



Written by on July 23, 2010

UN Command Reprimands North Korea Over Truce Violation

An AP report noted that colonels from the United Nations Command (UNC) — the agency responsible for carrying out the terms and conditions of the July 27, 1953, cease-fire agreement in Korea — met at the “truce village” of Panmunjom inside the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) dividing the two Koreas on July 23 with representatives of Pyongyang’s Korean People’s Army. During that meeting, UNC officers reminded North Korea about the UN Security Council order to honor the 1953 truce.



Officers also proposed a joint task force to discuss the “armistice violations,” the UNC said in a statement.

The incident prompting the charge of armistice violation was the March 26 sinking of the South Korean frigate *ROKS Cheonan* by a torpedo that a team of international investigators determined to be of North Korean origin. However, the North Korean government has denied any involvement in the sinking, which killed 46 sailors.

Korea Times cited a UNC official who said the two sides may have to hold another round of meetings to arrange “general-level” military talks, explaining that the July 23 “colonel-level” meeting was aimed mostly at setting up details for the high-level talks, including a date and protocol.

KCNA, North Korea’s official Korean Central News Agency later reported a proposal from Pyongyang that a group of up to 30 North Korean investigators visit the South for three to five days to conduct its own investigations into the *Cheonan* incident with a U.S. guarantee of logistical support. The statement said: “If the ‘results of investigation’ announced by the joint investigation team were objective and scientific as claimed by the U.S. forces side, there would be no reason for it to refuse to receive the inspection group.”

English-language reports issued by KCNA generally make little effort to disguise their blatant propaganda, which is reminiscent of similar releases issued by the old Soviet Union during the Cold War (or even the Ministry of Truth in Orwell’s *1984*). For example, a July 22 KCNA report about the visit of the North Korean military attaches to Panmunjom read, in part:

The military attaches corps here visited Panmunjom Thursday on the occasion of the 57th anniversary of the great victory in the Fatherland Liberation War.

Members of the corps went round the monument to President Kim Il Sung’s signature associated with his undying exploits performed in the noble cause for achieving the reunification of the country.

The term “Fatherland Liberation War” to describe North Korea’s unprovoked invasion of the South in 1950 would be laughable if used by almost any other nation.



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Another July 22 report about the sinking of the *Cheonan* read: “Ri Jong In, representative of a south Korean diving technology corporation, when interviewed by a reporter of the internet newspaper Thongil News on July 15, refuted the ‘results of investigation’ into the warship case published by the puppet joint investigation team.” (Emphasis added.)

Korea Times noted that South Korea has rejected the North’s request to send its own investigators to the South to reassess previous investigations into the *Cheonan* sinking, saying the issue should be handled under the framework of the UNC because the attack was a violation of the 1953 armistice agreement.

A related article in the *Korea Times*, [“US troops in Korea to be deployed to conflict areas,”](#) speculated that U.S. forces were now spread so thin around the world that troops might have to be removed from South Korea. The article quoted Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who told an audience of U.S. soldiers at Camp Red Cloud, north of Seoul, on July 20: ““Part of the discussion we are having with the Republic of Korea, with the leadership, and what we will be able to do in the next several years is support for deployments, literally, off the peninsula. But we’re not there yet. We haven’t got to that point in time.”

The report noted that the United States maintains 28,500 troops in South Korea as a deterrent against the North, but that is a small part of the over 400,000 U.S. forces stationed abroad, including those in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mullen’s statement was cited in the context of a U.S. strategy known as “strategic flexibility,” wherein instead of maintaining stationary positions aboard to defend host nations, U.S. troops would be prepared for rapid deployment so they can be swiftly dispatched to other parts of the world where — in the *Korea Times*’ words: “the United States is in need.”

It is a poor choice of words, but a Korean writer might be excused for being ignorant of the defense requirements mandated by the U.S. Constitution, under which the federal government is charged with protecting the separate states (not foreign nations) “against invasion.” Even then, it is *Congress* that is given the power to declare war.

Ironically, the first major instance of departure from that constitutional mandate occurred when the United States sent troops to Korea in 1950, without a congressional declaration of war, hence a common description of the conflict not as a war, but as a “police action.” However the conflict was described, “authorization” for it came from UN Security Council Resolution 83. In a ploy worthy of Br’er Rabbit, the Soviet Union boycotted the Council and thus was unable to use its veto power to stop UN action against its ally, North Korea. The United States was then led into providing most of the fighting forces supporting South Korea, but command of the war was overseen by communist bloc officials at the UN, thus dooming the operation to stalemate, instead of victory. Since the truce ending fighting in 1953 did not officially end the war, that stalemate (along with the presence of those 28,500 U.S. troops) has perpetuated ever since.

Now, the United Nations Command (UNC) rattles its sabres once more, and if fighting breaks out, it will once again be U.S. troops doing most of the fighting, while the UN calls the shots.

As the philosopher George Santayana said: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”?

Photo: A South Korean Army soldier removes weeds off the wire fence at Imjingak in Paju near the demilitarized zone separating the two Koreas, South Korea, July 23, 2010: AP Images





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