



Written by on October 29, 2010

Gunfire Exchanged Across Tense Korean Border

A report from the AP on October 29 cited a statement from an official at the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Seoul, South Korea, saying that North Koreans had fired two rounds toward South Korea along the border and South Korean troops immediately fired back.

The official, who asked to remain anonymous, said that there were no South Korean injuries, and it was unclear whether the shots were accidental or an intentional provocation.

The 14.5-mm rounds were fired hours after North Korea criticized the South for rejecting a proposal to hold military talks and vowed to retaliate. A [Wikipedia article](#) identifies such ammunition — 14.5 x 114 mm, .57 Cal — “as a heavy machine gun and anti-materiel rifle cartridge used by the Soviet Union, the former Warsaw Pact, modern Russia, and other countries.”

The AP report noted:

The spike in tensions Friday [October 29] came two weeks ahead of a global economic summit in Seoul to be attended by President Barack Obama and other leaders.

Last week, the North’s military proposed holding talks with South Korea over anti-North Korean leafletting by South Korean activists and other South Korean propaganda activities, the North’s military said in a statement Friday carried by the country’s official Korean Central News Agency.

It warned Friday of “merciless physical retaliation” for not accepting the talks, and said South Korea will realize “what catastrophic impact their rejection of dialogue will have on the North-South relations.”

A [Fox News report](#) quoted David Oten, a spokesman for U.S. military in South Korea, who said nothing to indicate the incident was highly unusual. “I don’t want to call it ‘routine,’” said Oten, “but this sort of thing happens about once a year.”

He continued, “The shooting could have been accidental or a clearing of arms.”

Fox also quoted a South Korean Defense Ministry spokesman who did not offer an explanation for North Korea’s action, stating: “We are monitoring their behavior and we are investigating the situation.”

However, Daniel Pinkston, a representative of [International Crisis Group](#) in Seoul (an internationalist-oriented consulting group) did offer the news network a possible motivation for the North acting in a provocative manner, namely, the South’s rejection of new talks with the Pyongyang regime. The North has not yet apologized for its sinking earlier this year of the South Korean ship *Cheonan*.





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He also mentioned that the North has expressed anger over loudspeakers set up by the South near the DMZ that broadcast anti-communist propaganda across the border, and in the past had even threatened to attack the speakers with its artillery. "They were very upset about those loudspeakers," Pinkston told Fox.

The war on the Korean peninsula between the North and South, supported by their respective allies, started in 1950 but never officially ended. Though a ceasefire signed on July 27, 1953 ended major conflict, tensions along the 2.5-mile-wide demilitarized zone (DMZ) serving as a buffer between the two Koreas have remained high continuously for 57 years.

The United States maintains a [force of over 28,000 military personnel](#) in south Korea, which serves as part of the Korean-American Combined Forces command in support of the United Nations Command (Korea).

As was true of the original U.S. role in the war in Korea, the participation of U.S. military forces in a UN operation has negative ramifications for U.S. sovereignty, while also increasing the risk of U.S. involvement in future military conflicts.

A detailed analysis of the U.S. role in the defense of South Korea is found in the report from [GlobalSecurity.org](#).

Photo: A man watches a TV news program reporting North Korea's firing to South at Seoul train station in Seoul, South Korea, Oct. 29, 2010: AP Images



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