

This photograph was taken on 24 March 1999 in the Sea of Japan (East Sea), northwest of the Noto Peninsula (i.e., Noto-hanto). It shows one of two DPRK infiltration vessels (e.g., “Mother Ships”) fleeing from Japan Maritime Safety Agency and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force vessels and aircraft. (Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force)

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Infiltration Operation off Noto-hanto, Japan, 19-25 March 1999¹

By Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.

Background

During 23-25 March 1999, forces from the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) and Japan Maritime Safety Agency (JMSA) located, identified and chased from their territorial waters two infiltration vessels from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK).² The precise objective and details of the mission these vessels were engaged in are unclear. Japanese defense officials believe that the most likely mission was to insert or retrieve an agent or

agents. Additional possibilities include, kidnapping of Japanese civilians, delivery of narcotics, or routine intelligence collection.³ Some sources have suggested that this entire operation was a diversion to allow other DPRK agents to infiltrate Japan along its Pacific Ocean coast. This, for a variety of reason, is improbable. Although this infiltration operation displayed a number of unusual aspects it was probably a routine operation for the DPRK’s intelligence community.⁴

The detection of this infiltration mission may have resulted from heightened JMSDF and JMSA surveillance due to a successful infiltration six months earlier. At that time an infiltration vessel reportedly departed a DPRK port (probably Ch’ongjin) on 19 September sailing southeast towards Japan. It arrived off the coast of Fukui Prefecture on 20-21 September and landed several agents. The agents were never located.⁵

Infiltration and Escape

Sometime on or about 20 March two specialized infiltration vessels from the Korean Workers’ Party (KWP) Operations Department left the DPRK port of Ch’ongjin and

sailed separately on generally southeasterly courses towards Japan. The two infiltration vessels were apparently part of a larger group of seven DPRK vessels which sailed towards Japanese waters at this time.⁶ Whether the remaining five were also from the Operations Department or legitimate fishing vessels is presently unclear.

It is believed that the first indications of a possible DPRK infiltration operation were passed to the Japanese on 19 March when ROK intelligence informed the Public Security Investigation Agency that two “spy operation ships” would shortly be leaving the port of Ch’ongjin. The fact that the ships had left port was reportedly confirmed by U.S. intelligence the following day. That same day Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) Headquarters issued orders for additional P-3C Orion patrols over the area of the *Yamato Ridge* (i.e., Yamatodai) 150 nm northwest of the Noto Peninsula (i.e., Noto-hanto). While these patrols spotted many ships, including all seven DPRK vessels, the infiltration vessels were apparently not identified as such at this time.

During the evening of 21–22 March Japanese and U.S. intelligence reportedly intercepted a coded short-wave radio transmission emanating from southern sector of the *Yamato Ridge*. The characteristics of the message indicated that it originated from a DPRK infiltration vessel. Also during this evening five of the DPRK ships returned to DPRK territorial waters, while the two infiltration vessels continued on. Additional JMSDF P-3C patrols over the *Yamato Ridge* area on 22 March failed to locate the two infiltration vessels due to stormy weather. During the evening of 22–23 March the two infiltration vessels entered Japanese territorial waters on separate courses heading towards Sadogashima and the Noto Peninsula.

At 0642 hrs., a JMSDF P-3C of the 2nd Fleet Air Wing, operating from Hachinoe Air Base, spotted a suspicious vessel approximately 10 nm west of Sadogashima, Niigata Prefecture. The JMSDF headquarters issued orders to the commander of the 3rd Escort Flotilla on the destroyer *Myoko* to proceed to the area of Sadogashima and investigate the sighting.⁷ The *Myoko*, accompanied by the destroyer *Haruna*, quickly left the area off of Maizuru and proceeded north. Approximately two-and-half hours later, at 0925 hrs. a JMSDF P-3C reported spotting a second suspicious vessel about 25 nm east of the Noto Peninsula, Ishikawa Prefecture. The JMSDF headquarters now ordered the *Myoko* to patrol west of the Noto Peninsula, between it and Sadogashima, while the *Haruna*, would first investigate the sighting east of the Noto Peninsula and then move towards Sadogashima. At approximately 1100 hrs. the *Haruna* arrived off the Noto Peninsula and identified not one, but two, suspicious vessels—the *Yamato Maru No. 2* and the *Shinsei Maru No. 28*. The names of the vessels were then passed to the JMSA for verification. The JMSA, which functions as a coast guard and

is responsible for investigating violations of Japan’s territorial waters, responded that the *Yamato Maru No. 2* was supposed to be operating off Hyogo Prefecture, however, it couldn’t at that time confirm anything else. Due to this delay the *Haruna* was ordered to leave the area and head northwest to investigate the first sighting off of Sadogashima. At 1210 hrs., the *Haruna’s* radar picked up a return of a suspicious vessel off of Sadogashima. By 1303 hrs. it had approached close enough to the vessel to identify it as the *Taisei Maru No. 1*. The name of this vessel was then also passed to the JMSA for verification. The *Taisei Maru No. 1* now began to slowly sail north-northwest. Meanwhile, at 1318 hrs., a JMSA Falcon-900 patrol aircraft arrived over the *Yamato Maru No. 2* and signaled the vessel to halt. The vessel ignored the signal and responded by sailing northwest. The *Myoko* now moved in closer and began tailing the *Yamato Maru No. 2*.

Among the factors that had aroused JMSDF suspicions concerning these vessels were that,

- Each ship mounted a large number of antennas. Far more than required by an ordinary fishing ship
- Neither ship was equipped with fishing nets or related equipment
- They weren’t flying the Japanese flag which is require by law

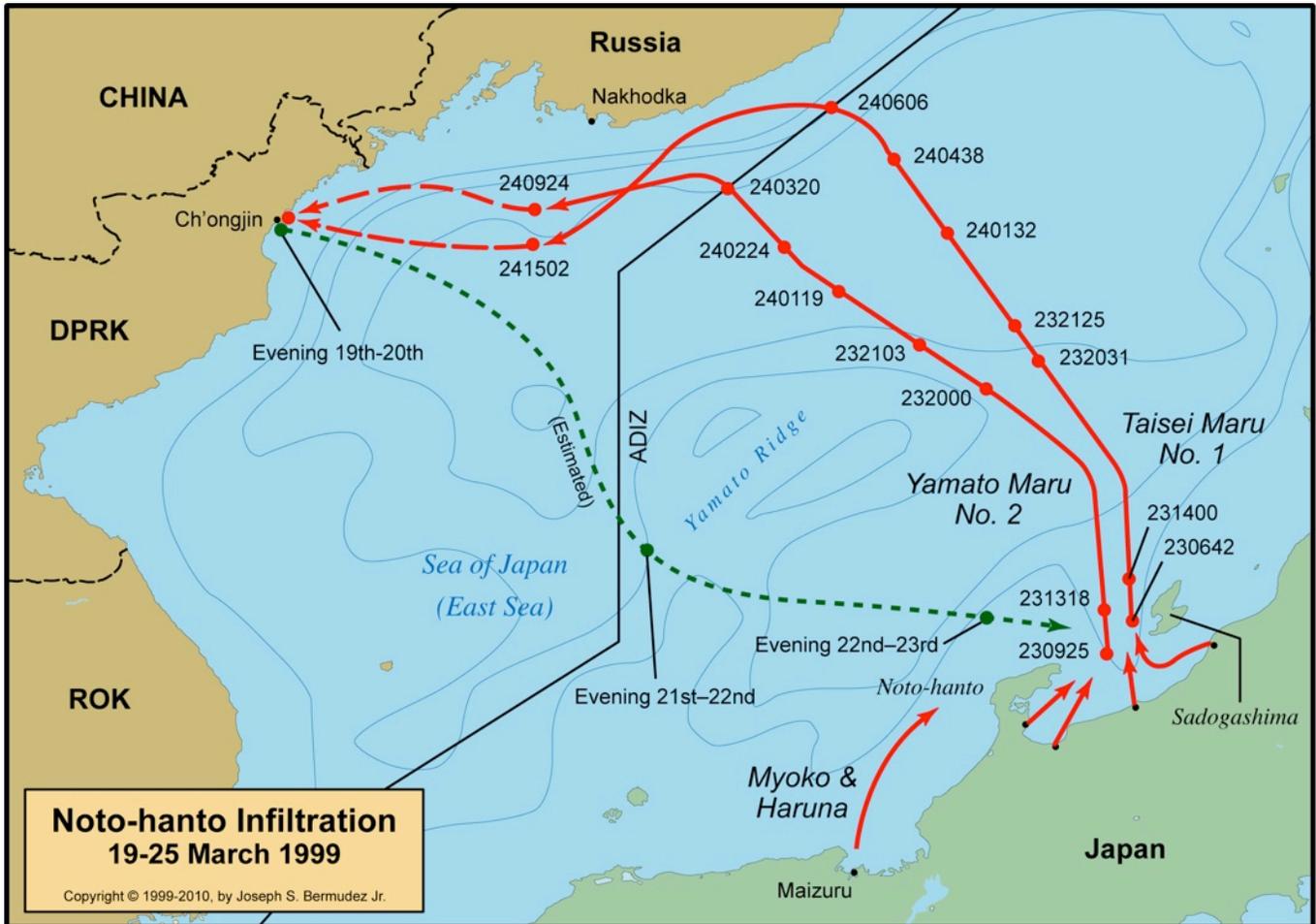
While these characteristics were, of themselves, not enough to classify the vessels as hostile, they did fit the profile of smugglers, intelligence gathering ships, or DPRK infiltration vessels and warranted further investigation.

Between 1330–1400 hrs. the JMSA concluded its preliminary investigation of the ships and reported that the *Shinsei Maru No. 28* was a legitimate Japanese fishing vessel, but that the *Taisei Maru No. 1* and *Yamato Maru No. 2* were infiltration vessels. The real *Yamato Maru No. 2* was operating off Hyogo Prefecture and the *Taisei Maru No. 1* had been scrapped in 1994. The JMSA now ordered its aircraft and patrol boats to intercept and board the two infiltration vessels (at the time Japanese law normally prohibited the JMSDF from doing this).

At 1400 hrs. a JMSA HSS-2B (i.e., SH-3) helicopter arrived over the *Taisei Maru No. 1* and signaled it to halt. When the ship failed to respond the helicopter began to drop smoke pots. The vessel, however, continued at about 10 knots on its north-northwest course. During the next five hours, JMSA Falcon-900 patrol aircraft and HSS-2B helicopters would track the two infiltration vessels, while JMSA

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patrol boats converged on the area. The JMSDF destroyers *Myoko* and *Haruna* would continue to trail the infiltration vessels just over the horizon. At 1548 hrs. the JMSDF HQ ordered the 4th Fleet Air Wing, at Atsugi Air Base, to provide additional P-3C aircraft for the operation.

At 1845 hrs. the JMSA patrol boat *Chikuzen* had approached to within 1 nm of the *Yamato Maru No. 2* and signaled it to stop and identify itself. The *Yamato Maru No. 2* ignored the signals and continued to sail away on a north-west course.⁸ The *Chikuzen* then fired several 20 mm warning shots into the sea near the ship.⁹ Although equipped with 35 mm guns the JMSA captains believed that the use of the larger caliber weapons would have been excessive. The *Yamato Maru No. 2* ignored the warning and increased speed putting an ever increasing distance between itself and the *Chikuzen*. Around 2000 hrs. the JMSA patrol boat *Hamayuki* joined the pursuit and at 2024 hrs. it began firing warning shots at the *Yamato Maru No. 2*. The *Yamato Maru No. 2* altered course slightly, increased speed to about 35 knots and gradually outdistanced the pursuing JMSA patrol boats. Shortly afterwards the *Yamato Maru No. 2* disappeared from their radar screens. Meanwhile, a similar situation played itself out as the JMSA patrol boat *Sado* pursued the *Taisei Maru No. 1*. The *Sado* took up the chase and continued to fire warning shots. The *Taisei Maru No. 1* now ac-

celerated to speeds close to 35 knots with the *Sado* trailing even further behind. At 2144 hrs. the *Taisei Maru No. 1* disappeared off of the *Sado's* radar screen.

In support of the JMSA pursuit, at 2051 hrs., an EP-3 ELINT aircraft from the 31st Fleet Air Wing took off from Kashima Air Base. Its mission was to intercept any communications between the evading infiltration vessels and their home base in *Ch'ongjin*.

As this situation developed the JMSA patrol boats were severely constrained in their actions by strict rules-of-engagement (ROE) which explicitly prohibit gunfire from being brought directly upon vessels violating Japanese territorial waters. Limiting actions against such intruders to efforts that "...will not cause human injuries." The obvious exception to this being in instances of self-defense. Since the fleeing infiltration vessels did not at any time fire upon their pursuers, the JMSA (and later JMSDF) units had no choice but to continue to fire only warning shots.

Once the JMSA patrol boats dropped away the infiltration vessels slowed somewhat and altered their courses slightly, but still continued on their northwest and north-northwest headings. If both ships held to their courses and speeds, it was estimated that they would enter Russian territorial waters at 0400 on 24 March. At 2347 hrs., however, the *Taisei Maru No. 1* stopped. The reasons for this halt are un-



Views of one of the two DPRK infiltration vessels fleeing at high speed from JMSA and JMSDF vessels. Note how the specially designed hull allows the vessels to ride high and more easily slice through waves and swells. What appears to be the stern clam-shell doors to the internal “wet-well” are visible in the lower image. (Japan Maritime Self-Defense



clear. It has, however, been suggested that it was to either transfer fuel from 55 gallon drums stored on the forward deck, or to drop overboard sensitive equipment or material which would be compromised if captured. Approximately 20 minutes later the *Taisei Maru No. 1* resumed its high speed escape on a north-northwesterly course.¹⁰

At 0040 hrs. 24 March, at an emergency cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi invoked Article 82 of the Self Defense Forces Law which authorized the JMSDF to conduct the stop and boarding of the infiltration vessels. This was followed by orders to the destroyers *Myoko* and *Haruna* to undertake the operation. Additionally, the destroyer *Asazari* was ordered to set sail from Sasebo to join the operation. While the destroyers *Shirane*, *Amagiri*, and

Umigiri based at Yokosuka on the Pacific coast were ordered to be deployed to Sasebo.

Shortly afterwards, at 0100 hrs., the *Haruna* closed with the *Taisei Maru No. 1* and ordered it to halt. While at 0118 hrs. the *Myoko* closed with the *Yamato Maru No. 2* and ordered it to halt. Both ships ignored the warnings and continued at high speed. At 0119 the *Myoko* fired a warning round from its 5 inch guns. During the next two and a half hours it would fire a total of 12 warning rounds at the *Yamato Maru No. 2*. While a P-3C would also drop four 150 kg bombs. This display of firepower, however, did not stop the *Yamato Maru No. 2*, which crossed the Japan Outer Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) at 0320 hrs., at 41°46' N and 132°53' E on a northwesterly course.¹¹ At 0132 hrs., the



Although blurry this image shows details of the various antennas on the vessel. Several crew members can be distinguished both aft of the bridge and on the main deck aft of the cabin. The stern clam-shell doors are just barely visible. Note the distinctive wake resulting from the high speed hull design. (Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force)

Haruna fired a warning round from its 5 inch guns at the *Taisei Maru No. 1*. During the next four and a half hours it would fire a total of 20 warning rounds at the *Taisei Maru No. 1*. While P-3C aircraft would drop two 150 kg bombs. As with the *Yamato Maru No. 2*, the *Taisei Maru No. 1* was undeterred by JMSDF actions and it crossed the ADIZ at 0606 hrs. on a north-northwesterly course.

As the infiltration vessels crossed the ADIZ the JMSDF pursuit was terminated. The reason for this was to prevent the incident from escalating into armed confrontation with KPAF aircraft or KPN naval craft which were believed to be mobilizing for action. Slightly less than two hours later, at 0755 hrs., a ASDF E-2C Hawkeye airborne early warning aircraft confirmed by radar that four KPAF MiG-21s, probably from the 2nd Air Division, had been launched and were headed towards the fleeing infiltration vessels.¹² In response the ASDF launched two F-15Js from the 6th Air Wing based at Komatsu Air Base. Both groups of aircraft remained on

their respective sides of the ADIZ and subsequently landed without incident.

Approximately one hour later, at 0840 hrs., a special cabinet meeting was convened to discuss the situation. At 1530 hrs., Japan's Defense Agency officially declared that the operation concerning the two infiltration vessels had been terminated, although P-3C patrol aircraft would still attempt to track the ships by radar. The infiltration vessels were at this time on a north-northwest heading towards the Russian port of Nakhodka. They kept to this course until approximately 25-30 nm from Russian territorial waters and then changed course to the west heading for the port of Ch'ongjin. The vessels are reported to have entered Ch'ongjin shortly before 0700 hrs. on 25 March. During this operation the Japanese Self Defense Forces employed a total of four destroyers, 14 P-3C patrol aircraft, and two F-15J fighters. While the JMSA employed a total of 15 patrol boats and 12 Falcon-900 patrol aircraft and HSS-2B helicopters.

The DPRK has steadfastly refused to acknowledge any involvement in the incident. Stating that "...The loud-mouthed 'mysterious ships pursuit case' cannot be construed otherwise than one more anti-DPRK fiction invented by the Japanese reactionaries on purpose."¹³

Noteworthy Features

A number of features of this infiltration operation are notable.

First, this is one of the few known instances in which the Operations Department has dispatched two infiltration vessels on what appears to have been the same overall mission.¹⁴

It appears that both two vessels were either directly, or indirectly through a headquarters, in communication with each other. Which illustrates another unusual aspect—that of radio silence. DPRK infiltration operations have traditionally shown excellent radio discipline and vessels have historically maintained radio silence unless an emergency arises. The Japan Defense Agency's report of intercepting short-wave communications apparently related to the infiltration, if correct, is noteworthy.

Next, the captains and crews of the infiltration vessels showed remarkable discipline in not firing back at their pursuers. This also indicates their clear understanding of the weaknesses in the rules of engagement employed by the JMSDF and JMSA at that time.

Moreover, while the actual penetration of Japanese territorial waters occurred during a period of bad weather and low visibility, it was not during a moonless period. Which has historically been a preferred time for DPRK infiltration operations.

Finally, the inability of the JMSA and JMSDF efforts to stop and board the infiltration vessels revealed profound weaknesses in their ROE and led to a reevaluation of policies

and procedures for dealing with maritime incursions. The revised ROE allowed for the use of force in certain circumstances and were a major factor in permitting Japan Coast Guard and JMSDF units to engage a DPRK infiltration vessel two years later in December 2001.¹⁵ Two more immediate results of this reevaluation were the JMSDF decision to acquire, in FY 2000, two additional high speed patrol boats and the arming of its destroyers with 20 mm machine guns.¹⁶

The Vessels

The two specialized infiltration vessels involved in this operation were from the KWP's Operation Department. More specifically from that department's Seaborne Escort Unit headquartered in Ch'ongjin. The vessels were disguised as the Japanese fishing ships *Yamato Maru No. 2* and *Taisei Maru No. 1*.¹⁷ These vessels are typical of DPRK infiltration vessels (a.k.a., "mother" ships) used to carry and launch swimmer delivery vehicles, infiltration landing craft disguised as small fishing boats or high-speed submersible infiltration landing craft such as the improved SP-10H. Both vessels were approximately 30 m long, displaced 100 tons, and had a maximum speed of 33-35 knots. Generally, ships of this type are armed with a wide variety of small arms including recoilless rifles and shoulder fired SAMs.¹⁸



Another blurry, but interesting, image of the same vessel showing details of the various antennas and crew members. (Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force)

Munitions Industries Department—began work to develop a replacement for the KPA's Ch'onma (i.e., *Flying Horse*) series of main battle tanks.²¹

While the production, or final assembly, of the P'okpoong is reported to have been delegated to the Ryu Kyong-su Tank Factory there are several other facilities within the DPRK which are also capable of producing tanks and which may be involved with the P'okpoong program.²² All these facilities are subordinate to the Second Economic Committee's Second Machine Industry Bureau. Components and subsystems are supplied by various factories (e.g., No. 38 Factory, January 18th Machine Factory, etc.) throughout the nation. Additionally, some components and subsystems are believed to originate in China, Russia and Eastern Europe.

The total number P'okpoong tanks both manufactured and in service with the KPA is unknown, but believed to be relatively low. In fact, it is conceivable that the vehicle has been only produced in small numbers to evaluate its capabilities or as part of a disinformation campaign—this has happened in the past. Given the current economic situation of the DPRK it is unlikely, however, that production of P'okpoong main battle tank will reach the same level as that for the Ch'onma family of MBTs (i.e., approximately 1,400) anytime in the foreseeable future.

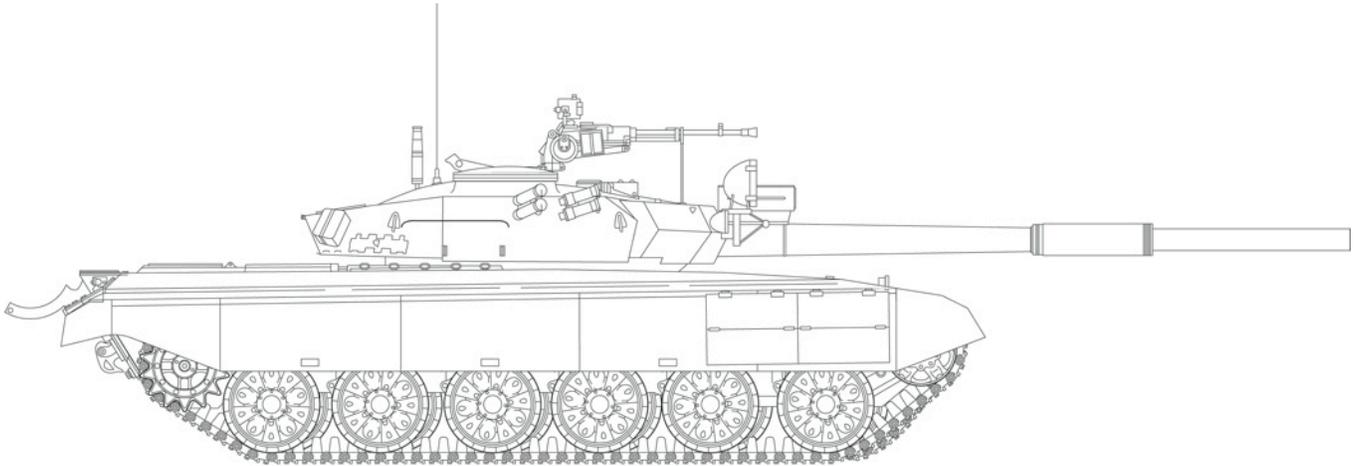
The vehicle appears to be in service with only the 105th Seoul, Ryu Kyong-su, Guards Tank Division.²³ Kim Il-sung, when he was alive, would regularly visit the 105th Tank Division to observe exercises. Kim Chong-il, his successor and son, has continued this tradition visiting the unit at least

P'okpoong: The KPA's New Main Battle Tank¹⁹

By Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.

Photographs and video released by the DPRK during 2009 and 2010 provide the most detailed look to date of the nation's latest main battle tank (MBT), popularly known as the M-2002 or P'okpoong (i.e., *Storm*).²⁰ The vehicle has been previously reported as being a derivative of the Russian T-72. The imagery, however, shows that the hull is only conceptually based upon the T-72; and while similar to the Chinese Type-85 it is more likely to be a stretched and heavily modified version of the T-62. The turret appears to also be based upon that of a T-62 and the suspension utilizes T-62 components.

Development of the P'okpoong dates to the late 1990s when the Second Economic Committee and Second Academy of Defense Sciences—both subordinate to the KWP's



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Provisional scale drawing of the P'okpoong MBT (2009), based upon available imagery. An precise scale drawing will have to wait until measurements can be taken of the vehicle. (Copyright © 2010 by Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.)

yearly. If, and when, the production of the P'okpoong continues the tank will likely enter service with the independent tank units in the P'yongyang region.

To date, there are no indications that any specialized bridge laying or engineering variants of the P'okpoong have been produced. Nor do any images show mounting attachments for mine rollers or plows. Regardless, should production continue, there are likely to be additional variants of the P'okpoong as the KPA attempts to improve armor protection, fire control and firepower.

Turret

The P'okpoong's turret appears to consist of a T-62 tur-

ret that has been heavily modified with: a large wedge-shaped laminate armor module bolted onto the front; angled slab appliqué armor added to the turret sides; and a large turret bustle built onto the rear. This design is conceptually similar to that which appears on modern Chinese tanks (e.g., Type-85, Type-88 and ZTZ-96G).

The purpose of the rear turret bustle is uncertain. It is likely to contain storage for crew equipment and possibly additional main gun ammunition storage. It also provides additional protection against HEAT type projectiles. In the images available to date two hatches can be seen on the top of the rear turret bustle and spare tank tracks and miscellaneous storage containers are mounted to its sides. Loops for



Vehicle #101. Note the missing front mud guard and the flexing side skirt panels. (Korean Central Television)



Vehicle #123. Visible in this image are the wedge-shaped laminate module on the front of the turret, glacis plate appliqué armor module, folding panels on the side skirt and laser range-finder (with cover) on the main gun. Note the driver on the left side of the tank as in the T-62. In the T-72 the driver sits in the center. (Korean Central Television)

additional storage are welded along the side rear and rear edges of the rear turret bustle. Miscellaneous storage containers are frequently seen attached to the top of the rear turret and rear turret bustle. The hatches on the turret are similar to those found on the T-62. While it is assumed that the P'okpoong is capable of snorkeling no evidence of snorkel tubes or cases appears in any of the available images.

Armament

While the images available do not provide enough detail to determine the size of the main gun. It could be either the 115 mm 2A20 or the 125 mm 2A26/2A46. Although it would be a technical challenge to mount the 125 mm gun in a T-62 turret due to its size and recoil. Either weapon is capable of firing a wide range of ammunition including: HE, HE-FRAG, HEAT and APFSDS. Notably, none of the images show the main gun equipped with a thermal sleeve that is typically found installed on T-72s, Type-85/88/96s and many T-62s, including some variants of the Ch'onma. While the basic load of a standard T-62M is 40 rounds, it is unknown how many the P'okpoong carries. The reason for this is that the rear turret bustle on the P'okpoong may be used, at least in part, for ammunition storage.

In addition to its main gun the P'okpoong mounts a 7.62 mm coaxial machine gun and a 14.5 mm KPV anti-aircraft gun in a manual mount on the turret roof. The use of the 14.5 mm KPV rather than the more usual 12.7 mm DShK is likely a response to the threat poised by ROK and US anti-tank helicopters. The manual mount for this weapon will, however, make it of limited use in the anti-helicopter role. There are two sets of two-barrel smoke/HE grenade launchers mounted on the turret sides.

The P'okpoong still mounts an infrared light on the turret. This strongly suggests that no thermal imaging sights are fitted. A laser rangefinder is mounted in the rectangular box mounted on top of the main gun. Additionally, what appears to be a meteorological sensor mast is mounted on top of the turret behind the commander's hatch. Indicating a relatively modern computerized fire control system.

Hull and Suspension

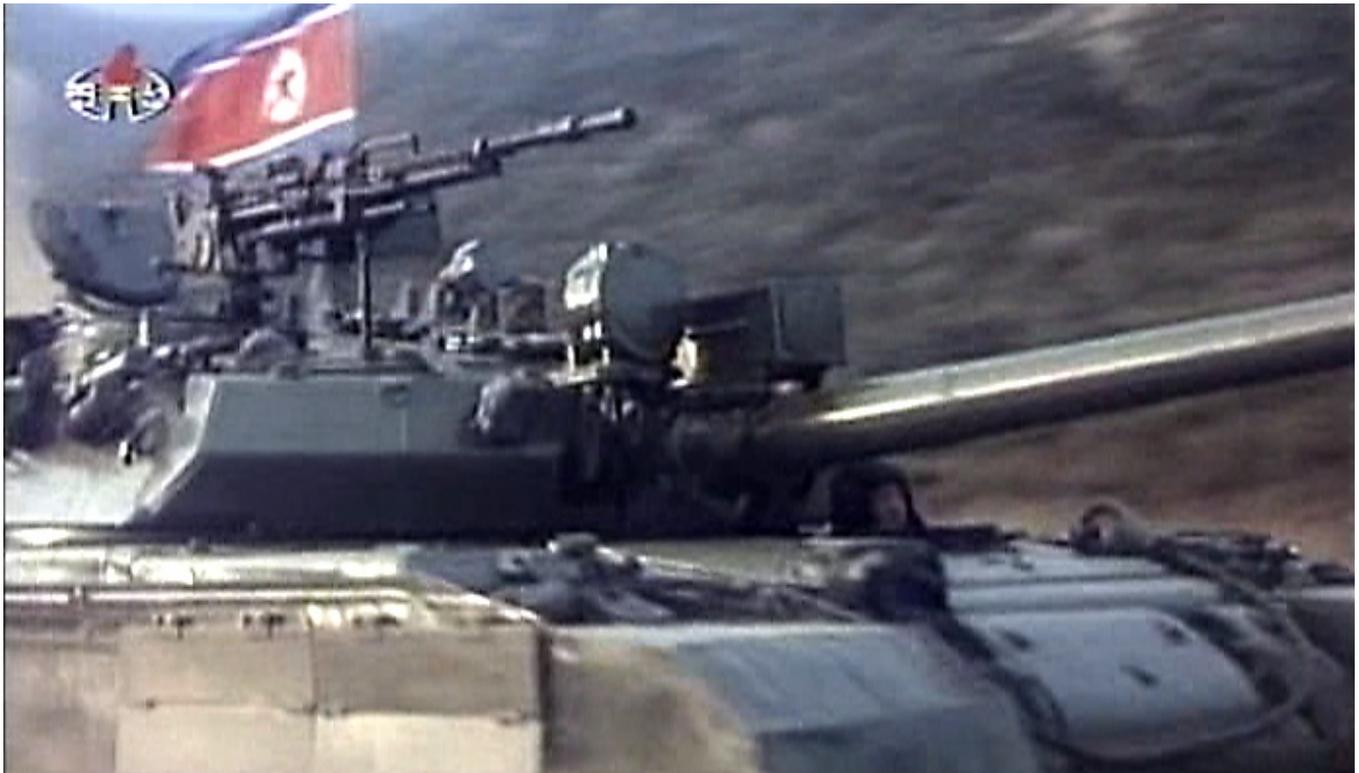
The available imagery strongly suggest that while the hull and engine compartment are very loosely based upon the T-72, the more probably lineage is a T-62 which has been stretched and heavily modified—possibly using the Chinese Type-85 as a conceptual model.²⁴ Supporting this are the



Vehicle #126. Close-up of the wedge-shaped laminate module and smoke discharges. (Korean Central Television)



Vehicle #131. Note the tow cable on the glacis plate appliqué armor module and that the laser range-finder does not have a cover. (Korean Central Television)



Vehicle #131. Close-up of the front end showing details of the turret front laminate module, glacis plate appliqué armor module, 14.5 mm machine-gun and laser range-finder. (Korean Central Television)



Vehicle #131. Close-up showing details of the rear turret bustle and the bottom of the meteorological mast behind the commander's hatch. (Korean Central Television)



Scenes of several P'okpoong tanks during an exercise outside a small village. Note that even in these long-range views that the meteorological mast, foldable panels above the first and second road wheels and the flexing of the side skirts are visible. (Korean Central Television)

facts that,

- the driver sits on the left side of the hull as in the T-62, not in the center as in the T-72
- the road wheels and drive sprocket appear to be T-62 components
- it uses the metallic hinge T-54/T-55/T-62 tracks and not the RMSH T-72 type tracks

The glacis plate is protected by bolted-on appliqué armor, while the suspension and lower hull are covered by full-length five-panel side skirts with mud/dust guards. While the composition of the side skirts is uncertain they appear to be “wavy” in several images. Strongly suggesting that they are made of laminate armor (e.g., spaced layers of aluminum, steel and plastic/rubber). Visible in all images available to date are two two-panel hinged steel plates above the first and second road wheels on the right side of the vehicle.²⁵ These may be either a foldable work platform or additional

armor to provide additional protection from HEAT projectiles for the driver's compartment.

While available images show a tow cable looped across the glacis plate no un-ditching logs or long-range external fuels tanks are apparent.

DPRK Intelligence Services 1967-1971, Part 1²⁶

By Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.

Background

The early 1960s were a time of significant civil turmoil and vulnerability within 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 General Pak Chong-hui (a.k.a., Park

Chung Hee or Bak Jeong-hee) in May 1961. The failure of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) to effectively exploit these vulnerabilities resulted in a decision to both reorganize and modernize the Korean People’s Army (KPA) and those organizations involved in intelligence and anti-ROK operations.

Building upon the changes initiated in 1961 Kim Il-sung, during February 1964, articulated his policy of the “three revolutionary forces.” These forces were the: revolutionary force in the North, “...revolutionary force of the south,” and the international revolutionary force. This policy sought to bring about the reunification of the Koreas through the establishment of a revolutionary movement and support of civil unrest and political subversion within the ROK, rather than by direct conflict (i.e., invasion). By 1966 it was became clear that supporting the “...revolutionary force of the south” alone would not work. As a result a new comprehensive policy based upon active guerrilla warfare was to be implemented. At the October 1966 14th Plenum of the Fourth Central People’s Committee of the Korean Workers’ Party (KWP) Kim Il-sung announced the adoption of such a policy under the banner of “Revolution in south Korea.” This new policy would quickly result in a dramatic surge in infiltration operations and an aggressive guerilla operations

against the ROK. These operations would reach their peak during 1967-1969.

Organization

To support these more aggressive policies against the ROK a number of personnel and organizational changes occurred within the intelligence and special operations assets of the KWP and KPA.

At the pinnacle of the intelligence and special operations community was Kim Il-sung, who is simultaneously General Secretary of the KWP, Supreme Commander of the KPA and Premier. The path for command and control then extended down through the KWP and the Cabinet to the agencies themselves.

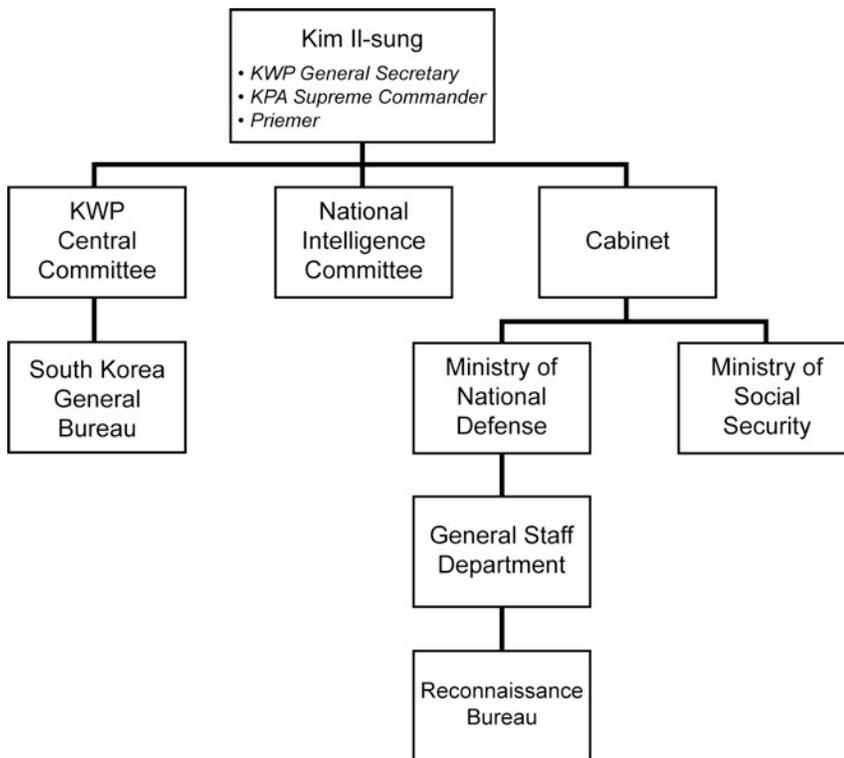
At the peak of the operations against the ROK the intelligence community was organized into the: National Intelligence Committee, KWP’s South Korea General Bureau, KPA’s Reconnaissance Bureau and Ministry of Public Security.

National Intelligence Committee

The National Intelligence Committee was a national-level policy and decision-making organ for intelligence and security functions. It is believed to have been established during the early 1960s (possibly 1961) following the dissolution of the Cabinet General Intelligence Bureau. This new committee was chaired by Kim Il-sung and consisted of the leaders of the intelligence and internal security agencies and leading members of the KWP and KPA. Organizationally, it may have been a component of the KWP’s Secretariat, however, this remains to be confirmed.

South Korea General Bureau

The South Korea General Bureau is believed to have been established in September 1961 as a result of the KWP undertaking a consolidation of its intelligence and anti-ROK subversive organizations under one central command. Directly subordinate to the KWP’s Secretariat, the South Korea General Bureau was tasked with exercising overall responsibility for intelligence and subversive operations against the ROK—including coordination with the Reconnaissance Bureau. Although this new organization drew heavily upon the personnel and resources of the Liaison Department, it included resources from a number KWP assets. Additionally, the majority of the propaganda and psychological warfare responsibilities of the KPA’s General Political Bureau were assumed by the Culture Department of the South Korea



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DPRK Intelligence Agencies (Simplified), 1967

General Bureau. The General Political Bureau was refocused primarily upon political security within the KPA.

Among the organizations subordinated to the newly established South Korea General Bureau were the: Liaison Department, Culture Department, Intelligence Department and Central Committee Political School.

Reconnaissance Bureau

The KPA's Reconnaissance Bureau was responsible for the collection of military intelligence concerning the ROK and foreign military forces. To accomplish these missions the bureau trained and dispatched intelligence agents to the ROK and Japan, and provided escorts and liaison to the intelligence units of the KWP Liaison Department and the Ministry of Social Security. During wartime the Reconnaissance Bureau's missions were extended to include: conducting sabotage, reconnaissance and guerrilla operations in the rear areas of the ROK and in Japan. With the reorganizations of the 1960s, however, the bureau's missions were expanded to include non-wartime guerrilla warfare and special operations within the ROK. This led to an expansion of both the units subordinate to bureau and its capabilities.

The bureau was organized into the following departments: Special (espionage), Intelligence, DMZ Police, Technical (radio and cryptography), Foot Reconnaissance, Political and Training Plans. Subordinate to the Reconnaissance Bureau were foot reconnaissance units (organized into direction and stations), sea escort units, DMZ police, a reconnaissance brigade, a airborne reconnaissance battalion and a number specialized army units.

Ministry of Social Security

During 1962 the Ministry of Internal Affairs was reorganized and the Ministry of Social Security was assigned many of the former organization's responsibilities for internal security and third country espionage and subversive operations. The Ministry of Internal Affairs' Anti-South Korea Operations Department and Anti-South Korea Special Operations Unit were disbanded and most of their anti-ROK responsibilities assigned to the Liaison Department, Reconnaissance Bureau and the Ministry of Social Security's Social Security Department. This later department was responsible for internal security and conducted limited operations in Japan and the ROK. Through its subordinate International Department (formerly the Foreign Security Bureau) the new ministry conducted limited positive intelligence operations in foreign countries. The Department of Guidance of Koreans Residing in Japan (a.k.a., Guidance Department) was responsible for all operations (including covert intelligence and subversion) concerning the *General Association of Koreans Residing in Japan*.²⁷

(Next issue, the South Korea General Bureau)

Editor's Note

I'd like to ask for everyone's indulgence in the delayed release of this issue of *KPA Journal*. I've been extremely busy this past month with both a number of large research projects and travel. I simply have not had the time I'd like to dedicate to the journal. Time will also be limited through the September as I will be traveling and working on several other research projects including three books. At this point I do intend to publish monthly, however, this could change. I will keep everyone informed as the situation develops.

The continued favorable response among readers to *KPA Journal* is most gratifying and I would like to thank one and all for their support and input.

There have been numerous requests for information concerning a wide range of subjects. Surprisingly, the responses are about evenly divided between interest in wartime and more contemporary subjects. Within these two time periods there is strong interest in: order-of-battle (OOB); table-of-organization and equipment (TOE); tanks and armored fighting vehicles; equipment; intelligence operations; COMINT, SIGINT and EW; and ballistic missiles. This is both encouraging and somewhat daunting. I will do my best to address these interests within the limits of my available time and the present issue hopefully reflects this.

At present some of the subjects that are in the queue for future issues include:

- 2001 Amam-Oshima infiltration operations
- Ballistic missile production infrastructure
- DPRK intelligence organizations 1969-71
- Historical OOB/TOE information
- Infiltration landing craft (including semi-submersibles)
- Infiltration vessels (i.e., "mother ships")
- Seaborne infiltration routes
- Wartime river-crossing equipment
- Wartime underwater bridges
- Wartime unit histories

As I note above, I'm in the middle of three book projects: *Combat History of the KPA*, *DPRK Intelligence 1945-1975* and the third revision of my *North Korean Special Forces*. As these progress I will keep readers informed.

A number of readers have inquired whether I will be accepting articles for publication in *KPA Journal* or developing it into a peer-reviewed journal? The simple answer to both is, "I would like to take the journal in both directions." At this point in time, however, I do not know when this will happen. It will likely be after the first year of publication.

I have not made any significant progress on the *KPA Journal* website this past month but still hope to have it online in June. When the website is up I will make *KPA Journal* available as both .pdf and as an ePub for those with portable devices such as the iPad, Kindle, etc.

As always, input from the readers is strongly encouraged. Thank you all for your encouragement and support.

—Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.

Endnotes

¹ This article based upon both the draft of the author's forthcoming book *North Korean Special Forces - 3rd Edition*, and his earlier article Bermudez Jr., Joseph S., "DPRK Spy-ships Chased on High Seas." *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Volume 11, Number 5, May 1999, pp. 34-35. *North Korean Special Forces - 3rd Edition*, is tentatively planned for publication in late-2010. The author would like to thank Yoko Urakawa and several other colleagues for their assistance during research for this article.

Sources used in the preparation of this article include: Interview data acquired by Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.; "Operations in Pursuit of DPRK Spy Ships," *Bungei Shunju*, May 1999, pp. 146-152; "Ship Captain Regrets Failure To Stop Intruder Ships," *Kyodo*, 28 March 1999 "Obuchi Criticizes NK On Spy Ship," *Digital Chosunilbo*, March 28, 1999; "N. Korea sponsoring drug trafficking," *United Press International*, March 26, 1999; "North Korea Says Not Involved in Ships Incident," *Reuters*, March 26, 1999; "Japan Examines Its Defence as Ships Reach N.Korea," *Reuters*, March 25, 1999; "Defense Agency Intercepted Messages From Suspicious Ships," *Asahi Shimbun*, 25 March 1999, p. 39; Roesler, Richard, "Japan fires warning shots on suspected NK spy ships," *Pacific Stars & Stripes*, March 25, 1999; "Military Dispatch Against Suspicious Ships Leaves Japan Shaken," *Korea Times*, March 24, 1999; "Suspected NK Spy Ships Elude Japanese Navy," *Korea Times*, March 24, 1999; "ROK, Japan Used Emergency Liaison System for First Time," *Yonhap*, 24 March 1999; "MSDF Quits Chase After Boats Flee to International Waters," *Japan Times*, March 24, 1999; "Japan To Demand Return of NK Ships," *Digital Chosunilbo*, March 24, 1999; "Navy Shoots at Suspected North Korean Spy Ships," March 24, 1999, *BBC World Service*; "Intruder Ships Flee Out of Range of Japan Forces," *Reuters*, March 24, 1999; Shino, Yuasa, "Further on Firing Shots at Fleeing Vessel," *AFP*, March 23, 1999.; "Fleeing Vessels Underway; Patrol Boats Being Outdistanced," *Kyodo*, 23 March 1999; "U.S. Helping Track 2 Mysterious Ships in Sea Off Japan," *Kyodo*, March 23, 1999; "MSDF, MSA Pursue Mysterious Fishing Boats," *Japan Times*, March 23, 1999; and "FOCUS-Japan Calls Out Military Over Rogue Ships," *Reuters*, March 23, 1999.

² The Japan Maritime Safety Agency was renamed the Japan Coast Guard in April 2000.

³ Drug smuggling from the DPRK into Japan has been a major problem for many years. Typically, Japanese or Chinese vessels will meet up with a DPRK vessel carrying the narcotics within DPRK territorial waters. The vessels transfer the narcotics and then return to their respective ports. For a contemporaneous example see, "Fukuoka Court Sentences Taiwan Drug Smuggler to 7," *Kyodo*, January 17, 2001.

⁴ The Japanese coastline along the Sea of Japan (i.e., East Sea) where the vessels were located has been the scene of the disappearances of a number of Japanese citizens during the 1970s which have been attributed to abductions by the DPRK.

⁵ Yu, Sung-chaе. "DPRK Agents Said To Infiltrate Japan Prior to Kim's Visit," *KBS-1*, October 8, 1998.

⁶ "Japan-N. Korea-Ships," *Associated Press*, April 4, 1999.

⁷ The 3rd Escort Flotilla is headquartered at Maizuru.

⁸ By international law, a nation has the right to stop and inspect any vessels found within its territorial waters. If that vessel refuses to stop and flees, international law allows the nation to pursue it unless, of course, the vessel enters another country's territorial waters.

⁹ This was reportedly the first time JMSA vessels have fired warning shots since August 20, 1953. At that time a JMSA patrol boat intercepted a Soviet intelligence gathering ship off Cape Soya in the northern tip of Hokkaido. One of the shots struck the ship's rudder disabling the craft. The ship was boarded and Soviet crew arrested.

¹⁰ "Purpose of Intrusion by North Korean Spy Ships Examined," *Sankei Shimbun*, March 29, 1999.

¹¹ An ADIZ is an internationally recognized demarcation line inside which a nation has the right to scramble aircraft and identify any aircraft entering it. The zone is not a maritime demarcation line. The Japanese Government decided not to continue the pursuit beyond the ADIZ because of concerns that such pursuit might lead to an unwanted confrontation with neighboring nations.

¹² The relatively slow response of the Korean People's Air Force to Japanese activities is suggestive of a poor C⁴ISR system.

¹³ "NK Spy Ship 'Ploy' to Send Agents to Japan," *Korea Times*, March 29, 1999.

¹⁴ There are several possible explanations for the use of two infiltration vessels. First, is that the mission was of significant importance that a backup vessel was dispatched. Second, this was a training mission in which one vessel was the experienced and the other the new crew. Finally, it is conceivable that there were two separate missions occurring at the same time.

¹⁵ An excellent study of the transformation and expansion of the Japan Coast Guard from the late 1990s through the mid 2000s see: Samuels, Richard J. "New Fighting Power! Japan's Growing Maritime Capabilities and East Asian Security," *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Winter 2007), pp. 84-112

¹⁶ Interview data and "Plans 'Firmed Up' To Buy 2 Extra High-Speed Missile Boats," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, April 11, 1999, p. 2.

¹⁷ These names are sometimes given as *No. 1 Taisei Maru* and *No. 2 Yamato Maru*, or *Daiichi Taisei Maru* and *Daini Yamato Maru*—which are simply variations in translation.

¹⁸ A future issue of *KPA Journal* will discuss infiltration vessels (i.e., "mother ships") and infiltration landing craft, including semi-submersibles) in greater detail.

¹⁹ This article is based upon interview and research data collected by Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. An abbreviated version of this article was published as "More details Emerge of North Korea's Latest MBT" by *Jane's Defence Weekly* on 30 April 2010 at www.jdw.janes.com.

- ²⁰ The national designator for this new main battle tank is unknown. The designation of P'okpoong appears to have come from press reports originating in Asia. The vehicle is sometimes called P'okpoong-ho or P'okpung-ho and translated as "Storm Tiger." This translation is inaccurate. While P'okpoong means "Storm," in Korean the article "-ho" is appended to indicate an item. It is frequently added to tank, aircraft, weapon, etc., designations. The confusion with "tiger" comes from the fact that in Korean "tiger" is "Ho-rang" or "Ho-ryong" and someone incorrectly assumed that "-ho" meant "tiger"—hence the inaccurate "Storm Tiger." An early description of the P'okpoong, based upon press reports, can be found at <http://wapedia.mobi/en/P'okpoong-Ho> (accessed December 18, 2009).
- ²¹ Ch'onma means "Flying Horse" or "Pegasus" and refers to Korean mythology and the great Chollima flying horse. It is frequently, and incorrectly, identified as the "Ch'onma-ho." A future issue of *KPA Journal* will cover the Ch'onma MBT. A overview of the Ch'onma can be found in Warford, James M. "The Ch'onma-ho Main Battle Tank: A Look at the Present and Future of North Korea's "Flying Horse," *Armor*, September-October 2005, pp. 46-49.
- ²² The factory is named after Ryu Kyong-su who was the first commander of the 105th Tank Brigade during the Fatherland Liberation War (i.e., Korean War). He led the unit during its capture of Seoul in June 1950.
- ²³ The 105th Tank Brigade (later expanded to division) was the KPA's first tank unit. It has remained the KPA's premier tank unit since then. The title of the unit is typically rendered as "Seoul Ryu Kyo'ng-su 105 Guards Tank Division" in DPRK media.
- ²⁴ It should be noted that Pakistan acquired several hundred Type-85-IIs during 1991-1992. Shortly afterwards Pakistan and the DPRK concluded a series of military agreements and exchanges which saw Pakistan acquire the Nodong medium range ballistic missile and the DPRK acquire nuclear technology. It is conceivable that the DPRK also was given access to the Type-85-II. Additionally, the DPRK and Syria have had military exchanges since the late 1960s. During this time both nations have exchanged military technology and equipment. It is likely that the DPRK also had access to the T-72s equipping the Syrian Army.
- ²⁵ It is unknown if these folding panels are also located on the left side of the vehicle since there are no clear images from that angle.
- ²⁶ 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.
- ²⁷ The General Association of Koreans Residing in Japan—known as *Chongryon* in Korean and *Chosen Soren* in Japanese—was, and is, a pro-DPRK organization of ethnic Korean living in Japan. The organization has frequently served as a front for illegal DPRK activities within Japan—including espionage and smuggling.