

North Korea Preparing People for War?

The Daily NK (<http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?cataId=nk01500&num=7104>) is carrying a story based upon information from a North Korean source that indicates that Kim may be preparing his people for war. The title of the article is “We Will Take Out Seoul”.

“A source from North Hamkyung Province reported to The Daily NK today, “In a people’s unit meeting held in a neighborhood of Hoiryong on the evening of the 5th, the chairwoman of the unit explained the situation, then said, ‘In implementing live fire training from the 6th, South Chosun is making an open attempt to attack our republic once again, but supposing just one of the puppet’s bombs falls on our territory, we will take Seoul out.”

“The reason why our People’s Army attacked the South Chosun artillery base was because the South Chosun puppet military provoked us first across the West Sea Military Demarcation Line,” she went on, before asserting, “The self-defensive measures of our People’s Army were a fair reaction.”

The chairwoman further added, “Even though South Chosun’s Lee Myung Bak told Obama of the U.S., ‘we are going to war, so help us,’ even Obama dealt with South Chosun sarcastically, saying ‘didn’t it happen because you irritated them first?’”

Please read the entire article for more information.

Analysis. South Korea's biggest fear has always been that the North would begin any conflict by using its artillery positioned along the DMZ to destroy all of South Korea north of the Han River. Here North Korea is obviously playing on this fear. They expected that the contents of these meetings would be reported to the South and that such reports might dissuade the South from carrying on its live firing exercises around the periphery of South Korea. It hasn't. It won't.

What is interesting is that they are even inventing dialog between the President of South Korea and the President of the United States to bolster their argument. Probably not the first time and probably not the last.

At the same time the Chosun Ilbo (http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2010/12/07/2010120701039.html) is carrying a story that indicates that South Korea may have missed a chance to stop the spiral of violence by turning their F-15Ks loose on the artillery positions and any MiGs the North sent to defend them. Their theory is that the Lee government has talked big but not delivered ordnance on target or done the other things it promised to do such as resuming the propaganda broadcasts into the DMZ.

“Some people are worried that an all-out war might break out. But the North is as afraid of a full war as we are,” he added. Kim was presidential secretary for defense affairs in the Roh Tae-woo government and defense adviser to president Roh Moo-hyun.

The military gave up on ordering the fighters to strafe North Korean artillery positions due to the UN Command-set rules of engagement stipulating that a response to an attack should be carried out with "equivalent" weapons. But many suspect the real reason was that top military brass got cold feet.

Experts cite historical examples to stress that fear of escalation would only help escalate a war. "We

have no choice but to keep suffering if we're worried about escalation whenever the North ratchets up the level of provocation," said a researcher at a government-funded think tank on condition of anonymity. "What would we do if the North fires one or two shells from a long-range howitzer at Seoul and says that it fired them by accident?" “

The last paragraph is key I believe. The North will continue to increase the level of provocation until it either gets what it wants or it gets severely beaten on. Then the North must make a decision: war or no war. If the decision is war then the rest will follow. If the decision is no war, at least not right now, then the North loses a bunch of its bite and becomes a lot of ignorable bark. Since threatening war is about the only tactic that gets Kim any attention, he will think long and hard about war now or war later.

The sad fact is that absent a complete implosion of North Korean society, war is an eventuality. As much as they don't want it, even the PRC may be coming to that conclusion.