



GUARDING KOREA'S FRONTIER

The Last Hot Spot of the Cold War. For more than forty years American soldiers have stood guard along the demilitarized zone that spans the breadth of the Korean peninsula. At various times during those four decades U.S. leaders in the White House, the Congress, or both have questioned the need for this continuing commitment. And, just as frequently, the truculent behavior of the communist government in North Korea has provided ample justification for U.S. forces to remain engaged in the defense of freedom in the Republic of Korea.

The most recent example occurred last December when an American helicopter was shot down after it accidentally strayed across the northern boundary of the DMZ. One American was killed in the incident. The pilot of the OH-58A Kiowa was captured and accused of spying while the government in Pyongyang demanded an American "apology" for "espionage." The U.S. government offered its "regrets" for an innocent and unintentional border violation, thereby denying both the demand for an apology and the espionage charge. The pilot was released after 13 days.

Tensions Always High. Since the Korean War ended in 1953, more than 50 Americans and 1,000 South Koreans have died in border clashes. Tensions along the demilitarized zone are always high and the potential for provocation is ever present.

As many Americans have forgotten, the Korean War is not necessarily over. No peace treaty has been signed. The Armistice of 1953 is still in effect, and war involving the United States is possible at any time.

Since the 1953 Armistice was signed, North Korea has become one of the most militarized states in the world.

Since the 1953 Armistice was signed, North Korea has become one of the most militarized states in the world, spending about 28 percent of its gross national product on the military. They have assembled a powerful military force which is in a position to launch a major attack to the south using armor, artillery, and fighter aircraft. These forces are backed by large prepositioned stockpiles that are sufficient to bolster North Korea's million-man army in an attack on South Korea. North Korean artillery and missiles are more than capable of destroying much of South Korea's capital, Seoul.

U.S.-ROK Forces on Guard. To help guarantee against the renewal of hostilities, the United States has maintained significant military forces in South Korea; there are about 37,000 U.S. soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines on duty there. The major American force is the U.S. 2d Infantry Division, stationed just south of the DMZ.

In actions that began in mid-1994, U.S. forces in Korea are now being upgraded with the addition of a Patriot missile battalion and the delivery of Apache attack helicopters, M1A1 Abrams tanks, Bradley Infantry

more . . .

Fighting Vehicles, Heavy Equipment Transporter Systems and more than 500 Humvees.

The Republic of Korea (ROK) armed forces have built a large, powerful force which is disposed in defensive positions south of the DMZ. The 520,000-man ROK army is professional, well-trained, well-led and continually upgrading its armament in view of the threat from the North.

Risk of War is Real. The forces opposing each other across the DMZ almost came to war in 1994. Trouble had been brewing for years over North Korea's nuclear weapons development program. North Korean intransigence toward International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections of their nuclear facilities and threats to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty prompted the United States to threaten stringent economic sanctions against Pyongyang.

The North Koreans had declared that sanctions would be considered an act of war and even threatened to turn Seoul into a "sea of flames." U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry later revealed that our government had considered military strikes to take out North Korea's nuclear weapons facilities, but that option had been ruled out.

Framework for Resolving the Nuclear Crisis. In October 1994, a framework agreement was concluded between the United States and North Korea that would immediately freeze the North's nuclear weapon programs, halt construction of two larger reactors and,

eventually, effect dismantlement of all of these facilities. (The two larger reactors could have produced enough plutonium for more than a dozen nuclear weapons a year.)

For its part, the United States would provide oil to generate electricity that will replace that which the reactors would have provided. In time, the North Koreans would be provided a new type of reactor, the so-called light water reactor, which could generate electricity for the Korean peninsula. These reactors have a greatly diminished capacity for production of materials used in nuclear weapons.

Even if both sides faithfully adhere to the provisions of the agreement, it will be years before North Korea's nuclear weapon programs no longer pose a threat. In the meantime, North Korea still maintains a much larger military force than is needed for self-defense and continues to develop long-range missiles (capable of carrying weapons of mass destruction) that pose a threat to much of Northeast Asia.

If the agreement works, it could lead to an easing of the tensions that have characterized the whole region for many years. Until it is proven successful, however, the North Koreans remain a formidable military threat not only to the Republic of Korea and U.S. interests in Northeast Asia but also in other troubled areas where weapons manufactured by North Korea are being sold.

In the meantime, in mid-June, the U.S. and North Korea reached tentative agreement on a \$4.5 billion program to construct the commercial reactors.

#