
Asia

Korean flashpoint around the Summer Olympics

by Linda de Hoyos

Senior military analysts are pointing to the likely possibility that North Korea will carry out major provocations during the period of the upcoming Summer Olympics in Seoul. Given Pyongyang's past record of terrorist actions, an attack on the South around the Olympics could easily fall into the category of an "act of war," turning the Korean peninsula again into a flashpoint for strategic confrontation.

The major factor in this estimation is North Korea's explosions of rage over Seoul's hosting of the Olympics, a rage which has been exacerbated by the decision of Beijing and Moscow to participate in the Games, despite Pyongyang's unsuccessful attempts to gain position as co-host.

In the eyes of North Korea and its dictator Kim Il-Sung, the Olympics have turned into a point of do-or-die. If the Games are successful, Pyongyang believes, then North Korea will have lost its opportunities for world standing, while South Korea's star "rises" and Seoul gains international prominence as an industrialized nation and regional power to reckon with. Chances of reunification on Pyongyang's terms will have been dashed for good.

The same set of considerations led to the North Korean terror-bombing of the South Korean cabinet in October 1983. The terrorist attack took place during the first stop by then-President Chun Doo Hwan of a four-nation trip that would have taken him to Indonesia and India. Weeks before the trip the Pyongyang press poured out volumes of vituperation against Chun's "junket."

As if to underline their intentions, on June 7, North Korea placed Soviet-made SA-5 surface-to-air missiles within 70 miles of Seoul. The missiles have a range of 200 miles and have been placed at four different sites along the DMZ. "They put at risk a considerable amount of air traffic into Seoul," said a Pentagon source.

In a joint statement from Seoul, U.S. Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci and South Korean Defense Minister Oh Jambok declared that North Korea's offensively oriented military force deployments and strengthened surprise attack capabilities represent a "serious threat to the Republic of Korea. Any provocation to disrupt the Games cannot be tolerated."

The North Koreans also have significant capabilities for on-the-ground terrorism. Kim Chong-il, the psychopathic son of Kim Il-Sung who reportedly directed the Rangoon bombing, heads up a 100,000-man "spetznaz" force trained in terrorist operations. North Korean capabilities are also intermeshed with those of Libya and Iran.

The North Koreans could also operate through the Japanese Red Army. On June 7, Red Army member Hiroshi Sensui was arrested in Manila. According to Japanese officials, Sensui was planning to use Manila as an "international terrorist center" for operations against the June 19-21 Toronto summit and the Olympic games, Reuters reported June 18. Deputy chief of the Japanese embassy in Manila Morihiro Aoki said June 16 that Sensui's arrest had thwarted the plan, although he would not give details of intelligence reports on the planned attacks. "We believe they wanted to set up a base here, with such attacks as the immediate goal," Aoki said. Sensui is a convicted murderer who was freed in 1977 in exchange for 156 hostages on a JAL airliner hijacked by Red Army terrorists in Bangladesh.

Unrest in the South

The groundwork for North Korean provocations has also been laid by a new wave of student unrest around demands that students on both sides of the 38th parallel be permitted to negotiate the reunification of north and south. On June 10, 60,000 South Korean police blocked a planned student march from the capital city of Seoul to Panmunjom, a town at the Demilitarized Zone. So far, the crackdown has not resulted in any student casualties (although there have been three student suicides so far), a possibility that could result in far more widespread protests.

Sources on the scene point out that the students now protesting around the theme of "reunification" are smaller in number, but far more militant, and possibly dangerous, than the student demonstrations of last year that led to the 1987 presidential elections.

Last month, students carried out four violent attacks on U.S. installations in South Korea, unleashing a wave of anti-

Americanism among the opposition to the government of President Noh Tae Woo. This month the students have taken up the emotionally charged theme of "reunification." The student protests carry great weight in Korea's Confucian society, where students are accorded the position of "conscience of the nation."

The students are acting in part under directives of Kim Dae Jung, the opposition leader who was spirited back to South Korea from exile under the protective wing of the U.S. State Department in 1985. Kim, a defeated presidential candidate, recently offered to go to Pyongyang and negotiate a joint hosting of the Summer Olympics with North Korea.

The students are also receiving support and guidance from Pyongyang. Giving the lines to its dupes in the south, Pyongyang radio declared June 8, "As for the initiative of students to hold North-South student talks, it is a very beneficial and good one for the reunification of the divided country. . . . Nevertheless, the Noh Tae Woo group is ruthlessly cracking down upon students by linking North-South student talks with 'security.' What a detestable behavior this is. . . . Such behavior of the Noh Tae Woo group was manipulated by the U.S. imperialists behind the scene."

A wild card?

Although a major North Korean provocation against the South would tend to disrupt the "New Yalta" deals currently under negotiation between Washington and Moscow, analysts believe that Kim Il-Sung is a wild card that cannot be controlled. In 1950, for example, Kim marched his troops against the South without the precise foreknowledge of either Beijing or Moscow, his two close allies.

In the last three years, North Korea has entered into an effective military alliance with the Soviet Union, which has backed Pyongyang's demands for "reunification" to the hilt. The Soviets have given the North MiG-23s and, it is believed, have stationed SS21s on North Korean soil. Although Moscow is telling various U.S. negotiators and visitors that it has no check on North Korea and that it has told the North not to engage in terrorism, military sources also report that Moscow has exerted no actual pressure on Pyongyang. In fact, Moscow is passively "playing" the Pyongyang profile.

Despite its protests to gullible Americans, Moscow has everything to gain from a North Korean provocation. The Korean peninsula, it is known, was a point of discussion between Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz in Moscow in May, although no details of the discussion have been released.

A North Korean provocation against Seoul would bring directly into play the "crisis-management" condominium Moscow and its negotiating partners in the West seek. Those negotiations will be driven to one final objective: the withdrawal of U.S. ground forces from South Korea, a theme that is being revived by presidential candidate Michael Dukakis and the liberals of Congress.

Korea's opposition:

by David Hammer

On May 20, Party for Peace and Democracy leader Kim Dae Jung, the most radical figure in Korea's parliamentary opposition, issued a call for "political parties of North and South Korea" to meet at the village of Panmunjom in the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea, to discuss the two countries co-sponsoring the 1988 Olympics. When even Kim's fellow opposition parties rejected the call (a key North Korean demand), stating that there are no such things as political parties in the North, Kim retracted it. But it was picked up by the radical students who rioted on June 10 (see accompanying article), along with another demand with which Kim has long been identified—that North and South Korea be reunified.

The banner of last year's student riots was "democracy"; this year it reads "reunification." According to the pundits of the major press in the United States and elsewhere, the reunification demand, as well as the increasing student radicalization and its concomitant virulent anti-Americanism, represent a natural deepening of the Korean nationalist movement.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The Korean radical opposition is not a "social movement"; it is an intelligence operation.

When Kim Dae Jung returned to Korea in 1985, after a three-year exile in the United States, he did so because the U.S. State Department not only demanded his return, but sent numbers of its top personnel to accompany him. His base—the radical student movement and the "grassroots" extraparliamentary opposition—and that opposition's chief demand of "reunification," were created by institutions based in the United States, most prominently Union Theological Seminary in New York City. For decades, that institution has been associated with the family of former Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his brother, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency Allen Welsh Dulles.