

[REDACTED]

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Special Analysis

NORTH KOREA:

Policy Toward Seoul After KAL Bombing

North Korea's sabotage of a South Korean airliner in November and proposal last month for North-South talks are symptomatic of the North's Jekyll-and-Hyde approach to dealing with Seoul. There is no indication P'yongyang intends to abandon either aspect of its policy. [REDACTED]

During the past 40 years, the North has repeatedly proposed dialogue with Seoul while planning and implementing terrorist acts. In 1983 it proposed talks with the US and South Korea within days of the bomb attack that killed 17 South Korean officials in Rangoon, Burma. Each new act of violence raises the question of whether the North has abandoned the peaceful side of its dual approach. The evidence suggests the answer is no. [REDACTED]

Shortly after the airliner incident last November, P'yongyang announced it had unilaterally reduced its military forces by 100,000 and reiterated its call for disarmament talks. President Kim Il-song, in his New Year's address, reaffirmed interest in talks with the South and proposed a bilateral conference to discuss a variety of topics, including the Olympics and military issues. Two weeks later the North formally presented its proposal to the South.

— Last year P'yongyang dropped longstanding demands that the US participate in military talks and that the US-South Korean Team Spirit exercise be canceled before the talks could open. [REDACTED]

These offers suggest P'yongyang will continue its efforts of the past year to portray itself as the side more flexible and more interested in reducing tensions. It has few alternatives. The peaceful tactic has not produced the results the North wants—direct official talks with the US and talks with the South on the North's terms. Violence, however, risks the disapproval of the North's major allies, China and the USSR, and precludes improved political and economic relations with the West. [REDACTED]

While the North does not appear ready to abandon the peaceful side of its policy, the extent to which it will pursue the violent track remains the issue. The surviving suspect in the KAL bombing claims the incident was aimed at disrupting the summer Olympics. The action came too early to affect the games directly and the Olympics remain a tempting target for P'yongyang. [REDACTED]

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