

North Korea to Seize Islands

North Korea plans to seize some or all of the five coastal islands in the event of conflict reports JoongAng Ilbo. (<http://joongangdaily.joins.com/article/view.asp?aid=2930366>).

“From mid-December, divisions within North Korea’s navy, like the sharpshooting brigade and reconnaissance bureau, have been involved in landing drills in the waters off the coast of Nampo,” RFA said, citing a source in China well-informed about North Korea. Nampo is a North Korean city and seaport located in South Pyongan Province.

The order for the exercise was given by North Korean leader Kim Jong-il and his son Jong-un, who demanded the border islands be taken over in the event of a sudden conflict, the anonymous source said.

The source said that the information had come from a North Korean military official in Pyongyang, saying that the exercises were being conducted to “break the will of the South Koreans who have been promising strong retaliation ever since the Yeonpyeong Island shelling.”

Please read the entire article for more important information.

Analysis. Not a good sign of things to come. Not so much because these particular units are practicing amphibious operations against the five islands, but because North Korea is willing to spend precious fuel to do it. I believe it is an indication that North Korea is beginning to believe it might fall. This is in line with the increased flying program undertaken by the NK Air force. Again, jet fuel is not cheap and the DPRK doesn't have a lot of it.

I doubt this is a ruse. Even though there have been some recent signs that South Korea may be interested in returning to the Six Party Talks, there is nothing solid to suggest that this will happen any time soon. In an earlier article in the Chosun Ilbo (http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2010/12/30/2010123001108.html), we get mixed messages from the Lee government.

In a briefing to the president, the Unification Ministry set three policy goals for 2011 -- persuading the North to change, seeking "proper" inter-Korean relations, and preparing for reunification.

"To help the North seek desirable change, we need to find a new approach to targeting the North Korea people," a ministry spokesman said. "We should lay firm foundations for the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula in the long term."

The expression "preparations for reunification" has long been interpreted by both Koreas as meaning absorption of one Korea by the other.

But apparently mindful of the risk of escalating tensions with that choice of words, the ministry also talked about "opening doors for dialogue" and added, "We are not seeking reunification by absorption."

If the South is not planning on seeking reunification by absorption, how are they planning to reunify? Are they expecting the North to simply implode? The odds are well against that. Even if the North were

to be on the ragged edge of imploding and Kim could get no help to survive, he would go to war and destroy as much as possible in retribution for his downfall.

It may also be that this talk is designed to placate both the PRC and the United States, neither of whom want war on the Korean peninsula. If the South intends to begin a propaganda campaign against North Korea to attempt to subvert the people, it is most likely that Kim will respond to this in the same manner as a regular military attack. The South may have already begun this propaganda campaign by allowing the lighting of the "Christmas Tree" and broadcasting by loud speaker across the DMZ. These actions may be part of the reason for the increased military activity on the part of the North.

Kim is pretty much limited as to how he can respond to an intense propaganda campaign launched by the South. Other than the puppet groups in the South and some loud speakers on the DMZ, the South is pretty much immune to the North's propaganda. This is even truer after the sinking of the Cheonan and the shelling of YP Do. The people of South Korea pretty much have lost their sense of humor with Kim. I doubt they will get it back any time soon.

That pretty much leaves Kim with his military as his response to the south's actions. That can get very messy in a hurry.