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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D. C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

12 December 1986

The Koreas: Trends in the Military Balance [Redacted]

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Summary

North Korea's military advantage will persist through this decade, but reductions in training have temporarily lowered its readiness. Both Koreas are adding new weapons at a slow but steady pace. The balance favors the North largely because of advantages in manpower, units, and equipment in the ground forces (see table). P'yongyang's strength in firepower and mobility is substantial and is the main reason for the North's lead. [Redacted]

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Weapons Developments

North Korea has continued to receive equipment from the USSR, and more could come as a result of Kim Il-song's visit to Moscow in October. [Redacted]

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This memorandum was prepared by [Redacted] Office of East Asian Analysis. Information available as of 12 December 1986 was used in its preparation. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Korea Branch, Northeast Asia Division, OEA, [Redacted].

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Ground Forces	North Korea	South Korea
Personnel	763,000	544,000
Infantry Divisions	28-29	21
Mechanized Divisions	0	2
Mechanized/Armor Brigades	36	2
Medium Tanks	3,200	1,260
Armored Personnel Carriers	1,750	700
Artillery	4,100	2,600
Multiple Rocket Launchers (Truck Mounted)	900	18
 Air Forces		
Personnel	56,000	33,000
Fighters	645	379
Bombers	71	0
Air Defense Missile Sites	48	34
Antiaircraft Guns	11,400	2,140
 Navies		
Personnel	37,500	23,500
Total Fighting Ships/Craft	525	133
Destroyers/Frigates	3	25
Attack Submarines	23	0
Missile Boats	36	11

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In the South, [Redacted]

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[Redacted] Seoul is introducing the first state-of-the-art tank to the peninsula.

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[Redacted]

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Production problems are causing delays with this US-designed tank, but we expect it to greatly improve Seoul's position in an area where the North has long held a substantial lead in both numbers and quality. [Redacted]

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North Korean Readiness

North Korea's overall military readiness is at a low level because of reduced training and a lack of major exercises since 1984. We are unsure what caused the reduction in military training, but political strategy and economic problems certainly have played a role.

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- Reduced petroleum imports have caused shortages in military fuel, particularly for the Air Force. At the same time, military fuel stocks are being released to the civil sector, particularly agriculture, because of problems there.
  
- After Seoul and Washington rejected P'yongyang's proposal in December 1985 for a mutual cessation of large military exercises, North Korea announced that as of 1 February 1986 it would unilaterally suspend major exercises. Since then no major exercises have occurred in the North, and training--even in reaction to Team Spirit--has remained at low levels. [REDACTED]

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Nonetheless, we believe the North could bring its readiness back to a high level--perhaps within a few months--through a concentrated training program. Therefore, we do not believe that the decline in readiness necessarily will have a long-term effect on the military balance. [REDACTED]

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We may be seeing the beginning of a new era in North Korean training. In October, North Korean and Soviet ships and aircraft held their first-ever joint exercise. Although the exercise was small in scale, it could be a prelude to greater cooperation. North Korea's Navy--in particular its fleet of diesel-attack submarines--could learn much from the sophisticated Soviet Navy. [REDACTED]

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SUBJECT: The Koreas: Trends in the Military Balance

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