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**FIRST EDITION  
(OPFOR2)**

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to North Korea**

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Environment**

**Functional  
Tactics**

**Force Structure  
& Formations**

**Reconnaissance &  
Security Actions**

**Offensive Actions**

**Defensive Actions**

**Counterstability  
Actions**

**Equipment  
& Capabilities**

## North Korean Military

**Forces, Operations & Tactics**



The Lightning Press  
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# OPFOR SMARTbook 2 - North Korean Military (OPFOR2) Forces, Operations & Tactics

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**ISBN: 978-1-935886-56-3**

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# (OPFOR2) Notes to Reader

North Korea is one of the most militarized countries in the world and remains a critical security challenge for the United States, our Northeast Asian allies, and the international community. The Kim regime has seen itself as free to take destabilizing actions to advance its political goals, including attacks on South Korea, development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, proliferation of weapons, and cyberattacks against civilian infrastructure worldwide.

The Korean Peninsula is a location of strategic interest for the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific Command due to its proximity to China, South Korea's historical relationship with the U.S. over the past 7 decades, and the booming South Korean economy that makes it an important U.S. trading partner. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, commonly known as North Korea or the DPRK, remains one of the United States' most critical security challenges for many reasons. These include the country's provocative and destabilizing behavior, such as unprovoked attacks on the Republic of Korea (South Korea; ROK); its pursuit of nuclear weapons and long-range ballistic missiles; and its willingness to proliferate weapons in contravention of international treaties. For over 50 years, North Korea has sporadically conducted operations directed against its foes, especially South Korea.

North Korea's military poses two direct, overlapping challenges to the United States and its allies: a conventional force consisting mostly of artillery and infantry that can attack South Korea with little advance warning, and a ballistic missile arsenal, intended to be armed with nuclear weapons, that is capable of reaching bases and cities in South Korea and Japan, and the U.S. homeland.

North Korea's conventional military consists of the ground, air, naval, and special operations forces. KPA Ground Forces operate thousands of long-range artillery and rocket systems along the entire length of the DMZ. These weapons include close-range mortars, guns, and multiple rocket launcher systems (MRLs) trained on South Korean military forces deployed north of Seoul, and longer-range self-propelled guns, rockets, and ballistic missiles that can reach Seoul and some points south of the capital. Collectively, this capability holds South Korean citizens and a large number of U.S. and South Korean military installations at risk. The North could use this capability to inflict severe damage and heavy casualties on the South with little warning.



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# The OPFOR SMARTbook Series (Overview)

In today's complicated and uncertain world, it is impossible to predict the exact nature of future conflict that might involve the U.S. Army. So the Army must be ready to meet the challenges of any type of conflict, in all kinds of places, and against all kinds of threats.

In the coming years, the United States and its allies will face an increasingly complex and interconnected global security environment marked by the growing specter of great power competition and conflict, while collective, transnational threats to all nations and actors compete for our attention and finite resources.

Competition and potential conflict between nation-states remains a critical national security threat. Beijing, Moscow, Tehran, and Pyongyang have demonstrated the capability and intent to advance their interests at the expense of the United States and its allies. China increasingly is a near-peer competitor, challenging the United States in multiple arenas—especially economically, militarily, and technologically—and is pushing to change global norms and potentially threatening its neighbors. Russia is pushing back against Washington where it can—locally and globally—employing techniques up to and including the use of force. In Ukraine, we can see the results of Russia's increased willingness to use military threats and force to impose its will on neighbors. Iran will remain a regional menace with broader malign influence activities, and North Korea will expand its WMD capabilities while being a disruptive player on the regional and world stages.

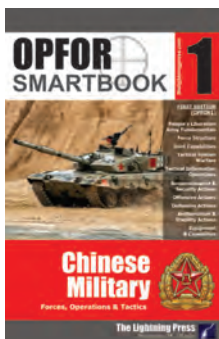
## Contemporary Operating Environment

Today's operational environment presents threats to the Army and joint force that are significantly more dangerous in terms of capability and magnitude than those we faced in Iraq and Afghanistan. Major regional powers like Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea are actively seeking to gain strategic positional advantage. The interrelationship of the air, land, maritime, space, and the information environment (including cyberspace) requires a cross-domain understanding of an operational environment.

## Opposing Force (OPFOR)

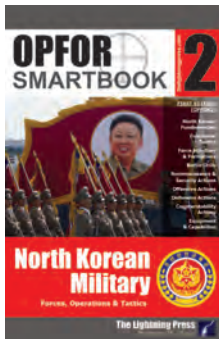
An Opposing Force (OPFOR) is a training tool that should allow the U.S. Army to train against a challenging and plausible sparring partner that represents the wide range of possible opponents the Army could face in actual conflict. It enables training of all arms of the Army and prepares the Army for potential combat operations.

During the road to war leading up to events in a training scenario, the OPFOR may play the role of a "threat" (potential enemy) that is on the verge of becoming an enemy. However, the actual training event usually deals with a state of hostilities. Thus, once hostilities begin in the training event, the OPFOR acts as the "enemy" of the U.S. force in the training environment.



For more than two thousand years, China has been surrounded by enemies, adversaries, and other competitors. With a force that totals approximately two million personnel in the regular forces, the PLA views protecting Chinese sovereignty and security as a sacred duty. OPFOR1 topics and chapters include the strategic environment (defense & military strategy, strategic & operational environments, territorial disputes), force structure (PLA: Army, Navy, Marine, Air Force, Rocket Force, Strategic Support Force), system warfare, information operations, reconnaissance and security, offensive and defensive actions, antiterrorism and stability actions, and capabilities (maneuver, fire support, air defense, aviation, engineer and chemical defense, network and communications, and special operations forces).





North Korea is one of the most militarized countries in the world and remains a critical security challenge for the United States, our Northeast Asian allies, and the international community. The Kim regime has seen itself as free to take destabilizing actions to advance its political goals, including attacks on South Korea, development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, proliferation of weapons, and worldwide cyberattacks. OPFOR2 topics and chapters include the strategic environment, force structure (KPA: Ground Forces, Navy, Air & Air Defense Force, Strategic Force, Special Operations, Reserve and Paramilitary forces, Internal Security & Intel Services), functional tactics, recon & security, offensive and defensive actions, counterstability actions, electronic intelligence warfare, equipment and capabilities.



It has been nearly thirty years since a holistic explanation of the Soviet-based Opposing Force (OPFOR) was examined in the U.S. Army Field Manual 100-2 series. Recognizing this, OPFOR SMARTbook 3: Red Team Army (Second Edition) re-examines and outlines the doctrinal operational construct and historical foundations of Soviet-era military forces from the FM 100-2 series, which is now out-of-print and largely unavailable. OPFOR3 topics and chapters include RTA overview, offensive and defensive operations, specialized warfare, tactical enabling tasks, small unit drill, urban & regional environments, rear area operations and logistics. *Future editions will be revised and updated to focus centrally on modern Russian forces, operations, tactics and lessons learned in the Ukraine.*



Throughout its 40-year history, the Islamic Republic of Iran has remained implacably opposed to the United States, our presence in the Middle East, and our support to Israel. While attempting to strengthen its deterrence against foreign attack and influence, Tehran has committed itself to becoming the dominant power in the turbulent and strategic Middle East. To achieve its goals, Iran continues to rely on its unconventional warfare elements and asymmetric capabilities—intended to exploit the perceived weaknesses of a superior adversary—to provide deterrence and project power. This combination of lethal conventional capabilities and proxy forces poses a persistent threat. *OPFOR4 SMARTbook is in the early stages of development and will be published at a later date.*



A hybrid threat is the diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, and/or criminal elements all unified to achieve mutually benefitting effects. Irregular forces are armed individuals or groups who are not members of the regular armed forces, police, or other internal security forces. Irregular forces are unregulated and as a result act with no restrictions on violence or targets for violence. OPFOR5 topics and chapters include irregular and hybrid threat (components, organizations, strategy, operations, tactics), insurgents and guerillas forces, terrorists (motivations, behaviors, organizations, operations and tactics), criminals (characteristics, organizations, activities), noncombatants (armed & unarmed), foreign security forces (FSF) threats, and functional tactics.



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The following primary references were used to compile *OPFOR SMARTbook 2: North Korean Military (Forces, Operations & Tactics)*. All references are open-source, public domain, available to the general public, and/or designated as "approved for public release; distribution is unlimited." *OPFOR SMARTbook 2: North Korean Military* does not contain classified or sensitive material restricted from public release.

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# I. Introduction to North Korea

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), chap 1.

North Korea is one of the most militarized countries in the world and remains a critical security challenge for the United States, our Northeast Asian allies, and the international community. The Kim regime has seen itself as free to take destabilizing actions to advance its political goals, including attacks on South Korea, development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, proliferation of weapons, and cyberattacks against civilian infrastructure worldwide.

*Note. ATP 7-100.2 addresses topics from the North Korean point of view. So, friendly refers to North Korea and allied or affiliated forces. Likewise, enemy, adversary, and foe refer to its opposition, which may be a challenger from within the country itself, or a regional or extraregional opponent (normally the U.S. or a U.S.-led coalition). Parties are neutral regarding North Korea. A threat has the capability and intent to harm the U.S., and an opponent may be against either the U.S. or North Korea, with context determining the correct interpretation.*

The Korean Peninsula is a location of strategic interest for the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific Command due to its proximity to China, South Korea's historical relationship with the U.S. over the past 7 decades, and the booming South Korean economy that makes it an important U.S. trading partner. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, commonly known as North Korea or the DPRK, remains one of the United States' most critical security challenges for many reasons. These include the country's provocative and destabilizing behavior, such as unprovoked attacks on the Republic of Korea (South Korea, ROK); its pursuit of nuclear weapons and long-range ballistic missiles; and its willingness to proliferate weapons in contravention of international treaties. For over 50 years, North Korea has sporadically conducted operations directed against its foes, especially South Korea. These actions include numerous armed incursions into South Korea; capture of a U.S. ship in international waters and detention of its crew for months; attacks on South Korean naval and fishing vessels; hijacking of one South Korean passenger airplane and blowing up of another; electronic warfare (EW) against South Korean signals, including global positioning satellites; cyberspace attacks against multiple countries; and successful or attempted assassinations of South Korean officials, including the country's president.

## I. History and Politics

North Korea is run by an oligarchy led by Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un. The Kim family has ruled the country since the end of World War II, and most military and civilian leadership consists of second-and third-generation leaders who are family or close friends of the country's late founder, Kim Il Sung; his late son, Kim Jong Il; or his grandson, Kim Jong Un. North Korean history has been full of conflict. Outsiders from China, Mongolia, and—most recently—Japan have repeatedly invaded the peninsula throughout its history. Japan's annexation of Korea in 1910 brought great hardship to the Korean people, and independence was not returned until the conclusion of World War II in 1945. The U.S. and the Soviet Union agreed to divide Korea along the 38th parallel to prevent the possibility of friendly fire between the two sides. The intent was not to divide the country, but for security and control prior to free elections, in which North Korea chose not to participate.



In June 1950, North Korea invaded its southern neighbor in an attempt to unify the peninsula under Kim Il Sung. With the intervention of the United Nations (UN) after the Soviet Union boycotted a UN Security Council meeting, an international coalition led by the U.S. pushed the North Korean military back across the pre-1950 boundary between the two countries in September 1950. U.S. General Douglas MacArthur then drove the UN forces all the way to the Yalu River where China, feeling threatened by anti-communist forces, interceded on behalf of North Korea with organized Chinese forces. The Chinese-led counterattacks pushed the U.S. military and its allies back and recaptured Seoul, the capital of South Korea. The UN forces then counterattacked, pushing the Chinese/North Korean forces to approximately the 38th parallel, the original dividing line between the two Koreas. Over the following 2 years a stalemate ensued, with only minor changes of territory between the warring sides. In late July 1953, the military commanders of North Korea's KPA, the Chinese People's Volunteers, and the United Nations Command signed an armistice that ended the fighting and created a 2,000-m wide demilitarized zone (DMZ) on either side of the then-current unit disposition, also known as the military demarcation line. Over 60 years after the armistice, no formal peace treaty has been signed, and the military demarcation line and the 4,000-m wide DMZ still exist from the peninsula's east coast to its west coast. Furthermore, North Korea has never renounced its ultimate goal, which is to unify all of Korea under its control. With a population of approximately 25 million people, 1.2 million—almost 5 percent of the population—serve on active military duty in the country, and another 7.7 million serve in the reserve forces. Besides military operations, the North Korean Government often uses its uniformed personnel for public service projects or harvesting crops.

The presence of U.S./UN military forces in South Korea and the size and capabilities of the South Korean military likely deter North Korea from crossing the border to reunite the two countries by force. The South Korean military is composed of approximately 600,000 active and 3.1 million reserve personnel, with a mandatory service requirement for almost all South Korean males. Since the armistice was signed, North Korea has broken it many times with incursions into the DMZ and South Korea by land, sea, air, and even underground by tunnel. Today, the country faces off against the Combined Forces Command, Korea—composed of South Korea and the U.S.—with a conventional regular force backed by nuclear weapons. The United Nations Command is also still present throughout South Korea, primarily in the Joint Security Area at Panmunjom, where periodic talks take place between the two sides.

The KPA uses tactics based on former Soviet or current Russian doctrine, Chinese developments, lessons learned, and observation of recent military actions. North Korea also emphasizes SOF units that primarily use unconventional warfare tactics. The country has initiated provocative actions against South Korea, Japan, and the U.S. in defiance of the armistice's terms. Publicly, the North Korean Government claims that its country lives in fear of an invasion from the south or an attempt by extraregional forces to instigate a regime change and the removal of Kim Jong Un. In June 2018, North Korean and U.S. leaders met in Singapore and agreed to an eventual denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. No timeline was set to achieve this goal. A second, unsuccessful summit took place in February 2019.

While North Korea maintains large amounts of military equipment, much of it is outdated making it quantitatively superior to most armies but qualitatively inferior. Due to the high cost of modern military equipment and the lack of funds for and access to the same from years of economic sanctions and poor economic policies, the country retains obsolete hardware, as evidenced by the presence of the T-34/85—a World War II-era tank—in some of its lower-priority armor units. The age and variety of equipment from the former Soviet Union, Russia, and China, and its own internally produced equipment generate major logistical issues for the KPA to effectively keep the assortment of weapons systems fully functional. The various types of ammunition required by weapon systems that date from the 1940s also puts additional strain on the military's logistics.

#### 1-4 (Strategic Environment) I. Intro to North Korea

# Satellite View of Korean Peninsula at Night

Ref: *North Korea Military Power: A Growing Regional and Global Threat*, Defense Intelligence Agency (2021), p. X.



Satellite view of the Korean Peninsula at night, 2020. Visible light emissions from North Korea continue to be extremely sparse, reflecting limited availability of electricity to most of the country outside the capital, Pyongyang.

# Foreign Assistance to North Korea

Ref: *Foreign Assistance to North Korea, Congressional Research Service (Apr '14), introduction.*

## A Brief History of U.S. Aid to North Korea

For four decades after the end of the Korean War in 1953, U.S. strategy toward the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, commonly referred to as North Korea) was relatively simple: deter an attack on South Korea. This included a freeze on virtually all forms of economic contact between the United States and North Korea in an attempt to weaken and delegitimize the North Korean government. In the 1990s, two developments led the United States to rethink its relationship with the DPRK: North Korea's progress in its nuclear weapons and missile programs and the onset of massive, chronic food shortages there. In response, the United States in 1995 began providing the DPRK with foreign assistance, which to date has totaled over \$1.2 billion. This aid has consisted of energy assistance, food aid, and a small amount of medical supplies. (See Table 1.) The United States has provided virtually no assistance since early 2009, though episodically there have been discussions about resuming large-scale food aid. Additionally, the Obama Administration, like the George W. Bush Administration, has said that it would be willing to provide "significant" energy and economic assistance to North Korea if Pyongyang takes steps to irreversibly dismantle its nuclear program.<sup>1a</sup> However, due to the deterioration in U.S.-North Korea relations, at the time of this writing there is little likelihood the Obama Administration will provide assistance to North Korea in the near future.

Table 1. U.S. Assistance to North Korea, 1995 -2013  
(As of December 2013)

Calendar or Fiscal Year (FY)	Food Aid (per FY)		KEDO Assistance (per calendar yr; \$ million)	6-Party Talks -Related Assistance (per FY; \$ million)		Medical Supplies & Other (per FY; \$ million)	Total (\$ million)
	Metric Tons	Commodity Value (\$ million)		Fuel Oil	Nuclear Disablement		
1995	0	0.00	\$9.50	—	—	0.20	9.70
1996	19,500	8.30	22.00	—	—	0.00	30.30
1997	177,000	52.40	25.00	—	—	5.00	82.40
1998	200,000	72.90	50.00	—	—	0.00	122.90
1999	695,194	222.10	65.10	—	—	0.00	287.20
2000	265,000	74.30	64.40	—	—	0.00	138.70
2001	350,000	58.07	74.90	—	—	0.00	132.97
2002	207,000	50.40	90.50	—	—	0.00	140.90
2003	40,200	25.48	2.30	—	—	0.00	27.78
2004	110,000	36.30	0.00	—	—	0.10	36.40
2005	25,000	5.70	—	—	—	—	5.70
2006	0	0.00	—	—	—	0.00	0.00
2007	0	0.00	—	25.00	20.00	0.10	45.10
2008	148,270	93.70	—	106.00	25.00	0.00	224.70
2009	21,000	5.60	—	15.00	—	4.00	24.60
2010	—	2.90 <sup>a</sup>	—	—	—	0.60	3.50
2011	—	—	—	—	—	0.90	0.90
2012	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2013	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	2,258,164	708.15	403.70	146.00	45.00	10.90	1,313.75

Source: Compiled by CRS from USAID; U.S. Department of Agriculture; State Department; KEDO (Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization).

Note: For the purposes of this report, U.S. government democracy promotion and refugee support programs are not included as forms of assistance to North Korea.

a. \$2.9 million in FY2010 represents a budgetary adjustment for contributions provided in FY2008.

### III. North Korean Motivations

North Korea embraces three primary goals, with additional second-tier objectives that support its principal aims. The first goal is for Kim Jong Un and his family to maintain their position of authority in the regime through the ideological control of the country's population. The Kim family and its supporters will likely pursue any strategy necessary to remain firmly in power. The second goal is for North Korea to remain an independent state free of outside interference, especially from the Western powers. The country's possession of a nuclear arsenal and its pursuit of missile technology are attempts to ensure that external powers do not interfere with its internal affairs for fear of a nuclear reprisal. The third goal, often espoused as the primary goal—from Kim Il Sung through Kim Jong Il to Kim Jong Un—is the unification of all of Korea under the North Korean Government. While this ambition is probably not obtainable as long as U.S./UN forces remain on the peninsula, a unified Korea under the Kim family's control remains the government's ultimate objective.

North Korea's large military is used as a tool to threaten its neighbors. The country uses limited military provocations to obtain diplomatic concessions at the negotiating table with South Korea, Japan, the U.S., and other countries. It also uses threats of possible war to obtain humanitarian aid. The North Korean Government knows that the Western powers and South Korea do not want another active war on the peninsula, so its threats often lead to success at the negotiating table. Its nuclear arsenal and fear by other countries that it may initiate a conventional or nuclear attack often serve as the impetus for North Korea's foes to acquiesce to the Kim regime's demands.

While North Korea's leaders may seem outlandish at times to the outside world, the Kim family is treated reverently and is seen as almost godlike in this officially non-religious country. Kim Il Sung developed a personality cult around himself during his long period in power. His son, Kim Jong Il, continued to cultivate the myth of the Kim family during his time as the country's supreme leader. The North Korean people treat the current ruler, Kim Jong Un, with almost the same awe as the previous two rulers. One reason for this is that many North Koreans are too afraid of the consequences for doing otherwise. Another reason that the current leader is treated so reverently is that life for the average North Korean has improved under Kim Jong Un, as compared to the famine of 1994—1998 during his father's regime—which many North Koreans still remember. These years of famine—in which an estimated two million North Koreans died—is known as the "Arduous March." Despite these bleak years where people starved to death, Kim Jong Il is still held in high regard by the current citizens that can remember that period, because he kept the country free from external—especially Western—interference. The Kim family's cult status is a major component of the glue that holds the country together.

## IV. Threat Perceptions

*Ref: North Korea Military Power: A Growing Regional and Global Threat, Defense Intelligence Agency (2021), pp. 8-9.*

North Korea's perception that the outside world is inherently hostile drives the North's security strategy and pursuit of specific military developments. This perception is informed by a history of invasion and subjugation by stronger powers stretching back centuries and, in the 20th century, by the 1910–45 Japanese occupation and the externally enforced division of the Korean Peninsula at the end of World War II.<sup>29</sup> The Kim family dynasty has exploited this history to craft a totalitarian political culture that is defined by resistance to outside powers and that invests the Kim family with unique, unquestionable authority to protect the Korean people from external threats. To respond to this existential threat, North Korea's leaders believe they must develop the military capabilities to hold external aggressors at bay and preserve the North's sovereignty and independence. These essential themes have been constant across all three Kim dynasty leaders, with the North's capabilities evolving over time to meet different manifestations of the perceived threat.

The North views the United States as its primary and immediate external security threat. This perception is strongly rooted in the U.S. role during the Korean War, the U.S. military presence on the peninsula since the armistice, and the leading role Washington has played in attempting to modify Pyongyang's behavior and constrain its nuclear ambitions. South Korea and Japan are treated as extensions of U.S. aggression. The North also perceives a strong and longer-term ideological threat from South Korea because Seoul's different economic and political systems represent an alternative—and, to Pyongyang, unacceptable—way of life for the historically unified Korean people. Advances in South Korean and Japanese military capabilities over the last two decades have also clarified a major and growing gap between the North's military power and that of its neighbors.

China and Russia have historically been allies, partners, and patrons of the North Korean state, but, despite broader diplomatic outreach since 2018, Pyongyang tends to show little trust in either country. The North fears absorption or preemption by a much more powerful China and probably wants to preserve its political independence from Beijing even at the risk of alienating Chinese leadership. Pyongyang probably sees Russia as a relatively less important partner in the region.

The Kim regime is driven by fears of threats to its power from internal sources as well. Kim Il Sung endured a period of factionalism before consolidating absolute rule over the North in the late 1950s; this experience taught him to place a priority on eradicating all political, economic, and social influences that might threaten his ideological control of the population. Over decades, this manifested as a series of overlapping internal security measures and societal controls designed to ensure absolute loyalty to the leader. Political control over the military was particularly critical, and it remains a major priority for the Kim Jong Un regime.<sup>30</sup>

One of the greatest perceived threats to North Korea's ideological control and internal stability is the growing influence of what the regime sees as politically corrosive outside information, including through foreign media exposure and the importing of entertainment programming that depicts daily life in South Korea.<sup>31</sup> This trend has grown as the regime's capability to provide basic goods and services to the population in the provinces outside Pyongyang has steeply declined, driving an increase in market activity that has coincided with broader availability of cell phones. Since the 2000s, North Korea has attempted various military and security efforts to monitor and deal with unsanctioned activity but has been forced to accept a degree of risk posed by the influx of outside media.<sup>32</sup>



## II. North Korean Capabilities and Intent

*Ref: ATP 7-100.2, North Korean Tactics, (Jul '20), chap 1 and Ref: North Korea Military Power: A Growing Regional and Global Threat, Defense Intelligence Agency (2021), p. 19 to 37.*

North Korea is adaptive, flexible, and agile—as much as a primarily non-motorized, mechanized, or tank army can be—and changes its composition and focus to optimize organizational capabilities and use them against known or perceived enemy vulnerabilities. North Korea will take prudent risks; however, the KPA may also make significant practical sacrifices in individuals and materiel in order to achieve a major psychological impact on an enemy. An example of such deliberate sacrifice would be a number of KPA near-simultaneous small-unit or direct action cell assaults on targets that result in the deaths of most or all attackers, but receive sensational media coverage to a global audience that indicates an absolute commitment to an objective.

North Korea maintains a range of capabilities and will apply them at selected times and locations in order to achieve desired effects. The KPA uses functional offensive and defensive tactics or acts of crime and terrorism to counter an enemy. These actions can also be employed to manipulate a population and dissuade support to an enemy's military forces or other enemy institutions. When necessary, North Korea will use acts of physical and psychological violence to gain influence and develop willing or coerced cooperation from a local population. Concurrently, the country will use indirect means to progressively degrade an enemy's combat power and infrastructure resources, and otherwise psychologically influence the political, social, economic, military, and information variables of an OE.

North Korea will attempt to exploit its familiarity with the physical environment and its ability to blend in to a local or regional populace and infrastructure in order to exploit U.S. limited language and cultural skills/experiences to accomplish its missions. The time variable normally favors the goals and objectives of North Korea, as the country is more flexible time-wise than typical enemy expectations or mandates. KPA activities occur over extended periods of time, but may change in pace, tempo, speed, and duration. Timing of KPA actions may appear random, while the actual mode of operations and activities are deliberate decisions as part of a long-term campaign or strategy.

Significant capabilities of North Korea include its ability to manipulate or ignore the restrictions and sanctions that apply to regulated military forces, law enforcement agencies, and internal security forces belonging to a sovereign state, alliance, coalition, or similar formal partnership of forces. International protocols and conventions, national statutes and law, and moral codes that guide or regulate behavioral norms and social interactions can limit an enemy's use of weapon systems and other capabilities that overmatch those of North Korea. The country complies with these codes of conduct when advantageous for its electronic intelligence warfare (EIW) campaign and overt or clandestine actions. When its regular forces incorporate clandestine use of combat power, the KPA can claim to plausibly deny responsibility for actions considered illegal or immoral by its foe. North Korea can easily ignore typical standards of conduct, however, when such standards no longer provide operational value to achieving a goal or objective.

Although violent actions by an individual, organization, or combination of forces often receive immediate notoriety, North Korea complements physical violence with methodical, long-term psychological warfare. The overarching agenda of the KPA can include but is not limited to the following issues:

- Spotlight popular grievances for resolution, including abuse, accidents, or war crimes by foreign soldiers fighting for North Korea's enemy.
- Establish influence, popular recognition, and support of susceptible South Koreans.
- Expand active or passive support of those that support North Korean goals or objectives.
- Deter opposition to its goals and objectives from the South Korean populace.
- Marginalize the governance or extraregional influence of the U.S.
- Develop general acceptance and legitimacy of KPA programs and actions.
- Achieve KPA objectives without alienating critical segments of the South Korean populace and other regional actors.
- Attract an international or global audience and external organizational sources of influence that support KPA aims.

North Korea seeks to gain the approval and support by some regional actors, such as China, in order to obtain active or passive assistance. The methods must eventually communicate a compelling narrative of legitimacy that is accepted by the population. North Korea can also attempt, however, to confer authority on itself without regard to the population. A credential of legitimacy may require a gradual process of convincing the relevant population that conceding to North Korea is an acceptable means to achieve desired social, economic, or political effects. The country may declare its actions are justifiable under existing conditions and attempt to degrade the legitimacy of a foe. Of note, North Korea already possesses legitimacy from its populace and recognition by most foreign governments.

Sometimes external recognition and support are not as important to North Korea as establishing a geographic or cyberspace enclave from which to plan, prepare, and conduct its activities and influence. For example, North Korea has established cyberspace teams in foreign countries. The country conducts direct and indirect actions that are adaptive and persistent from both types of sanctuaries. North Korea is a complex array of regular and irregular organizations, units, or individuals with sometimes disparate single-agenda aims. Many of the North Korean senior leaders create small fiefdoms, with the only common denominator being support—overt or tacit—from Kim Jong Un. A particular geographic, political, cyberspace, or ideological issue may lead to alliances or affiliations that are dynamic and changeable in purpose and actions.

In particular conditions and circumstances, North Korean irregular actions can include support from regular military forces or SOF from other states. The specter of weapons of mass destruction and an announced willingness to use any of these weapons are additional considerations in senior KPA leader risk assessment and decision-making in operations.

South Korean internal security forces and law enforcement organizations that might be infiltrated by the KPA can also be used to support KPA actions. The collaboration with organizations, units, or individuals may be based on coercion, contractual agreement, or temporary or long-term common goals and objectives. North Korea may prefer to use indirect approaches such as subterfuge, deception, and nonlethal action to achieve its objectives. However, it may commit to violent action, when necessary, in order to compel its enemy to submit to its intentions. Some irregular organizations, such as criminal gangs in both North and South Korea, exist for their own commercial profit and power and are not interested in the quality of life or civil security of a population that they influence or coerce. In the event of a war on the Korean Peninsula, the KPA may attempt to co-opt or affiliate with varied types of organizations in South Korea for mutual temporary benefit. Such alliances, however, may not be successful.

North Korea possesses a variety of military capabilities. Past actions may indicate possible future actions. While many of these provocations raised tension, the incidents did not lead to a resumption of the Korean War. These potential actions include the following, with examples in parenthesis:

# I. North Korea: A Growing Regional and Global Threat

Ref: North Korea Military Power: A Growing Regional and Global Threat, Defense Intelligence Agency (2021), foreword, LTG Berrier.

## ***From North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un's Remarks at the 8th Workers' Party Congress, Released 9 January 2021***

*"Building the national nuclear force was a strategic and predominant goal. The status of our state as a nuclear weapons state...enabled it to bolster its powerful and reliable strategic deterrent for coping with any threat by providing a perfect nuclear shield. New, cutting edge weapons systems were [also] developed one after another ... making our state's superiority in military technology irreversible and putting its war deterrent and capability of fighting war on the highest level."*

North Korea is one of the most militarized countries in the world and remains a critical security challenge for the United States, our Northeast Asian allies, and the international community. The Kim regime has seen itself as free to take destabilizing actions to advance its political goals, including attacks on South Korea, development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, proliferation of weapons, and cyberattacks against civilian infrastructure worldwide. Compounding this challenge, the closed nature of the regime makes gathering facts about North Korea's military extremely difficult.

Just over twenty years ago, North Korea appeared to be on the brink of national collapse. Economic assistance from former patrons in the Soviet Union disappeared; society was confronted with the death in 1994 of regime founder Kim Il Sung—revered as a deity by his people—and a 3-year famine killed almost a million people. Many experts in academia and the Intelligence Community predicted that North Korea would never see the 21st century. Yet today, North Korea not only endures under a third-generation Kim family leader, it has become a growing menace to the United States and our allies in the region.

Kim Jong Un has pressed his nation down the path to develop nuclear weapons and combine them with ballistic missiles that can reach South Korea, Japan, and the United States. He has implemented a rapid, ambitious missile development and flight-testing program to refine these capabilities and improve their reliability. His vision of a North Korea that can directly hold the United States at risk, and thereby deter Washington and compel it into policy decisions beneficial to Pyongyang, is clear and is plainly articulated as a goal in authoritative North Korean rhetoric.

Equally dangerous, North Korea continues to maintain one of the world's largest conventional militaries that directly threatens South Korea. The North can launch a high-intensity, short-duration attack on the South with thousands of artillery and rocket systems. This option could cause thousands of casualties and massive disruption to a regional economic hub. Kim Jong Un's emphasis on improving military training and investment in new weapon systems highlights the overriding priority the regime puts on its military capabilities.

In 2018, at the historic first summit between Kim Jong Un and the President of the United States, North Korea pledged to work with the United States to accomplish what it described as "the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula", and committed to other measures to reduce tensions and achieve "a lasting and stable peace regime." In the following years, North Korea tested multiple new missiles that threaten South Korea and U.S. forces stationed there, displayed a new potentially more capable ICBM and new weapons for its conventional force. Additionally, there continues to be activity at North Korea's nuclear sites. These actions indicate that North Korea will continue to be a challenge for the United States in the coming years.

## II. North Korea's Illicit Activities

*Ref: North Korea: U.S. Relations, Nuclear Diplomacy, and Internal Situation, Congressional Research Service (Jul '18), pp. 23 to 25.*

The North Korean regime engages in a number of illicit activities aimed at earning hard currency to support the Kim regime and its weapons programs, among other goals, and uses a global network of official and commercial entities to support and protect these enterprises.

*See related discussion on pp. 7-13 to 7-14.*

### Narcotics Production and Distribution

The North Korean regime has been involved in the production and trafficking of illicit drugs, counterfeit currency, cigarettes, and pharmaceuticals.<sup>88b</sup> In general, the United States has not prioritized countering these illicit activities, but they are a source of foreign currency for the regime. One North Korean agency, known as Office 39, reportedly oversees many of the country's illicit dealings—which may generate between \$500 million and \$1 billion per year.<sup>89b</sup>

The regime produces methamphetamine and it supplies international smuggling networks. In 2013, Thai authorities arrested several individuals who allegedly were conspiring to smuggle 100 kg of North Korean-origin methamphetamines into the United States.<sup>90b</sup> The DPRK reportedly ramped up its production of illegal narcotics around August 2017—perhaps because tighter sanctions have made it more difficult for the regime to obtain foreign currency—but that is difficult to verify.<sup>91b</sup> Indeed, it is not always clear who is directing North Korea's illicit activities—in other words, if those activities are being conducted by some state authority or by local criminal gangs.<sup>92b</sup>

### Arms Dealing

North Korea has emerged as a provider of cheap Cold War-era weapons, and it has sold arms and equipment to several states, especially to those in the Middle East and North Africa. In August 2016, authorities seized the Jie Shun outside of the Suez Canal, and found over 30,000 rocket-propelled grenades in the vessel. The authorities were acting on a U.S. tip, and the shipment was allegedly destined for the Egyptian military.<sup>93b</sup> North Korea also has cooperated with Iran and Syria. It has developed ballistic missiles with Iran, and it has shipped weapons and equipment, such as protective chemical suits, to Syria.

*See facing page for further discussion.*

### Money Laundering

The North Korean regime often relies on front companies—or companies acting on its behalf—so it can mask its illicit dealings and access the international financial system. These companies often are based in China, and some of the business partnerships are set up with the assistance of North Korean diplomats. The companies keep the regime's earnings in overseas bank accounts. They do not repatriate the funds to North Korea, thereby allowing the money to remain in the international financial system, where it is harder to track. In one case, a Chinese company used over 20 front companies—some of which were established in the British Virgin Islands and Hong Kong—to conduct transactions in U.S. dollars for a sanctioned North Korean bank.<sup>94b</sup>

Increasingly, the U.S. government has been sanctioning companies working on behalf of the North Korean regime. In November 2017, the U.S. Treasury Department banned a Chinese bank from the U.S. financial system. The bank, Bank of Dandong, reportedly acted “as a conduit for illicit North Korean financial activity.”<sup>95b</sup> Previously, in September 2005, the Treasury Department identified Banco Delta Asia, located in Macau, as a bank that distributed North Korean counterfeit currency, and helped to launder money for the country's criminal enterprises. The Department ordered that \$24 million in North Korean accounts with the bank be frozen. The North Koreans, in response, boycotted the then-ongoing Six-Party Talks for several months until the funds were returned.<sup>96b</sup>

### III. Core Military Capabilities

North Korea has aspired to become a nuclear weapons power for decades. Although the nuclear program's foundation dates to the 1950s, Pyongyang started making its most significant progress toward developing a nuclear weapons capability after withdrawing from the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 2002, citing increasing alarm over U.S. military activities abroad and dissatisfaction with the pace at which international economic aid, promised in past nuclear negotiations, was arriving. The North began testing nuclear devices underground in 2006. North Korea discloses very few details about its nuclear weapons inventory and force structure.

#### A. Nuclear Weapons and Ballistic Missiles

##### Program History and Pathway to Weapon Development

North Korean nuclear research began in the late 1950s through cooperation agreements with the Soviet Union. The North's first research reactor began operating in 1967, and Pyongyang later built a nuclear reactor at Yongbyon with an electrical power rating of 5 megawatts electrical (MWe). This reactor began operating in 1986 and was capable of producing about 6 kilograms of plutonium per year. Later that from the reactor's spent fuel were detected.

Construction of additional reactors—a 50-MWe reactor at Yongbyon and a 200-MWe reactor at Taechon—provided additional indications of a larger-scale nuclear program.<sup>76</sup> North Korea joined the Nonproliferation Treaty in 1985, but inspections only started 7 years later under the treaty's safeguards regime, inviting questions about the North's plutonium production. In 1994, North Korea pledged to freeze and eventually dismantle its plutonium programs under the Agreed Framework with the United States. At that time, a number of sources estimated that Pyongyang had separated enough plutonium for one or two nuclear weapons. North Korea allowed the International Atomic Energy Agency to place seals on spent fuel from the Yongbyon reactor and to undertake remote monitoring and onsite inspections at its nuclear facilities.<sup>78</sup>

In 2002, negotiators from the United States confronted North Korea with evidence of a clandestine uranium enrichment program, a claim that North Korean officials publicly denied. Disagreement over the North's establishment of a uranium enrichment program led to the breakdown of the Agreed Framework. The United States reached agreement with members of the Korean Economic Development Organization and stopped shipment of heavy fuel oil to North Korea, whose response was removing the international monitors and seals at the Yongbyon facility and restarting its plutonium production infrastructure.<sup>79</sup>

North Korea has demonstrated the capability to produce kilogram quantities of plutonium for nuclear weapons and has claimed to possess the ability to produce enriched uranium for nuclear weapons. The North disclosed a uranium enrichment plant to an unofficial U.S. delegation in late 2010 and claimed it was intended to produce enriched uranium to fuel a light-water reactor.<sup>80</sup>

The North began underground nuclear testing in 2006 and used early tests to both validate device designs and to send a political signal that it was advancing its nuclear capability. By September 2017 North Korea had conducted six nuclear tests: one each in 2006, 2009, and 2013; two in 2016; and one in September 2017, according to seismic detections and public claims by North Korean media.<sup>81,82</sup> Successive tests have demonstrated generally higher explosive yields, according to seismic data.<sup>83</sup> The September 2017 test generated a much larger seismic signature than had previous events, and North Korea claimed this was a test of a "hydrogen bomb" intended for use on an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).<sup>84</sup> North Korea has exclusively used the underground nuclear test facility in the vicinity of Punggye for its nuclear tests. In May 2018, North Korea disabled some parts of the Punggye test site, announcing that it no longer needed to conduct nuclear tests. However, Pyongyang retains a stockpile of nuclear weapons minimizing the impact of this development.



# North Korean Nuclear and Rocket Launch Facilities

Ref: *North Korea Military Power: A Growing Regional and Global Threat*, Defense Intelligence Agency (2021), p. 20.



See pp. 2-31 to 2-32 for discussion of the the Strategic Force, formerly the Strategic Rocket Forces Command, which is now on the same level as the army, navy, and air force. This command fields seven to eight brigades of surface-to-surface missiles of different types with various ranges.

# North Korean Artillery & Rocket Threat to South Korea

Ref: North Korea Military Power: A Growing Regional and Global Threat, Defense Intelligence Agency (2021), p. 29.

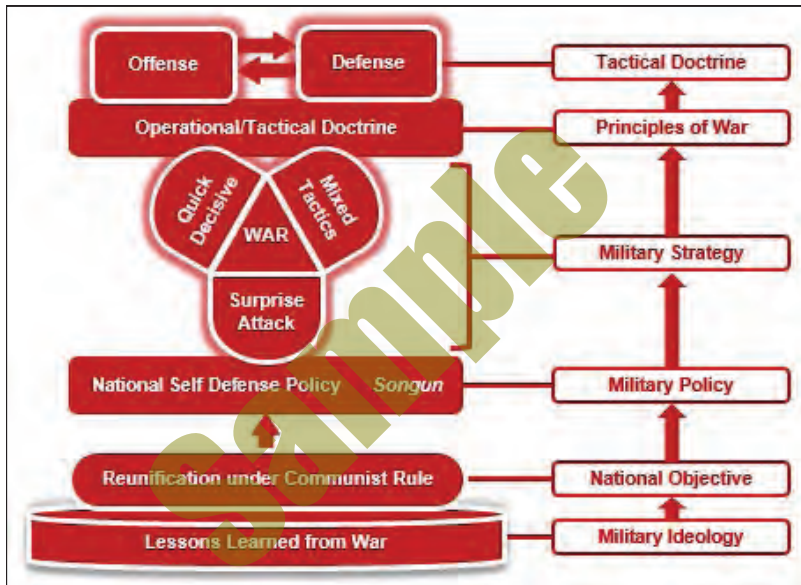


# III. Framework for Military Operations

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, North Korean Tactics, (Jul '20), chap 1.

## I. North Korean Military Principles

North Korea arrived at its current military principles through a disciplined process that incorporated thorough research of its previous military ideology, its steadfast attitude to complete its national objective, and its military-first policy, or Songun. These three foundational elements produced the KPA military strategy that led to its principles of war and its associated tactical doctrine. This systematic process is shown in figure 1-2.



Ref: ATP 7-100.2 (Jul '20), fig. 1-2. Building blocks of KPA tactical doctrine.

## A. North Korean Military Ideology

The Military Training Bureau serves as the KPA's military think tank and has studied conflict from World War II to the present. With that knowledge, the KPA has developed a military ideology based on its experiences from 1950–53 fighting the U.S.; Soviet/Russian military theory; and Chinese light-infantry tactics, modified by more-recent U.S. experiences in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other locations around the world. Due to the United States' ability to overwhelm almost any opponent with technology and firepower, the KPA emphasizes asymmetric warfare in conjunction with large numbers of SOF units. Even with this emphasis, the KPA plans the use of large amounts of artillery, including multiple rocket launches in lieu of air support, heavy reliance on antitank guns, and antiarmor support by a variety of first-and second-generation wire-guided antitank missiles. The KPA plans to overcome the technological mismatch by getting in close to a more advanced force, where weapons standoff ranges are no longer a factor. The KPA will attempt to concentrate and coordinate the firing of large numbers of older weapons systems in order to make up for a shortage of the latest technologically advanced equipment.

## B. North Korean National Objectives

The second building block is the primary national objectives discussed in the motivations section above: the reunification of Korea under North Korean control, prevention of external interference in the country's internal affairs, and the Kim family remaining in power. For North Korea, the U.S./UN presence in South Korea is a potential threat to the first, an obvious reminder of the failure of the second, and completely prevents the third.

## C. North Korean Military Policy

Juche, translated as "self-reliance," began as North Korea's economic self-reliance policy. Kim Il Sung announced his juche policy in 1972 and this national ethos places an emphasis on self-reliance, independence, resourcefulness, a display of one's strength, and self-defense, with the responsibility to internally solve problems without outside assistance. Songun, begun by Kim Jong Il in the mid-1990s, was a continuation of his father's juche policy with an added emphasis on military capability at the expense of civilians and the economy. Despite the bravado of juche, North Korea relies on imports to make up for shortages in raw materials, finished products, and technology that are not available in the country. During the Cold War, North Korea relied heavily on the support of the Soviet Union and China, especially its economy and military.

Since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, North Korea has found itself isolated and with few options for support due to UN sanctions and the international political climate. The country's only ally and major benefactor is China, with bilateral trade involving over half of North Korean exports and almost 75 percent of its imports. North Korea maintains a bilateral mutual aid and cooperation treaty with China, which calls for each country to come to the aid of the other if it is attacked. North Korea also serves as a buffer state between China and the economically capitalistic and democratic South Korea. The historical ties between North Korea and China continue to bind the two countries together, and the latter's fear of a unified and economically powerful Korean Peninsula under a democratic-style government most likely motivates Chinese actions to preclude such an event.

## D. North Korean Military Strategy

From the three primary national objectives and the country's careful examination of the U.S. performance in battle since 1953, the KPA created a three-part strategy if war were to occur on the Korean Peninsula: surprise attack; a quick, decisive war; and mixed tactics.

*See facing page.*

## E. North Korean Principles of War

Based on its military strategy, the KPA created several principles of war that guide its operational and tactical doctrine, ranging from a two-front war to rear area protection.

*See following pages (pp. 1-36 to 1-37) for an overview and further discussion.*

## F. North Korean Tactical Doctrine

The KPA's offensive and defensive tactical doctrine flows from its principles of war.

*See pp. 1-38 to 1-39 for an overview and further discussion.*

# North Korean Military Strategy

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), pp. 1-13.

From the three primary national objectives and the country's careful examination of the U.S. performance in battle since 1953, the KPA created a three-part strategy if war were to occur on the Korean Peninsula: surprise attack; a quick, decisive war; and mixed tactics.

## Surprise Attack

The KPA will attempt to conduct all attacks with some form of surprise at the strategic, operational, or tactical level, with reconnaissance playing a key role.

## Quick, Decisive War

North Korea lacks the resources to fight a protracted war, so any war the KPA fights must be quick and decisive to present the world with a *fait accompli*. The country also realizes that the U.S. democratic system takes time to react, as politicians attempt to build a coalition to deal with international problems. If the war is over before the U.S. can react, the U.S. may decide to let the status quo remain. This is similar to the Crimean situation where the international community condemned Russia for annexing part of the Ukraine, but did nothing to change the outcome.

## Mixed Tactics

Offensively, the KPA plans a two-front war through both regular and irregular means. The country will use SOF units and clandestine operatives prepositioned in South Korea to create a "second front" in the enemy's rear areas while the enemy must deal with the conventional battle on the primary front. The SOF units will attack enemy key command and control (C2) facilities and important logistical centers, and attempt to create fratricide between enemy rear-echelon units.

Since 1992, some North Korean leaders have boasted that their military forces could reach Pusan, a city on the southern coast of South Korea, in just 3 days. While totally unrealistic, some North Korean leaders actually believe that, in the right military and political conditions, their goal of reaching Pusan could occur in less than a month. However, some South Korean reports indicate that several KPA generals now believe that the capture of the entire peninsula is an impossibility and that, after the capture of Seoul, North Korea would need to sue for a negotiated peace based upon its position of greater strength. It is not known where Kim Jong Un stands on this policy revision, but some of the KPA's military plans reflect this change in attitude. If war were to resume on the Korean Peninsula, South Korea would face a formidable foe both on the front line and in its rear areas. Support for both regular and unconventional warfare would include EIW elements, such as offensive cyberspace operations and EW. See chapter 9 for more details on EIW.

*Note. JP 3-13 describes information operations as the integrated employment, during military operations, of information-related capabilities in concert with other lines of operation to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the decision-making of adversaries and potential adversaries while protecting our own. North Korea refers to its unique version of information operations as electronic intelligence warfare (EIW).*

Evolution is a concept with a strategic orientation, fostered and reinforced with actions at the operational and tactical levels of combat. North Korea aims to protect, nurture, and harness the conditions of an OE to avoid organizational demise, while enabling the ability to evolve as a supple nation-state with resilient long-term organizational purpose and capabilities. Evolution and adaptation recognize the North Korean commitment to a long-term program that promotes operational and strategic initiatives and objectives.

## IV. Multi-Domain Extended Battlefield

Like most countries that fight a war, North Korea will likely act in several deliberate ways to establish conditions for success. These ways are conceptually enduring methods that bring about desired ends. While a wide array of methods is available, the one method currently perceived to be unavailable to the country is to defeat the U.S. in a conventional battle. Instead, any aggregated violence will be designed not to defeat the U.S. on a battlefield, but to cause enough damage—real or perceived—in the physical and informational spheres that the U.S. cannot sustain its resolve.

Such a strategy requires two major lines of effort: attacks that cause damage, and actions that extend the time required for U.S. mission accomplishment. Likely North Korean actions will progress along these two lines of effort using all means available in the environment. The country will likely employ five broad conflict approaches toward limiting the effectiveness of U.S. military power: systems warfare, preclusion, sanctuary, isolation, and EIW.

### Multi-Domain Extended Battlefield



**Systems Warfare**



**Preclusion**



**Sanctuary**



**Isolation**



**Electronic Intelligence Warfare (EIW)**

### A. Systems Warfare

Systems warfare identifies and deconstructs vulnerable and vital enemy systems and networks. A system is a set of connected or related elements that, when combined, perform a unique function. The essential ingredients of a system include the individual components, the synergy among the components and other systems, and a functional boundary separating the system from other systems. A system of systems is a set of different systems so connected or interrelated as to produce results unachievable by the discrete individual systems. In systems warfare, the intent is to identify critical system components and attack them in a way that will degrade or destroy the effective use or practical importance of the overall system.

# KPA Force Structure and Formations

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, North Korean Tactics, (Jul '20), chap 3.

*Note. An explanation on naming and acronym conventions follows. The proper name for North Korea's military is the Korean People's Army, or KPA. This organizational structure is comparable to the U.S. Department of Defense; it does not refer exclusively to ground forces, as does the U.S. Army. The KPA consists of multiple components that include—but are not limited to—a ground force, a navy, and an air force. For the sake of clarity, this document adopts the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency convention of referring to the entire military as the KPA, the ground force as the Korean People's Army Ground Forces (KPAGF), the navy as the Korean People's Army Navy (KPAN), and the air force as the Korean People's Army Air Force (KPAAF).*

## Functional Organization of North Korean Forces

The KPA forces are organized functionally and named accordingly. At regimental and higher headquarters, units performing these functions are referred to as forces. At battalion and subordinate headquarters, units are called elements. When applicable to both forces and elements, the term used is unit.

## I. Service Component Organizations

All North Korean military forces, except the internal security forces, belong to the KPA. There are no separate military services per se. KPA armed forces are typically structured into six service components and various types of paramilitary reserve personnel, as indicated in figure 3-1.



Ref: ATP 7-100.2 (Jul '20), fig. 3-1. KPA armed forces service components.

*Note. The order of battle illustrations throughout this document are representative examples of KPA units. Due to the tiered nature of the KPA, where frontline and higher-priority units receive the most modern equipment and reserve units operate less-capable equipment, the same type of KPA unit may not operate the same type of equipment. For example, units along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) may field T-62 or even newer domestically produced tanks, while reserve units may operate T-54 or even vintage T-34/85 tanks. Any change to a subordinate organization would change the composition of the represented unit.*



### **Army (KPAGF)** (See p. 2-3)

The army is the largest of the six services, and relies on mobilization of reserve and militia forces to conduct sustained military operations. To avoid the confusion between the overall military forces and the ground forces, the army units will be called the Korean People's Army Ground Forces (KPAGF), while the entire military will be called the KPA. The KPAGF are composed of approximately 1.02 million active duty and 600,000 reserve personnel.

### **Navy (KPAN)** (See p. 2-27)

The navy includes naval forces for both oceanic and littoral missions. The Korean People's Army Navy (KPAN) is composed of 60,000 active duty personnel with no reserve.

### **Air Force (KPAAF)** (See p. 2-29)

There are approximately 120,000 active duty personnel supporting 1,600 aircraft. There are no reserve units within the Korean People's Army Air Force (KPAAF).

### **Strategic Force** (See p. 2-31)

The Strategic Force, formerly the Strategic Rocket Forces Command, is now on the same level as the army, navy, and air force. This command fields seven to eight brigades of surface-to-surface missiles of different types with various ranges.

### **Special Operations Forces (SOF)** (See p. 2-33)

There is no single command responsible for KPA special operations forces (SOF). Command of SOF units is divided between the Reconnaissance General Bureau (RGB), the Light Infantry Training Guidance Bureau, and the Strategic Operations Forces. The latter is also responsible for the SOF that will call in deep fires for the artillery. There are also SOF units that receive their training guidance from the RGB, but are assigned on a habitual basis to train with the four KPAGF forward-deployed corps. While many military forces field SOF and commando units in their military, the KPAGF do not use commando units; however, several of the light units belonging to the SOF forces would contain characteristics normally found in such units. The North Korean armed forces field approximately 200,000 SOF personnel divided among the KPAGF, KPAN, and KPAAF, with most belonging to the KPAGF.

### **Paramilitary Forces** (See p. 2-35)

The Worker-Peasant Red Guard and People's Guard—also known as the Red Guard Army—is a militia of approximately 5.72 million personnel organized by military district with units down to the village level. While some of the units are armed, many do not possess weapons and would be used as a labor force or as replacement soldiers. These personnel receive approximately 160 hours of annual training. The Red Youth Guard is just under one million secondary-school students who regularly receive basic military instruction and marksmanship training. There are also approximately 620,000 members of reserve military training units—also known as the Instruction Guidance Units—who normally serve as instructors.

### **Internal Security Forces** (See p. 2-37)

These 189,000 personnel serve as a national police force and border guards that are subordinate to the Ministry of People's Security in peacetime, but could be used for military purposes in time of war. Internal security forces personnel possess light arms to use in their work. There is also a Guard Command, sometimes called General Guard Bureau, responsible for the protection of Kim Jong Un, his family, and other senior officials. Composed of approximately 100,000 personnel, the Guard Command contains three combat brigades, several bodyguard divisions, and a single construction battalion. It is equipped like military units, with anti-aircraft artillery (AAA), multiple-launch rocket systems, armored vehicles, tanks, limousines, and trucks.

# I. Korean People's Army Ground Forces (KPAGF)

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), chap 3 and *North Korea Military Power: A Growing Regional and Global Threat*, Defense Intelligence Agency (2021), app. B.

The army is the largest of the six services, and relies on mobilization of reserve and militia forces to conduct sustained military operations. To avoid the confusion between the overall military forces and the ground forces, the army units will be called the **Korean People's Army Ground Forces (KPAGF)**, while the entire military will be called the KPA. The KPAGF are composed of approximately 1.02 million active duty and 600,000 reserve personnel.

KPA Ground Forces—armor, infantry, and artillery—remain the core of North Korea's military power and the primary means by which Pyongyang threatens Seoul. The KPA ground units comprise 10 regular corps, 2 mechanized corps, 1 armored division, 4 mechanized divisions, and 1 artillery division plus numerous combat, combat support, and combat service support brigades and regiments. The Ground Forces number about 1,000,000 active-duty soldiers, and another 150,000 are assigned to reserve units.<sup>172,173,174,175,176</sup> With a large artillery and infantry force forward-deployed, the KPA Ground Force can mount an attack on South Korean and U.S. forces with little or no warning. Although the KPA may meet initial success, its maneuver and sustainment problems, stemming from resource shortages, probably would limit its ability to maintain the momentum of an attack, unless it receives outside support.

Ground Forces are subordinate to the General Staff Department. The force is infantry heavy and is supported by significant artillery and armored/mechanized forces. The forward corps and the armored, mechanized, and artillery units operate the most modern ground equipment in the KPA inventory. The rear corps are a mix of regular and reserve forces with older equipment. The KPA is oriented to a conflict along the DMZ, with over 70 percent of the force deployed south of Pyongyang.<sup>177</sup>

In addition to the regular and reserve forces, the KPA has an extensive paramilitary organization that assists in providing rear-area security and manpower to replace combat losses. These forces are organized into the Worker Peasant Red Guard (WPRG) and Red Youth Guard (RYG).<sup>178</sup> These organizations are present at all levels of government (province, county, ward) and are under the control of the Korean Workers' Party in peacetime but revert to military control during crisis or war. The WPRG and RYG have about 6 million personnel (approximately 25 percent of the North Korean population).<sup>179</sup>

The KPA artillery and armored force mainly comprises North Korean-produced copies of Soviet-era equipment. It is largely based on old technology but is reliable and easy to maintain. The artillery force includes a large number of conventional towed and self-propelled systems and long-range 170-mm guns and 240-mm multiple rocket launchers.<sup>180</sup>

KPA Ground Forces modernization is slow and incremental, but Kim has dedicated some new systems to ground units. North Korea debuted a new main battle tank in a military parade in 2010, and the KPA has conducted multiple tests of the new 300-mm MRL CRBM since 2014. The 300-mm MRL CRBM is an advanced MRL system configured to fire up to eight 300-mm guided, rocket-propelled munitions per launcher. Presumably it will be deployed with artillery units. The system will extend the range of KPA firepower well south of Seoul and could be sufficiently accurate for precision targeting against key South Korean and U.S. military installations

on the peninsula.<sup>183</sup> Additionally, in September 2018 North Korea paraded a new self-propelled artillery system and a new six-wheeled, eight canister tactical guided missile system, most likely an antitank guided or surface-to-air missile. North Korea probably tested this new tactical guided missile system in April 2019.<sup>184,185</sup>

North Korean strategy, doctrine, and tactics for ground operations have remained fairly consistent since the 1950s. In the event of a massed attack against South Korea, the North would use heavy concentrations of infantry and armor supported by artillery to break through and attempt to destroy forces defending along the DMZ, and advance rapidly down the entire peninsula. These operations would be coordinated closely with the opening of a second front comprising special operations forces (SOF) units conducting raids and disruptive attacks in the South Korean rear area.

The KPA Ground Forces are capable of defending against and deterring a land invasion from the South. The KPA would initially focus on infantry and light infantry operations supported by large volumes of artillery fire support, but would default to guerrilla-style operations targeting rear areas and logistics if invading forces progressed beyond the DMZ. KPA doctrine puts great emphasis on fighting under arduous conditions, at night, in the mountains, and during inclement weather. KPA tactics are heavily influenced by Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese guerrilla activity, which emphasized the value of small-unit fighting. The modern KPA emphasizes small and large units attacking an objective simultaneously, such as SOF or light infantry attacking the objective from the rear or flank while heavy infantry supported with artillery assaults from the front and flanks.<sup>186</sup>

The majority of North Korean ground forces are equipped with 1950s–1970s Russian and Chinese light and medium tanks, armored personnel carriers, and towed and self-propelled artillery, or North Korean-developed versions of this legacy equipment. Since at least 2010, North Korea has produced only limited quantities of improved ground forces equipment, including an upgraded main battle tank, and the 300-mm MRL CRBM. In development since at least 2013, this CRBM system is equipped with two rocket pods carrying a total of eight guided rounds; the pods are mounted on a three-axle Chinese-origin truck chassis.<sup>271, 272</sup>

In August 2010, North Korean news media aired video footage of the regime's new main battle tank. The tank has features similar to the Russian T-72, which would provide improved performance over Pyongyang's Chonma-ho family of tanks that is based on the Russian T-62. The tank probably is in service with only one armored unit in the Army.<sup>273</sup>

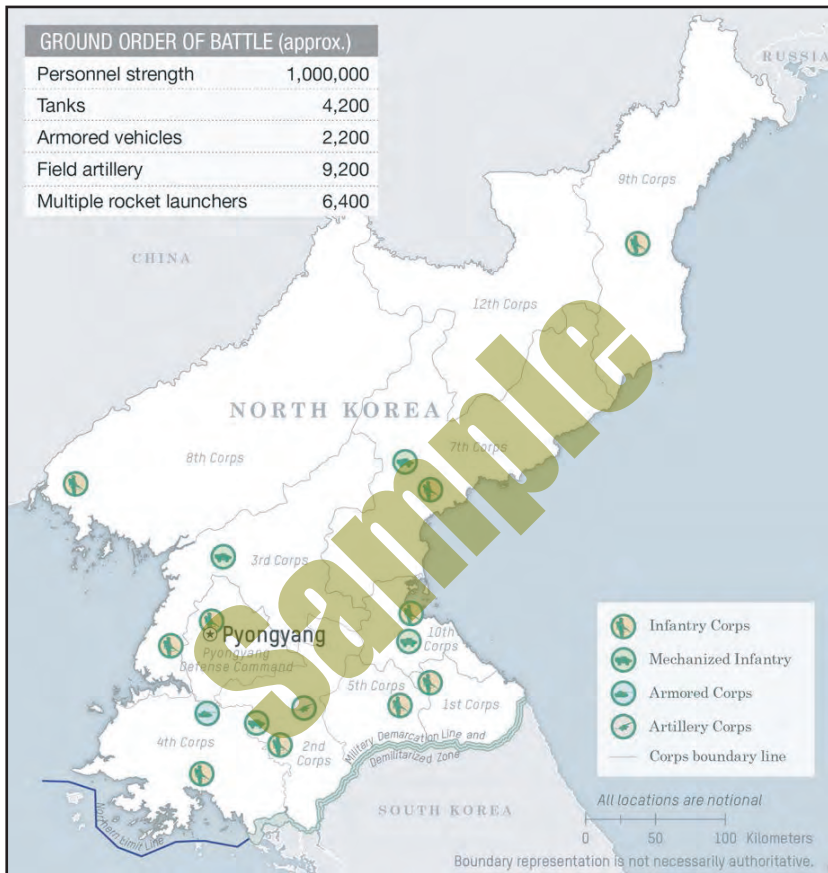
In a September 2018 military parade, Pyongyang displayed a new tracked, self-propelled artillery gun and a tactical guided missile system, most likely an anti-tank guided or surface-to-air missile, mounted on a six-wheeled armored chassis. It is unknown if either of these systems is currently deployed with the KPA.<sup>274</sup>

In October 2020, North Korea paraded several new systems that showcased North Korea's continued defense industrial activity to diversify and modernize its military force, in spite of strict sanctions. These included a new tank design that had flat armor panels around the turret and seven road-wheels; previous tanks only had six. It also paraded never-before-seen light armored vehicles with gun turrets and anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles. These new systems are not yet fielded.

# KPA Ground Forces (KPAGF)

Ref: North Korea Military Power: A Growing Regional and Global Threat, Defense Intelligence Agency (2021), p. 43.

## Major Ground Units 181, 182



The army is the largest of the six services, and relies on mobilization of reserve and militia forces to conduct sustained military operations. To avoid the confusion between the overall military forces and the ground forces, the army units will be called the **Korean People's Army Ground Forces (KPAGF)**, while the entire military will be called the KPA. The KPAGF are composed of approximately 1.02 million active duty and 600,000 reserve personnel.

# I. Command Posts

The KPA exercises tactical control over its wartime forces from an integrated system of command posts (CPs). The design of this system enhances the capability of uninterrupted C2 of forces.

The CPs are typically formed in three parts: a control group, a support group, and a communications group. The control group includes members of the command group or section and staff. The support group consists of the transport, logistics, and security/guard elements. Whenever possible, the communications group is remoted from the control and support groups in order to minimize C2 physical and electromagnetic signatures.

KPA military planners create a CP structure that emphasizes survivability through dispersal, stringent security measures, redundancy, and mobility. A CP system is organized to sustain damage with minimum disruption to the actual C2 process. In the event of disruption, subsystems reestablish C2 as soon as possible. Tactical CPs are typically designed to be mobile, with a physical and electronic signature smaller than comparable enemy CPs. The number, size, and types of CPs depend on the level of command and operational environment conditions.

## A. Command Post Types

KPA ground maneuver forces use several basic and special types of CPs. Not all levels of command use all CP types at all times, as shown in table 3-2. Redundancy provided by multiple CPs enhances resilient C2 operations. The KPA will allow a CP to move only after approval by its next higher commander. For brevity, acronyms are used for the various types of CPs.

Command Post Type	Division	Regiment	Battalion	Company
Main	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Forward	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rear area	Yes	Yes	No	No
Reserve	Optional	Optional	Optional	No
Command observation post	Yes	Yes	No	No
Deception	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional
Airborne	Optional	Optional	No	No
Auxiliary	Optional	Optional	No	No

Ref: ATP 7-100.2 (Jul '20), table 3-2. Command post types by command level.

See following pages (pp. 2-8 to 2-9) for an overview and further discussion.

## B. Commanders' Duties

The KPAGF place a stressful amount of responsibility on their unit commanders. The KPAGF expect their commanders to—

- Conduct detailed planning and preparation for all operations.
- Exploit the terrain, weather, and time to the KPA's advantage.
- Achieve surprise during the initial phase of each attack and at decisive times during the course of battle.
- Concentrate overwhelming forces at the decisive time and place.
- Conduct timely, fast, and daring maneuvers.
- Maintain control over subordinate elements' actions to ensure bold, determined, and exact execution of plans.

## C. Communications Procedures

While the KPA does have improved radio communications equipment, it is likely that it will routinely avoid using the radio for operational security reasons and because it has less communications equipment than most other militaries of its size and capabilities. In static situations, the KPA will likely use wire and fiber-optic communications, if available, to reduce radio traffic that is more susceptible for compromise. The KPAGF will likely use unsophisticated communications means such as signal flags, bugles, and whistles to communicate on the battlefield. However, some KPA units will have access to emerging technological capabilities and will use them for communications. In case of a communications break with higher headquarters, KPA units will continue operations within previously planned missions or prescribed alternatives.

## III. Tactical-Level Organization of Regular Forces

KPAGF tactical units fight battles and engagements, with the largest organizations conducting tactical operations being divisions and regiments. The KPAGF field a limited number of brigades, primarily in their armor or mechanized forces. In peacetime, KPAGF divisions are subordinate to a corps headquarters. There are some units that remain under direct control of a North Korean governmental bureau during peacetime and some KPA units may report directly to their service headquarters.

Major tactical-level commands of the KPAN, KPAAF, Strategic Force, and SOF units often remain under the direct control of their respective parent component headquarters while supporting the KPAGF. The KPA retains centralized command or control of certain elite elements of the ground forces, including airborne and SOF units. This command arrangement permits flexibility in the employment of these specialized capabilities in response to mission requirements.

*Note. The KPA may task-organize its forces for a particular mission down to the squad level, but does not identify this type of unit with a different term. Generic unit terms (squad, platoon, company, battalion, regiment, and division) or task-organized unit terms will be used throughout ATP 7-100.2. When there is no known KPA descriptive term, a U.S. term with similar meaning is used to provide a better understanding of the KPA unit's capabilities.*

*Note. In organization charts, the affiliated status is reflected by a dashed line—rather than solid—connecting the affiliated unit to the organization with which it is affiliated. This dashed line is not to be confused with dashed unit symbols, which indicate additional units that may or may not be present. Although there is typically no formal indication of this relationship in KPA plans and orders, the acronym for affiliated (AFL) can be used as a free text description next to a unit symbol.*

## A. Corps

The corps is a typical C2 headquarters above the division echelon for the KPAGF. Each corps headquarters is capable of controlling combined arms, joint, or inter-agency operations necessary to execute its mission. In peacetime, the four corps along the DMZ have permanently assigned divisions. Any division assigned to a forward corps is augmented with an additional artillery battalion and a military police battalion. The active duty KPAGF field two mechanized corps, 10 infantry corps, one capital defense (Pyongyang) corps, an air defense command, and a SOF corps assigned to the Light Infantry Training Guidance Bureau. The KPAGF maintain four infantry corps (I, II, IV, and V) along the DMZ in their first strategic echelon. The second strategic echelon contains their tank brigades and mechanized corps. The remainder of the KPAGF are scattered throughout the northern half of the country and along the borders with China and Russia.



A corps consists of those division-, brigade-, regiment-, battalion-size, and other units allocated to the command to accomplish mission tasks. The units assigned to a corps will depend on its mission(s). If a particular corps has contingency plans for participating in more than one tactical mission, it could receive a different set of forces under each operational plan. Typical units assigned to a corps include—

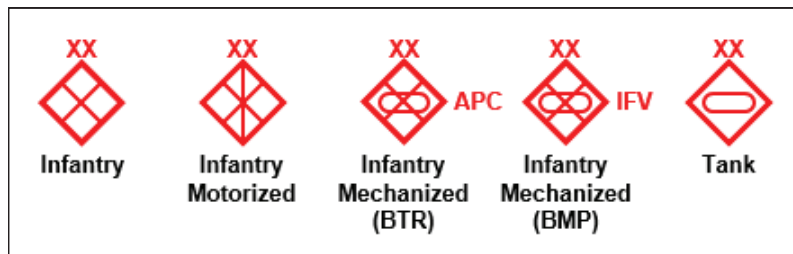
- Infantry divisions.
- Mechanized divisions.
- Motorized divisions.
- Infantry divisions (partial reserve).
- Infantry divisions (reserve).
- Light infantry divisions.
- Tank divisions (105th).
- Tank brigades.
- Artillery brigades.
- Light infantry brigades.
- Sniper brigades (KPAGF, KPAN, KPAAF).
- Missile regiments.
- Engineer regiments (bridge).
- Signal regiments.
- AT battalions.
- Reconnaissance battalions.
- Long-range reconnaissance battalions.
- Engineer battalions (general and construction).
- Nuclear-chemical defense battalions.
- Signal battalions (wire, radio, or telephone).
- Electronic warfare/military intelligence companies.

## B. Combat Division Force Structure

In the KPAGF, the largest tactical formation is the division. Divisions are able to—

- Conduct operations as part of a corps or higher organization without being task organized.
- Sustain independent operations for a designated period of time.
- Integrate interagency forces up to brigade-or group-size formations.
- Execute all actions as directed by a higher headquarters.

The KPAGF field one armored division, four mechanized divisions, 27 infantry divisions, and 40 additional infantry divisions assigned to the reserves. Figure 3-3 shows the various types of divisions that the KPAGF field, and figure 3-4 illustrates the structure of a KPAGF infantry division. Mechanized infantry divisions are very similar except the squads ride in armored personnel carriers (APCs) or infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs), depending on the priority of the unit for equipment.



Ref: ATP 7-100.2 (Jul '20), fig. 3-3. Different types of KPAGF divisions.



# II. Korean People's Army Navy (KPAN)

*Ref: North Korea Military Power: A Growing Regional and Global Threat, Defense Intelligence Agency (2021), app. D.*

The North Korean Navy is the smallest of the KPA's three conventional force services, with about 60,000 personnel. The Navy's primary mission is to defend North Korea's coastline and territorial waters from attack and to protect the approaches to North Korea's main ports. The Navy is also responsible for SOF insertion, coastal surveillance, and the protection and control of fisheries operations. In wartime, the Navy will focus on antisurface warfare, mine warfare, and interdicting sea lines of communication to hinder the United States and UNC's ability to flow forces into the theater.<sup>195</sup> North Korea's Navy would be constrained to a largely defensive role in a conflict, and it would face significant challenges attempting to operate against South Korea or the United States.

North Korea's Navy is primarily a coastal force. It maintains one of the world's largest submarine forces and operates a large fleet of air-cushioned hovercraft and conventional landing craft to support amphibious operations and SOF insertion. The force is divided into East and West Coast Fleets, with each operating a variety of patrol craft, guided-missile patrol boats, submarines, and landing craft.<sup>197</sup> North Korea has about 70 diesel-electric attack, coastal, and midget class submarines in service divided between both coasts. Many of the North's submarines are of older design and have limited endurance; however, they are sufficiently capable of using torpedoes and mines to threaten merchant ships and U.S. and allied navies operating near the Korean Peninsula. Determined to expand its undersea and deterrent capabilities, North Korea launched a new ballistic missile submarine with a single launch tube in 2015 and began flight-testing SLBMs the same year. North Korea is expected to continue SLBM development and expand its naval deterrent unless it proceeds with denuclearization. Finally, North Korea is likely to introduce other new submarines into its force.<sup>198,199,200,201</sup>

The Navy's surface ship order of battle comprises mostly small patrol craft that carry a variety of antiship cruise missiles, torpedoes, and naval guns. The Navy also operates a large fleet of air-cushioned hovercraft and conventional landing craft to support amphibious operations and SOF insertion.<sup>202</sup> The Navy uses a variety of torpedoes, including straight-running and wake-homing torpedoes, that can be launched from submarines and some surface ships. An international investigation concluded that North Korea used a wake-homing torpedo known as CHT-02D to sink the South Korean corvette Cheonan in March 2010.<sup>203,204</sup>

North Korea has a history of mine warfare being instrumental to its coastal defense strategy. During the Korean War, North Korea's naval forces were able to mine Wonsan Harbor and, as a result, successfully prevented a U.S. amphibious landing from cutting off retreating North Korean ground forces.

The most dramatic new development in the North Korean naval force was the debut of a ballistic missile-capable submarine and its associated SLBM, the Pukguksong-1 (translated as Polaris-1). According to North Korean press statements, the SLBM will be cold-launched and solid-fueled, will carry a nuclear warhead, and is intended to be launched from ballistic missile submarines. North Korea conducted multiple flight tests of the developmental SLBM in 2016 and displayed it in a military parade in 2017.<sup>206</sup> North Korea tested a second SLBM, called Pukguksong-3, in October 2019. A ballistic missile strike role would be wholly new for the Navy, which may not yet have a final plan for how to incorporate this new mission into existing doctrine and plans. North Korea's Navy also tested antiship cruise missiles in 2017.<sup>207</sup>

# KPA Navy (KPAN)

Ref: North Korea Military Power: A Growing Regional and Global Threat, Defense Intelligence Agency (2021), p. 49.

## Major Naval Units 196

### NAVAL ORDER OF BATTLE (approx.)

Personnel strength	60,000
Submarines	70
Patrol combatants	400
Amphibious landing craft	260
Mine warfare vessels	20



The navy includes naval forces for both oceanic and littoral missions. The **Korean People's Army Navy (KPAN)** is composed of 60,000 active duty personnel with no reserve.

# III. Korean People's Army Air & Air Defense (KPAAF)

*Ref: North Korea Military Power: A Growing Regional and Global Threat, Defense Intelligence Agency (2021), app. C.*

The North Korean Air Force is primarily responsible for defending North Korea's airspace and territorial integrity. Its other missions include tactical air support to KPA Ground Forces, insertion of SOF, transportation and logistics support, wartime strikes against targets in South Korea, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. The Air Force is capable of defending North Korean airspace, with aircraft and ground-based systems but would struggle to penetrate South Korean air defenses in an attack role.

North Korean air and air defense forces are organized into four air divisions (each responsible for a sector of the country) that control surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), antiaircraft artillery (AAA), and air surveillance assets. The forces also control transport units and two airborne sniper brigades as well as various support elements. The air divisions control combat and transport aircraft and helicopters that operate from a large number of airfields.

The air and air defense forces have about 110,000 personnel and control over 900 combat aircraft, over 300 transport aircraft, and 300 helicopters. The more modern aircraft are concentrated in and around Pyongyang, and the SAMs and AAA provide perimeter security for the country and the capital in particular. The capital has one of the most dense concentrations of AAA in the world.<sup>187</sup>

The Air Force's most capable combat aircraft are its few MiG-29 Fulcrum fighters procured from the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, its MiG-23 Flogger interceptors, its Su-25 Frogfoot ground-attack aircraft, and its Il-28 Beagle bombers. The majority of its aircraft are much older and less capable; the Air Force is one of the only air forces in the world that still operates MiG-21s, MiG-19s, MiG-17s, and MiG-15s. The Air Force also maintains a large fleet of An-2 Colt aircraft, first produced in the 1940s, which are single-engine 10-passenger biplanes probably tasked with inserting SOF into South Korea but are also capable of supporting simple air-to-ground strike missions. The Air Force is rounded out with other Soviet-era transport aircraft, including helicopters that would be used for troop transport and limited ground attack.<sup>188</sup>

The most common North Korean ground-based air defense artillery threat to aircraft (helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft) and unmanned aerial systems is very likely manually directed AAA and man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS). Manually directed systems will have limited ability to engage smaller targets, such as UAVs, in addition to poor ability to engage all targets at night and in inclement weather.

KPA ground-based AAA probably will rely heavily on medium-caliber (30-mm to 57-mm) AAA guns. Medium-caliber AAA guns maximize firepower (a combination of rate of fire and kinetic energy) by offering some of the highest rates of fire while being large enough to have sufficient terminal ballistics and lethality characteristics. The KPA also fields numerous 14.5-mm antiaircraft machineguns and domestically produced MANPADS (SA-7, SA-14, and SA-16). North Korea operates a variety of SAMs, mostly Soviet-era systems, including the SA-2, SA-3, SA-5, and SA-13.<sup>190</sup>

Flight time for North Korean pilots reportedly is severely restricted to as few as 15–25 hours per year. Flight hours this low probably stem from fuel shortages and may reflect concern over the upkeep and maintenance of the North's aging aircraft.<sup>191</sup> Under these conditions, North Korean pilots most likely focus their training on simple pilot proficiency and the maintenance of basic aeronautical skills.

# KPA Air Force (KPAAF)

Ref: North Korea Military Power: A Growing Regional and Global Threat, Defense Intelligence Agency (2021), p. 46.

## Major Air Units 189

### AIR ORDER OF BATTLE (approx.)

Personnel strength	110,000
Combat aircraft	900
Helicopters	300
Transport aircraft	300



See pp. 9-15 to 9-18 for related discussion of KPA Air Defense operations.

# V. KPA Special Operations Forces (SOF)

*Ref: North Korea Military Power: A Growing Regional and Global Threat, Defense Intelligence Agency (2021), app. E.*

North Korea's special operations forces (SOF) are designed to infiltrate South Korea and attack targets in the rear area, and to defend against foreign attacks on North Korea. SOF members operate in specialized units, including reconnaissance, airborne and seaborne insertion, and commando squads.<sup>208</sup> Core SOF doctrine emphasizes speed of movement and surprise attack to accomplish the mission. SOF personnel may be airlifted by helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft (and possibly Civil Air Administration transports), moved by surface ships or submarines, or travel on foot over land or via suspected cross-DMZ tunnels to attack high-value targets, such as command and control nodes, airbases, and ports. North Korean SOF are highly trained and well-equipped in comparison to other units, and if successfully infiltrated into the South, would be capable of disruptive attacks in the rear area.

*See pp. 9-39 to 9-44 for discussion of KPA SOF capabilities.*

There is no single command responsible for **KPA special operations forces (SOF)**. Command of SOF units is divided between the Reconnaissance General Bureau (RGB), the Light Infantry Training Guidance Bureau, and the Strategic Operations Forces. The latter is also responsible for the SOF that will call in deep fires for the artillery. There are also SOF units that receive their training guidance from the RGB, but are assigned on a habitual basis to train with the four KPAGF forward-deployed corps. While many military forces field SOF and commando units in their military, the KPAGF do not use commando units; however, several of the light units belonging to the SOF forces would contain characteristics normally found in such units. The North Korean armed forces field approximately 200,000 SOF personnel divided among the KPAGF, KPAN, and KPAAF, with most belonging to the KPAGF.

SOF personnel are present at all echelons of the KPA (from brigade and division to corps) as well as the strategic-level 11th Corps, which controls a number of SOF brigades for strategic missions, including creating a "second front" in the rear area that disrupts and distracts from the main fight along the frontlines. SOF light infantry, sniper, and reconnaissance elements and air and naval SOF elements are present in many infantry divisions and the forward corps. The various SOF units comprise over 200,000 personnel organized into brigades of 3,000–5,000 members and separate regiments and battalions of varying strength (these personnel are accounted for in KPA manpower figures).

North Korean SOF units are provided with the best available equipment, including weapons, explosives, incendiaries, chemical and biological agents, parachutes, aircraft, and communications equipment. Compared with the equipment of other worldwide SOF units, North Korea's equipment is rudimentary, and North Korean SOF probably lacks such sophisticated items as burst communications equipment, advanced signal-processing equipment, and specialized explosives. State media photos from two training exercises revealed purported North Korean SOF using newly identified equipment, including helical magazines, improved ballistic helmets, night-vision devices, and body armor, but fielding of this equipment to operational units cannot be verified.<sup>209</sup>

# Functional Tactics (Overview)

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), chap 2.

This chapter explains Korean People's Army (KPA) actions within the framework of functional tactics. It discusses the functional method and the terms, symbols, and control measures used to portray and govern KPA activities. A description of action and enabling functions is given, along with common function types performed by action and enabling units. The chapter concludes with a discussion of mission task execution.

## I. Tactical Terms, Symbols, and Control Measures

The Korean People's Army Ground Forces (KPAGF) typically use a minimum number of control measures to orient or regulate functional actions in a military operation. A control measure is a means of regulating forces or warfighting functions (ADP 6-0). The KPAGF visualize an operational environment (OE) to facilitate rapid transition, when necessary, between offensive and defensive actions and between linear and nonlinear dispositions. The KPA adapts to the nature of conflict conditions and provides clear expectations of a mission—as well as limitations or constraints to mission expectations—in written, verbal, or graphical instructions.

### A. Area of Operations

The KPA defines an area of operations (AO) as the geographical area and associated airspace within which a commander has the authority to plan and conduct combat operations. An AO is bounded by a limit of responsibility beyond which the organization may not operate or conduct fires without coordination through the next-higher headquarters. AO boundaries may be linear or nonlinear and may or may not be contiguous. Linear AOs can contain subordinate nonlinear AOs, and nonlinear AOs can contain linear AOs. Contiguous or noncontiguous boundaries are dependent on the mission and situational conditions of an OE and typically include more than military considerations, such as political declarations on sovereign territory, formal objections by multiple actors on disputed resources, or rogue actors operating in global commons and jeopardizing regional stability.

A commander identifies the conditions of an OE from the perspective of that level of command and a mission assignment. Within a unit's area of operations (AO), defined by the next-higher commander, a commander designates specific AOs for subordinates, along with zones and other control measures to facilitate mission intent, responsibilities, freedom of action, and mission success. Typical tactical control measures include the AO and multiple zones:

- Offensive zones.
- Defensive zones.
- Security zone.
- Defense zones.
- Zone of reconnaissance responsibility (ZORR).
- Attack zone.
- Kill zone.
- Kill box.

See following pages (pp. 3-2 to 3-3) for an overview and further discussion.

## B. Zones

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), pp. 2-2 to 2-5.

On the offense or the defense, the KPAGF main body will be divided into a defense zone with either three echelons or two echelons and a reserve. In the offense, the first echelon will consist of approximately two-thirds of the maneuver units. The second echelon will consist of approximately two-ninths of the organization's remaining combat power. The final one-ninth of the organization's maneuver units will serve as a reserve or a third echelon unit. The location of the echelons depends on the size of the unit—battalion, regiment, division, or field army. In the offense, the KPA uses fewer control measures than when on the defense.

**Offensive Zones.** The KPAGF use minimal control measures when conducting offensive actions, including zones. The KPA commander gives each subordinate commander left and right boundaries, and the order delineates the avenues of advance. Table 2-1 provides the standard attack frontage and depth for various KPAGF units. See chapter 5 for detailed information about reconnaissance and advance guard units.

**Defensive Zones.** KPAGF AOs typically consist of four primary zones when on the defensive: the security zone and the first, second, and third defense zones. There is also a buffer zone located between each of the three defense zones in a field army area defense. Zones may be linear or nonlinear in nature. The size of these zones depends on the size of the KPA units involved, engagement ranges of weapon systems, the terrain, and the nature of the enemy's operation. The KPAGF do not designate a support zone, so there is no support line as found in U.S. Army doctrine. The battle line (the KPA does not use this term) separates the first defense zone from the security zone. The KPAGF will place their logistical units in the rear of the first defense zone and throughout the second and third defense zones.

**Security Zone.** The security zone is the AO of a disruption force. This zone is a geographical area and airspace in which the security force fixes or disrupts an enemy, and sets conditions for successful combat actions throughout an AO. The KPAGF divide the security zone into the combat security area and the general security area. The combat security area is 1–2 km in front of the first defense zone and is subdivided into two areas. The first area extends 200–400 m from the forward battalions and is occupied by security outposts, security patrols, and ambush teams. The second area extends up to 2 km in front of each forward regiment and is occupied by a company (+) unit arrayed in 3–4 combat observation posts. These posts provide early warning, prevent surprise attacks, and call for and adjust artillery fire. The general security area extends 10–15 km in front of the first echelon defense zone of a division or corps. For corps operations the general security area is manned by a regiment (+) and for division operations this area is occupied by a battalion (+). The mission of general security outposts is to provide early attack warning and to conduct disruption, delay, and interdiction missions. Units in this security zone begin the attack on specified components of the enemy's combat system to begin the disaggregation and defeat of that system. Successful actions in the security zone will create a window of opportunity that is exploitable for forces in the defense zones. The security zone is bounded by the battle line and the limit of responsibility of the overall AO. In linear offensive combat, the higher headquarters may move the battle line and limit of responsibility forward as the force continues to move and maneuver in successful offensive actions. A higher headquarters commander can adjust the security zone boundary as forces adopt a temporary defensive posture while consolidating gains after a successful offensive action or in preparation for subsequent offensive actions. Similarly, a higher headquarters commander can adjust the security zone boundary based on emergent conditions in defensive actions. Security zones between or among KPAGF units may be contiguous or noncontiguous. They can also be layered, with a



# Enabling Forces and Elements

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), pp. 2-8 to 2-10.

## Security Force or Element

The security function is a principle enabler for all KPAGF tactical actions. Security is a continuous requirement and is performed by units with capabilities that act to protect KPA units from observation, destruction, or becoming fixed. Security functions can be to provide early warning and reaction time to the KPA, isolate enemy elements from an ongoing KPA mission, or actively delay, defeat, or destroy enemy forces to enable a KPAGF action unit to be successful.

A security unit provides security for a larger organization to which it is assigned, protects it from observation, and provides early warning of enemy actions. The security unit conducts activities to prevent or mitigate the effects of hostile actions against the overall tactical-level command or its key components. The KPA commander may choose to charge this security unit with providing protection for the entire AO, including the rest of the functional units; logistics and administrative units; and other key installations, facilities, and resources. The security force may include various types of units—such as infantry, special operations forces, counterreconnaissance, and signals reconnaissance assets—to focus on enemy special operations and long-range reconnaissance forces operating throughout the AO. It can also include internal security forces units allocated to tactical-level command, with the mission of protecting the overall command from attack by irregular or paramilitary forces. The security force may also be charged with mitigating the effects of weapons of mass destruction.

## Fixing Force or Element

The fixing function is a principle enabler for most tactical actions. Performing a fixing function requires capabilities that provide the means to prevent enemy units from interfering with KPA mission accomplishment. A fixing unit can fix the enemy by preventing a part of its force from moving from a specific location for a specific period of time so it cannot interfere with the primary KPAGF action. For example, in a mission to ambush a convoy moving through an urban area, a fixing function could be to delay arrival of an enemy quick reaction force. If the mission is to destroy an enemy force in a battle position, a fixing function could be to prevent a reserve from reinforcing the enemy force in the battle position.

Success in fixing an enemy is accomplished when a designated part of an enemy unit cannot participate in timely actions that otherwise could lead to disruption or failure of a KPA mission. This function can be accomplished in various ways including but not limited to suppressing a unit with fires, deceiving with coordinated elements of EIW, delaying enemy forces or elements from entering an area with voluntary or coerced civilian demonstrations, ambushing enemy units, denying enemy movement with countermobility effects, and disrupting enemy logistics sustainment.

The KPA identifies which enemy forces need to be fixed and the method(s) by which they will be fixed. It will then assign this responsibility to a force that has the capability to fix the required enemy forces with the correct method. A fixing force may consist of a number of units separated from each other in time and space, particularly if the enemy forces required to be fixed are similarly separated in disposition and location. A fixing force could consist entirely of affiliated irregular forces conducting discrete attacks on logistics, C2, or other systems to fix an enemy.

## Deception Force or Element

A KPA deception unit conducts deception actions that lead the enemy to act in ways prejudicial to enemy interests or favoring the success of a KPAGF action unit. When the EIW plan requires combat forces to conduct deception actions, such as a feint or demonstration, these forces will be designated as deception forces. Operational security

measures protect the actual purpose of these forces, and allocated resources support the practical conduct of tasks to deceive an enemy leader of mission intent.

## Disruption Force or Element

A disruption unit typically operates in the KPA security zone to disrupt enemy preparations or actions; destroy or deceive enemy reconnaissance; or begin reducing the effectiveness of key components of the enemy's combat system. The KPAGF security zone is normally 16–20 km in width and 10–15 km in depth for a KPAGF field army, and is in front of the first defense zone found in the main defense area. In the offense, the disruption unit could be a disruption force that already existed in a preceding defensive situation. For example, the disruption force for a division is typically a regiment with additional assets task-organized for the disruption function. Battalions or subordinate headquarters typically serve as disruption forces for regiments and can require task-organizing as a detachment.

## Assault Force or Element

An assault unit, as an enabler, supports the success of an action unit. One or more enablers could be directed to assault to destroy an enemy force or seize a piece of terrain that supports the conditions for an action unit to achieve the overall objective. At regimental level, the commander may employ one or more assault forces.

The purpose of an assault force may be to create or help create the opportunity for an action force—such as an exploitation force—to accomplish the primary mission. In this instance, an assault unit would have an enabling function. For example, a unit that breaches an obstacle and enables an assault unit to attack through the breach is a breaching unit. In such an offensive action, the breaching actions require an assault to enable the breaching to occur. Since the term “breaching” is more descriptive of the supporting function than the term “assault,” the former is used instead of the latter. The breaching units serve as an enabler for an action force to continue the attack and accomplish the KPAGF's primary mission objective. In this mission, the role of the supporting assault force is to create the tactical conditions for an exploitation unit—the action unit—to accomplish the mission objective.

## Support Force or Element

A support unit provides support to action units. Support units can be designated by their specific functions and may include—

- Support by fires. (See Appendix A for more information on fires support operations.)
- Types of other combat support.
- Types of rear service.
- C2 functions for parts of a unit or organization.

## Protected Force or Element

In tactical missions, there may be a particular organization(s) that the KPA commander wants to be protected from enemy observation or fire to ensure that it will be available after the current operation is over. This is designated as a protected unit. A protected unit is a capability preserved by a commander for a specified purpose. This type of unit is typically located in the rear of the main defense area.

## Reserve

In initial orders, some KPA subordinate units are held in an uncommitted status. At the KPA commander's discretion, some forces or elements may be retained under direct control, in reserve, as a means to influence unforeseen events or take advantage of emergent tactical opportunities. These capabilities are designated as a reserve. If and when such reserves are subsequently assigned a mission to perform a specific function, they receive the appropriate functional unit designation. For example, a reserve force might be ordered to become a counterattack unit. As another example, a unit with a mission task of demonstration or feint can be designated a deception unit.

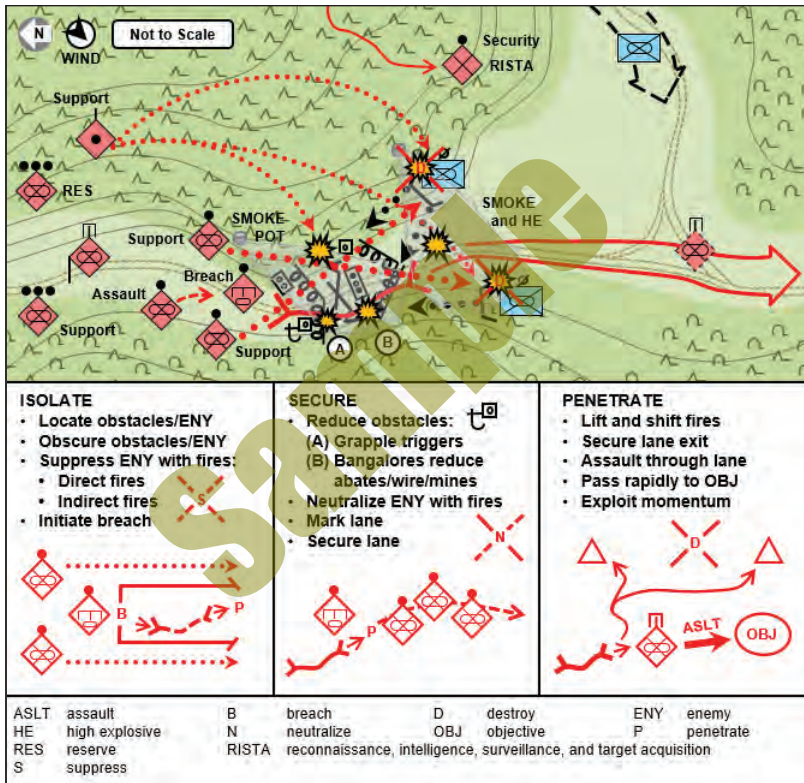


- Draw the enemy force into an ambush.
- Retain the ability to conduct its chosen COA.
- Move away and continue an assigned mission.

Breaking contact ensures KPA GF units retain the initiative and fight under circumstances of their choosing. It also provides the commander with the flexibility to either continue with the planned COA or to rapidly adopt a new COA more suited to changed conditions.

## IV. Situational Breach

A situational breach is the rapid reduction of and passage through an obstacle encountered in the execution of another tactical task. A breach drill is a combined arms tactical task executed by functionally organized elements performing various subtasks. Figure 4-4 provides an example of a situational breach.



Ref: ATP 7-100.2 (Jul '20), fig. 4-4. Situational breach (example).

## V. Fire and Maneuver

Fire and maneuver is a tactical drill designed to ensure the KPA GF retain the initiative to move and fight. Fire and maneuver is how the KPA GF make contact with, or react to contact by, an enemy. The action element is the movement or maneuver element, and the support element is the fixing element. Figure 4-5 provides an example of fire and maneuver.

A deliberate decision is the preferred way of conducting fire and maneuver in order to provide the commander with the flexibility to continue with a planned COA or



# Reconnaissance and Security

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), pp. 5-1 to 5-8.

This chapter covers Korean People's Army (KPA) reconnaissance and security—essential components to any mission. It discusses how the KPA uses reconnaissance, intelligence, surveillance, and target acquisition (RISTA) as essential elements to successfully meet its reconnaissance and security requirements. It also addresses the KPA intelligence process. The section on security provides information on how the KPA protects its units from being surprised by the enemy. Examples of reconnaissance and security organizational structures and the types of missions conducted by both types of units are found throughout the chapter.

## I. Reconnaissance and Security Operations

Reconnaissance and security operations are integrated functions to obtain information and create practical knowledge in order to enhance tactical decision making and actions and protect designated units, activities, and KPA combat power. Reconnaissance and security measures continuously sustain situational awareness and understanding of an operational environment (OE), including friendly forces, enemies, adversaries, and civilian populations. Security operations provide early and accurate warning of adversarial actions, intent, or other OE conditions that could impact mission accomplishment, and provide KPA leaders with time and maneuver space to preempt or react to conditions. The KPA considers reconnaissance and security as primarily offensive actions.

Reconnaissance and security missions are typically interwoven in combined arms mission tasks. While the KPA considers reconnaissance to be a military activity, it requires a variety of information not only about the enemy's military, but its politics and economics, as well as an OE's geography and weather. Reconnaissance is a specified or implied task for all KPA activities. In addition to the inherent continuum of reconnaissance and security actions, KPA leaders designate specified missions with appropriate capabilities and ensure that reconnaissance and security efforts complement the coordinated intelligence mission effect with higher-and lower-echelon headquarters and units.

Reconnaissance and security tasks combine the functional capabilities of organizations to provide the best possible collection and tactical effects to achieve assigned purpose and intent. Capabilities are typically a combination of ground and aerial resources and sensors. An extensive suite of technical sensor systems at various KPA echelons supports specified reconnaissance, surveillance, information collection, intelligence production, target acquisition, and fires tasks. Resource capabilities can overlap in coverage to provide redundancy or mitigate possible shortcomings of a particular system. Functional areas often integrated for reconnaissance and security operations include but are not limited to—

- Cyberspace and electromagnetic spectrum.
- Artillery rangefinding and signals target acquisition.
- Aircraft collection systems.
- Space system collection downlinks and interface into tactical systems.
- Air defense integrated early warning and target acquisition.
- Engineer mobility and countermobility.

# I. Reconnaissance Fundamentals

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), pp. 5-8 to 5-21.

## I. Reconnaissance Missions

KPA reconnaissance missions are usually grouped into three broad categories: area, zone, and route. A fourth category is special reconnaissance, which is typically conducted by special operations forces (SOF) or other designated units operating in the depth of an enemy AO or at selected sites.

### Reconnaissance Missions



**Area Reconnaissance**



**Zone Reconnaissance**



**Route Reconnaissance**



**Special Reconnaissance**

KPA doctrine further categorizes the different reconnaissance missions by branch or function. These categories include—

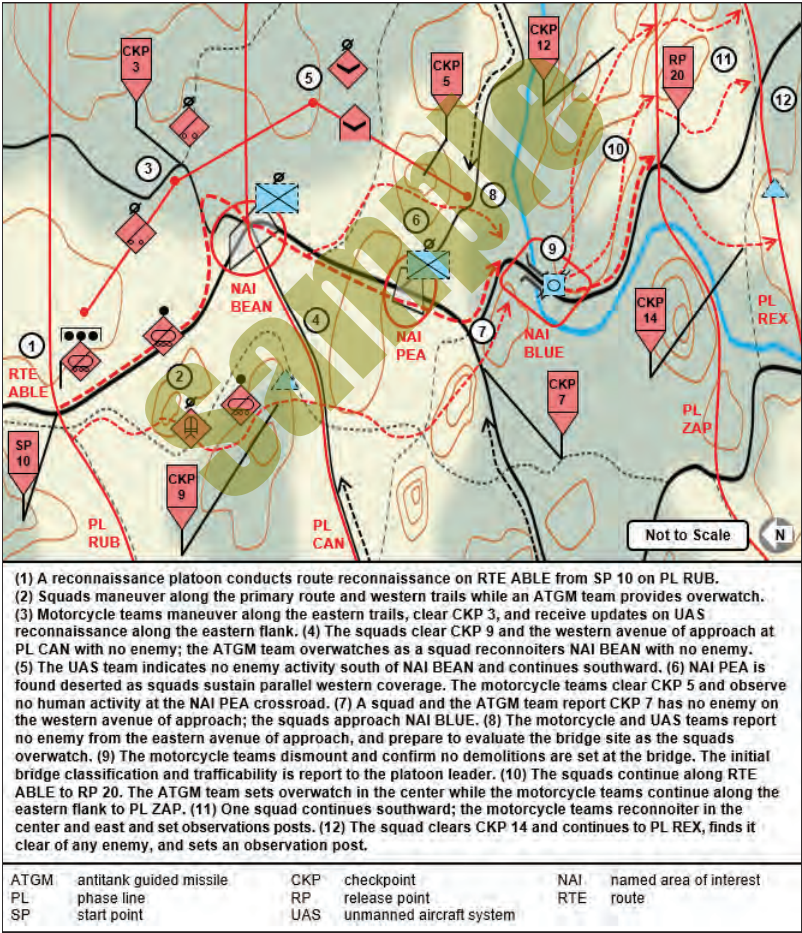
- Infantry.
- Armor.
- Field artillery.
- Signal corps.
- Engineers
- Chemical.
- Wireless technology.
- Rear area.
- Geographic.

### A. Area Reconnaissance

KPAGF area reconnaissance is a mission to obtain detailed information about the terrain, adversary or enemy activity, civilian activities, infrastructure, or other OE features within a designated geographic area. The area may be identified as a single geographic point or a specified area defined by a boundary. One difference between an area reconnaissance and a zone reconnaissance is that an area reconnaissance focuses typically on a geographic area smaller than a zone.

Figure 5-1 provides an example of a reconnaissance platoon reinforced with engineer reconnaissance squads conducting an area reconnaissance oriented on possible river crossing sites. The reconnaissance may include the following requirements—

- Trafficability of primary and alternate access, approach, and exit routes to crossing sites.
- Sustainability of routes based on soil and slopes.
- Concealed locations for crossing support units.
- Lateral and overhead restrictions to staging, support, and readiness areas.
- Riverbank slope and reinforcement material.
- Water flow characteristics, velocity, and probable near-and far-bank saturation areas in heavy rains.
- River bottom characteristics.
- Seasonal wind direction for smoke obscuration use considerations.
- Bypass routes if two planned crossing areas become untenable.



Ref: ATP 7-100.2 (Jul '20), fig. 5-1. Area reconnaissance and tactical tasks (example).



# I. Offensive Actions (Fundamentals)

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), pp. 6-1 to 6-14.

The Korean People's Army Ground Forces (KPAGF) visualize offensive actions as the decisive form of operations and an ultimate means of imposing their will on the enemy. The KPAGF have six purposes for conducting offensive action and use seven different forms of maneuver in their attacks. They use specific combat formations at the company and platoon level, with tight control by junior leaders. At the regimental and division level, they conduct integrated, dispersed, and limited-objective attacks. At battalion and below, KPAGF units conduct assaults, ambushes, raids, and reconnaissance attacks.

## I. Purpose of the Offense

The Korean People's Army (KPA) will likely attack and execute defenses by utilizing each and every gap between enemy forces—no matter how small. The KPA will likely endeavor to fix its enemies' maneuver forces and then flank and turn them with light infantry on the high ground. The goal will be to isolate enemy ground forces—particularly heavy forces—and, while they may not be destroyed, they will be cut off from sustainment support. Surrounded, low on ammunition, and out of fuel is a very psychologically destructive position to be in, and is the reason why entire U.S. units were lost during the Korean War. The primary distinction between different types of offensive actions is the purpose, which depends on three things: the situation, the resources available, and the overarching mission. Purpose is defined by the KPAGF commander in a mission statement, and the unit political officer must approve all of the unit commander's orders. The KPAGF recognize six general purposes of tactical offensive actions:

- Gain freedom of movement.
- Restrict freedom of movement.
- Gain control of key terrain, personnel, or equipment.
- Gain information (conduct reconnaissance).
- Dislocate.
- Disrupt.

See following page (p. 5-3) for an overview and further discussion.

KPAGF task organization of a unit for the offense is determined by function, with primary mission areas of disruption, attack, support, and reserve actions. Analysis of a primary action and enabling functions indicate how to most effectively apply available capabilities. Special mission requirements may emerge during this analysis, requiring specialized capabilities and task organization.

## II. Planning the Offense

Key elements of planning offensive missions are—

- Determine the offensive objective.
- Ensure there is adequate logistical support to accomplish the objective.
- Determine available time to plan and prepare actions.
- Organize units by functional mission task requirements.

# Forms of KPAGF Offensive Maneuver

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), pp. 6-3 to 6-10.

## Encirclement Maneuver (P'owi)

The encirclement maneuver, p'owi (pronounced "po we") in Korean, is conducted by the KPAGF at both the operational and tactical levels. While KPAGF corps- and army-level headquarters may use up to two divisions to conduct an operational encirclement, any encirclement done at the division and lower level will normally use the entire unit. The intent of the encirclement maneuver is to intercept the majority of the retreating enemy unit(s), encircle it, and destroy it. During the Korean War, North Korean units consistently attempted a double envelopment of South Korean and U.S. units. The KPAGF commander will often choose a location for the intended encirclement somewhere between the location of the enemy's front-line positions and its reserve unit. The KPAGF anticipates that successful penetration or thrust maneuvers in the area will cause units in adjacent AOs to withdraw or move to alternate positions. The KPA believes enemy units are most vulnerable during a retrograde operation, making them susceptible to encirclement and annihilation. The KPAGF further breaks down their encirclement maneuvers based on the situation: Partitioned destruction: encirclement of large units. Compressed destruction: encirclement of smaller units. Fire power destruction: destruction of units in narrow areas and while fighting encirclement operations. Raid destruction: destruction of units in built-up areas.

## Penetration Maneuver (Tolp'a)

The penetration maneuver, tolp'a (pronounced "dolpa") in Korean, is normally a division-level operation to destroy a defending unit and create a maneuver corridor 2–3 km in width. The penetration is normally supported by 50 to 80 tubes of mortar, artillery, and rocket fire for each kilometer of the defensive position under attack. Along the demilitarized zone (DMZ), a penetration during an initial attack by the KPAGF would likely receive support from 150 to 180 tubes per kilometer. The purpose of the penetration is for a first tactical echelon unit to create a gap wide enough to allow a second tactical echelon unit to pass through. Once the first tactical echelon unit penetrates the front-line position, it would set up a situational defensive position while the second tactical echelon unit passes through in order to conduct a deep attack against the combat support, rear service, and C2 units in the enemy's division or corps rear area.

## Thrust Maneuver (Ch'ŏmip)

The thrust maneuver, ch'ŏmip (pronounced "chim ip") in Korean, is conducted by a company, battalion, or regiment against an enemy strongpoint. The normal assault area will only be 600–800 m in width, with a maximum of 1,000 m. The attacking unit will receive support from between 110 and 150 tubes of mortar, artillery, and rockets. Units along the DMZ during an initial attack would likely receive support from 150 to 180 tubes if designated to conduct a thrust maneuver. Similar to a wedge splitting a log, the small attacking unit would force an opening through the strongpoint in order to allow an exploitation force to pass through the gap. For a larger thrust maneuver, the KPAGF may use two action units, one on each side of the gap, to create a larger hole for the following exploitation force. Once the second tactical echelon force passes through the gap, it could receive one of four missions: continue the attack by striking the rear or flank of the targeted enemy unit, attack the rear or flank of a unit adjacent to the targeted unit, open a blocked maneuver corridor, and assist in the passage of a larger force conducting a turning maneuver or besetment maneuver in the enemy's division or corps rear area.

## Holding Maneuver (Kyŏnje)

The holding maneuver, kyŏnje (pronounced "kyun jae") in Korean, is a type of dispersed attack to fix a larger force with a much smaller KPAGF unit. The KPAGF's intent is to draw enemy reserves away from the main effort. Holding maneuvers can be conducted by any size unit, from company to division. The holding unit will often serve as part of a feint or demonstration across a larger front. It may employ small-unit raids or mass indirect fires to deceive the enemy on its actual size and cause the committal of enemy reserves to its location. If a second tactical echelon unit is successful in passing through a penetration or thrust in an adjacent AO, the holding unit may conduct an actual attack to prevent the reserves or the unit under the holding attack from going to the aid of a unit being encircled or under besetment.

## Turning Maneuver (Uhoe)

The turning maneuver, uhoe (pronounced "wu hoe") in Korean, is a precursor movement to establishing an encirclement position or conducting a besetment of an enemy defensive position. KPAGF corps-and army-level headquarters conduct operational turning maneuvers, while division and lower headquarters conduct tactical turning movements. This maneuver can be used against the enemy's reserve or to coerce an enemy unit to abandon its primary defensive positions and fight in an undesirable direction. The turning unit may use limited visibility (night or inclement weather) or rough terrain (swamps, rice paddies, rivers, or mountains) to avoid undesirable contact with the enemy. If there is no natural gap in the enemy's defensive position, the turning unit could be part of a second tactical echelon that has passed through a gap in the front lines created by a penetration or thrust by a first tactical echelon unit.

## Infiltration Maneuver (Ch'im't'u)

The infiltration maneuver, ch'im't'u (pronounced "chim tu") in Korean, is an attempt to pass a KPAGF unit through the enemy's lines undetected in order to establish attack positions in the enemy's division or corps rear area. The infiltration unit(s) will use limited visibility or rough terrain to pass through the enemy's front lines undetected. The mountainous terrain on the Korean Peninsula, with most of the mountains running north-south, makes light infantry traversing the ridgelines an excellent method of reaching the enemy's rear area. A KPAGF division will normally designate several light infantry companies as infiltration units. While KPAGF units lower than division do not have designated infiltration units, regular KPAGF infantry may be used in that role. KPAGF infantry regiments will normally employ a single infantry company, and infantry battalions will employ one platoon to conduct infiltration maneuvers within their AOs. KPAGF units larger than division may also use infiltration maneuvers. An infantry corps will likely use the majority of its light infantry brigade and attached sniper brigade (four battalions each) during an offensive operation to attack the enemy division or corps rear areas. These infiltrating units will normally attack enemy C2 elements or artillery positions, block enemy reinforcements, or secure chokepoints to facilitate the movement of friendly follow-on units.

## Besetment Maneuver (P'och'o)

The besetment maneuver, p'och'o (pronounced "po cho") in Korean, is conducted by KPAGF units at the regimental and lower level to destroy units in defensive strongpoints. For success, the KPAGF unit making the attack desires a 3:1 ratio of friendly to enemy units, so regiments attack battalion strongpoints, battalions attack company strongpoints; and companies attack platoon strongpoints. The intent is to attack the defending unit on multiple flanks to make it impossible for the enemy unit to escape. There are four types of KPAGF besetments, but any flank not under direct fire will be covered with indirect fire. The four types of besetments are front and one flank; front and two flanks; front and rear; and front, rear, and two flanks.

# Functional Organization for a Integrated Attack

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), pp. 6-18.

An integrated attack employs various types of functional units. The tactical KPAGF commander assigns subordinate units functional designations corresponding to their intended roles in the attack.

## Enabling Forces

An integrated attack often employs fixing, assault, and support forces. A disruption force exists, but is not created specifically for this type of offensive action.

### Fixing Force

The fixing force prevents enemy defending, reserve, and quick-response forces from interfering with the actions of the assault and exploitation forces. The mission task to fix a designated enemy force can be time-related or when relieved of the task by the KPAGF commander. One or more fixing forces can be employed during the attack.

### Assault Force

The assault force is charged with destroying a particular enemy force or seizing key terrain. The assault or assaults can create a tactical opportunity for an exploitation force. The commander may employ one or more assault forces.

### Support Force

A support force provides the assaulting unit with one or more of the following, including but not limited to—

- C2 and communications.
- Rear service units.
- Direct fire support.
- Indirect fire support.
- Mobility support.
- EIW support.

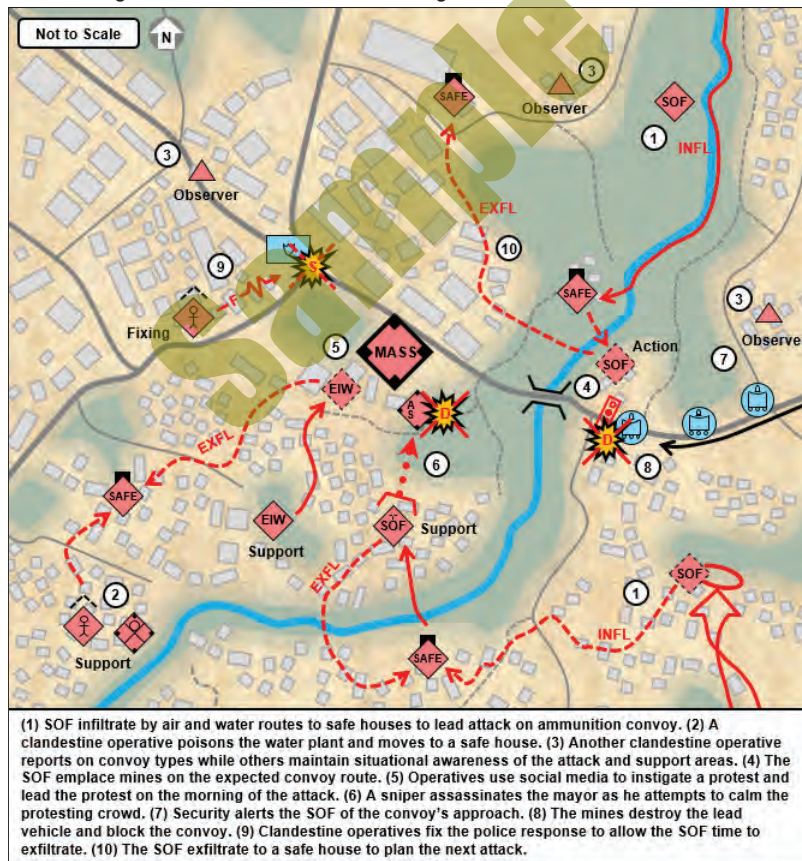
## Action Force

The most common type of action force in an integrated attack is the exploitation (second tactical echelon) force. This force must be capable of penetrating or avoiding enemy defensive forces and destroying targeted critical components of the enemy combat system. An exploitation force typically possesses a task-organized combination of mobility, protection, and firepower to accomplish the assigned exploitation objective.

## B. Dispersed Attack

Dispersed attack is an offensive action in which the KPA GF conducts offensive actions when threatened by a superior enemy or when unable to mass or provide integrated C2 and communications to an attack. While a unit of any size can conduct a dispersed attack, it will likely be conducted by a company or larger. The primary objective of dispersed attack is to create tactical opportunities to destroy the enemy's will or capability to continue armed conflict. Dispersed attack relies on dispersion of units and EIW effects to conduct tactical offensive actions when overmatched by an enemy. To achieve this, the KPA GF does not necessarily have to destroy the entire enemy force, but often only destroy or degrade key components of the enemy's combat system.

The KPA GF dispersed attack concept is to conduct recurring attacks in varied timing and multiple locations to degrade vulnerable enemy capabilities. A dispersed attack can be used against peer forces when tactical opportunities emerge and support the gradual defeat of the enemy combat system. Figure 6-10 is an example of a dispersed attack by KPA special operations forces (SOF) with assistance from North Korean clandestine supporters already living in South Korea. A subordinate unit could also conduct a dispersed attack as part of its higher unit's integrated attack. Number 3 in figure 6-9 provides an example of a unit conducting a dispersed attack while the higher KPA GF unit conducts an integrated attack.



Ref: ATP 7-100.2 (Jul '20), fig. 6-10. Dispersed attack (example).

# IV. Complex Operational Environments

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), chap 6.

The KPA expects to perform offensive operations in two primary types of complex OEs: urban and subterranean.

## I. Urban Operations

KPAGF offensive doctrine emphasizes speed in the attack. As such, the first operational echelon forces will likely bypass any major cities they encounter during offensive operations, leaving follow-on forces to deal with later. The KPAGF will likely isolate the bypassed cities to prevent assistance from the outside or a breakout from inside the urban area. The KPAGF has numerous small urban-warfare training facilities scattered throughout North Korea and at least one major army-level urban training facility to practice urban-warfare skills.

The major South Korean cities are densely packed urban environments with vast underground networks for communications, transportation, and utilities. There are over 320 km of track in the Seoul subway, with 70% of it located underground. There are also subways located in the four next-largest cities in South Korea: Busan, Incheon, Daegu, and Daejeon. These underground tunnels will serve as air raid shelters for local civilians.

If the KPAGF decided to conduct offensive operations in an urban area, the soldiers would face the same difficulties all military units face when confronted with operations within cities. It takes a large number of dismounted soldiers to clear each building before moving on to the next unsecured building.

## II. Subterranean Operations

U.S. and South Korean military units have discovered four infiltration tunnels reaching under South Korean territory. There may be other tunnels that could complement a KPAGF direct attack on South Korea. The existence of these tunnels became known in the mid-1970s when a KPAGF engineer defected to South Korea and disclosed the information during his debriefing. Of the four known tunnels, ranging in length from 1.64 km to 3.5 km, three tunnels are aimed primarily at Seoul, a strategic KPA target.

All four tunnels remained undiscovered until they actually crossed the military demarcation line (MDL) into South Korea. The length of the tunnel passageways south of the MDL ranges from 435–1,100 m. The estimated number of troops able to pass through the tunnels ranges from 4,000 soldiers per hour for Tunnel #1 to 8,000 soldiers per hour for the other three tunnels. There are sources that estimate an even higher troop movement capacity. Some of the tunnels could also move heavy weapons, such as large machine guns or small-caliber artillery. One of the tunnels even possesses a concrete interior instead of a dirt floor. Tunnel #3 is unique, as the diggers installed a rail system to remove the debris created during its excavation and a mechanical system to take the water out of the tunnel on the North Korean side of the MDL.

Some analysts, as well as the South Korean Defense Ministry, estimate as many as 17 to 21 more KPA tunnels cross the MDL into South Korea. This estimate is supported by another North Korean defector, who stated during his debriefing in the early 1970s that Kim Il Sung ordered every forward-deployed KPAGF division along the DMZ to dig and maintain at least two infiltration tunnels into South Korea.

*See following page for further discussion.*



# Infiltration Tunnels

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, North Korean Tactics, (Jul '20), pp. 6-34 to 6-35.

If a general war were to resume between the two Koreas, it is likely that SOF could use the infiltration tunnels as one of their methods to gain access to South Korean rear areas. The SOF would establish a “second front” by creating chaos in the South Korean strategic rear areas through attacking military CPs and key logistical centers. Table 6-1 compares the specifications of the four infiltration tunnels discovered so far, and figure 6-19 shows their locations.

Data Point	Tunnel #1	Tunnel #2	Tunnel #3	Tunnel #4
Location	8 km NE of Korangpo	13 km N of Chorwan	4 km S of Panmunjon	26 km NE of Yanggu
Invasion route	Korangpo-Uijongbu-Seoul	Chorwan-Ponchon-Seoul	Munsan-Seoul	Sohwa-Wontong-Seoul
Troop capacity, per hour	4,000	8,000	8,000	8,000
Total length, km	3.5	3.5	1.64	2.05
Length south of the MDL, m	1,000	1,100	435	1,030
Distance from Seoul, km	65	101	44	203
Depth below surface, m	45	50–160	70–73	145
Tunnel height, m	1.2	2	1.95	1.6
Tunnel width, m	0.9	2	2.1	2.6
Tunnel lining	Concrete	None	None	None
Discovery date	15 NOV 1974	19 MAR 1975	17 OCT 1978	3 MAR 1990
km kilometers S south	m meters	MDL military demarcation line		N north NE northeast

Ref: ATP 7-100.2 (Jul '20), table 6-1. Known North Korean infiltration tunnels.



Ref: ATP 7-100.2 (Jul '20), fig. 6-19. Known North Korean infiltration tunnel locations.



# III. Tactical Defensive Actions

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), pp. 7-18 to 7-22.

## Detachments, Battalions, and Subordinate Units

KPAGF detachments, battalions, and companies typically participate as part of a maneuver or area defense organized by a higher tactical command. KPAGF detachments and their subordinates are structured to execute one functional mission at a time. These units conduct tactical defensive actions employing SBPs and CBPs as part of either an area or mobile defense.

### Tactical Defensive Actions



#### Simple Battle Position (SBP)



#### Complex Battle Position (CBP)

## I. Simple Battle Position (SBP)

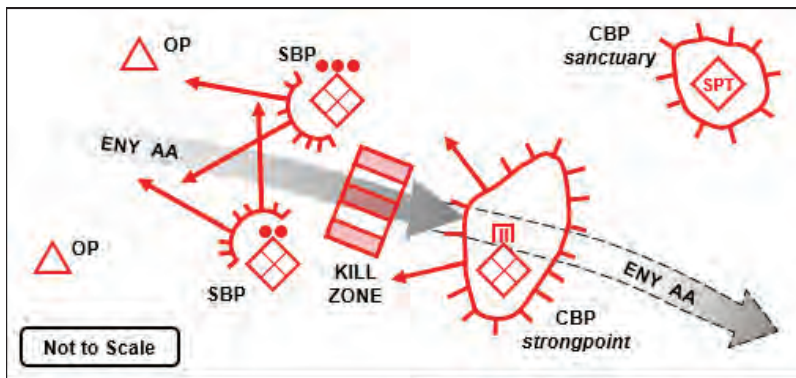
A simple battle position (SBP) is a defensive location oriented on a likely enemy avenue of approach. The development and construction of a SBP is selected on terrain well-suited to an assigned mission task. A SBP typically identifies the location of a small element, unit, piece of equipment, or system. The location of a SBP is not necessarily in complex terrain or coordinated with nearby battle positions. Improving a SBP—such as increasing C3D—is a continuous action, with an understanding of how much time is allowed to initially establish the SBP, available local resources, unit capabilities, and priorities of effort and support.

## II. Complex Battle Position (CBP)

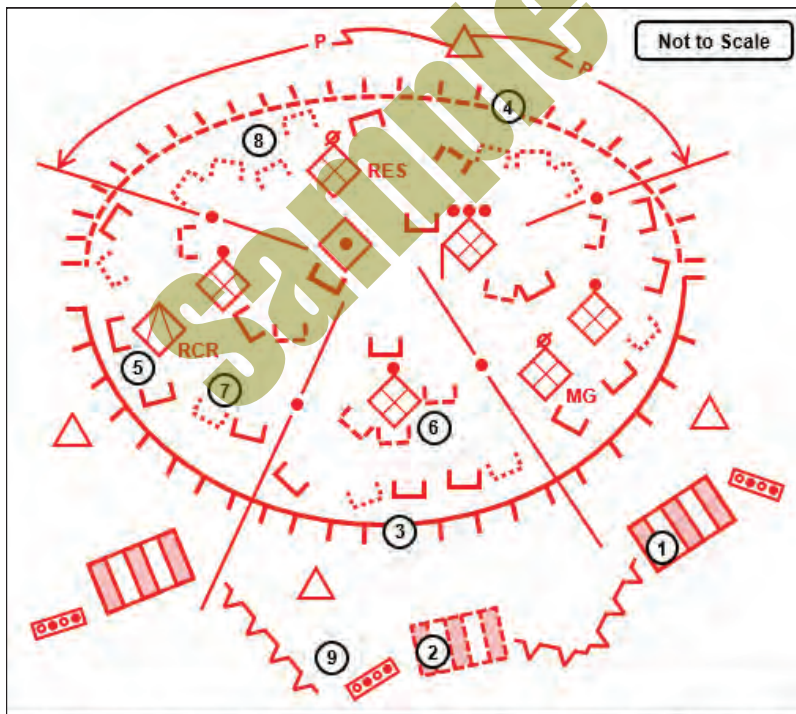
A complex battle position (CBP) is a defensive location designed to employ a combination of complex terrain, C3D, and engineer effort to protect the unit(s) in the position from detection and attack, and provide capabilities to defend and deny seizure and occupation by an enemy. North Korea has had 65 years to plan and prepare defensive positions, and the majority of these only need to be reinforced prior to hostilities. CBPs typically have the following characteristics that distinguish them from SBPs:

- Limited avenues of approach.
- Existing avenues of approach are observable by the defender.
- 360-degree defensive measures and protection from attack.
- Engineer effort that provides some countermobility obstacles that do not jeopardize C3D measures or otherwise reveal the CBP location.
- Sufficient logistics caches for intended defensive operations.
- Sanctuary from which to launch local tactical actions.

The location of a CBP is not necessarily oriented to an avenue of approach, as with a strongpoint. When sanctuary is the locational purpose, a CBP occupies terrain not likely to experience regular attention or use by an enemy unit. Figure 7-9 provides examples of SBPs and CBPs.



Ref: ATP 7-100.2 (Jul '20), fig. 7-9. Simple and complex battle position symbols (example).



A KPA platoon prepares a battle position. It identifies (1) primary and (2) alternate kill zones, then determines its (3) primary and (4) supplementary battle position orientation. It then selects (5) primary, (6) alternate, (7) subsequent, and (8) supplementary fighting positions within the battle position perimeter. (9) Obstacles and mines canalize the enemy into the kill zones.

Ref: ATP 7-100.2 (Jul '20), fig. 7-10. Platoon orientation in a battle position (example).

### III. Functional Organization of a Battle Position

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), pp. 7-18 to 7-24.

The KPAGF commander of a detachment, battalion, or company defending in a battle position designates subordinate units with functional responsibilities, with titles that describe each unit's function.

#### Disruption Element

The disruption element operates in a security zone to—

- Defeat enemy reconnaissance efforts.
- Determine the location, disposition, and composition of approaching enemy units.
- Report on observations and situational understanding.
- Coordinate actions and fires in conjunction with RISTA.
- Coordinate actions and fires with chemical-, biological-, radiological-, or nuclear-capable weapons systems.

Combat security outposts are typical of disruption capabilities employed outside of main defensive arrays and perimeters in an AO. They are generally composed of task-organized platoon-or squad-size elements. During counterreconnaissance and other security actions, other elements of a unit may be directed to support outpost mission tasks.

See pp. 5-37 to 5-38 for more information on combat security outposts.

See facing page. Figure 7-10 is a pictorial representation of a typical platoon with its orientation within a battle position.

#### Main Defense Element

The main defense element is to defeat or destroy an attacking unit. Designated elements may be directed to maneuver, attack, and defeat a penetration of the main defensive positions.

#### Reserve Element

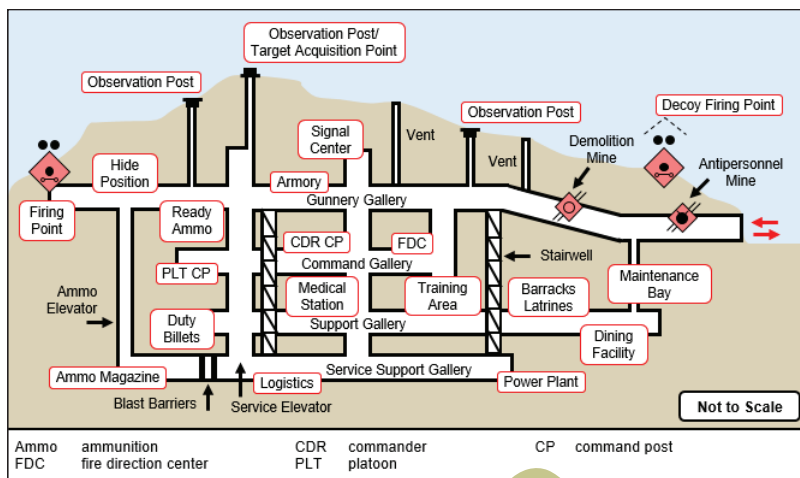
The reserve element provides tactical flexibility. All KPAGF leaders consider probable and possible contingencies and identify a capability to respond to emergent situations. Some types of KPAGF reserves have an assigned mission task and are a committed element, but can be redirected to other actions based on command decision for effective defenses and mission success.

#### Support Element

The support element of a battle position has the mission of providing one or more of the following capabilities, including but not limited to—

- Rear service Units.
- Command, Control, And Communications.
- Direct Fires Support.
- Indirect Fires Support.
- Support To Nonlethal Actions Such As EIW.
- Engineer Support.

built the HARTS in the 1950s at mountain fronts, but later switched to positions near mountain tops. Figure 4-14 provides an example of a HARTS.



Ref: ATP 7-100.2 (Jul '20), fig. 4-14. Subterranean complex battle position (side-view functional example).

Based on the terrain, the HARTS could be entirely manmade or a modification of a natural cave or cave system. If needed, a HARTS may contain surface trenches for both communications purposes and internal self-defense, including machine gun pillboxes for use against ground attack. The entrance doors to the bunkers will often be made of either solid steel or hollow steel with concrete poured between the metal slabs for additional protection. The passageways in a HARTS are typically 2–3 m in height and width and lined with 20–40 cm of concrete, often reinforced with steel. HARTS are equipped with an exhaust fan and a ventilation system to remove the smoke produced when firing for long periods of time. If the artillery is of the towed variety, the artillery prime movers will likely be nearby in a covered area for protection from counterartillery or direct aerial fire attack. Tunnels will likely connect the various guns so crew members can move between the positions without being seen by their enemy or becoming vulnerable to direct or indirect fire.

Each artillery piece in a HARTS will feature its own gun platform, crew cover, and ammunition storage areas. Each firing position, as some guns will have more than one, features a sheltered location consisting, at a minimum, of a crushed rock pad surrounded by a high berm created from the rock and dirt excavated during the construction process. Some HARTS will also contain a concrete pad for the artillery pieces or concrete walls. The HARTS position will be situated in such a way that the artillery tube or multiple rocket launcher system can be fired from inside its covered position.

Each gun or multiple rocket launcher system emplacement will likely have immediate access to one to four units of fire, consisting of 120 rounds per gun. It is estimated that the KPAGF store 30–90 days of additional ammunition in the local area. In offensive operations, the KPAGF planning factor is four units of fire on day one and two units of fire for the next 2 days, before moving forward to a new position. In defensive operations, the KPAGF plan on two units of fire per day. ZPU-2 or ZPU-4 heavy anti-aircraft machine gun companies in protected positions, most likely crewed by local female militia members, will protect most HARTS from aerial attack.

# Counterstability Actions

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), chap 8.

No peace treaty has been signed to end the Korean War; only an armistice is currently in place. As such, North Korea has conducted counterstability operations in South Korea since the cease-fire began in 1953. The purpose of North Korean counterstability actions is to counteract the actions of an enemy to create a stable environment for the civilian population to live in and flourish. North Korean counterstability actions can include regular and irregular Korean People's Army (KPA) activities to degrade and disrupt an enemy's civil security, law enforcement, public services, infrastructure, and effective governance, and destroy enemy resolve to resist the eventual outcome of the unification of Korea under the Kim regime. The methodology to conduct counterstability operations will change depending on the environment, from the current semipeaceful state between North and South Korea to the possibility of renewed combat operations on the peninsula.

## Counterstability in Support of North Korean Military Operations

Successful counterstability actions are typically evaluated as part of a long-term campaign to achieve North Korea's goals and objectives. Counterstability in tactical-level actions orients on several major characteristics of an OE. Offensive and defensive tasks aim at creating, sustaining, and exploiting a lack of—

- Nominal safety in everyday livelihood and commerce.
- Fair and impartial judicial processes.
- Trustworthy and effective law enforcement.
- Effective military and internal security forces.
- Responsible administration, stewardship, and governance by leaders.

**North Korea will likely employ criminal activities and terrorism** in its actions to destabilize the South Korean population, civilian environment, and governance in order to support of its goals and objectives. Although criminal organizations and terrorist groups are examples of capabilities that can conduct counterstability actions, the desired effects can also be created by KPA regular forces, irregular forces, combinations thereof, or willing or coerced civilians.

## I. Purpose of Counterstability Actions

The purpose of KPA counterstability actions is to create conditions enabling the successful design and execution of operations in a particular operational environment (OE) in order to complete a mission. Counterstability actions complement other regular or irregular KPA offensive and defensive tasks to counter the stability operations of South Korea and its coalition partners or allies. Counterstability is an integral aspect of KPA military operations and often causes an impact beyond the tactical and operational effects of armed combat. Whether conducted by regular forces, irregular forces, combinations of regular and irregular forces, or willing or coerced civilians, counterstability actions focus on disrupting major areas of potential stability in an OE.

The KPA plans, prepares, and executes counterstability activities to support tactical and operational missions and strategic goals in order to—

- Discredit enemy civil law enforcement or internal security forces.
- Deride enemy judicial processes.
- Damage enemy civilian infrastructure.
- Degrade enemy civil governance.
- Dissuade South Koreans from supporting the enemy.
- Disrupt coalition partner or ally support to the enemy.
- Dislocate enemy from regional or global community and diaspora support.
- Defeat enemy military and internal security operations.
- Destroy enemy civilian and military resolve to resist North Korea.

## II. Planning Counterstability Actions

The KPA, with assistance from the Korean Workers' Party, will exploit conditions of instability to enhance achieving its goals and objectives during both conflict and non-conflict periods. Counterstability actions range from covert influence to overt violence. The KPA will create conditions, unstable and otherwise, to promote a gradual acceptance of its objectives by the South Korean people, regional powers, and even eventual acceptance and support from transnational institutions.

Figure 8-1 provides examples of actions, targets, and the effects that North Korea hopes to achieve to destabilize the South Korean Government.

Task to Action	Enemy Target	Effect to Achieve
Discredit	Law enforcement	Unsafe environment
Degrade	Judicial processes	Doubtful rule of law
Disrupt	Social services	Insufficient well-being
Dislocate	Civil governance	Ineffective functions
Damage	Infrastructure	Unproductive economy
Disintegrate	South Korean population	Unsupportive citizenry
Dislocate	Partner/ally support	Isolated enemy
Destroy	Enemy resolve	Submissive population

Ref: ATP 7-100.2 (Jul '20), fig. 8-1. Counterstability actions to create conditions and effects.

If war were to break out on the Korean Peninsula, the KPA would attempt to exceed South Korea's capacity to exercise effective governance, maintain civil order and obedience, and ensure economic development. A principal aim would be to sustain recurring incidents in the South Korean population, create disruptive conditions that threaten effective South Korean governance, and defeat South Korea's practical resolve. Examples of instability actions that North Korea can institute or co-opt against South Korean targets include but are not limited to—

- Computer warfare aimed at civilian computer systems.
- Recurrent acts of terrorism within South Korea by North Korean supporters or special operations forces (SOF) personnel.
- Degrading or making infrastructure obsolete to diminish civilian quality of life.

### 7-2 (Counterstability Actions) Overview



# I. North Korean Actions Within South Korea

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), pp. 8-7 to 8-11.

Infiltrating governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental organizations in South Korea is a possible way for North Korea to disrupt operations and relationships among enemy actors and institutions. Intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations are the primary sources of subject matter expertise in many essential services and governance responsibilities. They are also the primary provider of humanitarian, infrastructure, and essential services in South Korea. Intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations usually have experienced and detailed knowledge of the civil environment within which they operate. In this principally civilian context, a diverse array of noncombatants can be a significant resource to be manipulated by the KPA or the Korean Workers' Party.

## I. Regular-Force Instability Activities

Since the armistice ended the fighting in 1953, North Korea has conducted activities within South Korea or in South Korean territorial waters in a number of ways. Two examples are the sinking of the South Korean corvette, ROKS CHEONAN, and the artillery attack against Yeonpyeong Island. The first may demonstrate the inability of South Korean naval forces to protect themselves from attack, while the second showed the vulnerability of South Korean civilians residing within range of North Korean artillery units.

On 26 March 2010, an explosion ripped the CHEONAN as it cruised the Yellow Sea a short distance south of the disputed Northern Limit Line. Despite the heroic efforts of the South Korean Navy, only 58 of the 104 sailors on board survived the attack. North Korea denied any role in the sinking, but a joint investigation with experts from five countries concluded that a torpedo fired from a North Korean submarine sank the ship. Russia later conducted its own investigation and determined the evidence was insufficient to determine a culprit.

On 23 November 2010, North Korean artillery units on Mudo Island and the mainland launched an attack with 122-mm multiple rocket launchers on Yeonpyeong Island. This occurred after a South Korean Marine K-9 artillery battery stationed on the island refused to stop its scheduled artillery exercise after a North Korea directive. The Marine battery conducted counterbattery fire on the firing units. The North Korean artillery barrage killed two South Korean Marines and two civilians who lived on the island. The South Korean Government decided to evacuate approximately 200 civilians to its mainland. After tensions rose throughout the day, calmer heads prevailed and the situation returned to normal.

These two incidents indicate the vulnerability of not only South Korea's civilians, but also of its military units to surprise attacks from North Korean forces. The threat of future North Korean provocations keeps tensions high in South Korea and could result in instability within its populace.

## II. Special Operations Forces Instability Activities

North Korean SOF and Korean Workers' Party forces are active and often operate in South Korea. During the 1960s, North Korean military personnel and agents infiltrated into South Korea in an attempt to create an insurgency similar to the one occurring in South Vietnam at the same time. The most well-known SOF action was

(Counterstability Actions) I. North Korean Actions Within South Korea 7-7



# North Korean Intelligence Services' Covert and Clandestine Operations

Ref: *North Korea Military Power: A Growing Regional and Global Threat*, Defense Intelligence Agency (2021), p. 59.

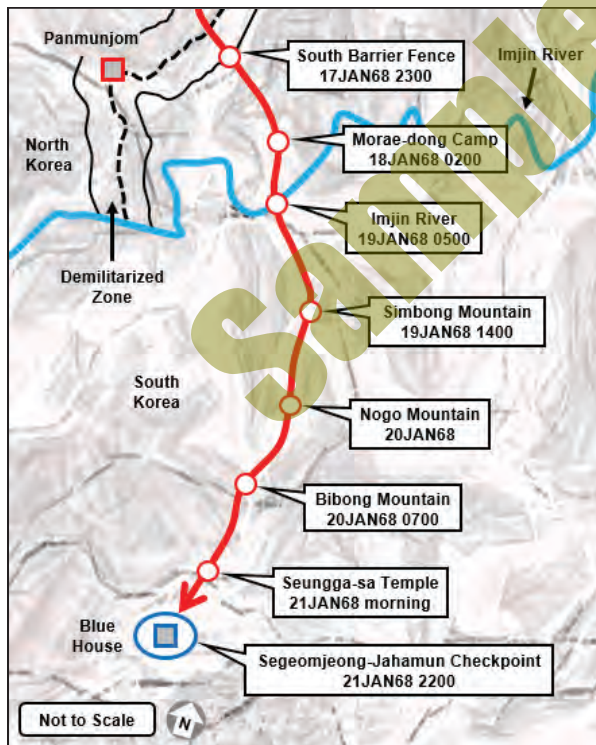
2020		
2019		
2018		Conducted cyber espionage against United States and other foreign government entities.
2017	Feb	Murder of Kim Jong Nam, Kim Jong Un's half-brother, in Malaysia.
2016	May	WannaCry ransomware attacks.
2015	Nov	Hack of world banking system; \$81 million stolen from Bangladeshi bank reserves through SWIFT.
2014	3 Nov	Hack of Sony Pictures; destroyed 70 percent of firm's computers, compromised employee PII and internal emails, resulted in delay of movie release.
2013	20 Apr	DarkSeoul cyberattack executed by North Korea; malware rendered tens of thousands of computers in South Korea's financial and media sectors inoperable.
2011	Sep	Attempted assassination of defector Park Sang-hak by North Korean agent.
2010		
2009	Jun	Denial-of-service attacks against U.S. and South Korean government telecommunications services led by RGB's Lab 110 unit.
2008		
2007		Attempted assassination of North Korean defector Hwang Jang-yop.
2006		
2005		
2004		North Korea hacking of South Korean and U.S. Defense Department networks.
2003		
2002		
2001		
2000		
1999		
1998	Jun	North Korean midget submarine captured by South Korea on probable spy mission; all four North Korean agents onboard committed suicide after killing five sailors from the sub's crew.
1997	Feb	Defector from extended Kim family, Lee Han-yong, assassinated in Bundang, South Korea.
1996	Sep	North Korean submarine on espionage mission infiltrated South Korean territory; 24 North Koreans killed, 13 South Koreans killed, 1 North Korean missing, 1 North Korean captured.
1995		
1994		
1993		Assassination of South Korean diplomat Choi Duk-keun in Vladivostok, Russia, by poison.
1992		
1991		
1990		
1989		
1988		
1987	29 Nov	Bombing of Korean Air Flight 858 between Baghdad and Seoul by two North Korean agents; all 115 people onboard killed.
1986		
1985		
1984		
1983	9 Oct	Attempted assassination of South Korean President Chun Doo-hwan in mausoleum bombing in Rangoon; 21 killed including 18 South Koreans.
1982		
1981		
1980		
1979		
1978	Jan & June	Kidnapping of South Korean actress Choi Eun-hee and producer Shin Sang-ok from Hong Kong.
1977		
1976		
1975		
1974	15 Aug	Second assassination attempt on South Korean President Park Chung-hee in South Korea. Park's wife, Yuk Young-soo, was inadvertently killed in the attack.
1973		
1972		
1971		
1970	11 Dec	North Korean agent hijacks domestic Korean Airlines Flight YS-11; holds passengers and crew hostage; 39 passengers later released, 11 kept in North Korea.
1969		
1968	21 Jan	Failed raid on South Korea's Blue House in an attempt to assassinate South Korean President Park Chung-hee; South Korean and U.S. military personnel killed in the incident.

# Historical Example: Attack on the Blue House

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), pp. 8-9 to 8-11.

In the mid-1960s, North Korea attempted to create an insurgency in South Korea, similar to what was happening in South Vietnam at the time. South Korean military and police forces killed 130 infiltrators and captured another 43 between 1964 and 1967. In 1966, the KPA started training Unit 124 for the express purpose of assassinating South Korean President Park Chung-hee. The mission's secondary purpose was to create chaos throughout South Korea and, with assistance from clandestine North Korean supporters, launch a guerrilla campaign against the South Korean Government in order to create a regime collapse.

The KPA soldiers selected for this mission were handpicked and trained for 2 years, including the last 2 weeks at a full-scale model of the Blue House near Wonsan. The soldiers received intensive training on infiltration and exfiltration methods, weapons, land navigation, hand-to-hand combat, and concealment. They were trained to cover 13 kph while carrying a 30-kg rucksack. The intense training resulted in numerous injuries: at the end, only 31 soldiers made the cut for the mission.



Ref: ATP 7-100.2 (Jul '20), fig. 8-6. Attempted assassination of the South Korean President.

Unit 124 left Wonsan on 16 January 1968 and headed for the North Korean section of the DMZ. Each team member had dark overalls, tennis shoes, a cap, a submachine gun, a pistol, eight grenades, an antitank mine, a dagger, and a rucksack with other supplies. On the night of 17–18 January 1968, the soldiers infiltrated across the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division section of the DMZ, near Yeoncheon, in six different teams. The KPA chose the

# II. Electronic Intelligence Warfare Components

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), pp. 9-3 to 9-16.

**North Korean EIW should not be confused with the U.S. view of EW or information operations.** North Korean EIW contains a number of components that are part of U.S. information operations, including EW, but also includes several activities that the U.S. does not normally associate with these terms. Integrated within North Korean EIW doctrine are the following components:

## Electronic Intelligence Warfare (EIW) Components

- **Electronic Warfare (EW)**
- **Deception**
- **Physical Destruction**
- **Protection and Security Measures**
- **Perception Management**
- **Information Attack**
- **Computer Warfare**
- **Reconnaissance**
- **Cryptanalysis**
- **Intelligence Collection**
- **Disinformation Operations**

These components do not exist in isolation from one another and are not mutually exclusive. The overlapping of functions, means, and targets requires all components to be integrated into a single, cohesive EIW plan. Effective execution of EIW, however, does not necessarily involve the use of all components concurrently. In some cases, one component may be enough to successfully execute a tactical EIW action. Nevertheless, using one component, such as camouflage, does not by itself necessarily constitute an application of EIW.

The use of EIW components is determined by the tactical situation and support to the overall operational objective. The size and sophistication of an enemy force also determines the extent to which the KPA employs the various components of EIW. The KPA commander may mix and match components to best suit tactical needs, within the bounds of guidance from higher authority.

Tools for waging EIW can include, but are not limited to—

- Conventional physical and electronic destruction means.



*CYBER1-1: The Cyberspace Operations & Electronic Warfare SMARTbook (w/SMARTupdate 1\*) topics and chapters include cyber intro (global threat, contemporary operating environment, information as a joint function), joint cyberspace operations (CO), cyberspace operations (OCO/DCO/DODIN), electromagnetic warfare (EW) operations, cyber & EW (CEMA) planning, spectrum management operations (SMO/JEMSO), DoD information network (DODIN) operations, acronyms/abbreviations, and glossary of cyber terms.*

# EIW Objectives and Targets

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), p. 9-4.

The KPA can employ EIW tools from both civilian and military sources and from assets of third-party actors. Information links, such as transmitters, communications devices, and protocols, will be targeted. The KPA is extremely adaptive and will employ the best option available to degrade, manipulate, influence, use, or destroy an information link. See table 9-1 for typical examples of EIW objectives and targets.

<b>Mission</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Possible Targets</b>
Electronic warfare	Exploit, disrupt, deny, and degrade the enemy's use of the electromagnetic spectrum.	Command and control and RISTA assets and networks.
Deception	Mislead enemy decision makers. Cause confusion and delays in the decision making process. Persuade local population or international community to support North Korea's objectives.	Key military decision makers. General enemy populace and international media outlets and Internet sites.
Physical destruction	Destroy the enemy's information infrastructure.	Command and control nodes and links, RISTA assets, telecommunications, and power sources.
Protection & security measures	Protect critical information assets.	Enemy RISTA assets.
Perception management	Distort reality or manipulate information to support North Korea's goals.	Enemy RISTA assets. Local populace and leaders. Media outlets, both international and domestic.
Information attack	Alter or deny key information.	Decision makers and other information users. Systems reliant on accurate information.
Computer warfare	Disrupt, deny, or degrade the enemy's computer networks and information flow.	Enemy command and control unit, RISTA assets, and computer networks.
Reconnaissance	Obtain key information on the enemy to achieve positive results on the battlefield.	Enemy units and leaders.
Cryptanalysis	Decode the enemy's coded message traffic.	Enemy written and electronic communications.
Intelligence collection	Obtain key information as directed by the KPA unit leader.	Enemy units and leaders.
Disinformation operations	Deliberately release false information, causing the enemy to make a wrong decision.	Enemy political and military leaders.
KPA Korean People's Army      RISTA reconnaissance, intelligence, surveillance, and target acquisition		

Ref: ATP 7-100.2 (Jul '20), table 9-1. *Electronic intelligence warfare objectives.*

# Perception Management Activities

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), p. 9-12 to 9-14.

At the tactical level, the KPA seeks to undermine an enemy's ability to conduct combat operations through psychological warfare and other perception management activities aimed at deterring, inhibiting, and demoralizing the enemy and influencing civilian populations. The various perception management activities include efforts conducted as part of—

## Perception Management Activities

- **Psychological Warfare**
- **Direct Action**
- **Public Affairs**
- **Media Manipulation and Censorship**
- **Statecraft**
- **Public Diplomacy**

## Psychological Warfare

Psychological warfare is a major contributor to perception management during pre-combat, combat, and post-conflict stages of a war. Targeting enemy military forces, psychological warfare attempts to influence the attitudes, emotions, motivations, aggressiveness, tenacity, and reasoning of enemy personnel. Specialists plan psychological warfare activities at all levels of command. In addition to enemy military forces, North Korea also conducts psychological warfare against its own people to control them.

North Korean specialists also concentrate on manipulating the local South Korean population and international media in favor of the KPA, turning opinion against its enemies' objectives. KPA planners focus special emphasis on highlighting enemy casualties and lack of success. KPA planners also highlight enemy mistakes, especially those causing civilian casualties. The South Korean population will be a major target of these activities due to the criticality of South Korean public support for military activities.

Example: North Korea Blames U.S. for American Student's Death. In January 2016, an American student visited North Korea as part of an organized tour group. As he was departing the country, the student took down a propaganda poster and attempted to smuggle it out of the country. The North Korean Government arrested him and sentenced him to 15 years' hard labor in prison just two months later. Early in his sentence, the student suffered a severe neurological injury and the North Korean Government released him in June 2017 on "humanitarian grounds." The student returned to the U.S., but died a week later.

North Korea attempted to deflect its culpability in the student's death in a number of ways, both domestically and internationally. First, the student confessed publicly on television to breaking North Korea's laws, reading from a handwritten script at the prompting of a local Methodist church and a university secret society. Second, the North Korean Government claimed the student was sent to the country to break its laws at the behest of the U.S. Government, doing so both before the trial and after the student's death. Third, North Korea stated the U.S. Government was trying to exploit the student's death for internal political purposes. Fourth, The North Korean Government denied any allegations that the student was tortured while in its country, and he had fallen into a coma due to a combination of botulism and sleeping pills. The U.S. doctor's noninvasive autopsy did not prove the student was tortured. Lastly, North Korea released three other Americans in May 2018 to demonstrate the country's willingness to negotiate with the U.S.

Through a variety of outlets, North Korea attempted to manage the perception of the student's death to the people living in North Korea, the U.S., and the international community. North Korea attempted to control the message as much as it could to create the impression that the student's death was not due to anything government officials did or failed to do while the student was in prison.

The KPA attempts to employ media and other neutral players, such as nongovernmental organizations, to further influence public and private perceptions. If North Korea perceives the presence of nongovernmental organizations to be detrimental to its objectives, the Kim government will attempt to hinder their efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to the populace, thus discrediting them.

## Public Affairs

The KPA may conduct public affairs actions aimed at winning the favor or support of the South Korean leadership and populace in the event that North Korea decides to invade South Korea. This civil support from the KPA might take many forms, such as public information and community relations. It could involve providing money, schools, medical support or hospitals, religious facilities, security, other basic services, or hope—as seen from the North Korean perspective. The KPA would accompany these support activities with the message or impression that, if North Korea loses the war or leaves the area, the local population will lose these benefits and the security provided by the KPA.

## Media Manipulation

Perception management targeting the media is aimed at influencing both domestic and international public opinion. The purpose is to build public and international support for North Korea's actions and to dissuade an adversary from pursuing policies perceived to be adverse to its interests. The willingness of the local South Korean population to either support or to oppose the KPA military effort will be critical to North Korea's success. While most aspects of media manipulation are applicable to levels well above the tactical, the trickle-down effect can have a major effect on the KPA tactical fight.

North Korea exploits the international media's willingness to report information without independent and actual confirmation. For example, South Korean and other international media reports state North Korea has ended its nuclear testing and has closed down its test facility. This is based on reports given to the media by the country and inviting the media, who are not knowledgeable about nuclear testing, to visit the nuclear test facility.

*Note. North Korea employs media censorship to control its own population's access to information and perception of reality. Successful preparation of the population significantly enhances public support for the KPA's military actions. As part of this, North Korea prepares its forces and population for enemy information operation activities.*

## Target Audiences

North Korean perception management activities seek to define events in the minds of decision makers and populations in terms of North Korea's choosing. Successful perception management consists of two key factors: speed and connection. Speed means reaching the target audience before the other side can provide the correct information, thus altering the perception of events. Connection means having the right media to provide the story to the target audience in a way that it will find credible and memorable. World opinion is a primary target of perception management, either to gain support for North Korean causes or to turn world opinion and support against potential foes. Reinforcement of its message (preferably by different sources) is also a powerful tool North Korea uses to convince the target audience of the veracity of its position.

## VI. Information Attack

Information attack focuses on the intentional disruption or distortion of information in a manner to support KPA mission completion. Unlike computer warfare attacks targeting the information systems, information attacks target the information itself. Attacks on the commercial Internet by civilian hackers have demonstrated the vulnerability of cyberspace and information systems to innovative and flexible penetration, disruption, or distortion techniques. North Korean cyberspace attackers learn from and expand upon these methods. The KPA recognizes the increasing dependence of modern armies on tactical information systems. It therefore attempts to preserve the advantages of such systems for its own use while exploiting the enemy's reliance on them.

Information attack is a critical component of EIW, offering a powerful tool for North Korea. For example, an attacker may target an information system for electronic sabotage or to manipulate and exploit information. This may involve altering data, stealing data, or forcing a system to perform a function for which it was not intended, such as creating false information in a targeting or airspace control system.

Data manipulation is potentially one of the most dangerous techniques available to North Korea. It involves covertly gaining access to an enemy information system and altering key data items without detection. The possibilities are endless with this technique. Some examples are—

- **Navigation.** Altering position data for enemy units, soldiers, and systems, making them think they are in the right place when they are not.
- **Blue Force Tracking.** Altering position data of enemy units, soldiers, and systems to make other units, soldiers, and systems believe them to be in one place where they are not or to lose track of them entirely. Alternatively, data manipulation can make KPA units appear as enemy forces or vice versa.
- **Battlefield Information Systems.** Enhancing KPA tactical success by the ability to mitigate or influence enemy activities controlled via battlefield information systems.
- **Survey and Gun or Mortar Alignment.** Causing enemy weapons to fire on the wrong target location.
- **Targeting and Sensors.** Misdirecting sensors to have false reads, locate false targets, or identify the enemy's own units as KPA targets.
- **Weapon Guidance.** Sending enemy weapons to the wrong location or target.
- **Timing.** Changing internal clocks, thereby disrupting synchronization.
- **Logistics Tracking.** Sending logistics packages to the wrong place or delaying their arrival. This can be done by altering bar codes on equipment or by hacking and altering logistics (delivery or request) data.
- **Aviation Operations.** Changing altimeter readings, position location data, or identification, friend or foe codes.

North Korea attempts to inject disinformation through trusted networks. The KPA tries to make its enemies distrust their RISTA and situational awareness assets by injecting incorrect information. Attacks could take the form of icon shifting (blue to red) or moving the icon's location. Fire missions and unit control would require significant human interaction, thus slowing the enemy's target engagement cycle.

Likely targets for an information attack are information residing in the critical tactical systems of the enemy. Such targets include—

- Telecommunications links and switches.
- Fire control.
- Logistics automation.



# Equipment & Capabilities

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), app. A - I.

North Korea is one of the most militarized countries in the world and remains a critical security challenge for the United States, our Northeast Asian allies, and the international community. The Kim regime has seen itself as free to take destabilizing actions to advance its political goals, including attacks on South Korea, development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, proliferation of weapons, and cyberattacks against civilian infrastructure worldwide.

## KPA Capabilities Overview

<b>A. Fires Support Operations</b>	<b>9-3</b>
<b>B. Aviation Operations</b>	<b>9-7</b>
<b>C. Antitank Operations</b>	<b>9-11</b>
<b>D. Air Defense Operations</b>	<b>9-15</b>
<b>E. Electronic Warfare Operations</b>	<b>9-19</b>
<b>F. Engineer Operations</b>	<b>9-23</b>
<b>G. CBRN and Obscurant Operations</b>	<b>9-27</b>
<b>H. Logistics Operations</b>	<b>9-33</b>
<b>I. Special Operations Forces Operations</b>	<b>9-39</b>

Appendix A describes how North Korean forces provide integrated fires in support of ground maneuver forces in tactical missions.

Appendix B describes how the KPA conducts aerial operations to include homeland defense, close air support of its ground forces, and support to special operations forces units.

Appendix C describes how the KPAGF employ antitank weapons in tactical missions in support of ground maneuver forces.

Appendix D describes how the KPAGF use all-arms air defense to protect its ground maneuver forces.

Appendix E describes North Korea's ability to conduct electronic warfare at the tactical level in support of tactical missions.

Appendix F describes the KPAGF's use of engineers in offensive and defensive tactical missions.

Appendix G describes KPAGF capabilities to use smoke and other obscurants, and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons in tactical missions.

Appendix H describes how North Korea supplies and sustains its ground maneuver forces in tactical missions.

Appendix I describes the KPA's normal methods of using special operations forces to support ground maneuver force operations.

# A. Fires Support Operations

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), app. A.

This appendix provides a doctrinal overview of Korean People's Army Ground Forces (KPAGF) fires support typically supporting a ground maneuver infantry regiment, brigade, or division formation. It provides a functional overview of fires support, the organizations providing it, capabilities and limitations, and its employment and integration in Korean People's Army (KPA) combined arms operations.

## Functional Overview

The mission of all KPAGF artillery is to destroy or defeat enemy personnel, equipment, and facilities and to support friendly maneuver unit (infantry and armor) operations. All KPAGF artillery, including howitzers, mortars, rockets, and recoilless rifles, are organized by type and assigned to specific units to perform explicit missions. Artillery is organized at each echelon of command from regiment to corps level to form artillery groups. Because it is likely the KPA cannot create air superiority or even air parity, it emphasizes artillery support at all levels of command. The KPA relies on artillery to offset deficiencies in other aspects of its ground forces.

## Organization

The KPA fields two artillery commands and the Strategic Force can provide indirect fire support to its units. Indirect fire and rocket units within the KPA include—

- 1 artillery division.
- 21 artillery brigades.
- 3–4 FROG/KN-02/300-mm multiple rocket launcher brigades.
- 1 SCUD-B/C/D/ER missile brigade.
- 1 No Dong brigade.
- 1 Musudan brigade.
- 1 KN-08 brigade.
- Indirect fire weapons assigned to KPAGF divisions, brigades, regiments, and battalions.

Table A-1 provides an example of what indirect fire weapons typically support KPAGF infantry units, from battalion to corps level. The weapon variants will differ from unit to unit, with lower-quality weapons found in reserve units.

## Indirect Fire Command and Control

The senior artillery officer within a KPAGF command normally serves as the artillery group commander for the organization. In a regiment, this is normally the regularly assigned artillery battalion commander supporting the infantry regiment. In a division, this is typically the artillery regimental commander. This artillery commander commands the artillery group and coordinates with the supported maneuver command. The artillery group commander will organize a staff from all the artillery units assigned to support the maneuver unit.

## Regimental Artillery Group

The regimental artillery group is composed of all organic and attached artillery units assigned to a regiment. The mortar battalion is normally positioned on the rear slope of a hill, approximately 1.5 km from the KPAGF frontline in the offense or the de-

fense, but actual location will be terrain dependent. The KPAGF intent is to place at least two-thirds of each gun's range forward of the KPAGF's front lines. The forward regiments along the demilitarized zone have their artillery groups prepositioned or positions prepared to move into so two-thirds of the guns' range fire into South Korea. The 122-mm and 152-mm artillery battalions are normally deployed between a regiment's first and second tactical echelon maneuver units. Most forward maneuver regiments will receive between two and four artillery battalions for support.

### Division Artillery Group

The division artillery group is typically composed of three to five artillery battalions, some organic and others attached, of guns, howitzers, mortars, and multiple rocket launchers. The artillery group is located between the KPAGF division's first and second tactical echelon maneuver regiments, but the exact location will be terrain dependent.

Weapon	Battalion	Regiment	Division	Corps
Mortar	82-mm: 9 tubes	120-mm: 18 tubes	n/a	n/a
Recoilless rifle	82-mm: 3 guns	n/a	n/a	n/a
Antitank gun	n/a	76.2-mm: 6 guns	100-mm: 12 guns 122-mm: 18 guns	n/a
Howitzer	n/a	122-mm: 18 tubes	152-mm: 24 tubes 122-mm: 18 tubes	170-mm: 108 tubes
Multiple rocket launcher	n/a	107/140-mm: 9 systems	122-mm: 12 systems	240-mm: 108 systems
Air defense artillery	n/a	14.5-mm: 20 guns	14.5-mm: 8 guns 37-mm: 12 guns 57-mm: 6 guns	14.5-mm: 8 guns 57-mm: 36 guns
mm millimeters    n/a not applicable				

Ref: ATP 7-100.2 (Jul '20), table A-1. Typical KPAGF indirect fire weapons, corps level and below.

### Corps Artillery Group

The corps artillery group is composed of between three and six organic and attached long-range and missile battalions, and is normally located behind the KPA lead division's second tactical echelon. When a corps arrays its divisions three abreast, it will form three artillery groups of four battalions each. If the corps has deployed its divisions in a two up and one back formation, the corps will form two artillery groups with six battalions in each.

### Capabilities And Limitations

Over 70% of all KPAGF indirect fire units are deployed in the southern third of the country and are focused on South Korea. This includes the KPAGF's artillery units usually located in fortified underground emplacements called hardened artillery sites (HARTS). From their current locations, the KPAGF artillery units can attack deep inside their enemy's rear areas, including approximately 700 artillery and rocket systems with the capability to hit South Korea's capital city, Seoul.

Coastal artillery, usually operated by the Korean People's Army Navy, is also placed along both seaboard to prevent enemy amphibious assaults. Many of these artillery units are also located in HARTS, but there are recent indications that some artillery units presurvey positions along the coasts for mobile artillery units to set their guns during any invasion from the sea. The KPA has also placed artillery on islands a short distance off both coasts to protect against amphibious assaults.

# B. Aviation Operations

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), app. B.

This appendix provides a doctrinal overview of the Korean People's Army (KPA) aviation operations typically supporting a ground maneuver infantry regiment, brigade, or division formation. It provides a functional overview of aviation operations, the organizations providing aviation support, the capabilities and limitations of aviation support, and the employment and integration of aviation in KPA combined arms operations.

## Functional Overview

The Korean People's Army Air Force (KPAAF) is part of the KPA. The primary mission of the KPAAF is to provide air defense capability to the North Korean homeland and its territorial waters. Other missions include tactical air support to the Korean People's Army Ground Forces (KPAGF) and the Korean People's Army Navy, special operations forces (SOF) insertion, strategic bombing, reconnaissance, transportation, and logistical support. All aircraft, fixed-or rotary-wing, belong to the KPAAF. There are approximately 120,000 personnel, including 29,000 officers, and about 1,600 aircraft in the KPAAF. In addition, the KPAAF controls all airfields and airports within North Korea, the North Korean national airline, and all airplane-related clubs. See pp. 2-29 to 2-30 for related discussion of KPA Air & Air Defense (KPAAF) forces.

## Organization

The KPAAF is part of the KPA and is responsible for all its aircraft. It is divided into four combat air divisions, based at 13 major bases. There are also two transportation air divisions. The KPAAF will use any airports or runways in the country to conduct military operations. There are also a number of emergency recovery airstrips and airfields throughout the country that it can use. The KPAAF has one operational underground runway, where planes can land without observation from the air, and another is under construction. Most of the military airfields possess hangers built into mountains for protection against aerial attack. Approximately 50% of the KPAAF is deployed within 100 km of the demilitarized zone. See table B-1 for additional information on these divisions and their mission.

Unit	Type	Location	Mission	Region
1st Air Division	Combat	Kaechon Air Base	Regional protection	Northwest
2nd Air Division	Combat	Toksan Air Base	Regional protection	East
3rd Air Division	Combat	Hwangju Air Base	Regional protection	South
5th Air Division	Transportation	Taechon Air Base	Transport & logistics	n/a
6th Air Division	Transportation	Sondok Air Base	Transport & logistics	n/a
8th Air Division	Combat & training	Orang Air Base	Training & regional protection	Northeast
n/a not applicable				

Ref: ATP 7-100.2 (Jul '20), table B-1. KPAAF air divisions.

The KPAAF is not only aviation-focused, but is also responsible for North Korea's air defense. If the mission involves aviation or airspace, the KPAAF is responsible for the unit or function. KPAAF organizations include the following—

- National air defense headquarters and command elements.
- Air staff.
- 6 air divisions.

- 18 fighter regiments.
- 3 light bomber regiments.
- 1 fighter/ground attack regiment.
- 1 ground attack regiment.
- Some independent air battalions.
- Some transportation regiments.
- 1 attack helicopter regiment.
- Some helicopter transportation regiments.
- Some training regiments.
- 2 sniper brigades.
- Reconnaissance unit.
- Unknown number of unmanned aircraft system (UAS) units.
- 19–20 surface-to-air missile brigades.
- Surface-to-air missile maintenance depot.
- Antiaircraft artillery academy.
- Unknown number of antiaircraft artillery regiments.
- 3 radar regiments.
- Unknown number of searchlight battalions.
- Communications regiment.
- Air traffic control regiment.
- Unknown number of aircraft production and repair facilities.

The KPAAF operates out of its headquarters in Pyongyang, the former Mirim Air Base, and several suspected underground facilities at Majang-san, Chunghwa-gun, and Pyongyang-si.

## Capabilities and Limitations

The KPAAF inventory contains approximately 1,600 fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft, including some that can operate in a variety of roles on the battlefield. Although some of the equipment is quite old, the KPAAF has the capability to conduct almost all air force missions. These include strategic bombing with the H-5 Beagle, direct air support of the KPAGF with attack or multirole aircraft, airspace control, transportation, and logistical support.

Compared to most Western air forces, KPAAF pilots do not receive sufficient training time to become truly proficient in their skills. Some KPAAF pilots have conducted combat operations in other countries, but most of this was during Vietnam or the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. Reports indicate that about 15 KPAAF pilots may have flown with the Syrian government forces attacking Aleppo in November 1973. Other KPAAF pilots have helped train pilots for the Ugandan Air Force. Before Kim Jong Un took power in North Korea, pilots flew only 15–25 hours per year due to the cost, a shortage of aviation fuel, and the lack of spare parts. Most training flights usually only lasted 30–45 minutes and focused mainly on taking off and landing the aircraft safely. Units flying the MiG-29, MiG-23, or Su-25 received additional training hours. After Kim Jong Un took power, pilot flight time double to 50 hours per year. The latest economic sanctions may have cut back the KPAAF pilots' flight time, but the effects are not fully known. It is likely that KPAAF pilots are substandard when compared to other modern air force pilots who receive many more flight hours in both simulators and the actual cockpit.

Another major limitation for the KPAAF is the advanced age of its aircraft. Most of the KPAAF aircraft use technology from before 1980. While there are a few more-recent aircraft and some of them may have received upgrades over the years, most

# KPAGF Tank & Antitank Weapons Systems

Ref: ATP 3-35 (w/Chg 2)), Army Deployment and Redeployment (Mar '15), p. C-2.

Weapons System	Type (Primary Antitank Weapon)	Primary Weapon Range, m	Quantity	Production Start Date
T-34/85	Tank (85-mm)	1,500	250	1943
T-54/55/Type 59	Tank (100-mm)	1,500	1,000	1955
T-62 or Chonma	Tank (115-mm)	1,500	1,200	1961/1971
Pokpung	Tank (115-mm/125-mm)	1,500	600	2002
Songun	Tank (125-mm)	1,500	200	2010
PT-76	Light tank (76.2-mm)	1,500	450	1951
Type 63	Light tank (85-mm)	1,500	INA	1963
PT-85	Light tank (85-mm)	1,500	500	1985
Type 62	Light tank (85-mm)	1,500	INA	1962
BRDM-2 (Not all armed the same)	Recon (Sagger)	500–3,000	2,100	1962
BMP-1	Infantry fighting vehicle (Sagger)	500–3,000	222	1972
9K11/9M14 (AT-3)	ATGM (Sagger)	500–3,000	INA	1963
9K111/9M111 (AT-4)	ATGM (Spigot)	70–2,500	INA	1970
9P148/PM113 (AT-5)	ATGM (Spandrel)	70–4,000	INA	1970
B-10	Recoilless rifle (82-mm)	400	INA	1954
B-11	Recoilless rifle (107-mm)	1,300	INA	1954
ZIS-2/M-1943	Antitank gun (57-mm)	2,000	INA	1945
ZIS-3/M-1943	Antitank gun (57-mm)	2,000	INA	1945
D-44	Antitank gun (85-mm)	1,150	INA	1944
D-48	Antitank gun (85-mm)	1,200	INA	1948
ATGM antitank guided missile      INA information not available      m meters      mm millimeters				

Ref: ATP 7-100.2 (Jul '20), table C-1. KPAGF tank and antitank weapons systems



# KPA Radar Systems

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, North Korean Tactics, (Jul '20), p. E-3.

Nomenclature	NATO/ Common Name	Type	Band	Distance Range, km	First Year
Kabina 66	Back Net	Air defense/early warning	F	250	INA
5N87	Back Trap	Early warning & acquisition	E & F	410	1991
5N69	Big Back	Early warning & ground control intercept	D	500+	1975
MT-LBU	Dog Ear	Acquisition	F & G	80	pre-1983
SNR-75	Fan Song A/B/C/E/F	Fire control & tracking	E, F, & G	60–120 (A/B); 75–145 (C/E/F)	1960s
SNR-75A	Gin Sling	Fire control & tracking	F & G	<145	1970s
SNR-125	Low Blow	Fire control & guidance	I & D	40 (I); 85 (D)	1961
INA	Moon Face	Early warning & ground control intercept	INA	INA	INA
PRV-13	Odd Pair	Height finding	E	400	1992
P-8	Knife Rest A	Early warning & ground control	VHF	150–250	1950
P-10	Knife Rest B/C	Early warning & ground control	VHF	200–250	1953
P-12	Spoon Rest A/C/D	Early warning & ground control	VHF	275	1956
P-14	Tall King	Early warning	VHF	500–600	1959
P-15	Flat Face	Early warning & acquisition	UHF	250	1955
P-15M2	P-15M Squat Eye	Early warning	UHF	5–200	late 1960s
P-35/37	Bar Lock A/B	Early warning	E & F	250–390	1958
PRV-11	Side Net	Height finding	E	180	1972
5N87	Back Net/Back Trap	Early warning	A	410	1970
SJ-202	Gin Sing-A	Fire control & acquisition	INA	INA	pre-1994
5N62	Square Pair	Fire control	H	350	1967
36D6	Tin Shield	Early warning & ground control intercept	E & F	180–360	INA
INA information not available    KM kilometers    UHF ultra-high frequency    VHF very high frequency					

Ref: ATP 7-100.2 (Jul '20), table E-1. KPA radar systems.

# I. Special Operations Forces Operations

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), app. I.

This appendix provides a functional overview of Korean People's Army (KPA) special operations forces (SOF) operations, the organizations providing logistics support, capabilities and limitations, and the employment and integration of SOF in combined arms operations.

See also pp. 2-33 to 2-34.

Unit Type	Level	Command	Number of Units	Soldiers (Estimated)
Reconnaissance battalions	Operational or strategic	Reconnaissance General Bureau	8	4,000
Reconnaissance brigades	Tactical or operational	Forward Deployed Corps	3 (17 Battalions)	4,500
Light infantry brigades	Tactical or operational	Light Infantry Training Guidance Bureau (LITGB)	12	49,600
Light infantry brigades	Tactical or operational	LITGB (Attached to forward deployed corps)	3	15,600
Sniper brigades	Operational or strategic	LITGB	3	16,800
Airborne units	Operational or strategic	LITGB	7 (includes 3 brigades, 2 sniper brigades, and 1 battalion)	30,000
Navy sniper brigades	Operational	Korean People's Army Navy	2 (1 on each coast)	9,000
Amphibious brigades (naval infantry)	Strategic	LITGB	3 (13 battalions)	5,000
Light infantry divisions	Tactical	LITGB	7	50,000–60,000
Deep artillery reconnaissance battalions	Operational or strategic	Strategic Force; Artillery Bureau, 518 Artillery Division; Army Corps (mechanized divisions)	11	Information not available
Total				184,500+

Ref: ATP 7-100.2 (Jul '20), table I-1. KPA special operations forces units.

## Functional Overview

The SOF are the best-trained soldiers in the KPA. While some KPA SOF units are similar to the SOF in other militaries, the SOF designation indicates that these soldiers receive additional training beyond the basic training given to regular soldiers. The KPA SOF include reconnaissance units, light infantry units, sniper brigades, and airborne units. The SOF spend their time training while other military units often spend time planting and harvesting crops, working on logging operations, or involved in other nonmilitary construction projects.

The most recent estimates for the KPA SOF are between 180,000 and 200,000 soldiers, sailors, and airmen. The most recent surge in KPA SOF strength estimates resulted from the conversion of seven infantry or mechanized infantry divisions into light divisions, presumably tailored to replicate tactics the KPA deemed successful based on observations of insurgents fighting conventional coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

### **Employment and Integration in Combined Arms**

The KPA will use its SOF units and clandestine supporters already on the ground in South Korea to create a "second front" in the enemy's rear areas, while its enemy must continue to deal with the conventional battle on the primary front. The SOF units will attack key enemy C2 facilities and important logistical centers, and attempt to create fratricide between enemy units located primarily in enemy rear areas. The KPA plan is likely to try to cause the enemy to divert resources to fight the SOF in its rear area, thus leaving its conventional forces at the front line more vulnerable to a conventional attack, which the KPA could perform with its limited armored forces.

The KPA SOF include ground, air, and maritime SOF units. In wartime or in transition to war, the KPA will maintain some SOF units under the command and control (C2) of their respective service headquarters or political bureau. Some SOF units are under bureau or service C2 in peacetime, but can also be provided to operational-or tactical-level commands during task organization to perform designated missions or mission support.

## **Organization**

There are two primary organizations responsible for training and executing missions assigned to the KPA SOF—the Reconnaissance General Bureau (RGB) and the Light Infantry Training Guidance Bureau.

### **Reconnaissance Battalions**

The RGB fields eight reconnaissance battalions to conduct strategic or operational missions in support of the overall KPA mission. The RGB may field another battalion tailored to clandestine operations in other countries. This type of specially designed unit may attempt to attack enemy military targets in other countries besides South Korea in the region. Each of the four forward-deployed Korean People's Army Ground Forces (KPAGF) corps arrayed along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) receives an additional reconnaissance battalion from this group of eight, in addition to its organic reconnaissance assets and any assets allocated from the reconnaissance brigades. Each of these 500-man battalions will likely serve as the lead element as a KPAGF corps crosses the DMZ into South Korea. These units' missions will be to gather intelligence, attack strategic targets, and assassinate military and political leaders. Other missions could include sniper shootings to create panic among the civilian populace, attacks against C2 centers, and assessing the reactions of the civilian population to the war.

### **Reconnaissance Brigades**

The KPA fields three brigades comprised of 17 reconnaissance battalions, all distributed among the KPA's forward-deployed corps and mechanized divisions. Often a traditional relationship exists between the reconnaissance battalion and the unit it supports, with a view toward engendering an improved quality of performance. The operational SOF units will likely rely on ground infiltration along predesignated routes, since strategic SOF units will receive a higher priority for air support. Some of the infiltration could be through preconstructed tunnels under the DMZ, with the final few yards needing to be dug to reach an egress point. SOF personnel who use this manner of infiltration may wear South Korean military uniforms or civilian attire

# SOF Capabilities and Limitations

Ref: ATP 7-100.2, *North Korean Tactics*, (Jul '20), pp. H-3 to H-5.

The KPA SOF primarily conduct five categories of missions. The first mission is reconnaissance— strategic, operational, or tactical, depending on unit composition and objective. The second mission type is direct combat operations conducted in conjunction with conventional operations, with the intent to facilitate the success of KPAGF main conventional forces. The third mission for the SOF is to establish a second front focused on defeating the C2 and combat service support units of the enemy. The fourth SOF mission is to counter the enemy's SOF by providing security for KPA conventional-force combat support and rear service units in the KPAGF rear areas. The final SOF mission is to provide internal security for the regime, as the SOF are some of the most politically reliable units in the KPA. The SOF would be called upon to deal with any domestic disturbances that might break out within North Korean territory during wartime.

Based on the Russian experience in Crimea, it is likely that either some KPA SOF would be inserted into South Korea, or North Korea would activate its clandestine agents already living in South Korea before hostilities actually began. The task of the SOF, with assistance from clandestine agents, would be to slow down the mobilization of South Korean military reserves. The SOF could do this in a number of ways:

- **Social media.** The SOF would attempt to spread the word that war between North and South Korea was not imminent and the activation of South Korean military reserves was unwarranted.
- **Antiwar protests.** The SOF, with clandestine supporters, could lead or infiltrate antiwar rallies in an attempt to convince the South Korean Government not to react to any North Korean actions.
- **False-flag provocations.** The SOF would attempt to blame any of their actions on others, especially South Koreans who favor war preparedness.
- **Political attacks.** Some SOF may attempt to cause chaos and possibly advocate regime change in South Korea during any political crisis, thus diverting attention away from any North Korean war preparations.
- **Terrorist-style attacks.** If other means proved ineffective or as an approaching conventional attack date drew near, the SOF might launch terrorist-style attacks to spread panic.
- **Attack key C2 and communications nodes.** Shortly before any KPA conventional surprise attack, the SOF would attack these important centers to prevent the flow of true information throughout South Korea.

There are three primary limitations for KPA SOF units. First, there is a finite number of aircraft and watercraft to deploy the SOF, meaning most ground units deploying through infiltration or airborne and waterborne assaults would not likely be larger than a brigade. Secondly, any airborne operation will likely lose the element of surprise after the initial sortie. Any Korean People's Army Air Force aircraft making it back safely to pick up additional SOF personnel will have to face an alerted enemy. Lastly, KPA labeling of a unit as SOF does not make it so. Many of the SOF units are more likely trained to the same standard as conventional forces in other militaries. The KPA SOF units are only special in comparison to other units in the North Korean military.

to help avoid undesired contact with enemy forces until it is too late. It is believed that most of the reconnaissance brigades' soldiers can speak English, and some subordinate units are comprised exclusively of females. The reconnaissance battalions from the brigades will attempt to determine enemy disposition and intentions, and serve as indirect fire observers. Battalions from the reconnaissance brigades will be ordered to attack high-value targets such as airfields; naval bases; port facilities; petroleum, oils, and lubricants storage facilities; or missile sites.

A 10-person squad-size unit is the essential building block of all reconnaissance units, but the KPAGF does not hesitate to use even smaller elements if the mission requires it. An individual soldier may be part of a cell with a narrow functional focus, such as clearing and scouting, raiding, destruction, capture, security, or interdiction. See chapter 5 for additional information on reconnaissance missions.

## Light Infantry Brigades

The KPA fields 12 light infantry brigades, which fall under the control of the Light Infantry Training Guidance Bureau or RGB during peacetime, but would shift to other commands prior to initiating combat operations. Three of the brigades are attached to the forward-deployed conventional KPA corps during peacetime, but the remaining eight brigades would most likely be similarly distributed among the four conventional KPAGF corps for combat operations. KPA soldiers assigned to a light infantry brigade must have previously served 4–7 years in the military and be considered politically reliable. These requirements probably stem from the likelihood that these units will operate 30–50 km from the forward edge of the battle area and away from other KPA units. Missions typically assigned to these light infantry brigades include:

- Infiltrating to seize or destroy missile sites, C2 cells, and chemical or nuclear facilities.
- Infiltrating to disrupt or destroy high-value targets such as airfields or petroleum, oils, and lubricants facilities.
- Infiltrating around enemy maneuver units to conduct encirclements or flanking attacks in support of KPAGF ground units.
- Infiltrating, seizing, interdicting, or taking control of major lines of communications to prevent the arrival of supplies or reinforcements to frontline enemy units.
- Infiltrating to seize key terrain or facilities such as dams, power plants, or enemy supply and logistics hubs.
- Providing long-range reconnaissance support to KPAGF corps and divisions.
- Serving as a rear guard during withdrawal operations, harassing the enemy or destroying bridges, tunnels, or other infrastructure that is facilitating the enemy's advance.

Light infantry brigades will most likely disperse to operate independently, employing tailored formations ranging from platoon-to battalion-size during combat operations. These SOF soldiers will likely wear civilian clothing or enemy uniforms in an attempt to disguise their true identity. Soldiers from these units will likely cross the DMZ in small groups during hours of limited visibility, then reassemble at a designated rally point. Some brigade members may infiltrate through the DMZ via the previously mentioned tunnels or enter South Korea by using small landing craft or miniature submarines along the coasts. Although KPA light infantry brigades normally operate in platoon-size or larger units, smaller units containing as few as three to five soldiers can deploy to harass enemy forces and generally create chaos in the enemy's rear area.

## KPAGF Sniper Brigades

While the light infantry brigades operate at platoon or higher levels, the three sniper brigades assigned to the KPAGF will most likely operate in five-man teams to 10-



# (OPFOR2) Footnotes

*Editor's Note. Select footnotes are provided below from the original reference source for the reader's convenience. In the interest of space, only non-public domain sources are provided. Readers should consult the original source document for the complete list of footnotes, sources, supplemental notes, and proper copyright attribution (in case of inadvertent omission).*

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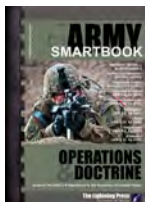


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## (OPFOR2)

# North Korean Military Forces, Operations & Tactics



North Korea is one of the most militarized countries in the world and remains a critical security challenge for the United States, our Northeast Asian allies, and the international community. The Kim regime has seen itself as free to take destabilizing actions to advance its political goals, including attacks on South Korea, development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, proliferation of weapons, and cyberattacks against civilian infrastructure worldwide.



North Korea remains one of the U.S.'s most critical security challenges for many reasons. These include the country's provocative and destabilizing behavior, such as unprovoked attacks on the South Korea, its pursuit of nuclear weapons and long-range ballistic missiles; and its willingness to proliferate weapons in contravention of international treaties.



North Korea's conventional military consists of the ground, air, naval, and special operations forces. KPA Ground Forces operate thousands of long-range artillery and rocket systems along the entire length of the DMZ. These weapons include close-range mortars, guns, and multiple rocket launcher systems (MRLs) trained on South Korean military forces deployed north of Seoul, and longer-range self-propelled guns, rockets, and ballistic missiles that can reach Seoul and some points south of the capital.

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