

PART ONE

North Korean Forces

Part One addresses three primary areas: North Korean fundamentals; functional tactics; and Korean People's Army (KPA) force structure. Chapter 1 discusses operational environments (OEs) and North Korean fundamentals. Chapter 2 describes functional analysis and tactics used in KPA offensive, defensive, and counterstability actions. Chapter 3 presents the Korean People's Army Ground Forces (KPAGF) structure and task-organization methods at tactical echelons for regular and irregular forces. Examples include task-organized units, organization military symbology, command and support relationships, integrated capabilities, and limitations of combat power.

Chapter 1

North Korean Fundamentals

This chapter describes the strategic environment, OEs, and approaches to conflict. It reviews North Korea's history and political structure, then delves into the country's military forces. Topics covered include military principles; operational framework; concept of evolution and adaptation; planned actions to counter U.S. forces; and motivations, capabilities, and intent.

OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

1-1. The Department of Defense defines an *operational environment* (OE) as a composite of the conditions, circumstances, and influences that affect the employment of capabilities and bear on the decisions of the commander (Joint Publication, (JP) 3-0). This definition applies to an OE for a specific operation and at any level of command. Analysis of an OE, either real-world or composite, focuses on eight interrelated operational variables, shown in table 1-1 on page 1-2.

1-2. Comprehending these eight operational variables and their interrelationships assists in understanding an OE and its impacts on a particular operation. Military operations will be significantly affected by conditions beyond just military force capabilities. The largest country with the strongest military forces and the most modernized systems will not always win in a conflict, because a threat can be a master at employing basic-technology solutions and exploiting environmental conditions to achieve success. This can include redefining the elements of victory to be simply continued existence as a force in being. A threat can be regular forces, irregular forces, terrorist forces, criminal organizations, or some hybrid thereof. As a learning organization, it seeks to continually improve its situational awareness and understanding of both its OE and its opponent. The threat confronts a foe with adaptive and innovative actions and operates with a range of motivations, weapons, equipment, and task-organized capabilities optimized to its particular environment.

Note. The chapters of this ATP address 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.

Table 1-1. Variables of an operational environment

Variable	Description
Political	Describes the distribution of responsibility and power at all levels of governance—formally constituted authorities as well as informal or covert political powers—within the operational environment, as well as associated regional and global political conditions.
Military	Explores the military and/or paramilitary capabilities of all relevant actors (enemy, friendly, and neutral) in a selected operational environment.
Economic	Encompasses individual and group behaviors related to producing, distributing, and consuming resources across an operational environment.
Social	Describes the cultural, religious, and ethnic composition within an operational environment, including the beliefs, values, customs, and behaviors of society members.
Information	Describes the nature, scope, and effects of individuals, organizations, and systems that collect, process, disseminate, or act on information.
Infrastructure	Portrays the basic facilities, services, and installations needed for the functioning of a community or society.
Physical environment	Explains the geography and man-made structures, as well as the climate and weather of an operational environment.
Time	Describes the timing and duration of activities, events, or conditions within an operational environment, as well as how the timing and duration are perceived by various actors within the operational environment.

1-3. In preparing an Army training event, scenario, or associated road to war information, leaders consider an entire OE and its impact on the threat's organization of forces, equipment, operations, tactics, and probable techniques in mission execution. In predeployment training against a specific real-world threat, an OE created for training and readiness evaluation represents the anticipated OE for the actual operation as closely as possible. For other training, professional education, and leader development venues for sustained Army learning and readiness, an OE represents a composite of the types of conditions that can exist in various actual OEs.

THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

1-4. The strategic environment is the set of general conditions, circumstances, and influences throughout the world that can affect military operations. It is the global environment in which the U.S. Government employs all the elements of national power—diplomatic, informational, military, and economic. There is one strategic environment and numerous OEs—each of which can refer to a region, a country, a town, or any other defined area.

1-5. Conditions existing in various OEs, combined with how different actors operate within them, comprise the strategic environment in which both the Army and its opponents operate. An understanding of these complexities in OEs across the world is a necessary element of both U.S. and threat preparation and mission

readiness. A threat may have a strategic perspective or be focused on a regional outcome to its actions. Figure 1-1 shows examples of potential OEs.



Figure 1-1. One strategic environment with numerous operational environments

1-6. Several key judgments show how threat actors will respond to current and trending conditions in the strategic environment to attain the necessary influence and combat power to achieve their goals and objectives. Understanding these judgments enables Army decision-making for how and when to act against an opponent. Paragraphs 1-7 through 1-14 outline these key judgments about the strategic environment.

1-7. Future threats will likely prioritize evolution of the organization over adaptation. While adaptation is a short-term reaction to a battlefield stimulus that enables momentary survival, evolution is how the threat cultivates an environment for the long term by manipulating conditions in order to ensure the survival and growth of the organization over time. Evolution facilitates long-term growth and development, while adaptation focuses on short-term survival.

1-8. An expanding spectrum of contentious issues will likely fuel future conflict among state and non-state actors. Traditional points of conflict—such as personal interest, religion, honor, and fear—will persist, and the number and intensity of those friction points will bring state and non-state actors—including peer and near-peer competitors of the U.S.—closer to overt conflict. Increasing social media presence could provide a new venue for aggravating flash points between countries or groups. Threats will take advantage of these friction points to gain an organizational advantage.

1-9. Regional actors will likely challenge the relative position of the U.S. in the global order to gain an economic, cultural, or other type of advantage. Potential or known competitors include Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, and non-state actors such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (commonly known as ISIS). Each competitor will have a different motivation for challenging the U.S.; part of successfully meeting this challenge will be to understand the other side's motivations. The combined power of regional players could exceed that of the U.S. and effectively create a situation where U.S. national power is severely constrained.

1-10. Nation-states will likely continue to fight proxy wars. Criminal and militant groups, special operations forces (SOF), and other military or paramilitary units can present plausible deniability by a nation-state. Proxy forces can be used to conduct operations and achieve outcomes that would otherwise be unacceptable to world powers and international organizations.

1-11. Exponential growth in science and technology will likely provide threats with increased lethality and stand-off weapon system capabilities. Opponents will seek technologies to achieve overmatch in specific niche weapons systems directed at perceived or known areas of U.S. vulnerability. Commercial off-the-shelf technology is a norm for threat acquisitions, and will help them achieve overmatch capabilities.

1-12. Threats often operate in urban environments characterized by increased human interactions, but also interact globally due to increased connectivity through various communications devices. Four major trends that influence OEs are population growth, urbanization, population growth along major bodies of water, and human connectedness and interrelations. The convergence of these trends results in turbulence that threats can manipulate to their short-, mid-, and long-term advantage.

1-13. Physical environmental conditions will remain catalysts for conflict. Climate stress, natural disasters, extreme weather events, and their second- and third-order effects will have significant impact on affected regions. Those with the most poverty may have natural resources or locations of strategic importance to nation-states.

1-14. The global commons—the earth’s unowned natural resources such as oceans, the atmosphere, and space—will be increasingly contested. Organizations around the world are prioritizing research and development efforts that would enable control of these currently minimally governed spaces. The domains of air, maritime, space, and cyberspace will continue to be targeted by threat actors on a regional and potentially global scale.

THREAT ACTIONS WITHIN AN OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

1-15. Peer and near-peer threats employ direct and indirect actions to create physical and psychological effects that can suddenly or progressively diminish the U.S. military element of power. Such threats have significant capabilities to act in all domains of land, air, maritime, space, and cyberspace to attack the U.S. and its interests. Primary and enabling actions using military, political, and informational means are integral to manipulating all elements of combat power to influence a foe’s situational awareness, understanding, and mission decision-making in a particular OE. In addition to physical forms of attack, a relevant population supportive of threat objectives, deception, distorted reporting in social media and political channels, and other forms of injecting believable misinformation in an OE can be integrated to convince a foe to act in a manner that favors a threat objective.

1-16. These threats integrate capabilities in order to mitigate the use of U.S. military power. Five broad physical and psychological ways are as follows: systems warfare, preclusion, sanctuary, isolation, and information operations. Some of these methods are often more appropriate at the operational and strategic levels of confrontation; however, actions and impacts can also be conducted or supportive at the tactical echelon. Actions and outcomes at all three levels focus ultimately at defeating a foe’s resolve to achieve its stated objective. At the tactical level of operations in conflict, these threats use tactics linked to functions necessary for combat action. In this ATP, these are referred to as functional tactics. Functional tactics and non-prescriptive techniques are used to conduct effective mission tasks and drills, achieve desired immediate or near-term effects, and support higher-echelon aims of weakening or defeating a foe’s resolve to continue a conflict.

MAJOR COMBAT OPERATIONS IN CONFLICT

1-17. Major combat operations aim to defeat the enemy’s forces and eliminate its military capability. These conflicts are dominated by large-scale conventional operations but often include unconventional warfare. At the conclusion of major combat operations, the character of the campaign may evolve to irregular warfare or peace operations. Not all combat operations are protracted. Joint operations may capitalize on superior military capability to quickly overwhelm a weaker enemy. Successful major combat operations defeat or destroy the enemy’s armed forces or seize terrain. Commanders assess them in terms of numbers of military units destroyed or rendered combat ineffective, the level of enemy resolve, and the terrain objectives seized or secured.

1-18. Current complex local, regional, and global changes lead to both opportunities and risks for nation-states around the world. This risk component of change manifests in certain trends that drive instability and global competition. Some important trends that will affect ground-force operations in such an era include—

- Globalization.
- Technology.
- Demographic changes.
- Urbanization.
- Resource demand.
- Climate change and natural disasters.
- Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and effects.
- Failed or failing states.

Note. This ATP can be used to inform and shape the composite features, capabilities, activities, and tactics of an opposing force for Army individual, collective, and leader education and development training in live, virtual, constructive, and gaming simulations. Army Regulation (AR) 350-2 defines an *opposing force* as a plausible, flexible, and free-thinking mixture of regular forces, irregular forces, and/or criminal elements representing a composite of varying capabilities of actual worldwide forces and capabilities (doctrine, tactics, organization, and equipment). The opposing force is used in lieu of a specific threat force for training and developing Army forces, and is tailored to replicate highly capable regular and irregular threats that, when combined, can replicate hybrid threats.

The purpose of an opposing force is to portray a threat and challenging conditions in learning environments for Army sustained readiness. The ATP 7-100 series provides information on specific real-world regular and irregular force threats for training and educating Army forces. This information can be used to tailor an opposing force in order to assess and evaluate individual and unit readiness to achieve mission-essential tasks and selected mission tasks.

INTRODUCTION TO NORTH KOREA

1-19. 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.

HISTORY AND POLITICS

1-20. 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.

1-21. 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.

1-22. 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.

1-23. 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.

1-24. 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.

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).

SONGBUN (NORTH KOREAN CASTE SYSTEM)

1-25. *Songbun* is a three-tier class system divided into 51 categories that was created by the Kim regime to isolate and control perceived internal political threats. It is very difficult to move up even from one category to the next-higher category, but it is very easy to move downward. Even an elite person living in Pyongyang can commit an infraction and be exiled to the country with a much lower songbun. Every person above the age of 17 in North Korea has a file maintained by the government that contains the individual's songbun. The key factors considered include—

- Ancestral socioeconomic background at the time of liberation (1945).
- Ancestral activities during the Korean War (1950–1953).
- Relatives living outside of North Korea (South Korea, China, or Japan).

1-26. The three classes of songbun are core, wavering, and hostile:

- **Core.** This is about 28% of the population, including professional revolutionaries, friends of the Kim family, descendants of “war heroes” who died working or fighting for North Korea, peasants, or those from peasant families.
- **Wavering.** This is the largest group, with about 45% of the people. These are people who previously lived in South Korea, China, or Japan; those with relatives that fled to South Korea; small-scale merchants and their families; and intellectuals.
- **Hostile.** This group composes 27% of the population and includes the descendants of landlords, capitalists, religious people, political prisoners, those that assisted South Korean forces during the Korean War, those deemed anti-Party, or those associated with external countries. The lowest of the low are those that are permanently banished to labor camps and worked to death. Even if a couple in the camp is allowed to marry and has children, the children will live their entire lives in the gulag unless they escape.

1-27. One's songbun affects whatever a person does in North Korea:

- **Occupation.** The government chooses a person's job, which cannot change unless also approved by the government. If an individual has a low songbun, the government will likely assign the person manual labor. People with high songbun might receive a cushy Party cadre position. Job promotion is not based on merit, meaning that those that are most capable may not be working to their full potential.
- **Education.** In North Korea, there is no merit system for education. If one's parents have good songbun, a student can continue to go to school and even university. Those that attend universities because of their songbun make connections that will eventually help them when they are working as adults.
- **Family.** Parents impress upon their children to obey the laws because a misstep can damage the entire family. When a North Korean citizen is “convicted” of a crime and sent to a prison or “re-education camp,” three generations of the family are swept up, as the North Koreans believe that there must be “bad blood” running through the family. North Koreans usually marry someone of the same songbun, as the marriage automatically moves the higher songbun spouse to the partner's category.
- **Internal Exile.** The North Korean Government systematically moves political undesirables to isolated locations, especially the mountainous areas in the northeastern part of the country. There

they are forced to perform hard labor in mines with few safety devices. Pyongyang and the surrounding area is now almost entirely composed of the core class that supports the Kim regime.

- **Food.** People with higher songbun get more food from the government stores than those with lesser songbun. This was especially true during the famine in the early 1990s, when up to 30% of the population died in the hardest-hit areas. About 60% of all North Korean refugees who now live in South Korea come from North Hamyong Province in the northeastern part of North Korea, an area hit particularly hard by the famine and where food insufficiency remains to this day.
- **Medical Care.** Until the 1990s, medical care was free to everyone. With the sanctions, there is not enough medicine or equipment to take care of the people. Special treatment centers are still available in Pyongyang, but only for those who are the core supporters of the system. Doctors in rural areas use whatever they can obtain through the system, find on the black market, or obtain from the fields, such as herbs. Families are expected to provide food and often the drugs needed for any operation outside of the best-equipped hospitals for the elites.
- **Housing.** There is no private ownership of houses or property in North Korea. Those with higher songbun, however, receive better housing than those with lesser songbun. In rural areas, much of the housing is “accordion” style, where a series of six or more houses are built right next to each other so fewer walls are needed (townhouses). Since the 1990s, people have been known to bribe officials to get better housing or a second unit for their family. Since the 1990s, there have also been reported cases of people “selling” their houses to others that could afford to buy them in order to use the money for food.

NORTH KOREAN MOTIVATIONS

1-28. 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.

1-29. 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.

1-30. 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.

NORTH KOREAN CAPABILITIES AND INTENT

1-31. 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.

1-32. 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.

1-33. 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.

1-34. 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.

1-35. 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.

1-36. 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.

1-37. 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.

1-38. 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.

1-39. 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.

1-40. 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:

- Conventional ground attack across the DMZ (June 1950).
- SOF direct mission (Blue House attack, January 1968).
- Seizing ships in international waters (United States Ship [USS] PUEBLO, January 1968).
- Hijacking airliners (December 1969).
- Blowing up airliners (November 1987).
- Ordering assassinations by hit squads (Burma, October 1983, and Malaysia, February 2017).
- Conducting SOF spy missions (September 1996).
- Launching unprovoked conventional artillery attacks (Yeonpyeong Island, November 2010).
- Torpedoing unsuspecting ships (Republic of Korea Ship [ROKS] CHEONAN, March 2010).
- Ambushing South Korean patrols by planting landmines on the southern side of the DMZ (August 2015).
- Assassinating Kim Jong Nam—Kim Jong Un's half-brother—using VX nerve agent in a Malaysian airport (February 2017).
- Launching missiles (multiple dates).

1-41. North Korea is constantly adapting and evolving its capabilities. These include improvements in organization, equipment, tactics, and techniques. North Korea's actions are a continuum in pursuit of accomplishing desired outcomes. Any pause or apparent pause in operations can be part of a coherent combat campaign. A long-term perspective guides near-term and mid-term actions to plan and marshal capabilities for future actions. While one form of action may appear stalled, another form of action is likely underway against a foe's vulnerability. This agility and flexibility are critical to how effectively North Korea adapts its

near-term patterns of operations to keep the initiative while maintaining a long-term expectation of achieving its goals and objectives.

SHAPE THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

1-42. A shaping operation establishes conditions for the decisive operation through effects on the enemy, other actors, and the terrain. It is likely that North Korea will use EIW techniques including propaganda to shape the environment, whether it is in an offensive, defensive, or counterstability operation. The intent of shaping operations is to create the conditions for success of the decisive operation.

TIME AND TEMPO

1-43. During the initial phases of a war, North Korea may attempt to employ a high operational tempo to take advantage of its conventional army strength against coalition forces stationed on the Korean Peninsula. Time is not on North Korea's side when it comes to war on the Korean Peninsula. To successfully win the war, the KPA must quickly defeat the coalition forces already in South Korea before any country can deploy additional forces from other places around the world. North Korea cannot fight a long war due to a lack of petroleum products, ammunition, and spare parts. At most, North Korea has fuel for only 2 months before it must get resupplied from external sources or used captured stores. If North Korea cannot end the conflict quickly, it will likely take steps to slow the tempo and prolong the conflict.

1-44. North Korea realizes the significance of coalitions and have observed successes and failures of U.S.-led coalitions. If timely victory does not occur, U.S. public support may begin to wane and ultimately influence political decisions. Therefore, the country will seek protraction of conflict to keep U.S. forces engaged in order to weaken resolve and drain military and economic resources. The KPA may avoid decisive combat with superior forces and focus on alternative methods. These activities may not be linked to maneuver or ground objectives, but may instead be intended to inflict mass casualties or destroy critical or essential systems, thus reducing U.S. resolve or ability to continue the fight.

WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

1-45. North Korea possesses nuclear and chemical weapons, and it is highly likely that the country has also done research on biological weapons. North Korea sought nuclear weapons because its leaders thought the threat of a nuclear attack would prevent other countries from contemplating a regime change. Estimates for North Korean nuclear weapons range from 20–60 bombs, with the capability to produce 6 new devices each year. The Kim family saw that Muammar Gadhafi gave up his nuclear weapons in 2003 but, without them, external powers intervened in Libya when the domestic revolts began in 2011. The Kim family does not want something similar to happen in North Korea.

1-46. North Korea has a longstanding chemical weapons program with the capability to produce nerve, blister, blood, and choking agents, and likely possesses a large chemical weapons stockpile. It is estimated that the country possesses 2,500–5,000 tons of chemical weapons of approximately 20 different types, making it the third-largest possessor of chemical agents in the world. This includes the highly toxic sarin and VX chemical agents. It is highly likely that the KPA would use chemical artillery shells. North Korea is not a signatory to the Chemical Weapons Convention, which is an arms-control treaty that outlaws the production, stockpiling, and use of chemical weapons and their precursors.

1-47. North Korea possibly has weaponized anthrax or smallpox that could be mounted on missiles for use against South Korean, U.S., or Japanese targets in the region. One of the most recent defectors, who was a KPAGF soldier, had been vaccinated against anthrax.

NORTH KOREAN MILITARY PRINCIPLES

1-48. 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 on page 1-12.

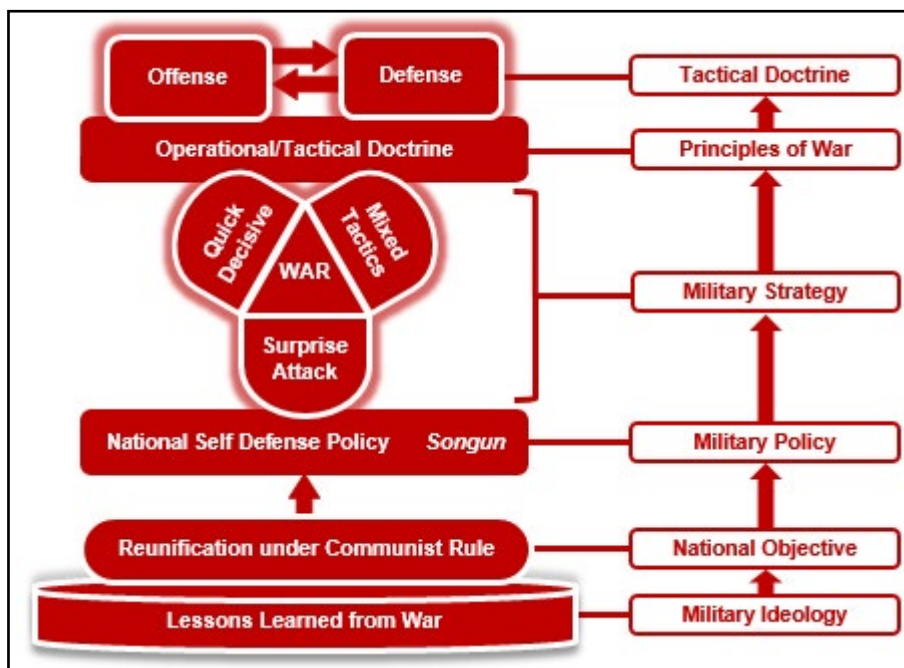


Figure 1-2. Building blocks of KPA tactical doctrine

NORTH KOREAN MILITARY IDEOLOGY

1-49. 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. The lessons learned from the country's experience and observation of wars over the past 80 years is the basic foundation of the KPA's military ideology.

NORTH KOREAN NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

1-50. 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.

NORTH KOREAN MILITARY POLICY

1-51. *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.

1-52. 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.

NORTH KOREAN MILITARY STRATEGY

1-53. 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

1-54. 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

1-55. 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

1-56. 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.

1-57. 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).

NORTH KOREAN PRINCIPLES OF WAR

1-58. 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.

Two-front War

1-59. KPA doctrine calls for a two-front war, but not in the traditional sense of the term such as in World War I or World War II with one force fighting in two different directions. The first front would consist of a massive conventional assault across the DMZ, using substantial firepower and chemical attacks on selected forward-position targets to isolate Seoul before moving farther south. Additionally, ballistic missile strikes—including missiles with chemical warheads—could hit South Korean and U.S. air bases, ports, and C2, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets throughout South Korea and in Japan. There is also a possibility that North Korea may attempt to use offensive biological weapons in its attacks or launch intercontinental ballistic missiles aimed at U.S. targets in Hawaii, Alaska, or even the California coastal cities.

1-60. The second front would be an attack by KPA SOF units throughout the South Korean rear area with assistance from prepositioned North Korean clandestine operatives. The SOF could reach South Korea by various means, including helicopter, hovercraft, light plane, parachute, small boat, submarine, or infiltration tunnel. These personnel could potentially, but not likely, attack U.S. bases in Japan. In addition, North Korea would focus on asymmetric warfare attacks on perceived areas of U.S. weakness as seen in recent U.S. overseas operations.

Surprise

1-61. The KPA will attempt to attack its enemy in an unexpected place, time, or means. The characteristics of a surprise attack could include the use of inclement weather, nighttime operations, or rugged terrain; a detailed deception plan; skilled infiltration units to include SOF units; parachute or air assault operations; massing of fires; quick concentration of forces at the decisive point and time; or the unexpected employment of large-scale mechanized or armor forces.

1-62. Reconnaissance is very important to the KPA. The military will strive to conduct reconnaissance continuously at all levels, including in the enemy's rear areas, in order to achieve surprise when attacking and to prevent surprise when on defense. Each forward-deployed KPAGF infantry corps fields a reconnaissance battalion, each infantry division contains an organic reconnaissance company, and each infantry regiment possesses its own reconnaissance platoon. There are also three independent reconnaissance brigades that could be deployed anywhere on the battlefield for additional intelligence-gathering operations.

Mass and Dispersion

1-63. The KPA will concentrate its combat power at the decisive point and time and will weight its main effort with additional assets. The country believes that it will only need a 2:1 ratio in favor of its ground forces at the decisive point to achieve offensive success. The offensive main effort will operate on a narrower front than the attacks to its flanks, with the supporting attacks dispersing over a wider front to deceive the enemy on where the main attack will occur. The KPA will use the terrain to maximize its success and deception operations when dispersing to avoid excessive concentration that could make units a lucrative target.

1-64. The KPA will also use indirect fire as part of its massing operations. Like the old Soviet Union/Russian doctrine that dates back to World War II, KPA doctrine expounds the use of large quantities of artillery fire on a single target. The KPA will use massed fires—including chemical weapons—from artillery, missiles, or multiple rocket launchers to both psychologically frighten the enemy as well as destroy its position. The KPAGF field over 10,000 artillery pieces of all types and the KPAAF is focused on support of the ground forces. With this large amount of indirect fire support available on the battlefield, the KPA can ensure that almost all targets receive the emphasis they deserve. When not otherwise employed, KPAAF aircraft will fly in support of ground troops.

Maneuverability

1-65. The KPA wants to fight and win a quick, decisive war. To achieve this objective, the KPAGF emphasize maneuverability as a basic element of combat power during training. In combat, units will seek to use the terrain to their maneuver advantage. The KPAGF will employ ground vehicles to quickly reposition artillery, armor, and infantry on the battlefield using existing high-speed networks or aircraft. SOF or other forces will conduct raids to seize key transportation nodes. However, the KPAGF will also conduct night moves and use minor roads and the rugged terrain to surprise the enemy.

Initiative

1-66. The KPA stresses to its leaders using deception and information denial or—as the Koreans call it—cunning and personified tactics in all planning for its troops. The emphasis to KPA leaders is to use initiative and aggressiveness with no hesitation in all situations. While the KPA conducts comprehensive planning and keeps these plans close hold, the leadership expects subordinates to make quick estimates and conduct bold operations that will result in a quick, but decisive, war. However, if a KPA commander deviates from the original plan and it results in failure, the commander will suffer the consequences—which could result in relief from duties or even execution for disobeying orders.

Operational Security (Secure Secrets)

1-67. The KPA places emphasis on operational security (called secure secrets) and teaches its members to keep their secrets and plans secure at all times. North Korea not only keeps a close hold on all plans, but also distributes false information to confuse the enemy as it attempts to protect and secure its secret information. Activities to safeguard the KPA's secrets may include reconnaissance, counterreconnaissance, deception, counterintelligence, and cover and concealment measures—such as conducting operations in inclement weather or darkness—at all levels of command (tactical, operational, and strategic).

Annihilation

1-68. KPA offensive doctrine calls for the annihilation (“destroy” in U.S. terminology) of the enemy at any cost by continuing the pursuit, staying close to the enemy to reduce the likelihood of the latter's superior artillery and close air support coming to the rescue, and continual contact to prevent the enemy from withdrawing or regrouping for a future attack. The taking of terrain is secondary to the enemy's destruction. In the KPA's seven designated offensive movements—penetration, thrust, holding, turning, infiltration, besetment, and encirclement—the focus is on the destruction of the enemy or the movement of ground forces in order to set up another maneuver that will aid in the enemy's annihilation. (See chapter 6 for more details.)

Combined Operations

1-69. KPA doctrine emphasizes that all actions, conventional or otherwise, must be coordinated at all levels and between the different types of units. Much of this coordination will be done through liaison or courier, which reduces the likelihood that an enemy can learn KPA intent by an increase in radio chatter or the interception of electronic signals. The KPA has many specialized units, including river crossing brigades and regiments, sniper brigades in all three services, and large numbers of SOF units. Any major attack will coordinate the use of all the different arms to attack the decisive point at the proper time.

Mobility

1-70. KPA doctrine also stresses the use of armored vehicles in all its operations. Ground forces will use the speed of vehicles to exploit all openings and, when on defense, the KPAGF will employ their mobile forces to counterattack any enemy penetration. Military vehicles will use both major and minor roads to move quickly, and light infantry units possess the ability to travel on foot through the rugged mountainous terrain to sneak up on enemy positions from an unexpected direction. The KPAGF will attempt to use their tanks and other vehicles in areas where the enemy does not operate mechanized or armored units, because the KPAGF fear a direct tank-on-tank battle due to their inferior weapon systems.

Rear Area Protection

1-71. The KPA understands the vulnerability of rear areas, as its leaders see the enemy's rear area as an operational center of gravity for U.S. forces. Much of North Korea's SOF effort will be directed at its enemy's rear area. Conversely, the KPAGF will also defend their own rear area against ground attacks to ensure continued rear area operations without disruption from enemy SOF. The country will deploy its vast number of paramilitary units to defend against rear area attacks in order to free its regular units for more conventional offensive operations.

NORTH KOREAN TACTICAL DOCTRINE

1-72. The KPA's offensive and defensive tactical doctrine flows from its principles of war. The KPA professes both a defensive and offensive strategy in case of war. The defensive strategy is to prevent an invasion across the DMZ or an amphibious landing on either of North Korea's coasts. If such an attack would occur, the country would mobilize not only its 7.7 million reserve personnel, but likely declare a total war in which every North Korean citizen would be obligated to defend the country. While much of the reserves may not be useful in combat, the personnel may serve other purposes. To deter any foe from attacking, the country has threatened the use of nuclear weapons against South Korea, Japan, or any reachable U.S. military facility in Asia. The country will likely use chemical or biological weapons. The military decision-making process to invade North Korea by a U.S.-led coalition could be delayed as allies debate the ramifications of North Korean use of such weapons.

1-73. The KPA prefers the offense to the defense and will remain on the former unless forced to temporarily go on the latter. It knows the only way to reunify the peninsula under North Korean control is to compel South Korea to join the country by military force. The last time that North Korea fought a major war was between 1950 and 1953 against South Korean and UN forces led by the U.S. during the Korean War. The KPA has studied the wars that the U.S. and other major powers have participated in since that time and reached a number of conclusions regarding the conduct of war: the most powerful military power does not win every time; technological advantages can be mitigated; and Western militaries almost always try to achieve their military goals quickly. One of the most recent examples of the KPA adapting because of observations on modern battlefields is the conversion of seven infantry or mechanized infantry divisions into light infantry divisions, presumably tailored to replicate tactics the KPA deemed successful, based on observations of insurgents fighting conventional coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. These divisions will likely fight in complex environments, such as cities, where vehicles are not essential for movement due to reduced battlefield distances. (See chapter 7 for more information on operations in complex environments.) From these observations and research, the KPA has decided on a number of techniques for its success in battle that include the following:

Sustainment (Adequate Logistics)

1-74. KPA doctrine calls for each commander to ensure that there are sufficient supplies to complete the unit's mission. Due to lack of supplies, most commanders will likely plan to the use of captured supplies, military or civilian, to successfully complete their assigned mission. KPAGF weapons systems, mortars, and artillery are often of a slightly larger caliber than those of the enemy, allowing the military to use captured ammunition stores while denying the same option to its opponent.

Camouflage, Concealment, Cover, and Deception

1-75. Protection and security measures to keep secrets secure for the KPA involve the use of camouflage, concealment, cover, and deception (C3D) by all units. Since North Korea will likely not obtain even local air superiority, KPA doctrine calls for denying the enemy any intelligence it may receive from aerial platforms through the use of both active and passive C3D techniques. The KPAAF uses both underground runways and harden sites to hide aircraft from aerial attack. The KPAN not only hides its ships in underground berthing facilities that are connected to the sea by fortified tunnels, it will also attempt to hide its vessels among civilian fishing boats found in small villages. All three KPA service components will use decoys to protect KPA assets for long enough to complete the mission and to give the enemy an inaccurate assessment of KPA attrition, possibly causing the enemy to incorrectly conclude that KPA assets have been destroyed. The KPA gleaned this from U.S. aerial strikes on Serbia, where the U.S. Air Force fired at decoy sites nearly as often

as at actual positions. North Korean military forces believe that each operation should include a deception plan that may include a demonstration, feint, raid, or an attempt to create fratricide among enemy units.

Echelon Forces

1-76. The KPA takes from Soviet/Russian doctrine in its use of echelons during both offensive and defensive operations. In a division offensive operation, the KPAGF will likely place two-thirds (67 percent) of their forces in the first echelon and two-ninths (22 percent) in the second echelon, with only one-ninth (11 percent) in operational reserve or as a third echelon. At the corps level (KPA Army Group), KPAGF doctrine describes a first echelon of four infantry divisions; a second echelon of two infantry divisions and a tank regiment; a third echelon of two mechanized infantry regiments; and a reserve of divisions not likely to be involved in the offensive operation. See Chapter 6 for examples of echelons in offensive operations.

1-77. The ground forces will also use echelons when forced to go on the defense, as the KPA believes echeloning its forces provides for defensive depth with rapid counterattack possibilities. Approximately one-ninth (11 percent) of a division's defensive force will be positioned as a forward security force, five-ninths (56 percent) will be in the first echelon, two-ninths (22 percent) in the second echelon, and the final one-ninth (11 percent) held in reserve for unforeseen events. The corps will be similarly arrayed in echelons. See chapter 7 for examples of echelons in defensive operations.

KPAAF and KPAN Employment

1-78. KPA doctrine states that joint operations should be used for most missions. Any major attack by the country will likely use KPAAF and KPAN assets to deploy KPAGF units into the enemy's rear areas. The KPAAF will infiltrate SOF units into South Korea with small airplanes, such as the recently repainted Antonov An-2 fleet or helicopters. The KPAAF can also use its airplanes, helicopters, or paragliders to drop airborne units in an air assault operation or to conduct SOF missions. The KPAN will use its small boats, stealth vessels, surface effect ships (a cross between catamaran and hovercraft), and submarines to clandestinely transport SOF forces behind enemy lines on both coasts of South Korea.

Terrain Appreciation

1-79. Lastly, KPA tactical doctrine calls for its forces to use the physical environment to best advantage, with a focus on the mountains, poor weather, or night operations to minimize the advantages of a technologically superior foe. Just like during the Korean War, the KPAGF will likely use the mountain ranges and ridges as an avenue of advance in bad weather or at night while their enemy focuses on the more easily accessible valley floor with its highways.

FRAMEWORK FOR MILITARY OPERATIONS

1-80. In pursuit of its national security strategy, North Korea conducts four types of operations that can be described as follows:

1-81. **Strategic Operations.** A strategic-level course of action (COA) that uses all instruments of power in peace and war to achieve the goals of the country's national security strategy by attacking its enemy's strategic centers of gravity.

1-82. **Regional Operations.** A strategic-level COA—including conventional, force-on-force military operations—against the country's regional foes and internal threats.

1-83. **Transitional Operations.** A strategic-level COA that bridges the gap between regional and adaptive operations, and contains elements of both. The country continues to pursue its regional goals while initiating actions to counter intervention from outside of its area of operations (AO).

1-84. **Adaptive Operations.** A strategic-level COA to preserve the country's power and apply it in adaptive ways against enemies that may overmatch North Korea's military capabilities.

Note. These terms are not actual North Korean tactics or actions as outlined by the country's doctrine, but how the U.S. military categorizes possible or potential North Korean actions within the framework of U.S. adversarial doctrine concepts.

1-85. Regional, transitional, and adaptive operations are typical of operational design for OEs in which North Korean tactical-level commanders operate. A tactical-level commander receives a mission statement and intent in plans and orders from higher headquarters. The commander's analysis and decisions focus on how to plan, prepare, and execute tactical actions in the current operational context. Conventional patterns of operation may be initial ways to conduct the mission, while situational understanding and risk-taking may cause a commander to shift from regional to transitional or adaptive operations. A North Korean commander sustains a keen understanding of a foe within an OE and decides when and how to employ offensive, defensive, and counterstability missions and tasks. Operations, missions, and tasks are ordered and conducted in a flexible and agile manner, and can shift from offense to defense, defense to offense, or transition back and forth depending on emergent OE conditions.

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS

1-86. Since 1953, North Korea has used its special diplomatic relationships with the Soviet Union and China to delay the implementation of a final peace treaty to end the Korean War. The breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 meant that North Korea would no longer receive the financial subsidies necessary to reduce the cost of fuel and other products to its people. China, to a lesser extent, has also reduced its unequivocal support to the country.

1-87. Without the protection of the Soviet Union and China, North Korea began a three-prong approach to deter its foes by creating a nuclear bomb, improving its missile capabilities, and placing even more emphasis on EIW through attacks on other countries' computer network systems. By creating a viable nuclear bomb small enough to fit on an intermediate- or long-range ballistic missile, North Korea believed that the potential for a nuclear war would prevent a potential attack on the country or a regime change aimed at the overthrow of the Kim family. It is likely that the country's nuclear program began in the late 1960s, with its nuclear weapons program starting in the late 1970s and being operational by the mid-1980s. North Korea continued to improve its EIW capabilities over the past two decades for strategic reasons, and the attack on Sony provided the world with ample evidence of the country's computer warfare capabilities.

1-88. North Korea's national military strategy is designed to support its national objectives by defending the Kim family's rule and enabling the regime to conduct coercive diplomacy through the potential threat of nuclear weapons and computer warfare. This strategy relies heavily on strategic deterrence through the nuclear weapons program and supporting delivery systems, and a large, heavily armed, forward-deployed military that presents a constant threat to South Korea, especially the Greater Seoul Metropolitan Area. These two aspects of its military strategy are meant to be mutually supporting; the threat posed by one is employed as a deterrent against an attack on the other.

REGIONAL OPERATIONS

1-89. North Korea can conduct this type of operation against regional opponents with some probability of success, using primarily offensive actions. The country may possess an overmatch in some elements of combat power against regional opponents, and focuses this power on discrete or discontinuous offensive actions. These offensive operations are characterized by using all available means to saturate an OE with actions designed to disaggregate the opponent's capability, capacity, and resolve to resist. Actions are conducted throughout an entire OE; may involve the political, military, economic, social, information, or infrastructure variables; and are not limited to attacks on military and security forces or conventional weapons.

1-90. North Korea prefers to achieve its objectives through regional operations, but maintains the flexibility to adapt its actions quickly in order to sustain or regain the initiative. The country assumes the possibility of regional or extraregional intervention and has contingencies for transitional and adaptive operations. During regional operations, North Korea acts to achieve its desired objectives and initially operates at a threshold

that does not cause intervention by other regional actors or extraregional forces. Strategic operations, including EIW and diplomatic or political actions, are used to dissuade outside intervention. In addition, the country plans and positions capabilities to conduct antiaccess and area denial operations against the U.S., the UN, or other external powers.

TRANSITIONAL OPERATIONS

1-91. Transitional operations serve as a pivot point between regional and adaptive operations. They feature a mixture of offensive and defensive actions that set conditions for the country to control the tempo and pace of enemy introduction into an AO. Transitional operations can also expand the available time for offensive operations to succeed. When shifting to this type of operation, the country may still have the ability to exert its combat power against an overmatched regional enemy in a specific location, and may have already defeated its original foe.

1-92. As North Korea begins transitional operations, an immediate aim is to preserve its combat power while setting conditions on the peninsula that allow it to transition back to more offensive-oriented operations. North Korea identifies and acts against extraregional actor vulnerabilities in conventional or clandestine ways to slow deployment of combat power or otherwise disaggregate operations. The country may elect to conduct conventional operations against an extraregional force that could not fully deploy or has been successfully separated into isolated elements, either in a deployment flow or in an AO.

1-93. North Korea may conduct transitional operations when a coalition threatens the country's ability to continue conventional regional operations on the Korean Peninsula. For example, successful North Korean actions in regional operations may prompt the U.S. to send additional troops to the peninsula. In such a case, North Korea will initiate actions to defeat the additional intervention.

1-94. Two probable outcomes to transitional operations are as follows:

- The U.S. withdraws from the region based on political decisions subsequent to its military defeat or for other unilateral or international reasons. In this instance, North Korean operations may begin to transition back to regional operations if appropriate to country objectives.
- The U.S. continues to deploy combat power into the region. In this situation, North Korean transitional operations may begin to shift toward adaptive operations and the expectation of future conflict on the peninsula.

ADAPTIVE OPERATIONS

1-95. Any coalition that faces North Korea on the Korean Peninsula will likely field a technological advantage—but a considerably smaller quantity of equipment—to meet the KPA on the conventional battlefield. North Korea will adapt its operations to mitigate its limitations and lesser capabilities, especially in technology. North Korean operational planners identify conditions, circumstances, terrain, and times that provide opportunities to optimize the country's own capabilities and degrade those of the enemy. The country task-organizes and tailors its forces for specific missions against enemy vulnerabilities. Many North Korean operations have an overarching intent to disrupt, defeat, or destroy the enemy's C2 framework and logistics.

1-96. The types of actions and methods that characterize adaptive operations can also promote success in regional or transitional operations. North Korea has conducted adaptive operations since the 1953 armistice, including assassination attempts on the South Korean president, the deployment of SOF personnel to start an insurgency in South Korea similar to that of Vietnam, and infiltration of SOF for direct actions in South Korea. Should war break out on the Korean Peninsula, it is likely that North Korea would attempt to conduct adaptive operations if its country was invaded by outside forces.

1-97. The North Korean policy is that if any country decides to invade it and the KPA is defeated, every North Korean citizen should do his or her duty to resist the invader. KPAGF soldiers learn that if their unit is no longer functional, the remaining soldiers should turn to guerrilla warfare and continue to fight the enemy through stay-behind ambushes, harassment, or destruction of enemy supplies. KPAGF soldiers will most likely fall back to the thousands of subterranean facilities located throughout the country, complete with pre-positioned supplies, as part of the country's defensive plans. Civilians are also taught that they should do

everything they can to resist the enemy and continue the fight to the best of their ability with any available resources.

NORTH KOREAN EVOLUTION AND ADAPTATION

1-98. North Korean evolution is a continuous process of development that enables the country to expand from a simple capability to a higher, more complex, and sustainable entity. It operates on a premise of creating permanent presence and influence in an OE. Actions promote continual resilience to conditions that would potentially degrade or destroy its organizational existence. The intent of evolution is continual improvement towards achieving objectives and permanence in North Korean power and expanding influence in the region and effects in a strategic OE.

1-99. Adaptation involves changing to accommodate particular near-term conditions in order to facilitate some capability based on lessons learned in an OE. Adaptation is different, however, from evolution. Adaptation is a process of change that is often designed to optimize or counter a specific purpose or condition, and provides results that are often temporary in nature based on variables of a particular OE. While North Korea can employ adaptive means and methods during various phases of its existence, adaptation results in temporary changes based on an immediate situation. North Korea will adapt and change based on its success or lack of success against the coalition forces it engages on the battlefield.

1-100. Analysis by North Korea on evolution centers on understanding how North Korea is to survive and thrive. Manipulating regional conditions can create leverage and time advantages to keep an adversary or enemy off-balance in its intended actions, and cause focus on reactive methods to North Korean initiatives rather than proactive methods to diminish North Korea's influence. Given observations of U.S. military performance in Afghanistan, Iran, and Syria, North Korea has modified aspects of its military force structure.

1-101. North Korea can decide to apply an action for purposes of adaptation in a near-term response against an adversary or enemy. Multiple actions can distract an adversary or enemy from concentrating on issues that would hamper North Korea from thriving and evolving in capabilities. Sustaining a constant series and group of organizational activities may force an adversary or enemy into a reactive cycle that centers most of its capabilities on immediate responses often at the tactical level of operations.

1-102. Multiple drivers of evolution exist with four critical aspects:

- Safe haven.
- Recruitment and retention or forced support of its population.
- C2.
- Logistics.

Of these four conditional drivers for evolution to occur, safe haven takes primacy. A sanctuary, whether physical, virtual, or both physical and virtual, compounds the value of relative shelter and safety. Safe haven from external influences provides favorable time and location for plans, preparation, support, and conduct of actions. With over 3,000 underground facilities located throughout North Korea and most within 113 km of the DMZ, North Korea considers its mountainous terrain and vast subterranean network a safe haven from enemy observation and destruction.

1-103. North Korea will attempt to launch an EIW campaign with integrated direct and indirect tactical actions that amplify public awareness of adversary or enemy inability to adequately counter threat actions. This manipulation of public opinion and general dissatisfaction of tactical interactions within a relevant population can include—

- Continually increasing military and civilian casualties.
- Ineffective governance and law and order.
- Ineffective protection and health and welfare life support.
- Unrepaired damage to infrastructure.
- General conflict weariness over extended periods of time.

1-104. 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.

MULTI-DOMAIN EXTENDED BATTLEFIELD

1-105. 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.

1-106. 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.

SYSTEMS WARFARE

1-107. 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.

1-108. North Korea views an OE, the battlefield, its own instruments of power, and an opponent's instruments of power as a collection of complex, dynamic, and integrated systems composed of subsystems and components. The country will likely seek to disaggregate enemy combat power by destroying or neutralizing vulnerable single points of failure in a warfighting function. Due to the inferiority of much of its equipment compared to its foes, the KPAGF regular forces will attempt to avoid infantry and armor units and instead attack enemy combat support and rear service units. The KPA believes that, without logistical support, U.S. frontline units will collapse due to lack of supplies. This belief that U.S. Soldiers will quit fighting when surrounded by the enemy or without a large logistical advantage dates back to the Korean War and a Chinese/KPA assessment of U.S. combat units during that period. The large number of KPA SOF will also concentrate its attacks in rear areas against combat support, rear service, or other high-value targets. These can include missile and radar sites; C2 cells; chemical or nuclear facilities; airfields; petroleum, oils, and lubricants facilities; dams or power plants; bridges; isolated communications relay sites; and logistical bases. The KPA believes its best chance for success on the battlefield is to break the U.S. logistical system and thus render the infantry and armor units combat ineffective due to lack of ammunition, fuel, and other supplies that U.S. Soldiers rely heavily upon in battle.

PRECLUSION

1-109. Preclusion combines antiaccess and area denial methods to degrade U.S. ability to mass and sustain joint combat power. *Antiaccess* is defined as action, activity, or capability, usually long-range, designed to prevent an advancing enemy force from entering an operational area (JP 3-0). *Area denial* is action, activity, or capability, usually short-range, designed to limit an enemy force's freedom of action within an operational area (JP 3-0). Preclusion refers to the combination of antiaccess and area denial methods, and seeks to influence an extraregional foe's ability to introduce forces into the AO and sustain combat power. It is an efficient way to prevent accumulation of enemy combat power in a region, and promote defeat or deny success to a militarily superior enemy. North Korea will attempt to use preclusion to selectively deny, delay, and disrupt entry of additional forces into the region (antiaccess), and compel extraregional forces to keep their staging and operating bases beyond continuous operational reach (area denial).

1-110. Strategic preclusion seeks to completely deter extraregional involvement or severely limit its scope and intensity. North Korea will attempt to achieve strategic preclusion in order to reduce the influence of the U.S., hostile regional powers, or other Western countries that may interfere with its actions on the peninsula. The country will employ all its instruments of power to preclude direct involvement by any extraregional power. Since U.S. military forces are already located on the Korean Peninsula, North Korea's actions would most likely focus on the prevention of additional forces deploying to South Korea. The country uses its close relationship with China in diplomatic and economic circles to prevent additional isolation of North Korea. Until 2017, China showed a reluctance to force the country to the negotiating table or to condone the most severe economic sanctions wanted by the UN. North Korea originally used the large KPA, with reserves numbering over seven million, as a strategic deterrent. When the collapse of external support from Russia and China reduced the KPA's strength due to weapons becoming obsolete over time, the country chose to focus on nuclear weapons and missile system as an attempt to regain strategic preclusion. Kim Jong Un reinforced this COA in March 2013 by instituting the policy of *byungjin*, which gave priorities to the nuclear and munitions sectors within North Korea while still providing resources to the electrical, coal, metal, and railway transport sectors of the country's economy.

1-111. Operational exclusion is to selectively deny an extraregional force access to or use of forward operating bases or sites within the region. North Korea could attempt operational exclusion by launching nuclear or chemical missiles at existing military bases in Japan, Guam, Alaska, or Hawaii.

1-112. Access limitation is an attempt to affect an extraregional foe's ability to introduce forces into the theater. Access-control operations do not necessarily have to deny the enemy access entirely. A more realistic goal would be to limit or interrupt access into the theater in such a way that the KPA could deal with the forces after their arrival. The KPA might conduct access limitation through minefields laid in sea lanes, submarine attacks on troop or supply ships, airplanes or air defense weapons shooting down aircraft, or SOF operations.

SANCTUARY

1-113. Sanctuary provides protection to key assets using both physical and non-physical means. North Korea will use any means necessary to protect key elements of its combat power from destruction by enemy forces, with particular attention paid to its air and missile capabilities. This protection for the KPA may come from use of any or all of the following:

- Engineer effort and fortifications.
- Complex terrain.
- Proximity to noncombatants.
- Risk of unacceptable collateral damage.
- Countermeasure systems.
- Dispersion.
- EIW.

1-114. Sanctuary generally cannot protect the entire KPA for an extended time period. Knowing this, the organization will seek to protect selected elements of its forces for long enough to gain the freedom of action necessary to pursue its strategic goals. The country will employ a wide variety of counterprecision techniques that include C3D; Global Positioning System jamming; EW; terminal defenses; close-contact tactical fights; aircraft; and extended-range munitions. It will also create sanctuary by exploiting civilian populations and cultural sites to hide weapons systems, support defensive postures and capabilities, and shape dispositions for offensive actions.

1-115. North Korea employs hardened and buried facilities and uses decoys of key facilities or capabilities, such as short-range ballistic missiles and surface-to-air missiles. North Korea will likely employ an integrated fires system that includes cannon, howitzer, multiple rocket, and short-range and medium-range missile systems capable of tactical to extreme-range fires and counterfires. North Korea employs a large number of older air defense weapons in its integrated air defense systems that may include a limited number of countertactical ballistic missiles. The KPA's reconnaissance, counterreconnaissance, intelligence, surveillance, and target acquisition capabilities are essential to the country's use of its integrated systems.

1-116. The estimated number of underground facilities in North Korea range from 3,000 to 14,000, most within 113 km of the DMZ. The KPA will launch its offensive against South Korea from the relative safety of its subterranean facilities and use tunnels under the DMZ to place SOF in the enemy rear areas. If forced to retreat back over the DMZ, the KPA will fall into these previously prepared combat battle positions; it will require significant personnel, ammunition, and time to eliminate the military personnel located in these underground facilities. See Chapter 6 for additional information on KPA subterranean operations.

ISOLATION

1-117. Isolation techniques are used to attempt to contain a foe's combat power so that it cannot impact KPA mission accomplishment. North Korea will seek ways and means to isolate U.S. military power and influence indirectly rather than with direct confrontation. The country will seek to degrade and isolate U.S. capabilities in ways that include—

- Disrupting effective communications with higher command and coordinating headquarters.
- Disrupting sustainment and general logistics to and within regional operations.
- Altering situational understanding of an OE through deception.
- Persuading South Koreans to repudiate outside support.
- Convincing enemies they are decisively engaged.
- Limiting or preventing mobility due to complex terrain, man-made or reinforced natural obstacles, or effects of weapons of mass destruction.
- Defeating political resolve to continue government commitment to actions in the theater, region, or operational area.

1-118. It is likely that North Korea believes that defeat of U.S. forces is not just a battle between the armed forces of enemies. For North Korea, victory is to not be defeated and to force the U.S. military to conclude its actions before its assigned goals are achieved. The intent of isolation is to limit U.S. freedom to act effectively against physical attacks, prevent mutual support of U.S. forces, diminish psychological attacks on KPA resolve, and minimize attack effects on KPA C2, systems, networks, and general support infrastructure.

ELECTRONIC INTELLIGENCE WARFARE

1-119. EIW uses all aspects of the information environment to create effects favorable to North Korea's objectives. Kim Jong Il stated that there were three pillars to creating a powerful state: ideology, arms, and information technology. Kim Jong Un has continued this emphasis on EIW. North Korea will attempt to identify critical or essential decisions by enemy forces that would most affect its own goals and objectives. With an understanding of these actions and the situational awareness and understanding that impact on these decisions, the country will attempt to execute a comprehensive EIW campaign to induce preferred decisions and actions by the enemy. An EIW campaign is waged through multiple means that can include—

- EW.
- Deception.
- Physical destruction.
- Protection and security measures.
- Perception management.
- Information attack.
- Computer warfare.
- Reconnaissance.
- Cryptanalysis.
- Intelligence Collection.
- Disinformation operations.

1-120. These EIW means are combined systematically and continuously to target decision-making processes. Multiple forms of information attack present a believable compilation of information and corroborating evidence, as a deception, that guides decisions that seem to be reasoned and correct to an enemy, but actually support KPA goals. KPA perception management manipulates information and other

forms of sensory presentation so that apparently true data obtained are mutually supporting misinformation that is undetected by the target of the EIW.

ACTIONS TO COUNTER U.S. FORCES

1-121. North Korea can operate across all domains and oppose U.S. interests in all phases of a joint operation. Using varied forms of hybrid and multi-domain capabilities, the North Koreans will carefully plan and execute actions prior to overt hostilities with U.S. forces as a series or group of integrated operations. Some actions will purposely be overt while others will be intentionally covert, to be activated at a critical point in time as determined by the commander. The balance of the five domains will shift with the tempo and nature of ongoing operations. While all five domains will be employed, there are important trends that might predominate actions and be most critical to North Korean success at particular points in time and events during a conflict.

ACTIONS TO INFLUENCE SHAPING OPERATIONS

1-122. North Korea prefers to win without fighting and on terms favorable to its interests. If its actions are successful but counter to critical U.S. interests, the U.S. may consider introducing additional armed force to the region. North Korean goals prior to this increase are centered on preventing this decision and, if that fails, constraining the introduction of additional military forces in such a way as to prevent the success of a U.S. joint and combined operation. During enemy shaping operations, North Korea will primarily use EIW, with less emphasis on systems warfare and preclusion and even less emphasis on sanctuary and isolation, as shown in figure 1-3. The balance of the country's methodologies will be focused on four key areas.

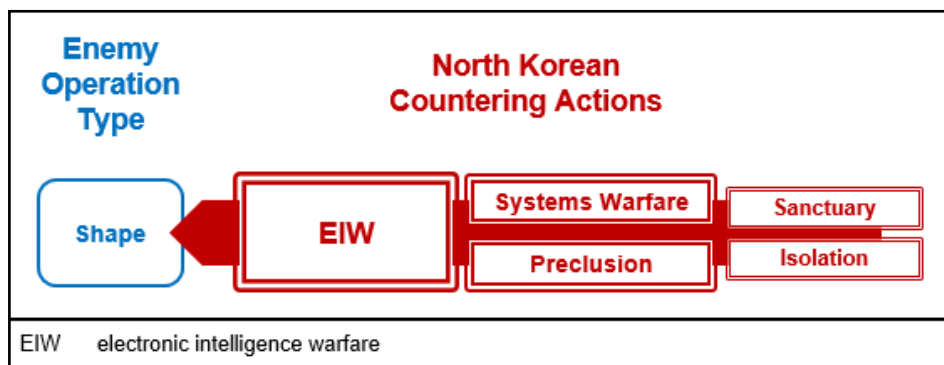


Figure 1-3. Actions to counter enemy shaping operations

Provide an Alternate Understanding of an Operation Environment

1-123. North Korean EIW activities will manipulate the acquisition, transmission and presentation of information in a way that suits its preferred decision outcomes. Manipulating cognitive understanding of conditions shapes a foe's decisions to actually support North Korean objectives.

Enable Targeted Instability

1-124. North Korea will attempt to foster instability in the South Korean population in such a way that regional security does not match U.S. operational requirements.

Disaggregate Partnerships

1-125. The country will act upon partnerships to reduce the ability of the U.S. to operate in its preferred combined, joint, and interagency manner.

Prevent the Facilitation of Access

1-126. North Korea will focus pre-conflict preclusion activities on nonlethal means. It will attempt to undermine relationships, raise political stakes, manipulate public opinion, and attack resolve in order to constrain or deny basing rights, overflight corridors, logistic support, and concerted allied actions.

ACTIONS TO DETER AUGMENTATION OF ENEMY FORCES

1-127. North Korea desires to accomplish its aims to deter introduction of additional enemy forces into the region, with focus on four key areas. During the enemy deter phase, North Korea will focus its operations on the reflexive control and preclusion domains, place a lesser emphasis on the systems warfare and sanctuary domains, and perform limited operations in the isolation domain, as shown in figure 1-4. Its goals are centered on manipulating deterrence efforts with effects that halt or significantly slow introduction of additional combat power.

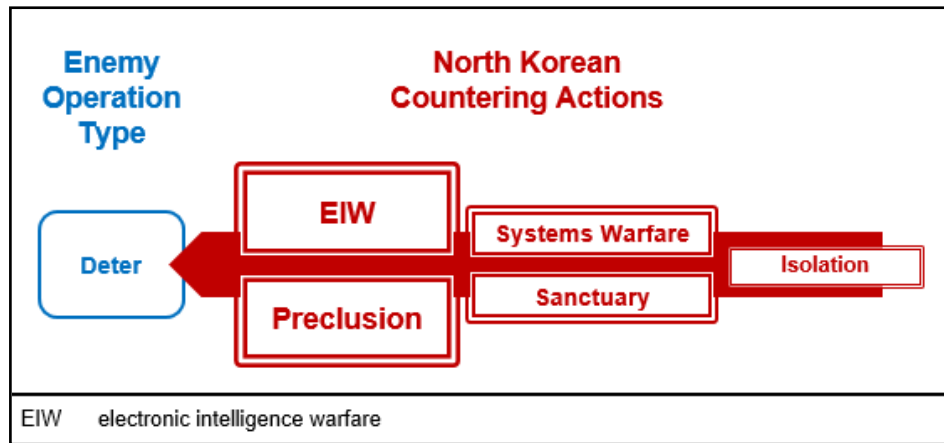


Figure 1-4. Actions to counter enemy deterrence

Alter Perception of Risk

1-128. North Korea may use EIW activities to manipulate an opponent's view of the risks involved in key actions. These efforts will focus on the heightened risk of escalation inherent in any action conducted by the U.S. and the potential loss of life for all sides.

Expose U.S. and Allied Forces

1-129. North Korea could expose enemy forces to attack, such as ships from South Korea, submarines, and even possible attacks on aircraft flying into the AO. These actions are designed to degrade the deterrence value of adding additional enemy forces to the Korean Peninsula in an attempt to destroy credibility among current and potential U.S. partner nations.

Mask Intent

1-130. North Korea could manipulate the information environment to incorrectly portray its intent. Successful deception would cause the U.S. to build deterrence capacity aimed at a false or less than critical North Korean capability.

Slow and Disrupt Deployment

1-131. North Korea could focus on continuing preclusion activities to limit the accumulation of applicable U.S. combat power to a level and presence that does not threaten the accomplishment of its goals.

ACTIONS TO MAINTAIN THE INITIATIVE

1-132. North Korea understands the role of initiative in victory. Time is a weapon the country believes favors its own goals and interests initially, and then fades the longer the conflict will last. During the enemy's seize initiative phase, North Korea will attempt to use the preclusion and systems warfare domains to stifle its enemy's ability to seize the initiative. To a lesser extent, North Korea will use the EIW and isolation domains, with even less reliance on the sanctuary domain, as shown in figure 1-5. The balance of its methodologies at this point in operations will be focused on two key areas: tempo and preclusion.

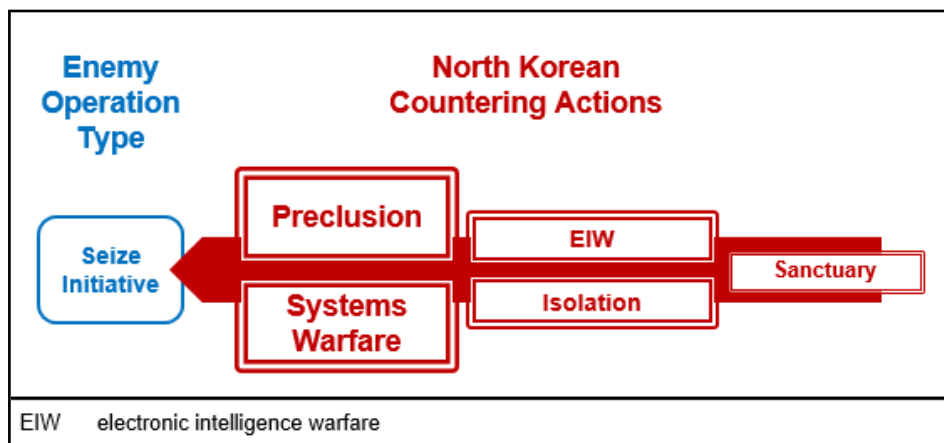


Figure 1-5. Actions to counter enemy seizing the initiative

Control Tempo

1-133. During the initial phases of an extraregional force's entry into the region or the addition of forces from a country already involved, North Korea may employ a high operational tempo to take advantage of the weaknesses inherent in enemy power projection. Lightly equipped forces are usually the first to enter the region. This may take the form of attack against enemy early-entry forces and be linked to diplomatic, economic, and informational efforts to terminate the conflict quickly, before the main enemy force can be brought to bear. If the North Koreans cannot end the conflict quickly, they will likely take steps to slow the tempo and prolong the conflict. The country realizes the significance of coalitions and has observed successes and failures of U.S.-led coalitions. If timely victory does not occur, U.S. public support begins to wane and ultimately influences political decisions. Therefore, the North Koreans will seek protraction of conflict to keep U.S. forces engaged in order to weaken resolve and drain military and economic resources. The preferred tactics during this period avoid decisive combat with superior forces. These activities may not be linked to maneuver or ground objectives, but may instead be intended to inflict mass casualties or destroy critical or essential systems, which reduces U.S. resolve or ability to continue the fight.

Conduct In-theater Preclusion

1-134. North Korea will threaten and attack forward bases and supplies via operational fires and affiliated irregular forces. This raises the risk to U.S. forces, hinders operational phasing, and diminishes host-nation support for protection of U.S. lines of communications. The North Koreans may now, or in the near future, have access to multiple weapons platforms to assist in conducting preclusion. Medium- and long-range, precision-strike munitions can provide the ability to target deploying forces, strategic mobility assets, forward operating bases and sites, staging areas, and lines of communications. Proliferation of long-range air defense systems can present significant challenges as North Korea attempts to exclude or limit U.S. access to areas where U.S. forces are directed to deploy. Other North Korean platforms may include unmanned aircraft that employ capabilities such as Global Positioning System jammers, sensors, EW capabilities, or other weaponized capabilities. In addition, readily available commercial imagery and omnipresent media sources provide early warning of U.S. actions and will become increasingly difficult to elude.

ACTIONS TO GAIN AND SUSTAIN DOMINANCE

1-135. North Korean actions will seek to render U.S. combat power ineffective by systematic and continual attacks on sustainment activities and C2 networks. North Korea will attempt to isolate and contain enemy maneuver and fires formations, and force U.S. forces to commit combat power to battles and engagements that diminish capabilities and prevent U.S. success. North Korea will likely focus on the domains of systems warfare, isolation, and sanctuary during the enemy's dominate phase. EIW is relegated to a subordinate role, while preclusion has an even lesser role, as shown in figure 1-6.

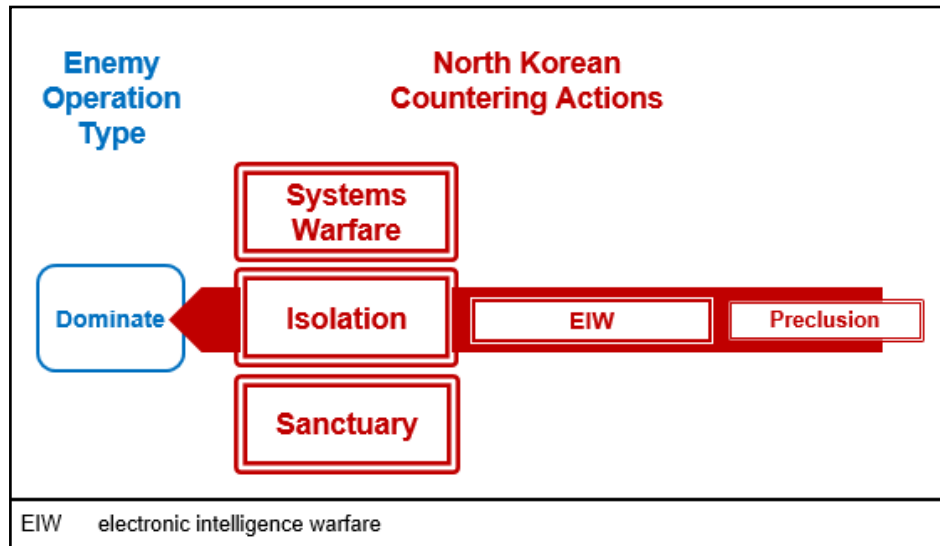


Figure 1-6. Actions to counter enemy dominance

Employ Targeted Overmatch

1-136. The destruction of high-visibility or unique systems employed by U.S. forces offers exponential value in terms of North Korean goals. These actions are not always linked to military objectives; they also maximize effects in the information and psychological arenas. High-visibility systems that could be identified for destruction might include stealth aircraft, attack helicopters, counterbattery artillery radars, aerial surveillance platforms, or rocket launcher systems. Losses among these premier systems could undermine U.S. morale, degrade operational capability, and inhibit employment of these weapons systems. If North Korea is able to obtain them, precision munitions can degrade or eliminate high-technology weaponry. Camouflage, deception, decoy, or mock-up systems can degrade the effects of sensor systems. The North Koreans can employ low-cost Global Positioning System jammers to disrupt precision munitions targeting, sensor-to-shooter links, and navigation. Lethal weapon systems such as missiles, air defense systems, sensor and EW weapons, unmanned aircraft systems, and artillery will all be used to degrade U.S. capabilities. An alternate way to operate on the margins of U.S. technology is to maneuver during periods of reduced exposure, based on detailed study of U.S. capabilities and patterns.

Protect Key Capabilities

1-137. North Korean forces could selectively forego massed formations, patterned echelons, and linear operations that would present easy targets. Military forces may hide and disperse in areas of sanctuary that limit the ability to apply the full range of U.S. technological capabilities. The country will retain the ability to rapidly mass forces and fires from dispersed locations for decisive combat at the time and place of its own determination. North Korea will use the physical environment and natural conditions to neutralize or offset the technological advantages of modern reconnaissance, surveillance, and intelligence operations. The country will employ its large array of reconnaissance, surveillance, intelligence, and target acquisition systems. Deceptive misinformation to large numbers of sensors can overwhelm a foe's ability to receive, process, and analyze raw intelligence data and provide timely and accurate intelligence analysis.

Disaggregate Enemy Formations

1-138. North Korea will target key vulnerabilities, fix maneuver forces, disconnect networks, and manipulate decision-making to limit or prevent U.S. forces from benefitting from the synergy of mobile, integrated, and protected firepower. North Korea will attempt to influence enemy maneuver forces to choose incorrect deployment times and attack avenues. North Korean regular and irregular forces' counter mobility efforts will limit flexibility and disrupt enemy maneuver responses and counterattacks.

ACTIONS TO COUNTER CONSOLIDATION OF ENEMY GAINS

1-139. North Korea will act to prevent consolidation of enemy gains and to alter conditions into a situation in which the country resumes control of an OE. Its goals are centered on manipulating consolidation efforts to a point where the country returns to or gains a level of influence over the region commensurate with its objectives and interests. If North Korea is losing the war and the enemy goes into a stabilization phase, the remaining North Korea assets will focus on the domains of EIW and systems warfare, with a lesser role for the sanctuary and isolation domains. Any efforts in the preclusion domain are minor, as shown in figure 1-7. If North Korea loses the war and the enemy's enable civil authority phase begins, any remaining pro-Kim regime elements would primarily operate in the EIW domain, deemphasizing the domains of systems warfare and sanctuary. The preclusion and isolation domains will have even less emphasis, as shown in figure 1-8. The balance of its methodologies at this point in the operation will be focused on four key areas.

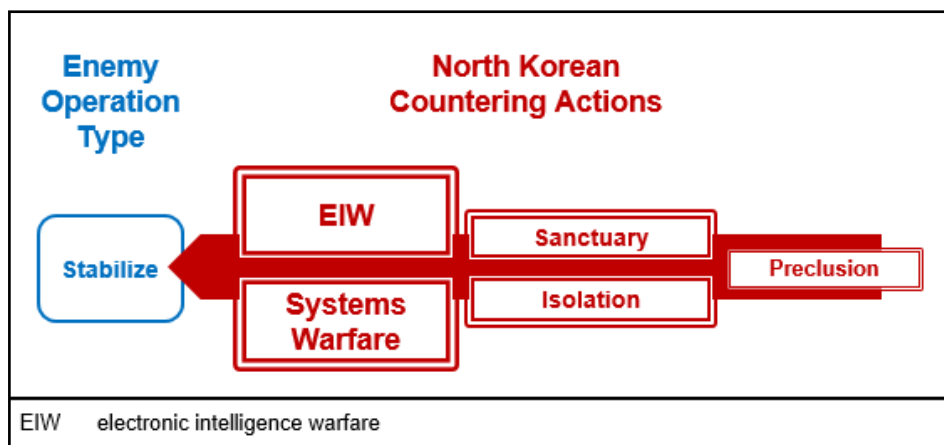


Figure 1-7. Actions to counter enemy stabilizing actions

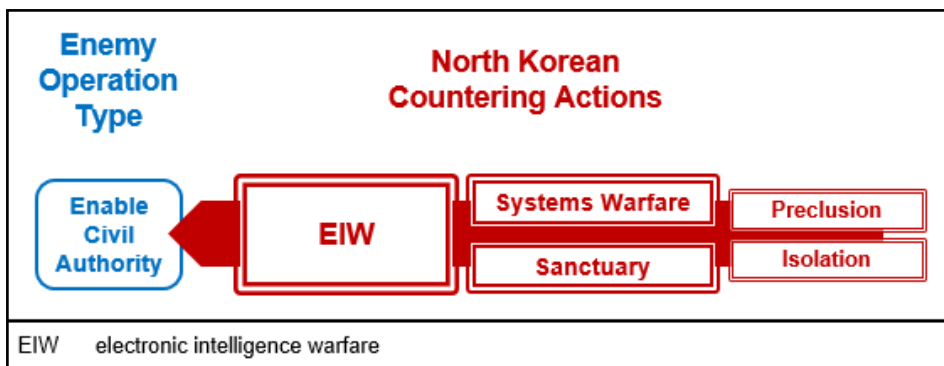


Figure 1-8. Actions to counter enemy enabling civil authority

Counter Stability

1-140. North Korean use of reflexive-control activities will manipulate the foe's view of the value of continued actions in the region. These efforts will focus both on altering the value of continued operations

by the U.S. and changing the perceived value by other actors in their continuing support as ally or partner to the U.S. This effort will include actions to undermine the authority and effectiveness of governance elements acting in concert with U.S. forces.

Redirect Support

1-141. North Korea will attempt to influence the South Korean populace and possibly other regional actors to shift their support to its interests and to act against the stated aims of the U.S. The country will exploit any lack of cultural understanding observed in U.S. forces. It will conduct EIW campaigns dedicated to portray the U.S. culture as an institution bent on political and economic global domination in the name of “Western” democracy. Information campaigns will present U.S. military forces as brutal and unconstrained by the accepted rules of warfare, and exploit instances of U.S. missteps due to cultural differences. The fabrication and exaggeration of U.S. cultural shortcomings are designed to alienate the South Korean populace from supporting the U.S. and aid in recruiting people and other countries to support North Korea and its goals and objectives.

Change the Nature of the Conflict

1-142. North Korea will seek to shift the nature of the conflict, or at least its perceived nature, to characteristics that do not match the themes proffered by U.S. information operations. North Korean forces will also act to prevent enemy consolidation areas from becoming secure enough to permit substantive stability operations.

Employ Cultural Standoff

1-143. North Korea will optimize cultural standoff and social aspects of an OE to provide protection and freedom to maneuver for friendly forces. Cultural standoff techniques employed by North Korean actors include integrating religious, medical, and other sensitive facilities into sanctuaries; employing human terrain and cognitive manipulation for deception objectives; and exploiting the South Korean population using EIW.

OFFENSIVE, DEFENSIVE, AND COUNTERSTABILITY ACTIONS

1-144. Offensive and defensive actions occur within three general types of KPA operations. Those types of actions at the tactical echelons are—

- Offensive actions.
- Defensive actions.
- Counterstability actions.

1-145. The types of actions in KPA operations are both tactical methods and guides to the design of COAs and mission orders. KPA counterstability actions, although offensive and defensive in nature, are often recurring actions to create or amplify conditions that support an OE conducive to achieving North Korean objectives. These types of actions often seek to create or sustain conditions to destabilize a society, its governance of law and order, and other social support to a relevant population of the society.

OFFENSIVE ACTIONS

1-146. The KPAGF conduct three basic types of tactical offensive actions at the echelons of regiment and higher—

- Integrated attack.
- Dispersed attack.
- Limited-objective attack.

1-147. The tactical missions of integrated and dispersed attacks are based on the objective and how the KPAGF assess their combat power in relation to their enemy. An integrated attack applies overmatch capabilities in selected windows of opportunity for synchronized and massed combat power to destroy an enemy’s resolve to continue a conflict. When the KPAGF do not have overmatch capability, typical offensive actions include dispersed attacks conducted over extended periods of time and expansive areas. Attacks can

include domains of land, maritime, air, space, and cyberspace. Interdependent and coordinated actions by dispersed forces attack throughout their assigned areas of responsibility. Specific actions aim to destroy key components of an enemy's combat system, degrade enemy resolve, and gradually defeat enemy ability to continue a conflict through continuous EIW actions.

1-148. The KPAGF will conduct limited-objective attacks when, while combating a stronger enemy force, they recognize an opportunity to seize the initiative from enemy operations. Two types of tactical limited-objective attacks are spoiling attack and counterattack. The purpose of a spoiling attack is to pre-empt or seriously disrupt an enemy while it is in the process of planning, forming, assembling, or preparing to attack. A counterattack prevents the enemy from achieving its offensive mission outcome, and allows the KPAGF to regain tactical initiative in their operations. Typical forces with the flexibility to react to situational opportunities with a limited-objective attack are reserve or designated counterattack forces.

1-149. KPAGF attacks can have designated purposes with expected outcomes. An attack to destroy eliminates a target entity as a useful fighting force or an objective, and often focuses on a single component of an enemy's combat system. An attack to seize is to gain control of key terrain or man-made facilities/infrastructure. An attack to expel forces an enemy to vacate an area. Attacks to expel often have a significant EIW component that facilitates degradation of enemy resolve and fosters enemy defeat. A strike is an offensive action that rapidly destroys a key enemy organization through a synergistic combination of massed precision fires and maneuver. A strike mission is conducted typically at a C2 operational level above division, based on the combat power required for effective mission success. The tactical outcomes for strikes are not limited to destruction, seizure, or expulsion.

1-150. At the tactical echelon of battalion and below, the KPAGF conduct four basic types of offensive action—

- Ambush.
- Assault.
- Raid.
- Reconnaissance attack.

1-151. The tactical actions of ambush, assault, and raid can be conducted with a combat power allocation as minimal as one individual, whereas the combat power normally required to conduct a reconnaissance attack is at least that of a task-organized company. See chapter 6 for discussion and examples of offensive actions at divisional, regimental, and subordinate-unit levels.

DEFENSIVE ACTIONS

1-152. The KPAGF consider defensive operations as a temporary interval between attacks in order to gain time or conserve troop strength. The KPAGF will only go on the defense when forced to do so and only as a temporary measure until they can return to the offense again. The KPAGF go on the defense to repulse a superior attacking force, to inflict grave casualties upon an attacking force, to defend key terrain, and to transition to a decisive attack. Defense is conceptually a planned defense or a situational defense. Planned actions typically involve sufficient time, knowledge, and situational understanding of an OE to prepare and rehearse forces for specific tasks. Nonetheless, circumstances change often and suddenly at times that preclude actions as originally planned. In instances such as being surprised or finding KPAGF combat power at a significant disadvantage, conditions can require a temporary situational defensive posture until the KPAGF can regain the initiative.

1-153. At the tactical echelons of regiment and above, defensive tactics are identified with one of two descriptions:

- Mobile defense.
- Area defense.

1-154. A KPAGF tactical mobile defense applies fires and maneuver to destroy key elements of the enemy's combat system to deny enemy forces their objective while preserving its own combat power. A mobile defense uses the depth and breadth of an AO and available time to create favorable conditions for KPAGF actions to disrupt, defeat, or destroy an enemy. The objective is typically focused on defeat or destruction of key C2 nodes and logistics support. For the KPAGF, this form of defense trades space for time. The main

combat power is concentrated in the second echelon, while the first echelon fights a series of delaying actions to disrupt the enemy until the decisive fight against the second echelon.

1-155. A tactical area defense denies key areas of terrain or access to designated areas in order to set the conditions that cause an enemy's offensive operations to culminate before achieving its objectives. Deception activities are a key component of EIW, especially during counterattacks. An area defense retains selected terrain, when directed, to support other defensive or offensive actions to protect critical capabilities, preserve combat power, or create favorable conditions for KPAGF actions to disrupt, defeat, or destroy an enemy.

1-156. At the battalion, detachment, and subordinate echelons, the KPAGF perform maneuver and area defensive actions using combinations of—

- Simple battle position (SBP) defenses.
- Complex battle position (CBP) defenses.

1-157. A SBP is a coordinated defensive position(s) oriented on an enemy avenue of approach. A CBP is a coordinated defensive location with multiple SBPs. The purpose of a CBP can include—

- Protect and conceal a safe haven or sanctuary of key KPA capabilities.
- Delay enemy forces in an AO for a specified period of time.
- Defend and prevent seizure of a location or area by an enemy.
- Contain or block enemy forces.

1-158. Defensive tasks often set conditions for the KPAGF to resume offensive actions. Whether the defensive mission task is terrain oriented or enemy-force oriented, conditional fires and maneuver of forces are typically part of how the KPAGF intend to use combat power in support of mission purpose and intent. See chapter 7 for discussion and examples of defensive actions at divisional, regimental, and subordinate-unit levels.

COUNTERSTABILITY ACTIONS

1-159. Counterstability actions are a normal aspect of North Korean operations, and often occur concurrent with other ongoing defensive or offensive actions. These types of actions leverage the variables of an OE, combat, and a relevant population to create conditions that enhance the KPA's physical, informational, and cognitive goals and objectives in support of the mission. Offensive and defensive tasks in counterstability actions can be simultaneous and continuous at various levels of intensity. North Korea sustains or modifies the frequency and level of physical and cognitive violence and coercion in order to destabilize an OE. Actions are at times sudden and massive in effects, but are more often a series of gradually escalating incidents that cause long-term debilitating effects to an enemy and relevant population. Whether sudden and massive or gradual and insidious, counterstability actions degrade the capabilities of a foe and seek to manipulate OE conditions to the advantage of the KPA.

1-160. North Korea will plan and coordinate counterstability actions to incite dissatisfaction by the South Korean population. The country's actions can overtly or covertly challenge legitimacy of the South Korean Government by disrupting governmental services such as military and internal security forces, law enforcement and judicial agencies, financial institutions, internal development programs, diplomatic initiatives, or degrading civil services and a safe and secure environment. North Korea will attempt to interrupt indigenous or external support to South Korea to extend instability in the area. In some instances, it may attempt to provide civil services and support to an area while concurrently disrupting those types of services and support from the South Korean Government in order to acquire support from the local population, political affiliates, and the North Korean diaspora.

1-161. An effective strategic communications program, integral to EIW objectives, can directly and indirectly criticize and damage the aims of South Korea, opposition groups, and partner actions through local, regional, and global media outreach. North Korea has proven it is not constrained or limited by the rule of law or international conventions and protocols. Crime and terrorism are two areas of counterstability actions that confront a safe and secure OE, the rule of law, social and economic well-being, and just and stable governance. These actions are instrumental to disruption and subversion of enemy military forces and society. See chapter 8 for discussion and offensive and defensive examples of counterstability tactical action.

1-162. The recent Russian takeover of Crimea only reinforced likely KPA previous planning to insert some KPA SOF into South Korea or to activate clandestine operatives already living in South Korea before any actual hostilities begin. Their task would be to help gain any North Korean advantage that would slow down the mobilization of South Korean reserves. The SOF could do this in a number of ways:

- **Social media:** spreading the word that war is not imminent and that military reserve mobilization is unnecessary as well as expensive.
- **Antiwar protests:** leading/infiltrating rallies intended to convince the South Korean Government not to act against its North Korean brothers.
- **False-flag provocations:** blaming any SOF actions in South Korea on others, especially those South Koreans who favor war preparedness.
- **Political attacks:** causing chaos and possibly advocating regime change during the crisis, thus diverting political attention away from North Korean actions.
- **Terrorist attacks:** if other means prove ineffective or as an approaching conventional attack date draws near, launching terrorist attacks to spread panic among the South Korean civilian population.
- **Attack key nodes:** just prior to the North Korean attack, attacking important C2 and communications centers to prevent the flow of true information throughout South Korea.