

This picture, taken during early July 1950 shows the damage done to two of the three railroad bridges across the Han-gang (i.e., Han River) in Seoul. A photo history of the bridges appears on page 5. (USAF)

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DPRK Intelligence Services 1967-1971, Part 2¹

By Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.

South Korea General Bureau

The early 1960s were a time of heightened civil turmoil and political vulnerability for the Republic of Korea (ROK) which witnessed large student uprisings force the resignation of the Syngman Rhee government during April 1960 and the subsequent coup d'état by Gen. Park Chung-hui in May 1961. The failure of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to effectively exploit these vulnerabilities provided Kim Il-sung the opportunity to purge rivals and reorganize and modernize the Korean People's Army (KPA)

and those organizations involved in intelligence and anti-ROK operations.

The first steps in this direction were taken during the Fourth Party Congress held during 11-18 September 1961. At this congress Kim Il-sung successfully consolidated his power by securing the appointment of his fellow former anti-Japanese partisans to virtually all important positions within the government, KPA and Korean Workers' Party (KWP). As a majority of these were active or retired generals they were collectively known as the "partisan generals."² This consolidation of power witnessed the influence of the military become a dominant force in DPRK foreign policy.

Within the sphere of anti-ROK operations the partisan generals directed the purge of Pak Il-yong and Yim Hae, two of the few remaining Soviet faction members of the KWP. Pak and Yim had previously succeeded Major General Cho In-chol as directors of the Liaison Department and it was under their leadership that the unrest within the ROK had resulted in two changes of government with little foreknowledge or action by the Liaison Department.

To assume responsibility for anti-ROK operations the Fourth Party Congress in September 1961 established the

South Korea General Bureau (SKGB) subordinate to the KWP's Central Committee.³ Although this new organization drew heavily upon the personnel and resources of the Liaison Department, it included resources from a number of other KWP assets including the Cultural Department, Intelligence Department and Central Committee Political School. Additionally, a reorganization of the of the KPA's General Political Bureau to focus primarily upon political security within the KPA witnessed the majority of that bureau's propaganda and psychological warfare responsibilities being assumed by the Cultural Department.

To lead this new bureau Yi Hyo-sun was appointed director. Yi was the elder brother of a former anti-Japanese partisan and was newly elected to the positions of both a Vice Chairman of the Central Committee and a member of the Political Committee at the Fourth Party Congress.⁴ As director of the SKGB Yi was responsible for the coordination of psychological warfare, espionage, subversive and intelligence operations against the ROK and Japan. This included providing guidance and coordinating anti-ROK intelligence and unconventional warfare operations with the KPA's Reconnaissance Bureau and the Ministry of Social Security.⁵ Additionally, the SKGB was responsible for the production of finished intelligence for the Central Committee.

The primary objectives of the SKGB's anti-ROK operations were to establish a viable revolutionary movement within the ROK, overthrow the ROK Government and establish the proper political conditions for the reunification of the Fatherland. The focus was on political subversion rather than guerrilla warfare.

The accomplishment of these missions was challenging due to political factors both within the ROK and domestically. Within the ROK Yi had to overcome the virulent anti-Communist stance of the new Park government, the beginning of significant economic growth in the ROK and the fact that the general ROK population was strongly anti-Communist. Domestically, Yi had to overcome the general lack of knowledge and experience concerning the ROK within the components of the SKGB. During 1953-1955 Kim Il-sung had purged Pak Hon-yong and his "Domestic faction" (i.e., South Korean Communists). Unfortunately for Yi, Pak and his faction represented the majority of the DPRK's corporate expertise on the ROK and the Communist movement within the ROK. Furthermore, many of Pak's supporters within the ROK refused to cooperate with

the KWP under Kim Il-sung. This forced Yi to start from the beginning in many instances to establish a revolutionary movement and intelligence network within the ROK.⁶

During the next two years the number of operatives and infiltrators dispatch by the SKGB into the ROK slowly increased. During February 1964, Yi's efforts to establish a revolutionary movement within the ROK were publicly established as policy when Kim Il-sung expounded upon the importance of strengthening the "three revolutionary forces" to bring about reunification of the Fatherland. These forces were the: revolutionary force in the North, revolutionary force of the South, and the international revolutionary force.

A number of events occurred within the ROK during the following year which precipitated a more aggressive effort by the DPRK to strengthen "...the revolutionary force of the South." The most significant of these events were: large scale student demonstrations against the ROK government; the January ROK-U.S. agreement to dispatch of ROK Army (ROKA) combat troops to fight in Vietnam—they first arrived in September 1965; and the June signing of the ROK-Japan normalization treaty.

Beginning in July of 1965, Yi Hyo-sun directed a substantial increase in operations against the ROK. The number of infiltrators dispatch into the ROK increased dramatically, as did their aggressiveness. The underlying purpose of these operations, however, remained focused upon political subversion and creating the proper political climate to enable the establishment of a revolutionary movement, not guerrilla warfare. Both Kim Il-sung and the partisan generals believed that such actions would fan the fires of revolution which they believed were simmering within the ROK as demonstrated by the massive student demonstrations—fully remembering the failure to do so during 1960-1961. This in turn would lead directly to the collapse of the ROK Government and the reunification of Korea, or to a call by "indigenous" revolutionaries for "assistance" from their brothers in the North that the KPA was honor-bound to provide.

During the Second Party Conference in October 1966 the offices of Central Committee Chairman and Vice Chairman were replaced with a Secretariat consisting of a General Secretary (Kim Il-sung) and ten Secretaries—one of whom was Yi Hyo-sun.⁷ It was at this point that the SKGB was subordinated to the Secretariat and the director was identified as the "Secretary in Charge of South Korean

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Affairs”—commonly known to outsiders at this time as the Secretary in Charge of Anti-ROK Operations (SICARO).

While the steady increase in operations against the ROK did show small measures of success (especially among college students) they were simply not achieving the results anticipated by Kim Il-sung and the partisan generals. In fact, in many ways they were counterproductive as ROK/U.S. forces adapted new policies and measures that neutralized many of the successes and the ROK Government increased its social welfare and anti-Communist programs in the rural areas of the country that further limited the effectiveness of Yi's subversive efforts.

By the time of the Second Party Conference during October 1966 Kim Il-sung and the partisan generals had lost patience with the limited results shown by Yi Hyo-sun's political subversion operations. They came to believe that the establishment of a realistic revolutionary movement within the ROK was not feasible under the current political conditions and that such conditions could not be reasonably expected to occur unless a comprehensive policy based upon active guerrilla warfare was implemented. In a speech given under the banner of "Revolution in south Korea," Kim Il-sung announced the abandonment of the policy of seeking to unify Korea by peaceful means and the adoption of a new more militant policy toward the ROK.⁸

At the secret Fourteenth Plenum of the Central Committee, in March 1967, Central Committee member O Chin-u criticized a number of KWP officials including Yi Hyo-sun.⁹ By the time of the Sixteenth Plenum of the Central Committee, in July 1967, the partisan generals had decided to force the issue of revolution in the ROK in the manner they knew best—guerrilla warfare. In an effort led by O Chin-u, Yi Hyo-sun and a number of other prominent officials were purged. Yi was specifically removed from his positions as director of the SKGB and Secretary in Charge of South Korean Affairs for his lack of success in establishing a revolutionary movement within the ROK.¹⁰ He was replaced by Colonel General Ho Pong-hak.¹¹

Ho quickly threw himself into his work, apparently wanting to demonstrate his capabilities and the correctness of the more aggressive strategy. Under his direction the next two years witnessed a dramatic change from political subversion to active guerrilla warfare.¹² These activities were designed to deliberately destabilize and precipitate the collapse of the ROK Government by direct confrontation; to drive a wedge between the ROK and U.S.; discourage foreign and domestic investment in the ROK; weaken general confidence in the ROK government; forcibly establish and support a KWP within the ROK; and create an environment favorable for a popular uprising in the ROK. These years have become known in the DPRK as the "...era of the

upsurge-period tactics..." or "...era of two-front tactics for both war and peace..."¹³

For a host of reasons most of these anti-ROK efforts would fail. Yet despite these repeated failures the prominence of the partisan generals continued to rise through 1968. It ultimately reached the point where they had even begun to involve themselves in domestic nonmilitary affairs. This state of affairs was viewed by Kim Il-sung with increasing concern as he felt threatened by the growing popularity and power of his fellow partisans. At the end of 1968 he responded to this potential threat and purged the partisan generals.

It is unclear as to exactly when this purge began, however, two dates stand out. The first was 11-16 November 1968 at the Eighteenth Plenum of the Central Committee. The second was the Fourth Plenum of the Fourth Party Committee of the KPA during 6-14 January 1969. It appears that the purge first began during late November 1968 in the midst of the embarrassing failure of the Reconnaissance Bureau's 124th Army Unit's operations on the East coast; peaked with the January 1969 meeting; and had run its full course by mid-1969.¹⁴

Kim Il-sung, once again with the assistance of O Chin-u, pursued this purge in a cold dispassionate and efficient manner.¹⁵ At the November 1968 meeting O began the purge by criticizing Ho Pong-hak and Defense Minister Kim Ch'ang-bong. O specifically denounced Ho Pong-hak for "...failing in organizational operations in South Korea, being unfaithful to the revolution within the South Korean General Affairs Bureau [sic], and creating factionalism and regionalism while 'running alone.'"¹⁶

In April 1969 Kim Chung-nin, a non-partisan civilian and the director of the Cultural Department, was appointed as the Secretary in Charge of South Korean Affairs (i.e., SICARO).¹⁷ Kim was given a broad mandate to reorganize and supervise all anti-ROK assets and operations.¹⁸

Organization

At this time the primary organizations subordinated to the newly established South Korea General Bureau were the: Liaison Department, Cultural Department, Intelligence Department and Central Committee Political School.

Liaison Department

At the same time that Yi Hyo-sun was appointed director of the SKGB in September 1961, So Ch'ol was appointed director of the Liaison Department. Under Yi and So's direction the Liaison Department was tasked with establishing a revolutionary movement within the ROK by recruiting, training and dispatching operatives into the ROK and Japan.

The Liaison Department was organized into the following sections: Staff, Rear Services, Personnel, Organization,

Communications, Liaison and the South Korea Exhibition Hall.

Operatives were usually trained in a network of safe-houses in groups of two or three by the instructors and handlers of the Organization Section. Approximately 300 operatives were trained and made available for operations annually by this section.

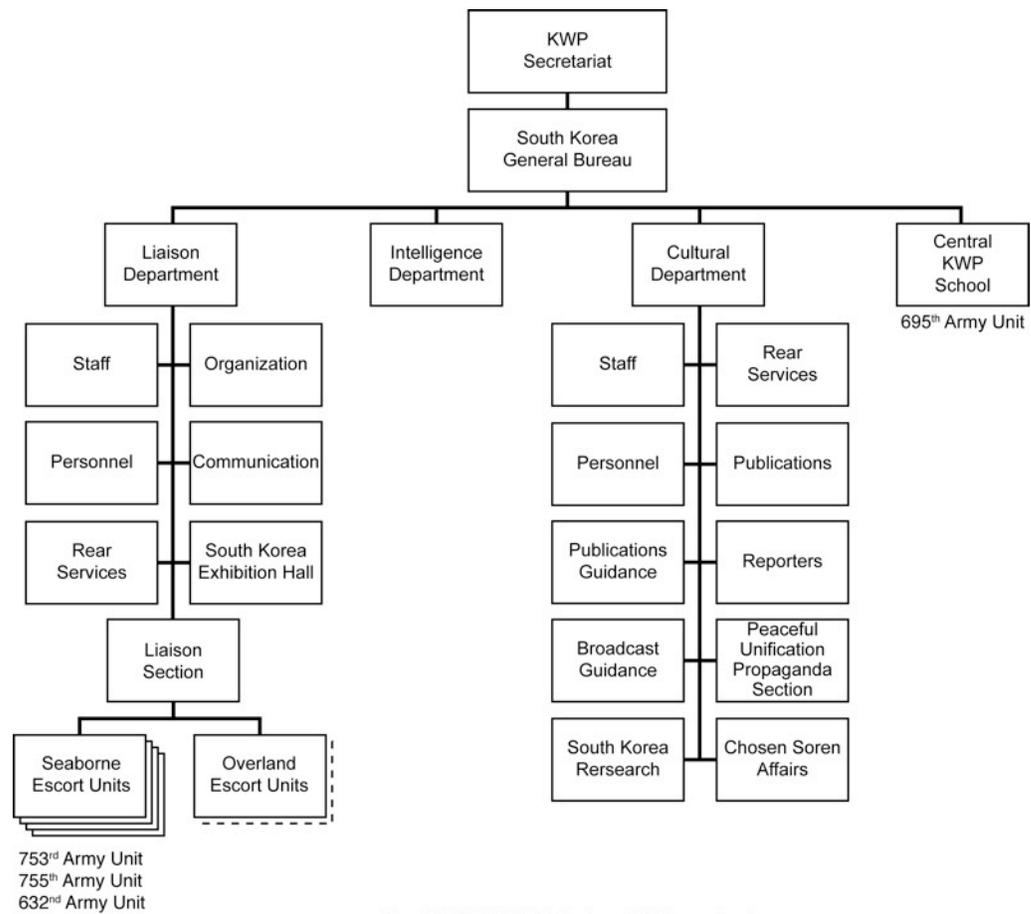
To support the infiltration of operatives, the Liaison Section operated three sea escort units and one or two overland escort units. Three sea escort units have been identified from this period: the 753rd Army Unit at Namp'o, the 755th Army Unit at Haeju and the 632nd Army Unit at Wonsan. Total sea escort personnel strength was estimated to be 2,500, of whom 900 were escort operatives and crew members, It is believed these units operated a total inventory of 64 infiltration vessels, of which at least 20 were specially design high-speed units outwardly resembling trawlers.

The Communications Section was responsible for training and equipping operatives with radio transmitters and receivers and code books for maintaining contact via radio. At least a portion of the instructions transmitted to operatives in the field was done so via coded broadcasts or specific songs played on Radio Pyongyang at scheduled times.

When Yi Hyo-sun was replaced as director of the SKGB in 1967 it is believed that So Ch'ol was also replaced. He was succeeded as director of the Liaison Department by Yu Chang-sik.¹⁹

Intelligence Department

The Intelligence Department (perhaps titled the General Affairs Department) was charged with the collection and analysis of intelligence information concerning the ROK, Japan and U.S. forces in East Asia. Most of its information came from operatives in the field and openly published news reports, radio and television broadcasts and maga-



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South Korea General Bureau (SKGB) 1961-1969

zines. Little is known concerning the organization of the Intelligence Department.

Cultural Department

The Cultural Department (sometimes called the Culture Department) was organized into the following sections: Staff, Rear Services, Personnel, Peaceful Unification Propaganda, Publications, Publications Guidance, Reporters, Broadcast Guidance, South Korea Research and Chosen Soren Affairs.

At the Fourth Party Congress held during September 1961 Kim Chung-nin was elected as a candidate member of the KWP's Central Committee. The following year he was appointed as the director of the Cultural Department. He held this position until April 1969 when he was appointed the Secretary in Charge of South Korean Affairs, replacing Ho Pong-hak.

The Cultural Department was responsible for planning and conducting psychological warfare activities against the ROK, Japan and U.S. forces in East Asia. It published propaganda material, controlled the activities of the reporters dispatched to the Military Armistice Commission meetings and oversaw the publication of newspapers and radio

broadcasts within the DPRK. Through its Chosen Soren Affairs Section it directed political and psychological warfare activities towards Korean residents in Japan. While its South Korea Research Section analyzed the political, economic, social, cultural and psychological situation within the ROK.

Central Committee Political School

The KWP's Central Committee Political School, also known as the 695th Army Unit, was responsible for training former citizens of the ROK (either volunteers or abductees) to infiltrate back into the ROK to establish KWP cells and conduct intelligence operations.²⁰

This training was conducted through a network of small training centers and safe houses located throughout the nation, but primarily concentrated in the P'yongyang area. This training provided preliminary instruction to a large number of prospective operatives. Those selected for missions were then given more detailed general training and mission specific training within the safe house network of the Liaison Department's Organization Section.

During this period it was estimated that the 695th could handle about 300 trainees at one time. Courses could range from 6 months to 4 years in duration. While the curriculum consisted of extensive training in political theory and dogma as well as subversion and espionage. During the late 1960s training was expanded to include guerrilla warfare.

(Next issue, the Reconnaissance Bureau)

Han-gang Bridges, June-September 1950

In previous issues of *KPA Journal* (Vol. 1, No. 2 and No. 3) an account was presented detailing the activities of the KPA's 1st Engineer Regiment and its bridging and repair operations on the Han-gang in Seoul during July-September 1950. Additional information has become available in the form of USAF reconnaissance photographs chronicling these activities and is presented here.

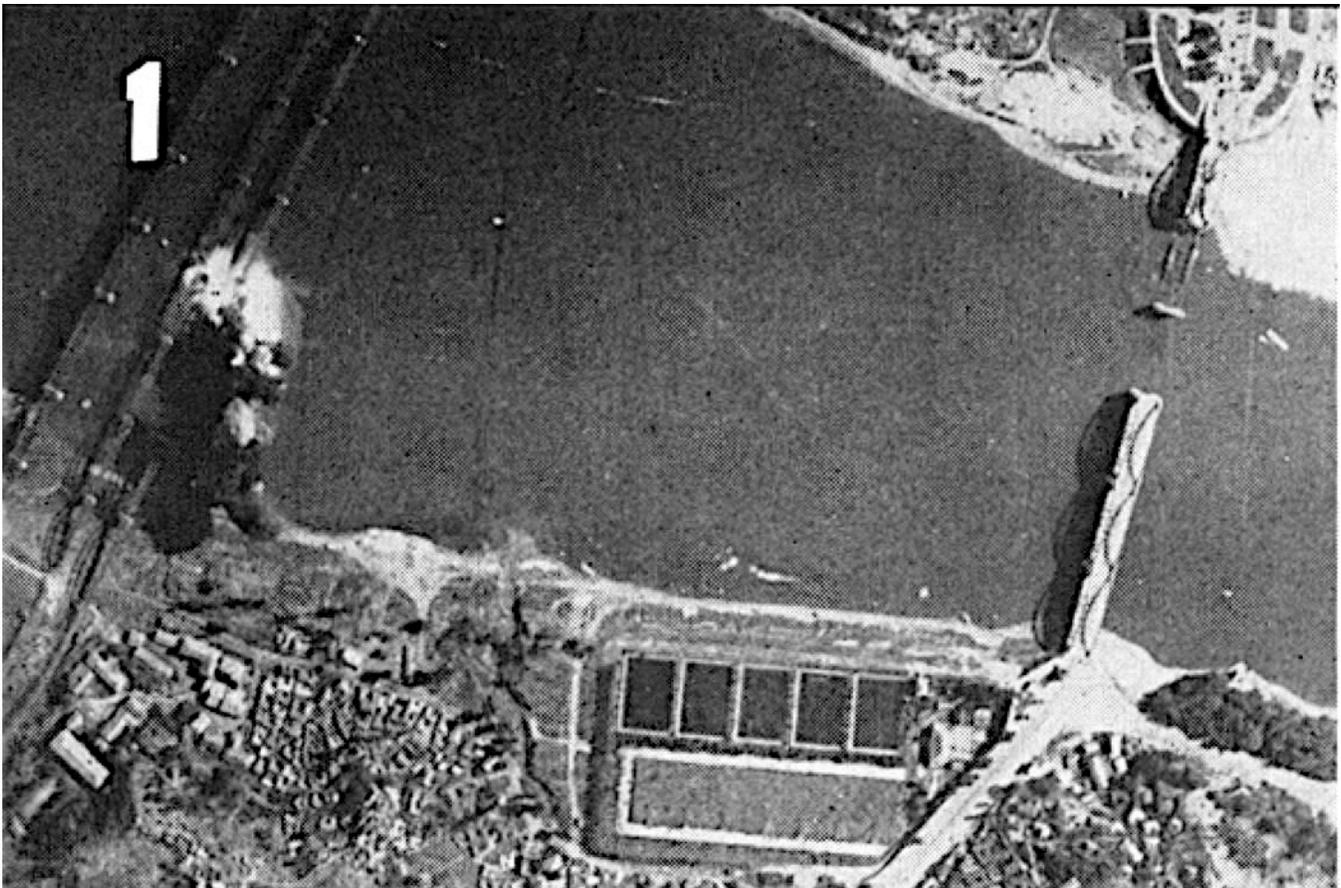


Photo #1: This photo was taken in early July 1950 and shows a US Air Force attack on the now-famous bridges across the Han-gang (i.e., Han River) in Seoul. At the left are the three railroad bridges (one double-track on the left and two single-track on the right). At the right of the image is the concrete road bridge which has been destroyed by withdrawing UNC forces. (USAF)



Photo #2: This photo was taken shortly after Photo #1 and shows additional bombs impacting the two single-tracked railroad bridges. (USAF)

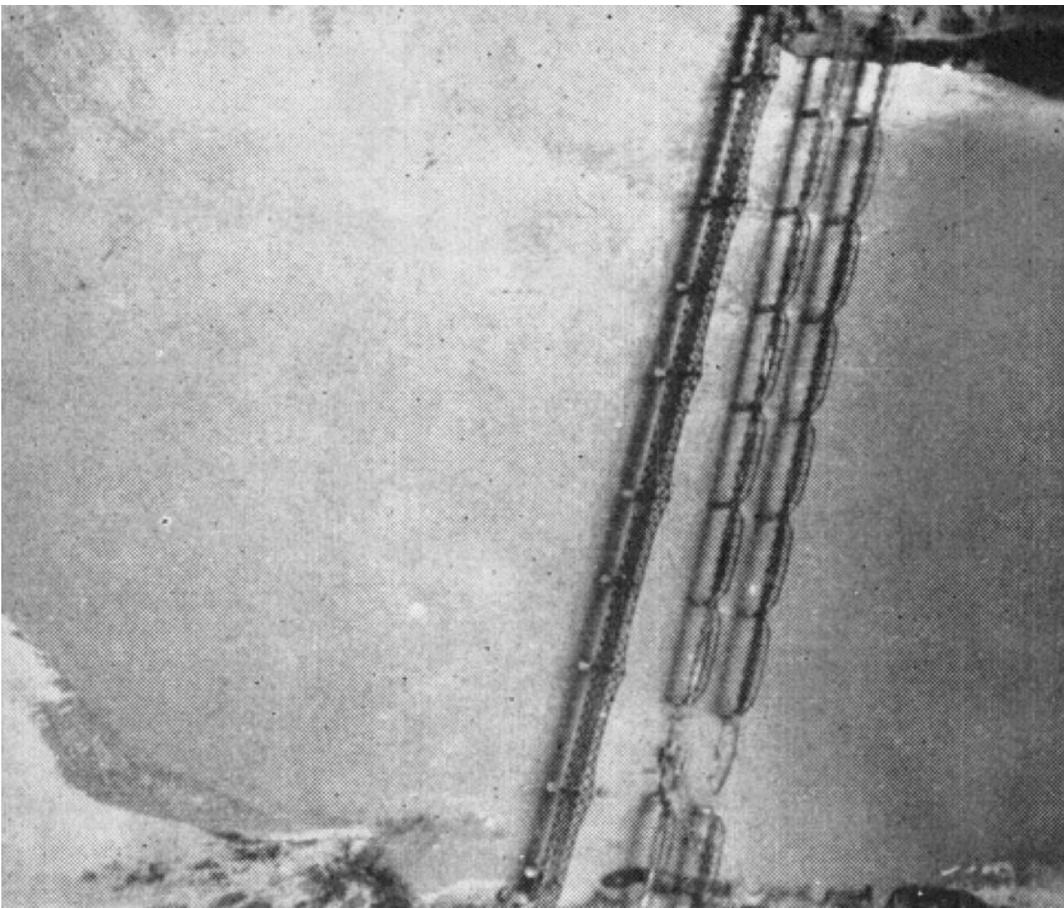


Photo #3: This photo was taken after the attack shown in Photos #1 and 2, and clearly shows destroyed spans at the southern end of both single-track railroad bridges. (USAF)

Photo #4: This photo taken in mid-July 1950, shows that the two single-track railroad bridges are still unusable (look carefully at the shadow pattern cast by the three superstructures), the new ramp being constructed at the southern end of the double-track bridge. To the East can be seen the pontoon bridge constructed by the 1st Engineer Regiment. Note the spare pontoon sections positioned on both shores. (USAF)

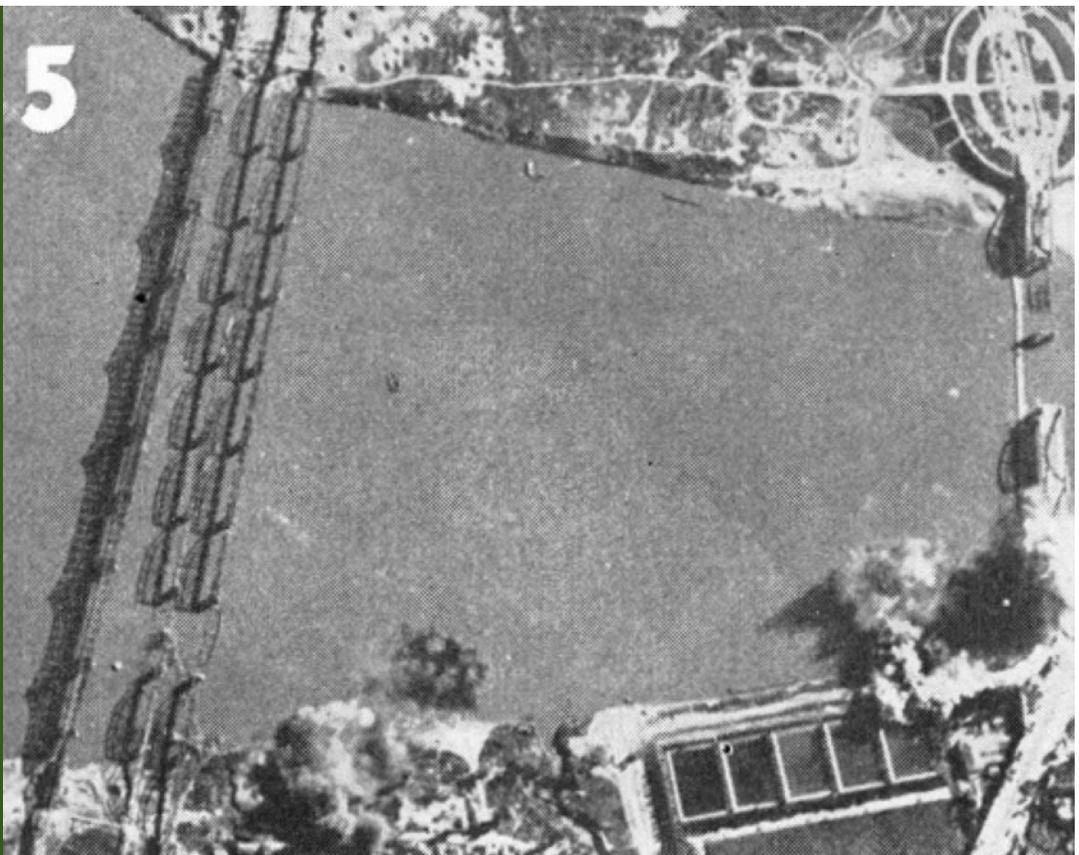
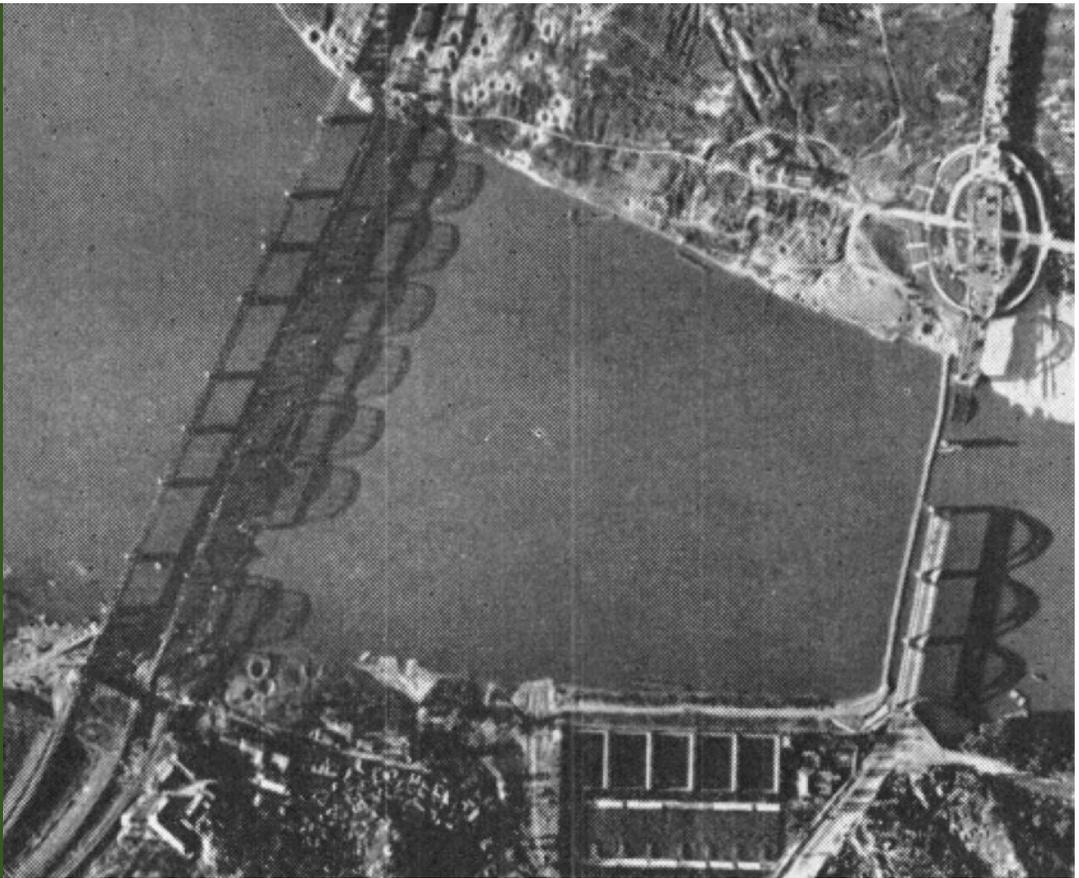


Photo #5: The photo shows the 26 July 1950 attack on the pontoon bridge. Note that the two single track railroad bridges are still unusable and the ramp leading to the southern end of the double-track railroad bridge. (USAF)

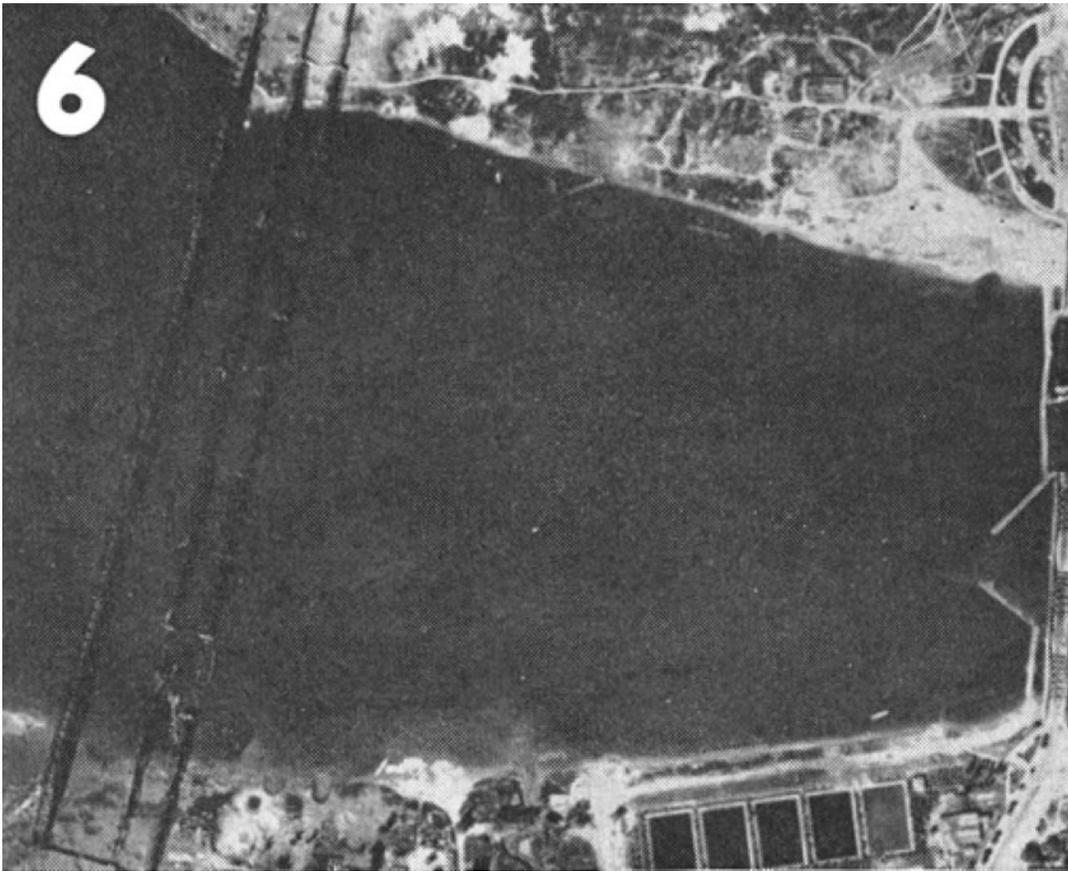


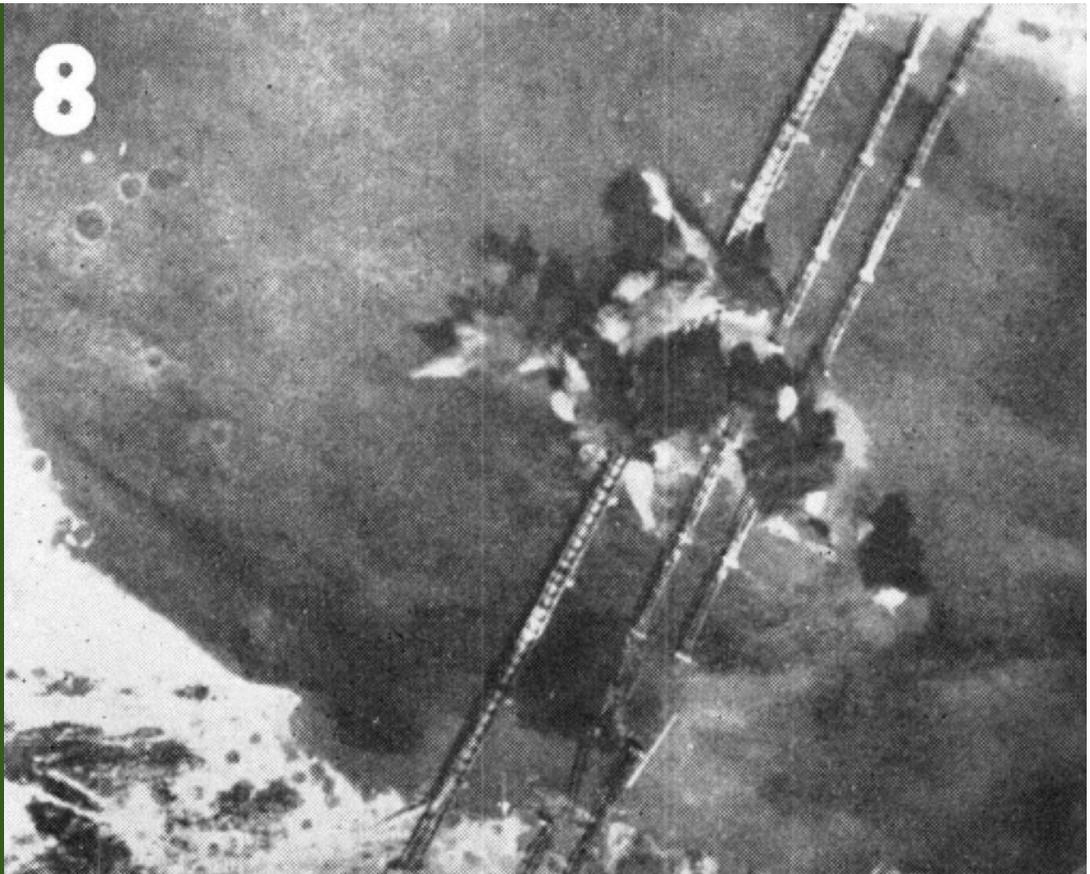
Photo #6: Shows the aftermath of the 26 July 1950 attack. With the pontoon bridge damaged and broken into two. (USAF)



Photo #7: Taken on 11 August 1950 this photo shows that additional damage has been done to the structure of highway bridge. While the pontoon bridge has either been damaged or temporarily broken apart to simulate damage. Note the pontoon section floated to the northern bank. (USAF)

8

Photo #8: This strike photo taken 18 August 1950 shows the double-track railroad bridge under attack. Note that a section of the pontoon bridge has broken loose and floated downstream to lodge against the southern end of the single-tracked railroad bridge. (USAF)



9

Photo #9: This strike photo taken the following day on 19 August 1950 shows double-track railroad bridge under further attack. The dislodged section of the pontoon bridge remains lodge against the southern end of the single-tracked railroad bridge. (USAF)

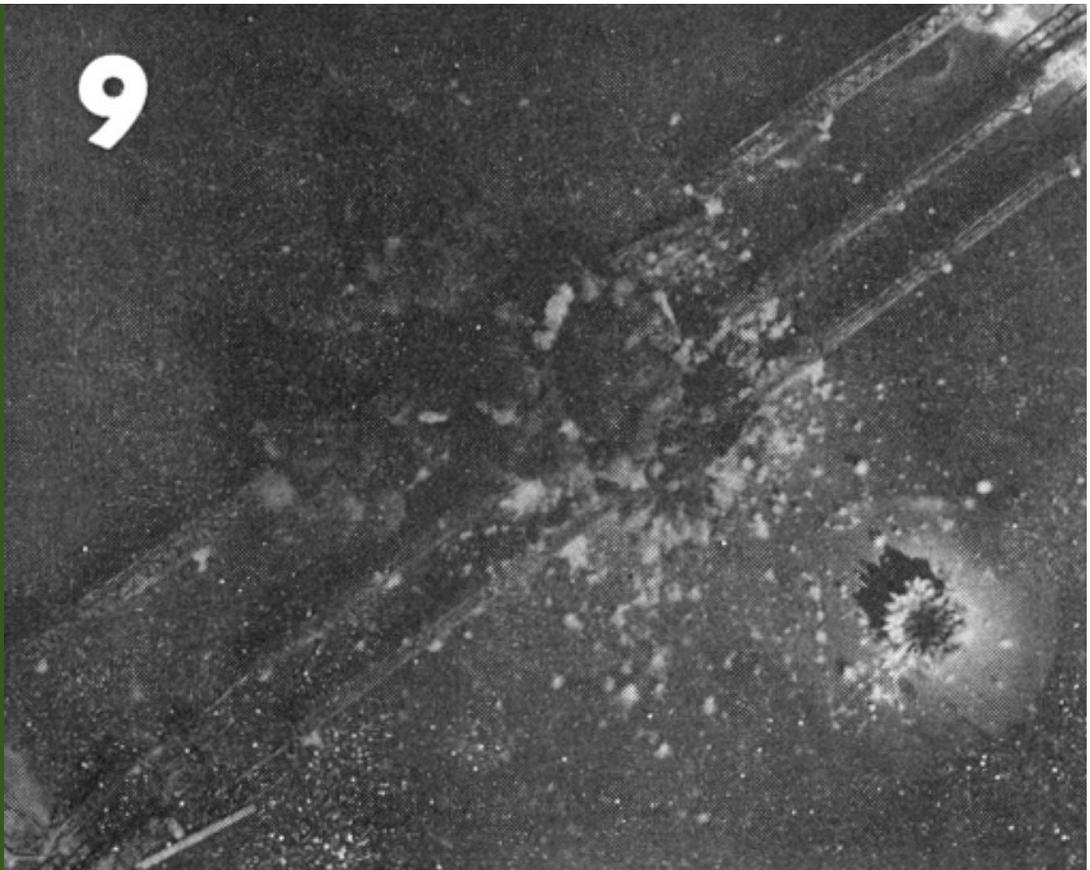




Photo #10: Reconnaissance photo taken the following day, on 20 August 1950, shows all the railroad bridges have suffered heavy damage and are not usable. The section of the pontoon bridge that had broken loose remains lodged against the southern end of the single-tracked railroad bridge. (USAF)

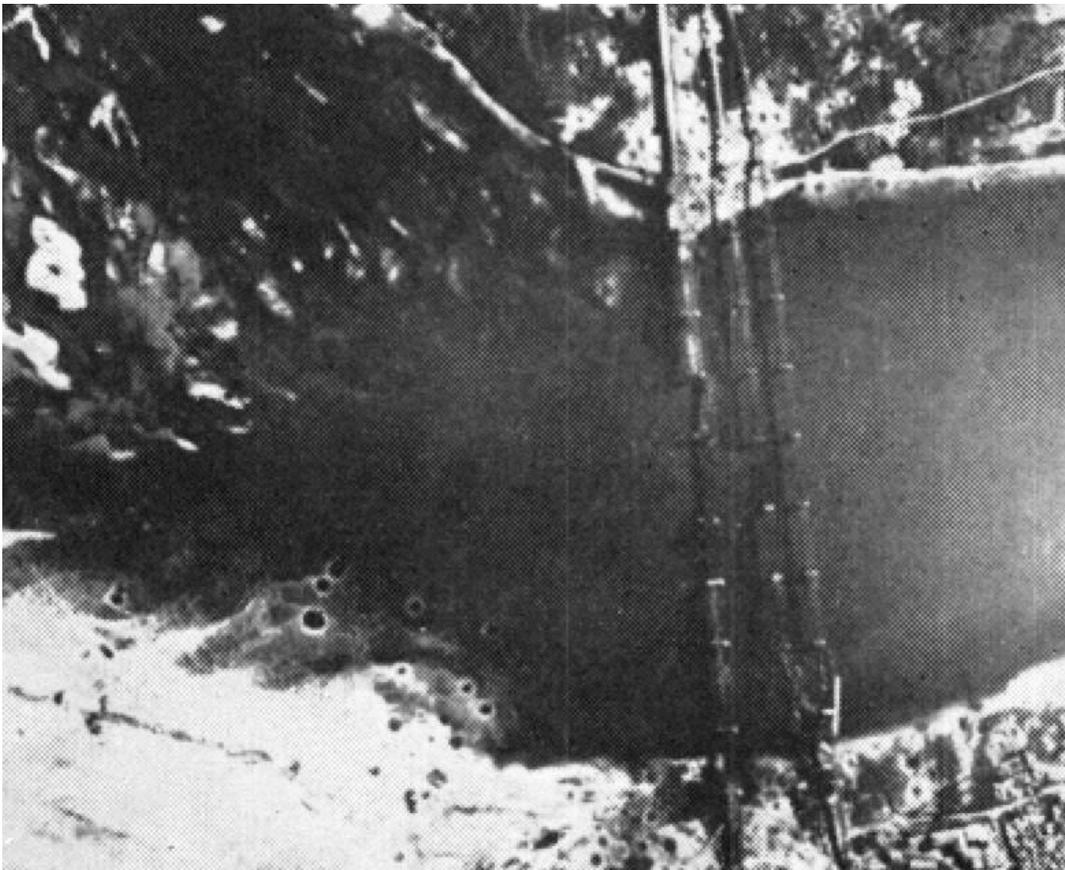


Photo #9: This strike photo taken five days later, on 24 August 1950, shows the progress of emergency construction efforts by KPA and railroad construction troops as they work on the double-tracked railroad bridge. The section of the pontoon bridge still remains lodged against the southern end of the single-tracked railroad bridge. (USAF)

Editor's Note

As readers will immediately note there has been a significant delay between last issue and this one. This delay was the result of travel and other commitments. I hope to have *KPA Journal* back on schedule this month with the publication of this and the June issues.

With this issue I've continued the survey of DPRK intelligence services in the 1960s. I will conclude this series in the June issue with a discussion of the KPA's Reconnaissance Bureau. This will hopefully provide a useful historical background for many readers given the 2009-2010 organizational changes to this organization. While on the subject of the Reconnaissance Bureau readers may be interested in an article I completed last week for the *38 North* website covering these changes. It is entitled "A New Emphasis on Operations Against South Korea?" and can be found at <http://38north.org/2010/06/a-new-emphasis-on-operations-against-south-korea/>. Another article available at the site entitled "Can North Korea Build the H-Bomb?" by Jeffrey Lewis should also be of interest to readers. While on the subject of recently published works concerning the DPRK I would like to recommend *Criminal Sovereignty: Understanding North Korea's Illicit International Activities* by Paul Rexton Kan, Dr. Bruce E. Bechtol, Jr., and Robert M. Collins, available at www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil.

Due to the travel and other commitments noted above I have regrettably made no progress on the *KPA Journal* website. Hope springs eternal and I have ever intention of getting it online as soon as time permits.

Finally, I would like to thank all the readers for their article suggestions and encourage everyone to keep them coming in. As always I would like to thank everyone for their encouragement and support.

—Joseph S. Bermudez, Jr.

Endnotes

- ¹ The information for this article was drawn from research for the author's forthcoming book *North Korean Intelligence Services 1945-1975*, which will be published in the first quarter of 2011 and from the author's book *North Korean Special Forces: Second Edition*, U.S. Naval Institute Press, Annapolis November 1997.
- ² Interview data acquired by Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.; Suh, Dae-sook. *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1988, pp. 211-231; Sung-joo, "North Korea's Security Policy and Military Strategy," in *North Korea Today: Strategic and Domestic Issues*, ed. Robert A Scalapino and Kim Jun-yop, University of California, Berkeley, 1983, pp. 144-163.

- ³ Alternate English-language names for the South Korea General Bureau include the: Anti-South Korean Projects General Bureau, Bureau of Overall Operations Against the South, General Bureau for Works toward South Korea, General Bureau of South Korean Affairs, General Liaison Bureau, South Korea General Affairs Bureau, South Korean Projects General Bureau and Southern General Operations Bureau.
- ⁴ Yi is sometimes identified as Yi Hyo-san.
- ⁵ During 1962 the Ministry of Internal Affairs was reorganized into the Ministry of Social Security (a.k.a., Ministry of Public Security). This ministry was assigned most of the previous organization's responsibilities for internal security and foreign espionage and subversive operations.
- ⁶ Suh, Dae-sook. *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1988, p. 227.
- ⁷ Interview data acquired by Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. and Suh, Dae-sook. *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1988, p. 223.
- ⁸ "Excerpt From Book 'Inside Look at Kim Chong-il': DPRK's Kim's Ascent to Successor Viewed," 10 June 2000, pp. 131-198, *Open Source Center*, KPP20000623000057.
- ⁹ O Chin-u was promoted to general one month later and subsequently appointed to the position of director of the General Political Bureau of the MPAF. "Monthly Examines Political Hierarchy in the DPRK Following the Ninth Supreme People's Assembly Elections," *Wolgan Choson*, July 1990, pp. 214-227, as cited in the *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*.
- ¹⁰ There is some debate as to the timing of Yi Hyo-sun being purged, with dates varying from January to July 1967. Once purged Yi was reportedly first demoted to assistant manager of a local farm machinery factory, then to a common laborer and was ultimately imprisoned at a special "Factionalists Group Detention Center." "Overview of DPRK Regime, Politics," *Pukhan Kaeyo*, 29 December 1999, pp. 59-139, *Open Source Center*, KPP20000831000080 and "Excerpt From Book 'Inside Look at Kim Chong-il': DPRK's Kim's Ascent to Successor Viewed," 10 June 2000, pp. 95-130, *Open Source Center*, KPP20000623000056.
- ¹¹ Colonel General Ho Pong-hak was a veteran of the Fatherland Liberation War, reportedly having begun that war as the chief of staff of the 4th Infantry Division. During early 1961 he was appointed director of the KPA's General Political Department and shortly afterwards, at the Fourth Party Congress in 1961, became a member of the KWP Central Committee..
- ¹² One of the best studies of the ROK/U.S. perspective of the fighting during this period is, Bolger, Major Daniel P. *Scenes from an Unfinished War: Low-Intensity Conflict in Korea, 1966-1969*, Leavenworth Papers, Number 19, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1991. It is now available at, <http://www.cgsc.edu/carl/resources/csi/content.asp#scenes>
- ¹³ "Kim Chung-nin's Background Detailed," *Pukhan*, January 1992, pp. 91-100, as cited in *FBIS-EAS-92-050*.
- ¹⁴ "Monthly examines political hierarchy in the DPRK following the Ninth Supreme People's Assembly elections," *Wolgan Choson*, July 1990, pp. 214-227, as cited in the *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*.

- ¹⁵ Immediately prior to the Fatherland Liberation War (i.e., Korean War) O Chin-u was appointed director of the Hoeryong Cadres School which trained selected KPA troops (e.g., the 766th Independent Unit) in special reconnaissance and partisan warfare tactics. O was considered as one of the DPRK's experts on guerrilla warfare and special operations.
- ¹⁶ "Monthly examines political hierarchy in the DPRK following the Ninth Supreme People's Assembly elections," *Wolgan Choson*, July 1990, pp. 214-227, as cited in the *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*.
- ¹⁷ "Standing of DPRK's WPK Under Kim Chong-il Leadership Examined," *Pukhan*, November 2000, pp. 28-39, *Open Source Center*, KPP20001115000031; "ROK Monthly Profiles DPRK Party Office No. 35," *Pukhan*, May 2000, pp. 76-91, *Open Source Center*, KPP20000522000047, "Article Criticizes Kato's Ties to DPRK," *Bungei Shunju*, 10 December 1995, pp. 116-127, as cited in FBIS-EAS-95-238; and "Narrative Biographies of DPRK Figures," *Sindong-A*, January 1995, (Supplement) pp. 210-278, as cited in *FBIS-EAS-95-015-S*.
- ¹⁸ Among the many organizational developments that Kim Chung-nim undertook were the disestablishment of the 124th and 283rd Army Units, reorganization of the 695th Army Unit, and the establishment of the VIII Special Purpose Corps. "Kim Chung-nin's Background Detailed," *Pukhan*, January 1992, pp. 91-100, as cited in *FBIS-EAS-92-050*.
- ¹⁹ Yu Chang-sik, was subsequently purged in September 1973 when Kim Chong-il initiated a reorganization of the KWP's intelligence agencies. "Overview of DPRK Regime, Politics," *Pukhan Kaeyo*, 29 December 1999, pp. 59-139, *Open Source Center*, KPP20000831000080 and "DPRK Arrests Four Others Planning To Defect With Hwang," *Chungang Ilbo*, 3 March 1997, as cited in *FBIS-TOT-97-062*.
- ²⁰ Alternate English language names for the Central Committee Political School include the: Central Korean Labor Party School, Korean Worker's Party School and, more simply, the Political School.