

## SECTION 3 MILITARY FORCES OF THE DPRK

### GENERAL

The DPRK remains the world's most militaristic state. It commits roughly 25% of its GDP to military spending. Out of every 1,000 people, 40 serve in uniform. By comparison, the ROK spends 4% of its GDP on the military and 14 of every 1,000 people serve in uniform. The DPRK maintains imposing forces in terms of numbers. Over 1,200,000 personnel serve in the active forces, with reserve forces totaling over 5,000,000, making it the fourth largest military force in the world. The majority of DPRK forces are forward deployed, in attack positions, within 65 km (40.4 mi) of the DMZ. This concentration along the border supports a military strategy that is directed against the ROK. Technically, a state of war exists between the two Koreas, as no peace treaty or terms were agreed upon at the end of the Korean War. Although the armistice of 1953 marked the end of conventional combat for the DPRK, it did not signify the end of hostilities or the preparation for continuing battle.

## NATIONAL MILITARY ORGANIZATION

DPRK defense activities are coordinated by the Ministry of the People's Armed Forces MPAF. The (MPAF) is headed by the Minister of National Defense and consists of the Political Department, the Operations Department, and the Rear Services Department. The Minister of Defense reports to the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, as well to the Central People's Committee, the main political committee of the Korean's Worker Party. There is a separate General Staff that acts as an advisory committee to the MPAF. The DPRK maintains an Army, Air Force, Navy and a Special Operations Force (SOF). There is no separate Marine Corps, although the Navy does conduct some amphibious and ground support operations.

The DPRK enforces a mandatory conscription law for citizens age 17 and over. Minimum service periods are as follows: 3 to 4 years (air force), 5 to 8 years (army), and 5 to 10 years (navy). Those not able to serve actively for that period of time are enlisted Red Guard militia; a large paramilitary force. Active service is followed by part-time service in the military reserves or service in the Worker-

Peasant Red Guard to age 60. The DPRK military has an estimated manpower pool of approximately 5,000,000 personnel, although the estimate for reserve troops actually assigned to a military unit number is closer to 750,000 in the army and 40,000 in the navy.

The Worker-Peasant Red Guard militia is the largest civilian defense force in the DPRK with a strength of approximately 3.8 million. The militia is organized on a provincial/town/village level. Command structure is brigade, battalion, company, and platoon. The militia maintains infantry small arms, mortars, and air defense artillery although some units are unarmed. Those under conscription age are assigned to the Red Youth Guards for training. Membership in the Red Youth Guards is approximately 1,000,000. In addition, the security forces and border guards, numbering approximately 115,000 personnel, are used for internal security duties.

## **THE NORTH KOREAN ARMY (NKA)**

The ground forces are by far the largest and most formidable of the DPRK's military forces. In the 1980s, NKA

force structure became increasingly mobile and mechanized, with a steady increase in tanks, self-propelled artillery, armored personnel carriers, and trucks.

The NKA ground combat vehicle inventory consists of medium and light tanks, which include the T-62 and T-54/55 main battle tanks. The NKA light tank inventory includes the indigenously produced M-1975, the former Soviet PT-76, and the Chinese Type 62 and 63 variants. The NKA armored personnel carrier inventory includes the M-1973/M-1967 and a few BTR-60s.

The NKA relies on massive numbers of artillery systems to support ground operations. The North Korean Air Force's perceived vulnerability contributes to this reliance on field artillery as the major combat multiplier. In the 1980s, the DPRK produced a significant amount of self-propelled artillery by mating towed artillery tubes with chassis already in the inventory. Also produced are a variety of self-propelled guns, howitzers, gun-howitzers (ranging from 122-mm to 152-mm), and two versions of the KOKSAN gun (170-mm). The DPRK also manufactures at least three calibers of multiple rocket

launchers - 107-mm, 122-mm, and 240-mm - and mounts many of them on heavy trucks.

The DPRK produces a wide range of former Soviet antitank guns, from 57-mm to 100-mm. This includes the 76-mm field gun and SU-85 100-mm SP. Infantry fire support weapons include mortars ranging from 60-mm to 160-mm, hand-held rocket-propelled grenade launchers, and AT-1/SNAPPER and AT-3/SAGGER wire-guided antitank missiles. The DPRK probably produces the AT-4/5.

Major units of the NKA are listed as follows:

- 8 conventional corps
- 1 armored corps
- 4 mechanized corps
- 2 artillery corps
- 1 capital defense command
- 30 infantry divisions and
- 4 infantry brigades
- 15 armored brigades
- 20 motorized/mechanized infantry brigades
- Special Purpose Forces Command

## THE NORTH KOREAN NAVY (NKN)

The 46,000-man NKN is primarily a coastal navy. The NKN is organized into two fleets: the East Coast Fleet, with five operational commands, and the West Coast Fleet, with seven operational commands. The East Coast Fleet is headquartered at Toejo Dong, with major bases at Najin and Wonsan. The West Coast Fleet is headquartered at Nampo, with major bases at Pip Got and Sagon Ni. Numerous smaller naval bases are located along both coasts. The fleets do not exchange vessels because geographical limitations make mutual support almost impossible.

The NKN does not have a Marine Corps. Amphibious operations would be conducted by SOFs in addition to naval personnel. There is no naval air arm.

Most NKN vessels are small patrol-size craft unable to operate over 50 nautical miles (nm) from the coast but capable of policing the DPRK's territorial waters. The navy's numerous amphibious craft and midget submarines are intended to clandestinely insert SOFs into the ROK. The DPRK also maintains coastal defense artillery and missile sites.

Coastal defense artillery includes 122-mm, 130-mm, and 152-mm systems. Land-based coastal defense missiles include the SSC-2B SAMLET.

The NKN's most capable weapons systems are their approximately 43 guided-missile patrol boats equipped with the SS-N-2A STYX antiship missile (or its Chinese version, the CSS-N-1 SCRUBBRUSH). Though their small size limits operations to coastal waters and calm seas, they have a capability to quickly respond to Combined Forces Command (CFC) shipping approaching the coast. The NKN has 12 OSA-1 guided-missile patrol boats, 10 DPRK versions of the OSA-1 called the SOJU, and 19 other fast attack missile craft; the OSA and SOJU are all equipped with four CSS-N-1 missile launchers. The missiles have a maximum range of 25 nm and carry radar or infrared homing seekers.

The largest part of the NKN consists of small combatants, including torpedo boats, patrol boats, patrol craft, fast attack craft, and small amphibious landing craft. Of the approximately 200 torpedo boats, nearly half are DPRK-built. Most are equipped with 25-mm to 37-mm guns. The DPRK built at least 62 CHAHO fire-support patrol units. This unique

vessel has a multiple rocket launcher in the center of its deck to provide fire support to ground troops or attack surface ships.

The DPRK's attack submarine inventory is estimated to include 4 former Soviet WHISKEY Class, 22 Chinese ROMEO Class, and DPRK-built ROMEO Class submarines. The WHISKEYs, acquired in the 1960s, can carry 14 torpedoes or 28 mines. Shortly after delivering four ROMEOs in the early 1970s, China helped the DPRK start its own ROMEO construction program, which continues to produce new units. The ROMEOs are well equipped, have an improved sonar, and can carry 18 torpedoes or 36 mines.

To date, the DPRK has indigenously produced over 200 personnel landing craft. This includes approximately 100 NAMPO personnel landing craft based on a former Soviet P-6 torpedo boat hull. The NAMPO has a maximum speed of 40 knots and a radius of 335 nm at 28 knots. The NAMPOs provide a limited amphibious capability, each carrying up to 100 troops on short transits. Amphibious assaults against CFC probably would be small, clandestine landings involving two to six NAMPO craft; CHAHO or other naval craft could provide fire support. Other amphibious craft include 8



HANTAE medium landing ships, which can carry 3 to 4 light tanks, and approximately 125 KONG BANG amphibious hovercraft.

The DPRK has a credible mine warfare capability. There are numerous small surface ships that are capable of delivering mines within both the navy and civilian sectors. Mines will be used to defend against amphibious assaults, strategic ports and seaward flank protection for land forces. Defensive mine fields will be monitored by coastal observation teams and radar, and they will be supported by well emplaced artillery and missile batteries. This will make close approach and mine clearing operations extremely hazardous. DPRK has a large inventory of older technology mines, significant historical experience with their effectiveness, and, most importantly, the willingness to use them.

## **THE NORTH KOREAN AIR FORCE (NKAF)**

The primary mission of the NKAF is air defense of the homeland. Secondary missions include tactical air support to

the Army and the Navy, transportation and logistic support, and insertion of SOF.

Interceptor, ground-attack, transport, attack helicopter, and transport helicopter regiments are formed from over 730 combat aircraft, approximately 300 helicopters, and 92,000 personnel. Although DPRK airbases are located throughout the country, the majority are in the southern provinces. Pyongyang has the capability to protect combat aircraft in hardened shelters.

The DPRK does not produce aircraft indigenously. Its inventory, though large, consists of many aircraft manufactured using 1950s and 1960s former Soviet or Chinese technology. However, in the 1980s the former Soviet Union supplied some more modern all-weather air defense and ground-attack aircraft.

Interceptor aircraft are an integral part of the DPRK's air defense network, which also includes surface-to-air missiles and numerous mobile and fixed anti-aircraft artillery weapons. Interceptors fly combat air patrol missions to protect DPRK coastlines, military installations, and key urban areas. The

MiG-23/FLOGGER and MiG-29/FULCRUM are the most modern interceptors in the inventory. However, the backbone of the air force remains the MiG-21/FISHBED. The DPRK has 120 MiG-21s and over 100 MiG-19/FARMERs. The MiG-21 has 23-mm cannons and AA-2/ATOLL heat-seeking air-to-air missiles. The DPRK's air defense capability improved in 1984, when the Soviet Union began supplying the first of the 46 MiG-23/FLOGGER interceptors. This all-weather interceptor can carry the AA-2/ATOLL or AA-8/APHID and the more capable AA-7/APEX missile. Until the MiG-29/FULCRUM arrived in 1988, the FLOGGER was the DPRK's most modern aircraft. The FULCRUM, an all-weather counterair fighter, entered service in the former Soviet Union in 1985. Equipped with a look-down, shoot-down radar, beyond-visual-range air-to-air missiles, and close-in dogfight missiles, it provides the best airframe against the more modern CFC combat aircraft.

Most ground-attack regiments have Russian- and Chinese-produced light bombers and fighters with technology from the 1950s and 1960s. The NKAF has three regiments of Il-28/BEAGLE, one regiment of Su-7/FITTER, five regiments of MiG-15/FAGOT and MiG-17/FRESCO, and two regiments of

MiG-19/FARMER. The 82 BEAGLES are medium-range bombers with a radius of 550 nm and a bomb load of 2,205 lb. Other attack aircraft include about 100 FARMERs and Chinese versions of the FARMER that have been modified for ground attack. These older aircraft can operate only in daylight and good weather and can only carry small bomb loads. The NKAF also has 20 1961 vintage Su-7/FITTERs, ground-attack fighters.

The NKAF has modernized its ground-attack capability by importing Su-25/FROGFOOT aircraft from the former Soviet Union. Deliveries began in 1988, totaling approximately 36 to date. The Su-25 is a late-1970s aircraft, has a combat radius of 300 nm, and can carry up to 8,800 lb of bombs and rockets. During the initial stages of the surprise attack, the most likely targets for the Su-25 are airfields, surface-to-surface missile sites, headquarters, and other military targets of opportunity.

During the 1980s, the NKAF substantially increased their helicopter inventory from 40 to 275. Helicopters in service include Mi-2/HOPLITE, Mi-4/HOUND, and Mi-8/HIP. In 1985, the DPRK circumvented U.S. export controls to buy 87 U.S.-manufactured Hughes helicopters. These helicopters are