regime, and may close the door on the possibility of peaceful dismantling of the nuclear program.

These are significant steps on the part of the United States and clearly put the pressure on the D.P.R.K. to respond in kind. Lack of response may conclusively demonstrate the true nature and intent of the regime and therefore lay the groundwork for the justification of a pre-emptive military strike.

Presence

If the North Korean nuclear threat cannot be eliminated, then it must be deterred. The key to this effort is one that has been employed since the conclusion of the Korean War, a significant U.S. military presence on the peninsula.

"On a large scale of presence, forward deployed forces speak loudly of U.S. global presence and represent a strong U.S. initiative in maintaining that presence."³⁸ The value of the American presence is a historical fact, successful deterrence of war in the Northern Pacific for over 38 years. Yet many see the mission on the Korean Peninsula as accomplished and call for withdrawal of U.S. forces due to the increasing pressure of a shrinking military budget.

One must pay heed to the nature of the regime and the historical lessons of the past. The decision making process of the government of North Korea is in the hands of a limited few. One person's misperception is the regime's misperception. Kim Il Sung's regime has misread U.S. security intentions in the past, most obviously in the 1950 Acheson declaration regarding the American defense perimeter in Asia. More recently, ill-timed

statements regarding U.S. defense commitments combined with the inability to accurately determine Saddam Hussein's aggressive intent contributed to the crisis in the Gulf.

Maintaining troops on South Korean soil may not stop Kim Il Sung's thirst for nuclear weapons. However, the absence of war on the Korean Peninsula for 38 years conclusively demonstrates the deterrence value of the American military presence.

Engagement of American forces and potential massive retaliation will continue to give Kim Il Sung food for thought regarding any future aggression and possible employment of nuclear weapons. The deterrence provided by forces deployed in country cannot be wholly replaced by naval combatants or long range bomber aircraft. Despite arguments to the contrary, the presence of U.S. ground forces in South Korea is vital in countering the threat of North Korean nuclear weapons. Termination or reduction of this presence may send erroneous signals to not only the regime in Pyongyang but also allies in the region nervous about the firmness and credibility of the American commitment.³⁹

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Sol W. Sanders, an observer to the U.S./D.P.R.K. talks in June of 1991, described Kim Il Sung's government as one whose "... self-imposed isolation and what might be a very false sense of geopolitical realities in Northeast Asia and the world are a very great danger to world peace (author's emphasis)." ⁴⁰ The inherent nature of the xenophobic and irrational regime of Kim Il Sung, exacerbated by extensive economic problems, international isolation, and military insecurity make the Korean peninsula perhaps the most volatile region in the world today.

In view of this threat, the theater commander must be prepared to utilize his forces in a variety of ways, with the overall objective of countering the nuclear threat posed by the regime of Kim Il Sung.

Employment of military forces in the support for the policies of dialogue and negotiation should be maintained. The questionable operational utility of tactical nuclear weapons and their political ramifications make them an asset that the theater commander can do without. The possible impact on the operational readiness of the forces in theater brought about by the termination of "Team Spirit" pales in comparison to the possible benefits reaped by the elimination a North Korean nuclear threat.

While the chances of the D.P.R.K. voluntarily terminating their program may be slim, the effort must be made.

Continuation of the strong and credible military tripwire on as provided by the current structure of the United States Forces Korea (U.S.F.K.) is vital, despite increasing budget constraints that will inevitable arise in the future. One must remember the successful presence that U.S.F.K. has maintained over four decades, and that the fundamental reason for the deployment of American troops (the regime of Kim Il Sung) is still very much in power.

Finally, the United States has the capability (unilaterally if necessary) to strike the nuclear facilities in Yongbyon and eliminate the threat. The gravity of the threat is such that the theater commander must be ready to employ contingency strike plans at the direction of the National Command Authority.

However, the problems posed by a nuclear armed North Korea are due to the fundamental nature of Kim Il Sung and his dynastic regime. While there are options available to counter the threat in the short-term, "...the key factor contributing to instability in the Korean Peninsula and the prolongation of the cold war structure between the two Koreas lies in the very political nature of North Korea's outdated Communist regime (author's emphasis)."⁴¹ Despite the "historic" agreements that have been reached and the "new openness" and dialogue currently underway, the prospects for long term peace on the Korean Peninsula remain dim until the departure of the regime of Kim Il Sung.

Notes

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