

## **Chapter 8**

# **Counterstability Actions**

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.

### **PURPOSE OF COUNTERSTABILITY ACTIONS**

8-1. 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.

### **PLANNING COUNTERSTABILITY ACTIONS**

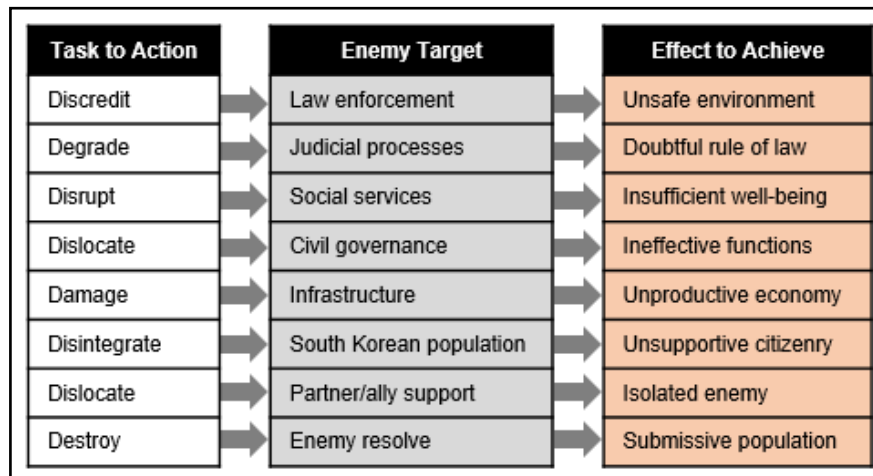
8-2. The KPA, with assistance from the Korean Workers' Party, will exploit conditions of instability to enhance achieving its goals and objectives during both conflict and non-conflict periods. Counterstability actions range from covert influence to overt violence. The KPA will create conditions, unstable 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.

8-3. 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.
- Reducing effectiveness or attempting to corrupt law enforcement forces.
- Reducing effectiveness or attempting to corrupt security forces.
- A combination of North Korean sympathizers and SOF operating similarly to guerrillas conducting paramilitary operations.
- Supporting charismatic individuals and special interest groups that disrupt effective civil governance; possibly focusing on the reunification of the country and that “brothers” should not kill each other.
- Manmade disasters by KPA SOF or North Korean sympathizers.
- Increased criminal activities, possibly agitated by KPA SOF or North Korean supporters.

8-4. Figure 8-1 provides examples of actions, targets, and the effects that North Korea hopes to achieve to destabilize the South Korean Government.



**Figure 8-1. Counterstability actions to create conditions and effects**

8-5. An integrated KPA counterstability concept would typically require a long-term framework, with tasks that expand and sustain unstable conditions until North Korea obtains the ability to achieve its plans and policies. The range of counterstability tasks and missions can include support to military operations, from small-scale military or paramilitary engagements to participation in major military operations. Related coercive activities in the civilian sector often include crime and acts of terrorism. North Korea can coordinate implementation at any point along this range of military, paramilitary, or nonmilitary civil activities in order to destabilize the operations of its enemies and enhance the electronic intelligence warfare effects of its agenda. Counterstability tasks to discredit South Korea and its allies can include but would not be limited to—

- Military engagement missions against South Korea and its allies.
- Peace operations to keep or enforce international peace agreements signed by North Korea.
- Offering civil governance and social well-being activities to make South Korea look bad if they are refused, such as participating in the Olympics, family reunions, and joint North Korea/South Korea ventures.
- Highlighting corruption and other problems within South Korea, such as the imprisonment of a former South Korean president.

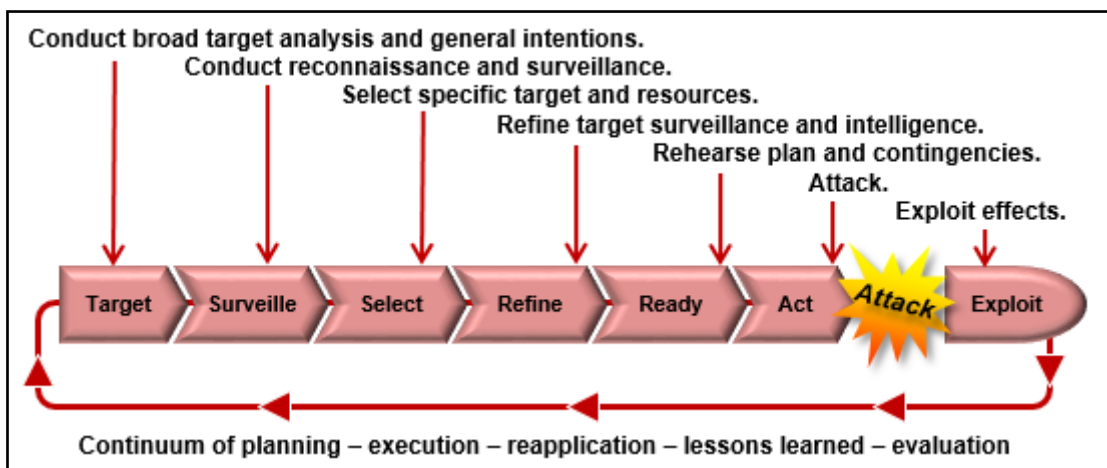
- Placing pressure on the international community and South Korea regarding the humanitarian crisis caused by international sanctions through highlighting the effects on North Korean children.
- Military combat operations against South Korea and its allies.

8-6. North Korea recognizes that decisions and actions by its likely enemies are normally compliant with international conventions and legal restrictions on conduct of war activities. International forces deployed to the peninsula will typically act consistent with host-nation laws and regulations when operating as part of a coalition or alliance, and conduct operations with rules of engagement that are typically more restrictive than actions demonstrated by the KPA.

8-7. Mission planning of counterstability actions includes combinations of offensive and defensive tasks. Key elements in planning North Korean counterstability tasks include—

- Determine the goals and objectives.
- Define the time available for plans, actions, and mission completion.
- Define the amount of time allowed to plan and prepare for operations.
- Organize forces by function for particular missions.
- Coordinate electronic intelligence warfare activities in support of each mission.
- Incorporate recurring observations into refined plans and actions.

8-8. Counterstability actions require detailed reconnaissance and surveillance to collect information, develop situational awareness, and determine situational understanding of OE conditions. This continuous intelligence preparation and production, often complemented with support of a local network, provides an appreciation of how to most effectively conduct actions with available resources in order to achieve specified and implied tasks. Actions will be either offensive or defensive in nature and execution. A conceptual cycle of planning, preparation, execution, and exploitation results in continuous assessment and evaluation. Learning from this cycle is integrated into subsequent planning and action. Figure 8-2 shows the steps in the cycle and the continuous nature of the cycle itself.



**Figure 8-2. Counterstability plan-act-exploit cycle**

8-9. Offensive counterstability actions use KPA offensive doctrinal guidance and purposes to shape the planning process. The two types of offensive action are the planned offense and the situational offense. A planned offense implements an offensive mission task when there is sufficient time and knowledge of the situation to prepare and rehearse forces for specific tasks. Typically, the enemy is in a defensive position or in a known location. A situational offense is used when tactical opportunities arise unexpectedly or on short notice. Planning and preparing for this type of action may have to be abbreviated in order to take advantage of an opportunity. See chapter 6 for more information on offensive actions.

8-10. Defensive counterstability actions also apply KPA doctrinal guidance and purposes. The two types of defensive actions are the planned defense and the situational defense. A planned defense is a defensive mission task conducted when sufficient time and knowledge of an OE and enemy situation allow preparation

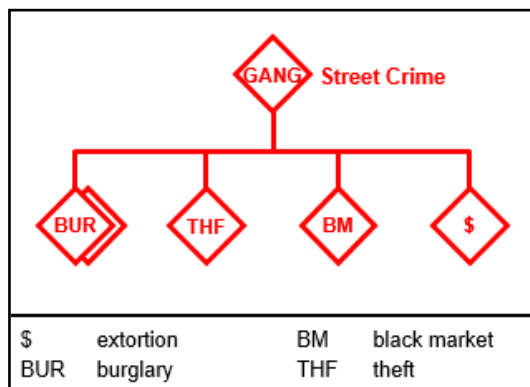
and rehearsal of forces for a deliberate defense. The decision to use a situational defense can occur when conditions change quickly and the KPA must adopt a defensive posture in a limited amount of time with immediately available resources. In post-hostility periods and the occupation of their country by external forces, the most ardent Kim supporters—including those with guerrilla training—may initiate counterstability operations spontaneously, due to decades of indoctrination of a total resistance strategy by all North Korean people. See chapter 7 for more information on offensive actions.

## THREATS AND CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

8-11. Criminal activity exists at every level of society as a destabilizing factor in all environments, whether it is in North or South Korea. In peacetime, much of the crime in North Korea is local or conducted by government officials. In wartime, it is likely that North Korea would work with criminal elements in South Korea if it was to their mutual advantage. The presence of criminals as a threat to the South Korean Government and its allies, whatever their level of capability in independent or affiliated activities, can complement other South Korean opponents conducting counterstability operations.

8-12. Whether or not criminal activities are coordinated with KPA forces for deliberate counterstability actions, the social impact of criminal actions typically degrades enemy capability to stabilize conditions in the South Korean population. Criminals can also conduct criminal actions separate from North Korean forces in support of their own goals and objectives. If North Korea is defeated and the country occupied, collaborating criminal organizations will likely continue to operate and possibly coordinate with the KPA, the Korean Workers' Party, or their remnants.

8-13. Criminal organizations generally fall into three organizational types: gangs, large-scale criminal networks, and transnational criminal organizations. Typical examples of these types are shown in figures 8-3, below, 8-4 on page 8-5, and 8-5 on page 8-6, respectively. Gangs and criminal networks may develop into larger criminal networks, and can evolve into transnational criminal organizations. The lines of separation between echelons of capability and criminal influence can be purposely vague. Organizational structure can be relatively flat or involve multiple levels of control and commodity marketing, sales, and distribution.

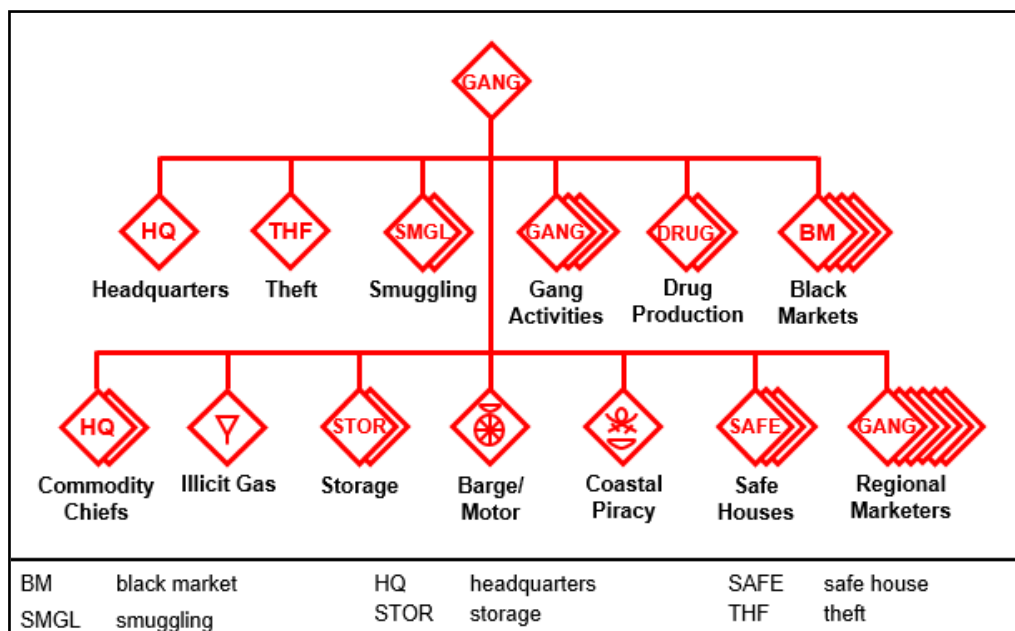


**Figure 8-3. Criminal gang organizational structure (example)**

8-14. Basic differences exist, however, in how these three types of organizations are structured and how they typically operate. Gangs and small-scale networks tend to have an internally publicized organizational structure and leadership focused on localized crime, protection of territorial or commodity operations in a gang-declared area, and coercion of a local population. Their disruptive impact on the populace is significant, even when they are not affiliated with KPA forces.

8-15. Large-scale criminal networks expand illicit commodity operations, increase organizational profits, and typically focus on producing or acquiring and trafficking a product and protecting market distribution and territory. These networks and gangs can have an enduring association, but can also adapt to emergent opportunities to expand criminal control for profit and power. Criminal networks controlling local or regional markets may have ties to and frequently do business with criminal organizations in other regions or countries.

This enterprise expansion can lead to a larger networks of customers, intermediary outlets, access to advanced technologies, and other capabilities and resources for successful large-scale criminal ventures.



**Figure 8-4. Criminal large-scale network organizational structure (example)**

8-16. Criminal networks may develop into expansive criminal networks or transnational criminal organizations, depending on leadership or opportunities. These organizations may have ambitious economic or political agendas. They often fill the power vacuum in poorly governed or ungoverned geographic regions, and can challenge governmental control of a region and its population. In individual cases, this type of criminal organization can evolve into a de facto insurgency, with goals and objectives geared toward increasing wealth, power, or influence. Criminals can cooperate in transnational ventures, often taking advantage of the increasing ease and effectiveness of global communications. Globalization and the increased legitimate and illegitimate movement of people across contested borders and among nation-states add significant capabilities to criminal activities and the disruption of enemy governance or use of military forces.

8-17. The nature of shared goals or interests determines the tenure, type of tactical relationship, and degree of affiliation. Any affiliation depends on the needs of the criminal organization at a particular time. Criminals and criminal organizations may oppose other criminal actors whose activities degrade the success of a criminal enterprise. Criminal motivations vary, but are seldom from a political or religious ideology. These organizations may become affiliated with KPA military or paramilitary forces for mutual benefit if their interests coincide. Activities can range from misdemeanor acts, such as petty theft, to major felony crimes such as murder. Any of these can sap the resources and ability of the South Korean Government, military forces, nongovernmental organizations, or supporting coalition or allied forces to increase OE stability.

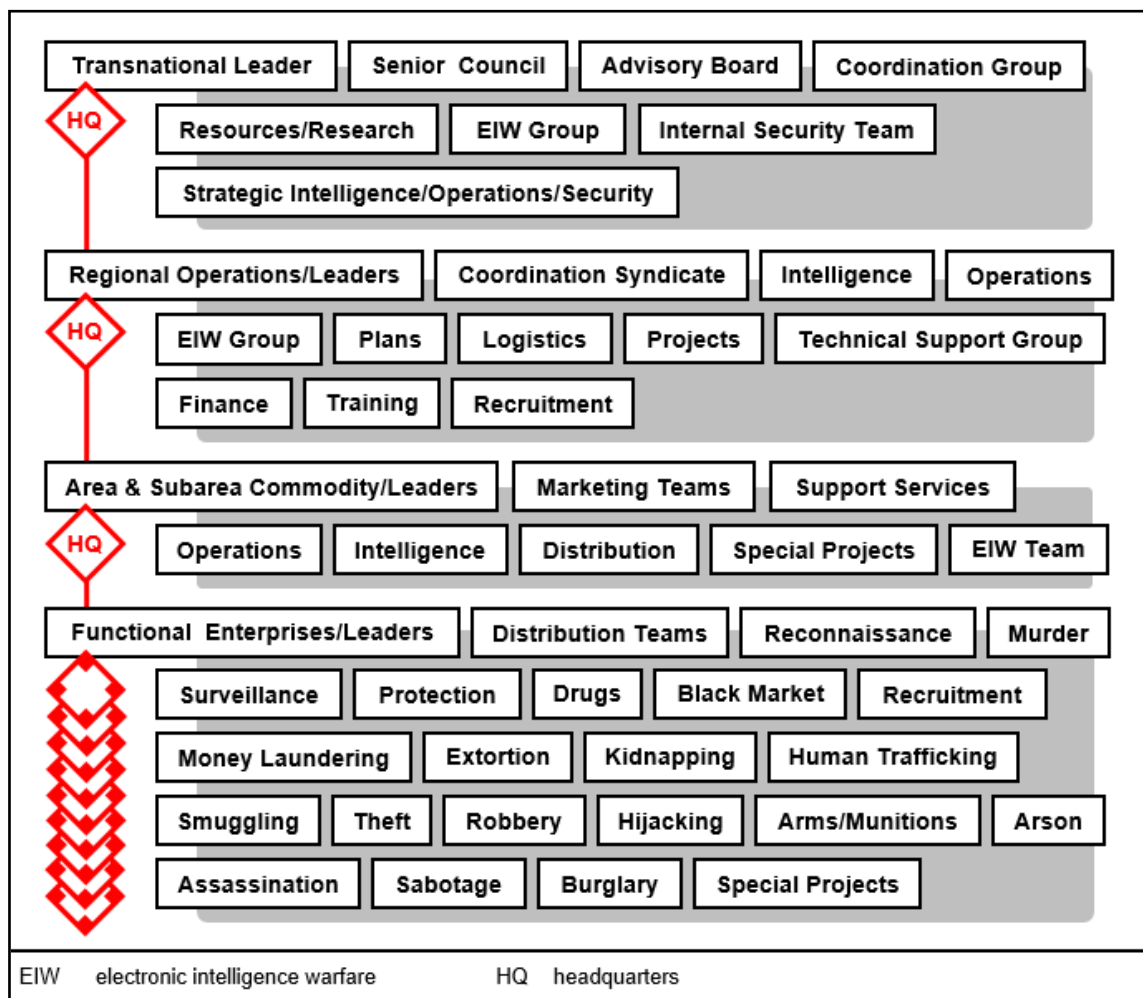


Figure 8-5. Criminal transnational organization structure and functions (example)

## PREPARING COUNTERSTABILITY ACTIONS

8-18. In the preparation phase—whether in war or peacetime—North Korea will focus on ways to apply all available resources and the full range of actions to place the enemy in a vulnerable position. North Korea will prepare the South Korean OE and its own organizations to achieve a mission purpose, and considers mission requirements for branches and sequels to a designated counterstability task. Aspects of camouflage, concealment, cover, deception, or complex terrain provide degrees of force protection and operational security to KPA plans, preparations, and actions. As in typical offensive and defensive actions, key considerations include but are not limited to—

- Conduct reconnaissance, intelligence, surveillance, and target acquisition.
- Identify the mission objective.
- Coordinate functional support and logistics.
- Determine plans and actions.
- Rehearse critical actions and finalize mission order.
- Position forces and resources for mission execution.

## EXECUTING COUNTERSTABILITY ACTIONS

8-19. Counterstability actions may appear as discrete events when executed; however, North Korea typically plans and operates with a comprehensive approach to conducting actions in order to achieve unity of effort toward a primary objective. Cooperation and coordination by North Korea leverages the capabilities of disparate actors to conduct a broad array of actions. Shared understanding and appreciation may be displayed as a formal organization, long-term association, or temporary affiliation for mutual benefit.

8-20. North Korean leaders understand actors are not compelled to work together toward one common goal, but can often be convinced to mutually support and benefit from select activities. One example would be individuals or groups providing goods to North Korea from overseas locations, contrary to international sanctions. A desired end state can be crafted to accommodate the best interests and goals of both North Korea and diverse participating actors.

8-21. North Korea may desire to create legitimacy for its actions, and typically seeks to establish control of a process, resources, or commodity with the acceptance of a target audience. The manner in which North Korea and cooperating organizations conduct themselves in long-term operations can either foster legitimacy or cause indirect or direct resistance to their actions. Internally, North Korea uses the creation of a cult following of the Kim family to provide legitimacy of the current government to its people. North Korea uses draconian measures, such as sending people to gulags or executing them after show trials, to stifle any dissent from its citizens. Consent or resistance to North Korea in the region is typically based on fear of a return to an active conventional war on the peninsula or the start of nuclear war. North Korea often uses the other side's fear of these two types of warfare as blackmail to receive external support.

8-22. North Korean actions may concentrate on convincing the South Korean populace that the actions of its established governmental organizations are dysfunctional or corrupt, and a mandate proclaimed by North Korea offers an improvement. In order to increase support of North Korea's goals and objectives on the Korean Peninsula, the country would conduct operations to destabilize South Korea's civil and military organizational performance, disrupt support to South Korea by coalition partners or allies, and defeat South Korean military operations. North Korea may attempt to replace South Korea's destabilized systems with demonstrated support system capabilities as a method to obtain active or passive acceptance by the South Korean population.

8-23. In addition to offensive and defensive operations by military forces, acts of crime and terrorism can be applied to increase the types and number of recurring destabilizing incidents the South Korean Government must confront. The examples in this chapter demonstrate how crime and terrorism can be integral to North Korean operations, with a cumulative effect to defeat the resolve of South Korean leaders and the populace to resist North Korea's goals and objectives.

## NORTH KOREAN ACTIONS WITHIN THE SOUTH KOREAN POPULATION

8-24. 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.

## REGULAR-FORCE INSTABILITY ACTIVITIES

8-25. 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.

8-26. 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.

8-27. 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.

8-28. 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.

### **SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES INSTABILITY ACTIVITIES**

8-29. 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 the 1968 attempt to assassinate the South Korean president in order to jump-start an insurgency. See page 8-9 for additional details on this incident.

8-30. Since 1953, North Korea has sent in SOF personnel into South Korea many times for reconnaissance, direct action missions, and attempted conversion of local civilians to communism. How many times this has happened is unknown, but there have been numerous documented incidents. One example occurred in September 1996: A North Korean submarine ran aground in South Korea while on a mission to retrieve a SOF reconnaissance team. Left on its own, the team tried to make its way back to North Korea through the demilitarized zone (DMZ). After a 50-day manhunt, South Korean forces killed or apprehended the entire team at the cost of 11 of their own soldiers' lives.

### **IRREGULAR FORCES ACTIVITIES**

8-31. Irregular forces include—but are not limited to—terrorists, insurgents, guerrillas, criminals, active supporters, passive supporters, and independent actors. The Korean Peninsula is unique, as North Korea does not have most of these groups inside its own country, but in the case of a conflict these groups could arise to become a threat to the country's government. Within North Korea, there are no known terrorist groups, insurgents, or guerrillas working against the Kim regime. While there is a high level of corruption in North Korea, there appears to be no major criminal enterprise working independently of a governmental official. These criminal groups are not known to be actively or passively operating against the Kim regime. As evidenced by the songbun system described in chapter 3, however, there are both active supporters of the Kim regime and citizens that are neutral about the government. Any North Korean who is vocal against the current government is already a political prisoner in the gulag system.

8-32. In the event of war, these groups may appear on the battlefield. North Korea, most likely through its SOF and Korean Workers' Party clandestine agents, may work through its active supporters in South Korea to destabilize the country. There is criminal activity in South Korea, but it is unlikely that criminal elements will join North Korea against their own government. Figure 6-10 on page 6-19 demonstrates one possible role that a North Korean clandestine operative could play in conjunction with KPA SOF in a dispersed attack. If the war moved into North Korea, it is possible that individual separated North Korean units or civilians could become guerrilla units operating against the enemy.



## TERRORISM AND MISSION TASK EXECUTION

8-33. *Terrorism* is the unlawful use of violence or threat of violence, often motivated by religious, political, or other ideological beliefs, to instill fear and coerce governments or societies in pursuit of goals that are usually political (JP 3-07.2). Terrorism strategies are typically long-term commitments to degrade the resilience of an enemy in order to obtain concessions. Whether acts of terrorism are deliberate, apparently random, or purposely haphazard, the physical, symbolic, and psychological effects can diminish a population's confidence in its key leaders and governing institutions. The local, regional, international, and transnational attention on acts of terrorism by state or non-state actors can often isolate an enemy from its supporting population. The themes and messages promoted by acts of terrorism can accentuate anxiety, demoralize the resolve of a population and its leaders, and eventually contribute to defeat of an enemy.

### North Korean Use of Terrorism

8-34. North Korea uses terrorism as a way to cause significant psychological or physical effects on the South Korean population through the anxiety or fear caused by a stated intention to use or the actual use of violence. A North Korean decision to apply terrorism will be motivated by the ideological belief that the Kim family and the North Korean Government is the legitimate government for all of Korea. Social and political pressure, internal or external to the South Korean population and its government, will be exploited by North Korea with near real-time media coverage in the global information environment. International conventions and law-of-war protocols on armed conflict and the illegality of conducting acts of terrorism are often not a constraint on KPA forces. The pursuit of goals and actions labeled as terrorism by South Koreans may be considered fully justifiable by North Korea and even some South Korean sympathizers.

8-35. Another consideration is an independent North Korean actor who may be separate and distinct from any other North Korean individual or organization. The spectrum of actors on the peninsula can range across political, public, and commercial institutions, other institutions appearing legitimate but disguising an illicit agenda, and individuals or organizations who openly declare intent to use terror as a matter of policy and practice. Any of these may choose to engage in acts that the Western world would define as terrorism.

8-36. Over the last decade or so, whether intentional or not, North Korea has used unmanned aircraft (UAs) to sow concern amongst South Korean leaders. They fear that North Korea has not only the capability to send UAs across the DMZ undetected, but also to harm South Korean governmental officials, civilians, or infrastructure by carrying chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear weapons. Between October 2013 and May 2017, at least five North Korean UAs crossed the DMZ, including four that crashed on South Korean ground. Though the UAs did not harm anyone physically, each possessed the capacity to carry enough weight to do so, creating concern to the South Korean Government. Each recovered North Korean UA could have contained conventional explosives or chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear weapons; these platforms could be used in assassination operations against South Korean leadership or to damage or disable key infrastructure. The cameras recovered from the UAs, all manufactured in Japan, contained pictures of key South Korean infrastructure, including nuclear power stations, military bases, and the Blue House—South Korea's official presidential residence (equivalent to the U.S. White House). Historically, North Korea has conducted many terrorist-style operations in South Korea; the 1968 attempt to assassinate the South Korean president at the Blue House is one example.

### Historical Example: Attack on the Blue House

8-37. 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.

8-38. 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.

8-39. 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 U.S. sector because its personnel were known to operate under more restrictive rules of engagement than the South Koreans and, if the assassination was successful, South Korea might have blamed the U.S. for the security failure. The lead team had cut the wire on the south barrier fence by 2300 local time and, by 0200, the six teams had assembled at camp sites near Morae-dong and Seokpo-ri.

8-40. The unit remained at these campsites until crossing the frozen Imjin River wearing white bedsheets at 0500 on 19 January 1968 and subsequently creating a single campsite on Simbong Mountain to hide in during daylight hours. At 1400 hours, four South Koreans searching for firewood stumbled across the campsite and were captured. The Unit 124 members debated on whether to kill them, but decided instead to convert them to their communist ideology. After several hours of indoctrination and threats by the KPA soldiers, the South Koreans promised not to give the team away. After being released, however, they immediately alerted the police of what had happened.

8-41. After releasing the South Koreans, Unit 124 immediately broke camp and traveled at 10 kph, crossing Nogo Mountain and arriving at Bibong Mountain at 0700 on 20 January 1968. South Korean forces had immediately started a search for the North Korean soldiers on Simbong and Nogo Mountains, but Unit 124 had long departed those areas. The South Korean authorities increased security around Seoul, including at any potential high-value targets. After spending the rest of the day and most of the night on Bibong Mountain discussing what to do since they had been detected, the Unit 124 leader devised a new plan. The unit broke into teams of two to three soldiers and continued to infiltrate to a rally point, the Seungga-sa Temple. Located on the northern side of the Seoul suburbs, the temple was less than 14 km from the Blue House.

8-42. Despite the police and military searchers, all of the North Korean soldiers made it to the temple safely. Once there, they removed their overalls—revealing a South Korean Army uniform of the local 26th Infantry Division. The Unit 124 soldiers openly marched in platoon formation along Segeomjeong Road toward the Blue House, passing several South Korean police officers and army units. Whenever questioned by authorities, the North Korean leader would say they were a South Korean platoon on a break from the search operation.

8-43. At 2200 on 21 January 1968, the unit approached the Segeomjeong-Jahamun checkpoint, less than 100 m from the Blue House. The local police chief approached the disguised KPA soldiers and asked them a series of questions. About the same time the police chief became suspicious of the KPA soldiers and pulled out his pistol, a civilian bus arrived at a nearby bus stop. The Unit 124 members assumed the bus was full of police or military reinforcements, pulled out their weapons, and started shooting at the police chief, other police officers, and the civilian bus.

8-44. The Unit 124 members then fled the scene. South Korean and U.S. forces immediately initiated a search. By 23 January 1968, 29 of the 31 soldiers had been killed in firefights. One was captured alive when his grenade failed to explode in a suicide attempt. The other soldier made it back to North Korea alive and later became a general. Between the attack at the checkpoint and the search operation, there were 26 South Koreans killed and 66 wounded. The dead included the aforementioned local police chief, his assistant, and 24 civilians, most of them on the bus by the checkpoint. Four U.S. Soldiers were also killed by the escaping infiltrators as they attempted to return to North Korea.

8-45. The North Korean Government tried to distance itself from the assassination attempt by blaming it on a rogue element within the government. The attack took a back seat to other issues when the Korean People's Army Navy captured the USS PUEBLO in international waters on 23 January 1968. Unit 124 failed its mission. Not long after this, North Korea lessened its infiltration attempts into South Korea and dismissed any hopes of creating an insurgency similar to South Vietnam. Figure 8-6 shows the route that the assassination team took from the DMZ crossing to the Blue House.

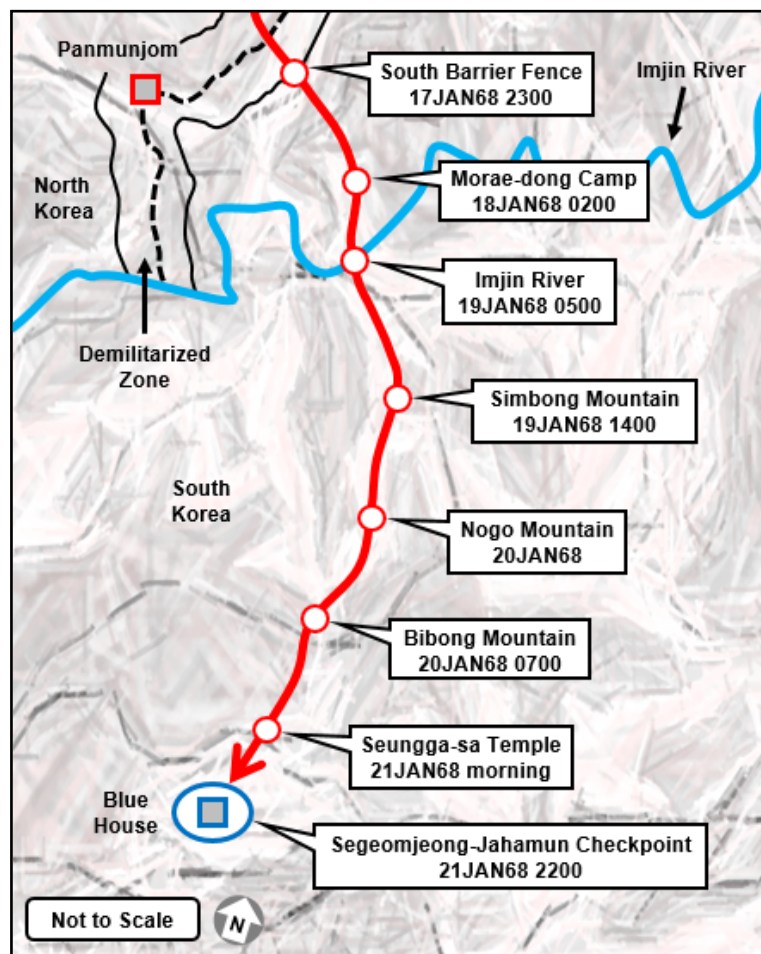


Figure 8-6. Attempted assassination of the South Korean President

## COUNTERSTABILITY IN SUPPORT OF NORTH KOREAN MILITARY OPERATIONS

8-46. 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.

8-47. 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.

This page intentionally left blank.