



MONTHLY RECAP: NOVEMBER, 2010

November, 2010 has been a month full of events that have the potential to reshape relations on the Korean peninsula and throughout the region, and the full implications of the exchange of artillery fire between North and South Korea is yet to be known.

DPRK SHELLS ROK

On November 23, North Korea fired approximately 120 rounds of artillery at the South Korean island of Yeonpyeong, killing four, including two civilians, and injuring nearly 20 others. North Korea claims that the rounds were fired in response to South Korean artillery fire aimed toward North Korea, but Seoul states that the marines on the island were conducting routine, monthly exercises and were firing toward the south-west, away from North Korea and into South Korean waters. South Korea launched fighters and returned artillery fire, but have not publicized information on possible damage caused to North Korea.

Leaders from around the world condemned the attack, and ROK President Lee Myung-bak called for a military response to any further provocation. US warships based in Japan, including the aircraft carrier USS George Washington, deployed to the West Sea and conducted naval drills with South Korea. North Korea fired more artillery toward the NLL prior to the drills, but all rounds fell into North Korean waters. A South Korean howitzer accidentally fired toward the DMZ, but did not cross the inter-Korean border.

NEW ROK DEFENSE MINISTER NAMED

Following the artillery exchange, President Lee accepted a letter of resignation from Minister of Defense Kim Tae-young. Former head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Kim Kwan-jin was named the new defense minister.



INTER-KOREAN EXCHANGES FROZEN

Following the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island, South Korea banned any civilian border-crossings, recalled flood aid that had already reached China on its way to North Korea, and canceled inter-Korean Red Cross meetings, effectively cancelling future separated-family reunions.

SIX-PARTY TALKS REJECTED

On November 29, it was reported that China's call for an emergency session of Six-Party Talks would not happen. Chinese envoy Wu Dawei called for the talks to be held in early December to prevent escalation of tensions on the Korean Peninsula. South Korea expressed its disinterest in such talks, and was soon followed by US and Japanese 'unenthusiastic' response. Leaders demanded that North Korea comply with its obligations and that China increase pressure on Pyongyang to curtail hostilities and provocations.

SEPARATED FAMILY REUNIONS

On the first day of the month, the Korea Central News Agency (KCNA) announced the restart of inter-Korean separated family reunions at the Keumgang tourist resort. On November 4, the North's Red Cross office called on the South to hold such talks on a regular basis, but the South Korean government has been hesitant to cooperate with the North as it awaits an apology for the sinking of the ROKS Cheonan. North Korea included four South Korean POWs, who had been considered dead by ROK authorities, in the separated family reunions. After the reunions, North Korea re-seized the Mt. Keumgang facilities, attaching "frozen" labels on dining and lodging facilities and an automotive garage.

U.S. OFFICIAL TRAVELS TO THE DPRK

On November 2, president of the Korea Economic Institute (KEI) Jack Pritchard visited Pyongyang for



several days of discussions with North Korean leaders.

DPRK ON THE CHEONAN SINKING

On November 2, North Korea offered to provide samples of its torpedoes in order to prove that Pyongyang was not involved in the sinking of the ROKS Cheonan. A North Korean representative claimed that the North's torpedoes are "made of steel alloy material," unlike the aluminum alloy found by South Korean investigators. Defector group Daily NK reported that the No. 129 Factory in Songhyang Dong, Hamkyung Province does produce aluminum torpedoes.

ROK DELINKS CHEONAN, NUCLEAR ISSUES

A South Korean presidential aide said on November 9 that restarting Six-Party Talks depended more on North Korea's commitment to denuclearization than on Pyongyang apologizing for sinking the ROKS Cheonan. This was seen as a shift away from Seoul's earlier position of refusing to negotiate with North Korea until Kim Jong Il takes responsibility and apologizes for the North's attack on the South Korean naval ship.

ROK PLANS TO BOOST DEFENSE SPENDING

The South Korean government unveiled a plan on November 2 to increase its defense budget and make it the seventh-largest defense equipment exporter in the world by 2020. It is expected to generate 50,000 jobs and reap four billion USD in export sales.

WEST SEA NAVAL CLASH

On November 3, the South Korean navy fired shots toward a North Korean fishing vessel that had crossed over into South Korean waters. Tensions were high as South Korea, amidst preparations for hosting the G20 Summit, expected North Korean aggressions, and this was the second time in less than a week that



tensions were raised, as North Korea fired shots across the DMZ several days prior. South Korea returned fire, but no casualties were reported.

DPRK-PRC ECONOMIC COOPERATION

North Korean premier Choe Yong-rim visited China's northeastern provinces in order to lobby for increased economic cooperation and Chinese economic investment. He is said to have visited Harbin and Changchun, and met with a number of Chinese officials including the vice premier of the state council, Zhang Dejiang.

DPRK LAUNCHES PDA

A Russian blogger in North Korea reported on November 3 that North Korea's first PDAs are now on sale. The PDAs come in several models, the most expensive costing 140 USD and coming with 8 gigabytes of internal memory. The PDAs also have a dock for MicroSD memory cards, which the blogger notes are also compatible with North Korean mobile phones.

MOBILE PHONE SUBSCRIPTIONS QUADRUPLE

The third-quarter earnings report of Orascom Telecom Holding, released on November 7, revealed that North Korean cell phone subscriptions grew from 69,261 in September 2009 to 301,199 in September 2010.

DPRK COMPETES IN ASIAN GAMES.

Asiad organizers reported that North Korea registered 199 athletes in 20 sports for the Guangzhou 2010 Asian Games. The games ran from November 12-27. The North won six gold medals, in weightlifting, wrestling, and shooting events, and also took home ten silver and twenty bronze medals.



DPRK FINED BY FIG

North Korea's gymnastics federation has been fined 20,000 Swiss Francs by the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) after an investigation revealed that North Korean gymnast Hong Su Jong has used three different ages when registering for international competitions. The gymnastics team has been banned from FIG events for two years.

ROK OFFERS TO SHARE WORLD CUP WITH DPRK

On November 16, it was leaked that South Korea's bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup includes an offer to hold some games in North Korea. FIFA will name the host on December 2.

IFRC REVISED PLAN 2011

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) released its "Revised Plan 2011" for North Korea on November 1. The plan, available on the IFRC website, identifies the key challenges in North Korea as "ongoing economic difficulties (food, energy, drug supply, water, etc.), disasters (flood damage in most areas), initial problems following monetary reform, [and] worsening north-south relations."

UN: NORTH KOREA PROLIFERATING

A committee of experts created by the UN Security Council to review the implementation of sanctions against North Korea reported on November 13 that Pyongyang is involved in "the surreptitious transfer of nuclear-related and ballistic missile-related know-how and technology" to a number of countries, including Iran, Burma and Syria. The report was completed over six months ago, but its release had been prevented by China, which recently dropped its objection without explanation.

NEW ZEALAND FREEZES DPRK FUNDS



New Zealand reportedly froze 170,000 dollars that the Myohyang Bureau transferred to a New Zealand bank in October. The money was for beef and bus parts. The Daily NK reported on November 5 that the beef was to be distributed as state gifts in celebration of Kim Jong Eun's birthday, and that the auto parts were to be used for repairs to the State Tour Bureau's fleet of Japanese tourist buses (Japanese sanctions prevent the North from importing parts directly from Japan). The Myohyang Bureau transferred the payment from a Latvian bank account that had not previously been identified as a North Korean account, and the New Zealand government has blocked the export of the beef and parts and frozen the money while investigating the origin of the funds.



US SANCTIONS

On November 5, the US Treasury Department announced new regulations on implementing sanctions put into place in June 2009 and August 2010. The regulations detail stipulations for definition and interpretation of terminology as well as detailed implementation procedures.

On November 18, the United States enacted additional sanctions against North Korea. The sanctions target two North Korean firms, the Korea Daesong Bank and Korea Daesong General Trading Corporation, that Washington says are linked to Office 39, an office thought to be responsible for drug smuggling and other illegal economic activities of the Korean Workers' Party.

JO MYONG ROK DEAD

North Korean National Defense Commission First Vice-Chairman Jo Myong Rok died on November 6. Vice Marshal Jo, who had also recently been elected as a representative to the Standing Committee of Political Council, died of a heart attack at the age of 82. He was known to be one of the most powerful figures in Pyongyang. Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Eun topped the list of funeral committee members, the order of which is used to indicate positions of power in North Korea.

HECKER: LWR AND CENTRIFUGES AT YONGBYON

Siegfried Hecker, former director of the Los Alamos Nuclear Laboratory, has reported seeing the construction of a light-water reactor and a uranium reprocessing facility at the North's Yongbyon nuclear complex. Upon his return from a visit to North Korea, Hecker reported that the reactor would be able to generate 25-30 megawatts of electricity upon completion, which he said was likely to be several years away. He was also shown a reprocessing facility with 2,000 centrifuges and an "astonishingly modern" control room. As there was no evidence of this facility when IAEA inspectors were evicted from North



Korea in April 2009, the speed at which the North has built the centrifuge cascades indicates that these centrifuges were probably assembled off-site. Hecker also reported that the North's 5 MWe reactor has not been restarted since being shut down in July 2007, and the 50 MWe reactor was being disassembled, with a senior official describing it as "a ruined concrete structure and iron scrap,"

MASS EXODUS OF KOREANS FROM NAKHODKA

Vladnews Agency, a Russian news service based in Vladivostok, reported on November 30 that of the 20,000 North Koreans working in Russia, many working in the lumber industry, construction, or as traders in the town of Nakhodka, many have returned to the North in November. Following the artillery fire on November 23, Vladnews reported mass exodus, as if a central order had been issued recalling all North Koreans.

WIKILEAKS

A number of the US State Department's diplomatic cables released publicly on November 27 by Wikileaks revealed candid conversations with South Korean, Chinese and Mongolian officials about North Korea. Among the opinions revealed, Chinese officials see North Korea as a burden (one official called the Kim regime a "spoiled child") and would accept a Korean Peninsula unified under Seoul; Chinese officials recognize that their protests of North Korean provocations have "had no effect" and believe only Washington can influence Pyongyang; Beijing has undertaken contingency planning for chaos in North Korea, and could handle up to 300,000 refugees; ROK Minister of Unification Hyun In-taek expects Kim Jong Il is "unlikely to live beyond 2015"; and North Korea asked the Mongolian government to pass on a request for bilateral talks to Washington, and while Mongolia offered to host such talks, Washington refused.