



This photograph purportedly shows a KPA special operations team on a training exercise. Notable in the image is the camouflage pattern of their uniforms.

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## **DPRK Intelligence Services 1967-1971, Part 3<sup>1</sup>**

By Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.

### **The Reconnaissance Bureau**

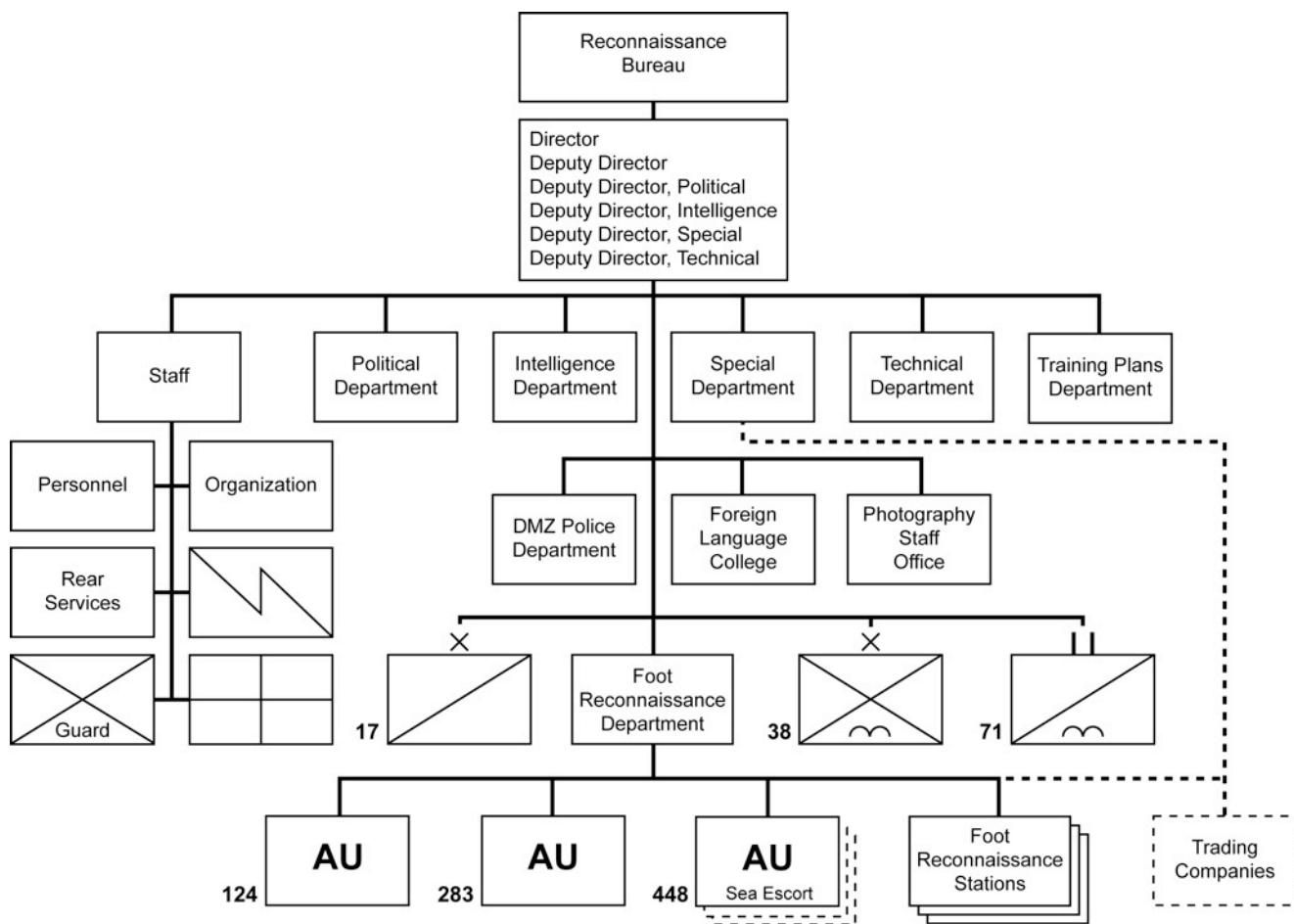
Between 1967 and 1971 the Reconnaissance Bureau was subordinate to the General Staff Department of the Ministry of National Defense (later Ministry of People's Armed Forces). It was responsible for providing tactical and strategic intelligence on the Republic of Korea (ROK), Japan, U.S. Forces in the ROK and Japan, and exercised operational control over organizations engaged in military intelligence activities.

To accomplish these missions the Reconnaissance Bureau trained and dispatched intelligence agents to the ROK

and Japan, and provided escorts and liaison to the intelligence units of the Korean Workers' Party (KWP) Liaison Department and the Ministry of Social Security (see *KPA Journal* Vol. 1, Nos. 4 and 5). During wartime the Reconnaissance Bureau missions were expanded to include: high-value ranger/commando type operations and guerrilla operations in the rear areas of the ROK and in Japan.

As a result of the failure of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to effectively exploit the civil unrest within the ROK during 1960-1961 Kim Il-sung initiated a wide ranging purge of his political rivals replacing them with his fellow former anti-Japanese partisans, a group collectively known as the "Partisan Generals", to virtually all important positions within the government, KPA and Korean Workers' Party (KWP).

Kim and the Partisan Generals established a new policy calling for the expansion of political subversion operations against the ROK under the name of "Plan for Liberation of South Korea and Unification" and set in motion a reorganization of all those organizations involved in intelligence and anti-ROK operations. Within the Reconnaissance Bureau this witnessed a consolidation of assets and a restructuring



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### Reconnaissance Bureau 1961-1969

of its wartime organization to one more practically reflecting the current political and military situation on the Korean Peninsula. Among the changes were the dissolution of the components tasked with prisoner-of-war interrogations, disestablishment of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Department and its replacement by the Foot Reconnaissance Department, reorganization of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Department's three regional or "direction" offices into Foot Reconnaissance Stations, the establishment of the 17<sup>th</sup> Foot Reconnaissance Brigade and more.

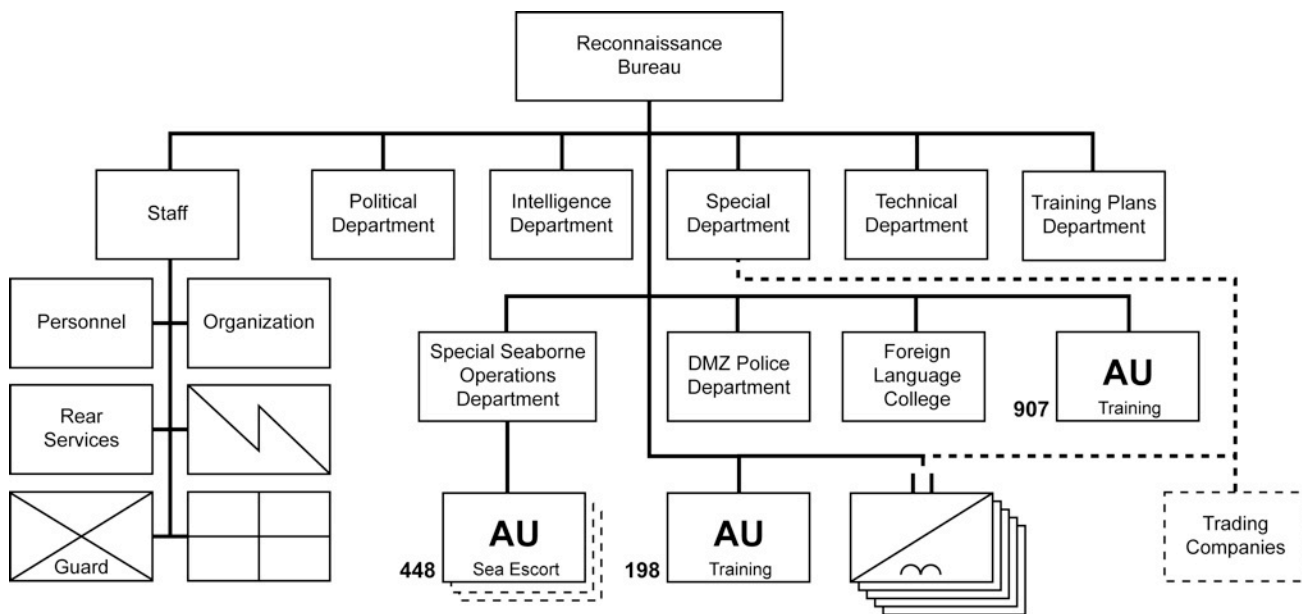
While it is presently unclear when he was appointed director of the Reconnaissance Bureau, Lieutenant General Kim Chong-tae was identified as the bureau's director in 1962.<sup>2</sup> He would hold this position through November 1968.

By the mid 1960s the policy of pursuing the political subversion of the ROK had not produced the results that Kim Il-sung and the Partisan Generals had desired. Following the secret Fourteenth Plenum of the Central Committee, in March 1967, a decision was reached to force the issue of "revolution in the south" by instituting a more aggressive

policy of active guerrilla warfare within the ROK. This policy led to yet another reorganization of the DPRK's intelligence services and other organizations involved in supporting insurgency operations within the ROK. Among these was the appointment of Ho Pong-hak as the Secretary in Charge of South Korean Affairs (i.e., the director of the KWP's South Korea General Bureau). For the Reconnaissance Bureau the new policy resulted in the expansion of its missions to include non-wartime guerrilla warfare and special operations within the ROK. To accomplish these expanded missions the Reconnaissance Bureau underwent a

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### Reconnaissance Bureau 1969-1977

reorganization and expansion.

Lieutenant General Kim, Secretary Ho and Defense Minister Kim Ch'ang-bong would become the primary proponents of aggressive guerrilla warfare against the ROK. During the year-and-a-half that this plan was in effect it failed to produce the desired results and Kim Chong-tae, Ho Pong-hak, Kim Ch'ang-bong and their supporters were purged. The purge commenced at the November 1968 Eighteenth Plenum of the Central Committee and had run its full course by the Fourth Plenum of the Fourth Party Committee of the KPA in January 1969.<sup>3</sup> Two months later, during 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).<sup>4</sup> Kim was given a broad mandate to reorganize and supervise all anti-ROK assets and operations. Though Kim did not exercise control over the Reconnaissance Bureau his reorganization of anti-ROK assets and operations resulted in a comprehensive reorganization of the bureau, the establishment of light infantry units and the VIII Special Purpose Corps.<sup>5</sup>

#### Organization

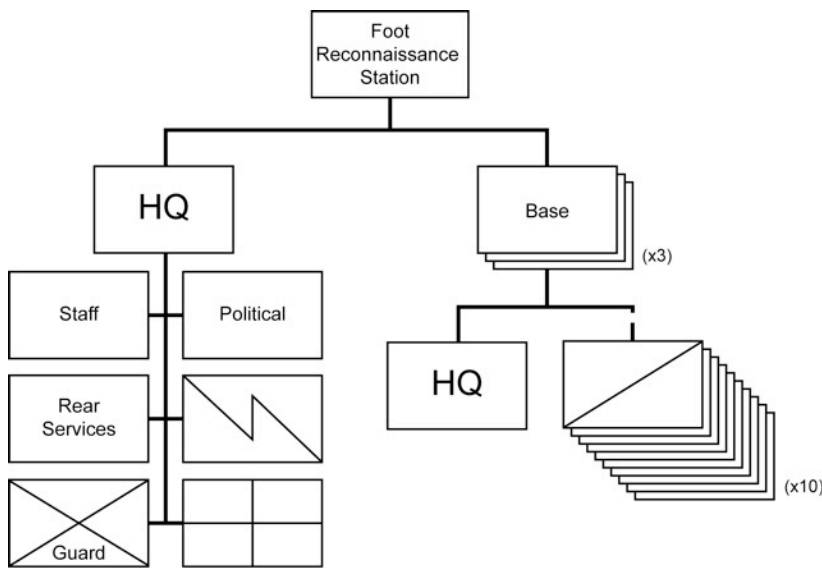
As of mid 1967 the director of the Reconnaissance Bureau was Lieutenant General Kim Chong-tae. He was assisted by five deputy directors. These leaders built upon the organizational and policy changes initiated in 1962 so that by 1967 the Reconnaissance Bureau consisted of: a staff (Personnel, Organization, Rear Services, Communications, Guard and Medical), DMZ Police Department, Foot Reconnaissance

Department, Intelligence Department, Political Department, Special (espionage) Department, Technical (radio and cryptography) Department, Training Plans Department, Photography Staff Office, Foreign Language College, the 17<sup>th</sup> Foot Reconnaissance Brigade and 38<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade. The Reconnaissance Bureau also operated an unknown number of trading companies run by the Reconnaissance Bureau as “front companies” to facilitate infiltration, intelligence collection and foreign currency earning operations. These “front companies” operated primarily under the control of the Foot Reconnaissance and Special Departments.<sup>6</sup>

As noted above this organizational structure did not remain in place for long. A year-and-a-half later—following the renunciation of the costly and aggressive guerrilla warfare policies and the purge of Lieutenant General Kim Chong-tae—Kim Chung-nin initiated new policies which witnessed another reorganization of the Reconnaissance Bureau and:<sup>7</sup>

- a return to its core missions of tactical and strategic reconnaissance, however, with a greater emphasis upon special operations
- the disestablishment of the Foot Reconnaissance Department and the 124<sup>th</sup> and 283<sup>rd</sup> Army Units
- reorganization of the foot reconnaissance stations into reconnaissance brigades
- the disestablishment of the 17<sup>th</sup> Foot Reconnaissance Brigade
- the subordination of the 38<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade to the newly established VIII Special Purpose Corps



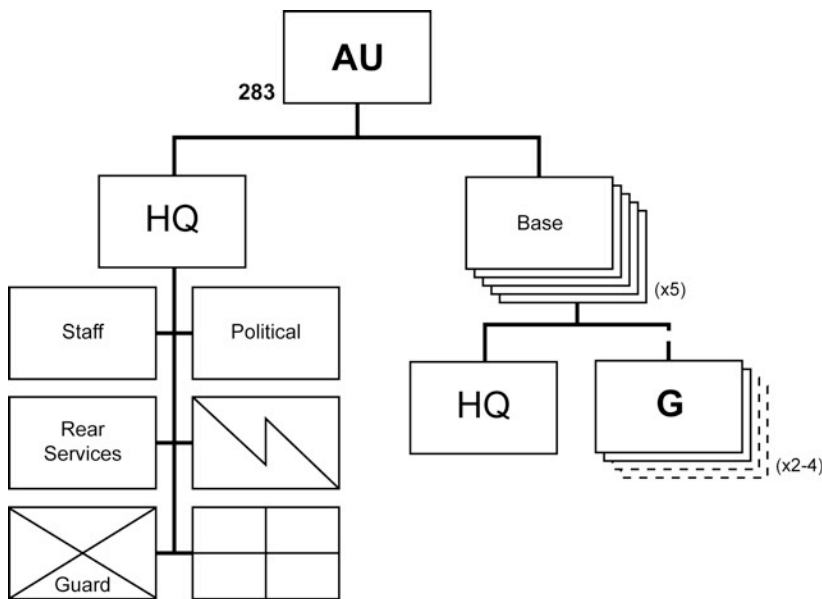


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### Foot Reconnaissance Stations 1961-1969

- reorganization of the training infrastructure

Accompanying these substantial organizational changes the KPA established both its first light infantry regiments and the VIII Special Purpose Corps to control the KPA's special operations forces. While several sources indicate that the VIII Special Purpose Corps was initially subordinate to the Reconnaissance Bureau this is not supported by in-depth examination. Possible reasons for this



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### 283rd Army Unit 1966-1969

erroneous association with the Reconnaissance Bureau were that the new corps was organized around a cadre of former Reconnaissance Bureau personnel and units, and that it assumed many of the special operations functions formerly held by the Reconnaissance Bureau.<sup>8</sup> By the early 1970s the reorganization of the Reconnaissance Bureau had resulted in the bureau now consisting of: a staff, DMZ Police Department, Intelligence Department, Political Department, Special (espionage) Department, Technical (COMINT and cryptography) Department, Training Department, 907th Army Unit (a training center for ROK Army personnel who had either been abducted or defected to the DPRK), 198th Army Unit (a training unit which operated safe houses in the P'yongyang area which were similar in function to those operated by the Liaison Department), as many as three sea escort units (which included the 448th Army Unit stationed at Wonsan), the Foreign Language College and five independent reconnaissance battalions. Additionally, the Reconnaissance Bureau continued to make use of a unknown number of trading companies as "front companies."<sup>9</sup>

### Foot Reconnaissance Department

The Foot Reconnaissance Department developed out of the reorganization of the bureau's 3rd Department during the early 1960s.<sup>10</sup> In 1967 it was organized into a staff section, three Foot Reconnaissance Stations, and the 448th Army Unit (sea escort). The mission of these units was to conduct tactical and strategic reconnaissance and infiltration operations against the ROK by land (i.e., the Foot Reconnaissance Stations) and sea (i.e., the 448th Army Unit).

During the mid 1960s the 124th Army Unit (guerrilla warfare) and 283rd Army Unit (guerrilla warfare) were established and subordinated to the Foot Reconnaissance Department to conduct guerrilla warfare operations within the ROK.

**Foot Reconnaissance Stations:** During the early 1960s the three regional or "direction" offices of the Reconnaissance Bureau's disestablished 3rd Department were organized into three Foot Reconnaissance Stations. These Foot Reconnaissance Stations operated in direct support of the I, II and V Army Groups (later corps) deployed along the DMZ, yet they remained under the operational control of the Reconnaissance Bureau. The mission of the

Foot Reconnaissance Stations was to conduct reconnaissance of ROK and US positions along the DMZ; harassment and ambush operations within and south of the DMZ; and assisting Reconnaissance Bureau and Korean Workers Party (KWP) agents infiltrating into the ROK.

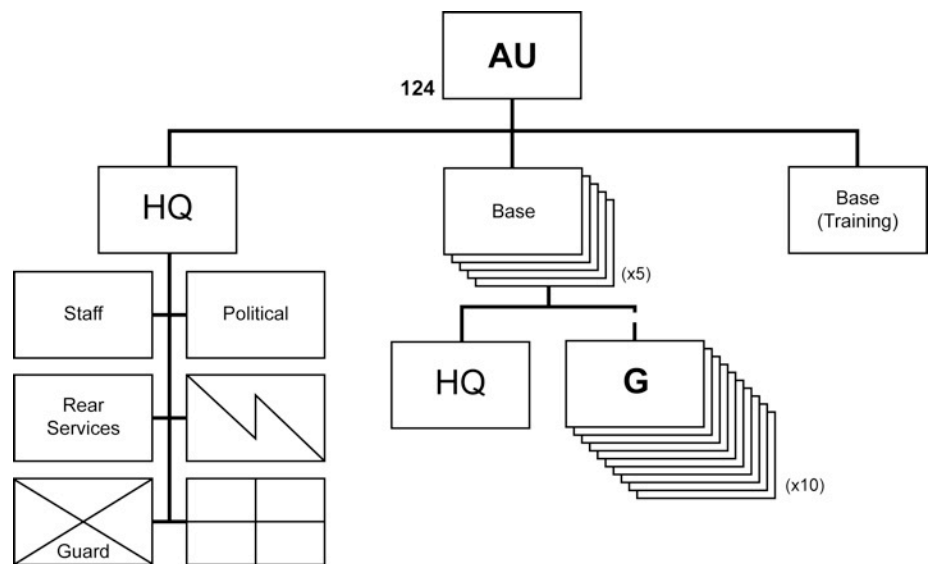
Each Foot Reconnaissance Station was generally organized in a similar manner with a headquarters and three subordinated bases. Each base consisted of a headquarters and 10 foot reconnaissance companies. These companies normally utilized teams of three to five lightly armed and equipped troops who operated within the area of responsibility of the Army Groups. Operations beyond this were tasked to the 283<sup>rd</sup> Army Unit, 128<sup>th</sup> Army Unit, 448<sup>th</sup> Army Unit or South Korea General Bureau.<sup>11</sup>

**283<sup>rd</sup> Army Unit:** There is some confusion concerning the origins, organization and missions of the 283<sup>rd</sup> Army Unit. One contemporaneous U.S. intelligence report states,

*“...that staff element within the Reconnaissance Bureau responsible for the overall training and dispatch of unconventional warfare forces ... may be numerically designated the 283<sup>rd</sup> Army Unit. Prior to 1968, this designation identified agent training bases of the Reconnaissance Bureau; however, due to the lack of success encountered by anti-ROK operations during 1967, agent training bases were reorganized and redesignated as the 124<sup>th</sup> [Army Unit].”*<sup>12</sup>

A ROK intelligence historical study, however, has a different view of the 283<sup>rd</sup> Army Unit: stating that it was established on 16 May 1966 around a cadre of personnel from the 17<sup>th</sup> Foot Reconnaissance Brigade and the “Air Transport Reconnaissance Battalion” (tentatively identified as the 71<sup>st</sup> Airborne Reconnaissance Battalion). The unit reportedly had a total personnel strength of 900 and was organized into a headquarters and five bases. The mission of the 283<sup>rd</sup> Army Unit was to establish guerrilla warfare bases in remote areas of the Taebaek-san (i.e., Taebaek Mountains) where they would propagandize the local farmers and villagers, train them as guerrillas and prepare them to conduct a guerrilla war against the ROK in cooperation with troops sent from the DPRK (e.g., 124<sup>th</sup> Army Unit).<sup>13</sup>

Another contemporaneous account of the 283<sup>rd</sup> Army Unit states that the unit consisted of “four training centers for agents.” At these centers KPA officers were trained in guerrilla warfare operations. Such officers were subse-



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### 124<sup>th</sup> Army Unit 1967-1969

quently dispatched to specific locations within the ROK in small teams of seven to eight troops. Their mission was to establish long-term guerrilla warfare bases.<sup>14</sup>

As with the 124<sup>th</sup> Army Unit, the 283<sup>rd</sup> Army Unit was disestablished in 1969 with many of its personnel and equipment being distributed to the newly established reconnaissance brigades and the VIII Special Purpose Corps.

**124<sup>th</sup> Army Unit:** The 124<sup>th</sup> Army Unit was reportedly established in April 1967 and assigned the mission of planning, training and conducting guerrilla warfare and unconventional warfare operations within the ROK building upon the infrastructure established by the 283<sup>rd</sup> Army Unit. Kim Shin-jo, a captured member from the 124<sup>th</sup>, stated that his unit was tasked with infiltrating

*“...deep within the enemy’s rear to conduct reconnaissance, espionage, subversion, and sabotage, and to organize local sympathizers into an irregular fighting force.”*<sup>15</sup>

These operations were intended to provide credibility to Pyongyang’s propaganda claims that an indigenous “people’s revolution” had arisen within the ROK, thereby contributing to the establishment of favorable political conditions for the reunification of Korea during the 1970s. In general the 124<sup>th</sup> Army Unit was tasked with missions beyond the area of operations of the Foot Reconnaissance Stations and Army Groups deployed along the DMZ. It was an elite unit in every sense of the word.

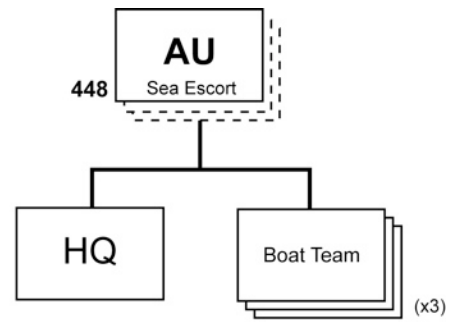
Its cadre personnel were drawn from the 283<sup>rd</sup> Army Unit, Foot Reconnaissance Stations, 17<sup>th</sup> Foot Reconnaissance Brigade, DMZ Police and from specially selected re-

cruits. It received specialized training and equipment for unconventional warfare operations.

During the first year of its existence the unit grew from an estimated strength of 2,400 to 5,000 by April 1968. These troops were organized into a headquarters and six bases (believed to have been identified as the 1<sup>st</sup> Base, 2<sup>nd</sup> Base...6<sup>th</sup> Base). Five of these were operational bases while the sixth is believed to be a replacement training center. Each operational base was itself organized into a headquarters and ten companies of approximately 75-100 personnel each.<sup>16</sup>

Although the organizational life of the 124<sup>th</sup> Army Unit would be relatively short, it was dramatic. Among the many missions undertaken by the 124<sup>th</sup> Army Unit during 1968 were two high-impact operations: a raid on the ROK Blue House to assassinate ROK President Park Chung-hui during January, and a series of amphibious landings of some 200 heavily armed troops during October-November on the ROK's east coast near Samchok and Ulchin.<sup>17</sup> Both failed dramatically and were a contributing factor leading to the purge of Lieutenant General Kim Chong-tae, Secretary in Charge of South Korean Affairs Ho Pong-hak and Defense Minister Kim Ch'ang-bong. Following this purge the Reconnaissance Bureau underwent a general reorganization in which the 124<sup>th</sup> Army Unit was disestablished, with many of its personnel and equipment being distributed to the newly established reconnaissance brigades and the VIII Special Purpose Corps.

**448<sup>th</sup> Army Unit and Sea Escort Units:** The 448<sup>th</sup> Army Unit, located in Wonsan, was the only Reconnaissance Bureau sea escort unit known to have been positively identified during this period. It would seem likely, however, that additional sea escort units were located on the West coast in the areas of Haeju and Nampo. The 448<sup>th</sup> Army Unit was apparently organized during the early 1960s from those former 3<sup>rd</sup> Department agent-escort field detachments which had utilized small boats and fishing vessels for covert



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**Sea Escort Units 1961-1969**

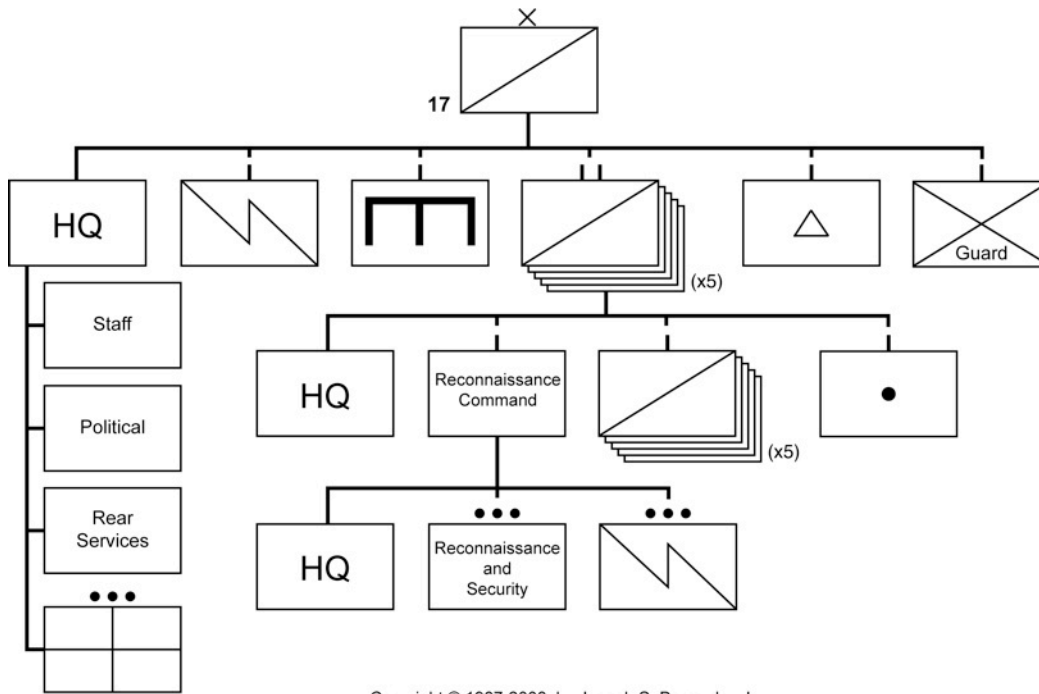
infiltration along the ROK coastline.

The 448<sup>th</sup> Army Unit is believed to have had three subordinate boat-teams. Like the sea escort units of the Liaison Department the 448<sup>th</sup> was also equipped with specialized agent infiltration craft, midget submarines and swimmer delivery vehicles. An example of these early midget submarines was captured on 5 July 1965 when it was abandoned by its crew after becoming grounded on a mudflat during a receding tide at the confluence of the Imjin and Han Rivers.



DPRK midget submarine that was captured on 5 July 1965 when it was abandoned by its crew after becoming grounded on a mudflat during a receding tide at the confluence of the Imjin-gang (i.e., Imjin River) and Han-gang (i.e., Han Rivers).





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**17<sup>th</sup> Foot Reconnaissance Brigade 1961-1969**

This three-man, three-ton, 5.7 meter long midget-submarine was of crude construction and was likely a one-of-a-kind vessel. It is possible that this midget-submarine was from a Reconnaissance Bureau sea escort unit located at Haeju.

Elements of the sea escort units may have also conducted operations using the two WHISKEY-class submarines of the Korean People's Navy.

**17<sup>th</sup> Foot Reconnaissance Brigade**

Subsequent to the reorganization of the Reconnaissance Bureau's 3<sup>rd</sup> Department into Foot Reconnaissance Stations during the early 1960s several new units were established. One of these was the 17<sup>th</sup> Foot Reconnaissance

Brigade which was established sometime between 1961 and 1963.<sup>18</sup> The personnel for this unit were obtained from the former 3<sup>rd</sup> Department; the consolidation of a variety of Reconnaissance Bureau assets which had been previously attached to the Army Groups deployed along the DMZ and their subordinate divisions; and the KPA's first airborne reconnaissance battalion (tentatively identified as the 71<sup>st</sup> Airborne Reconnaissance Battalion, see below). This brigade may have held the honorific title of "Sniper" brigade at this time, however, this remains uncertain.

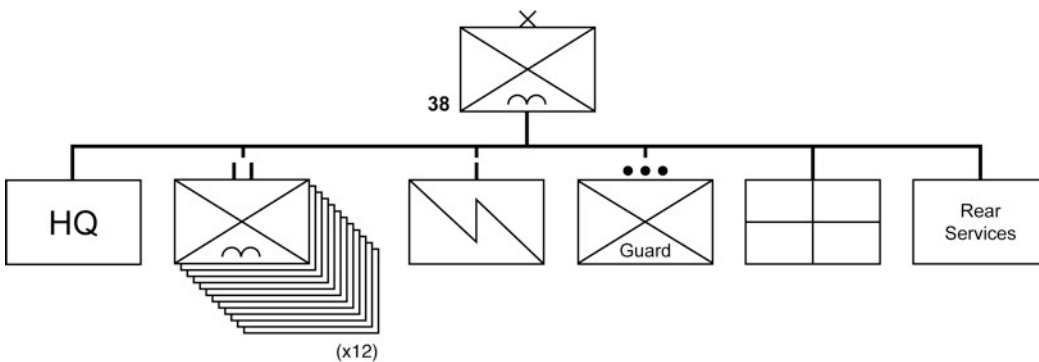
The brigade's mission was to conduct special and guerrilla warfare operations within the ROK's strategic rear during wartime. It is not believed to have engaged in combat operations during the 1960s, however, it did serve as a source of experienced personnel for the 124<sup>th</sup> Army Unit, 283<sup>rd</sup> Army Unit and the Foot Reconnaissance Stations.

ROK sources indicate that the 17<sup>th</sup> Foot Reconnaissance Brigade was originally constituted with four battalions and in October 1964 was expanded to five battalions with the inclusion of the 71<sup>st</sup> Airborne Reconnaissance Battalion.

During 1966, it is believed that the 17<sup>th</sup> Foot Recon-

naissance Brigade was one of the units which provided the trained cadre to establish the 38<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade and the 283<sup>rd</sup> Army Unit.

During 1967 the brigade reportedly consisted of approximately 9,300 troops.<sup>19</sup> It was organized into: a headquarters; five reconnaissance battalions (at least one was air mobile and/or parachute qualified); and security, engineer, communications



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**38<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade 1966-1969**

and instrument reconnaissance companies. The reconnaissance battalion is believed to have been the primary tactical unit and was apparently capable of independent operations. Each reconnaissance battalion consisted of approximately 1,722 troops and was organized into headquarters (45 troops); reconnaissance command company (71 troops), 5 reconnaissance companies (301 troops each); and a reconnaissance heavy weapons company (99 troops). All elements, except for the heavy weapons company, were equipped with light infantry weapons including TT-33 pistols, AK-47 assault rifles, RPD light machine guns, and RPG-2 antitank launchers. The heavy weapons company was equipped with M-1937 82 mm mortars. Communications and transportation equipment was available at levels in excess of typical KPA infantry standards. The brigade reportedly had enough parachutes to equip 500-600 troops, but was dependent upon the KPAF for airlift.

As part of the reorganization of the Reconnaissance Bureau during 1969 the 17<sup>th</sup> Foot Reconnaissance Brigade was disestablished. It is believed that the brigade's constituent battalions were organized as independent reconnaissance battalions and subordinated directly to the Reconnaissance Bureau. The remainder of its personnel and equipment were distributed to the newly established reconnaissance brigades and the VIII Special Purpose Corps.

### **38<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade**

Pursuant to Kim Il-sung's directives the 38<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade was established in 1966. The brigade was established around a small cadre of airborne qualified troops from the 17<sup>th</sup> Foot Reconnaissance Brigade and probably the 71<sup>st</sup> Airborne Reconnaissance Battalion.<sup>20</sup> The mission of the new brigade was twofold: to undertake "anti-commando" operations in the P'yongyang area and conduct special operations (i.e., "...occupy and hold objectives, assault and reconnaissance") within the ROK strategic rear.

The organization and strength of the 38<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade at the time of its establishment is unclear, however, by the late 1960s it consisted of: a headquarters; 12 airborne battalions (500 troops each); and small combat and service support assets. Total troop strength was approximately 6,700.

Following the purge of Lieutenant General Kim Chong-tae and the subsequent reorganization of the Reconnaissance Bureau the 38<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade was subordinated to the newly established VIII Special Purpose Corps.

### **71<sup>st</sup> Airborne Reconnaissance Battalion<sup>21</sup>**

Although a KPA Paratroopers School was established in P'yongyang as early as 1958, it wasn't until November 1959 that a "Paratroop Training Company" was established.<sup>22</sup> This company was reorganized as a battalion subordinate to the Reconnaissance Bureau during late 1960 or early 1961.

This newly expanded battalion—tentatively identified as the 71<sup>st</sup> Airborne Reconnaissance Battalion—consisted of approximately 300 troops and regularly conducted small airborne training exercises.

Sometime between 1961 and 1963 personnel from this battalion were utilized as a cadre to establish the 17<sup>th</sup> Foot Reconnaissance Brigade. Several years later, during 1966, it is believed that this unit and the 17<sup>th</sup> Foot Reconnaissance Brigade provided the trained cadre to establish the 38<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade and the 283<sup>rd</sup> Army Unit.

ROK sources indicate that during 1966 the 71<sup>st</sup> Airborne Reconnaissance Battalion was incorporated into the 17<sup>th</sup> Foot Reconnaissance Brigade to create a five battalion brigade. Exactly how the reorganization of the Reconnaissance Bureau during 1969 affected the 71<sup>st</sup> Airborne Reconnaissance Battalion is unclear. It appears that the 17<sup>th</sup> Foot Reconnaissance Brigade was disestablished and its constituent battalions, including the 71<sup>st</sup>, subordinated directly to the Reconnaissance Bureau as independent reconnaissance battalions.

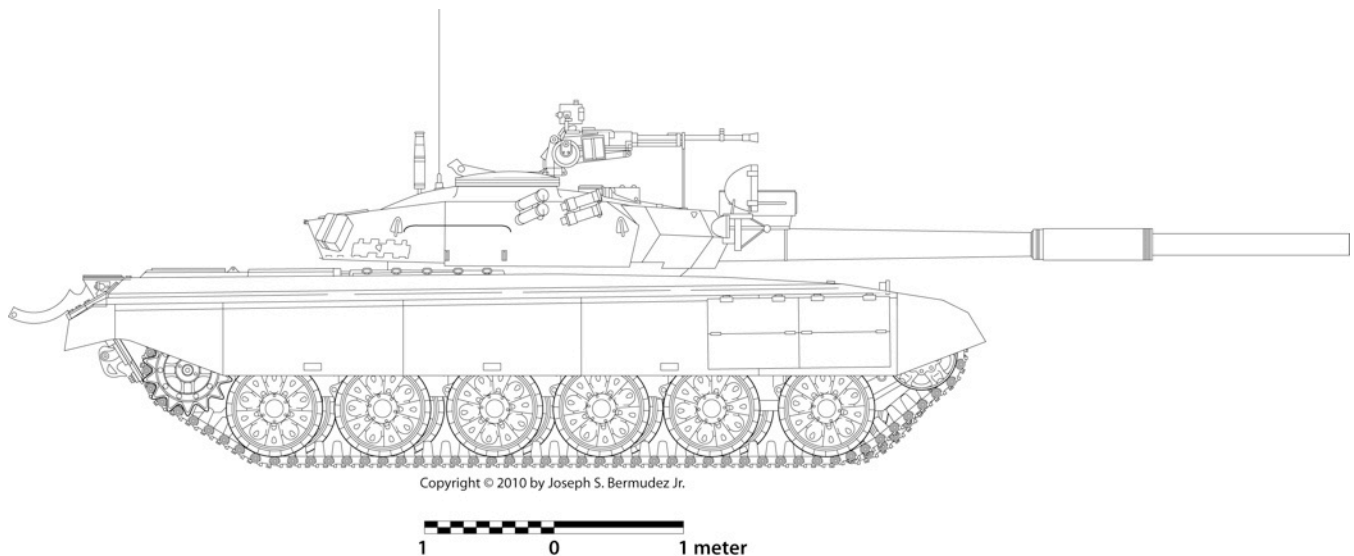
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## **Addendum: P'okpoong Main Battle Tank**

In Vol. 1, No. 4 I presented an account of what is publicly known concerning the KPA's P'okpoong main battle tank along with a number of photographs and a scale drawing. This article drew considerable response from readers and I am providing here a revised drawing with a scale bar and some extended comments from Jim Warford, the author of the Ch'onma MBT article I previously cited.

*"Overall, the tank looks like a hybrid design showing Russian, Chinese and even Romanian influences. While the relationship to the Chinese Type 85-II... and the T-62-based Ch'onma is apparent, I think the Romanians had a hand in this as well. In some ways I'm surprised that the P'okpoong doesn't look more like the Romanian T-72 copy, the TR-125. A couple of the great images you included in the Journal show the area on the glacis in front of the driver that resembles the Romanian TR-85M1 and TR-800 MBTs (see attached). Overall, the hull of the new tank looks a lot like one of these Romanian tank hulls. I'm also wondering if there is a connection between the add-on turret frontal armor fitted to the TR-85M1 (and perhaps the Ch'onma III (M1992) as well), and the add-on armor fitted to the P'okpoong. The P'okpoong's add-on armor not only has a similar shape to the turret frontal armor of the Type 85-IIAP it also has a single lifting eye on the "face" that is very similar to the lifting eye arrangement of the Type 85-IIAP, AL Khalid, Type 88C, etc. This implies that the array can be removed and replaced if damaged, etc. In fact, the picture of tank #126 on page 9 shows what could be a large (Israeli-looking) mounting bolt used to fasten the add-on*





*armor array to the turret front. Although smaller and more numerous, the Type 85-IIAP and Type 88C use very similar visible bolts for the same purpose. I think the add-on glacis armor looks very interesting and I wonder why there is no thermal shroud fitted to the tank's main gun...especially since the most well-known pics of the Ch'onma III (M1992) show the tank with a shroud. These pictures seem to confirm that these P'ok-poong MBTs are fitted with the 115mm main gun, but as you mention, it's hard to say for sure.<sup>223</sup>*

plans of going live with it by the end of Summer—even if it is bare bones.

As always, all readers are encouraged to share ideas of what you would like to see in future issue of *KPA Journal*.

Finally, I would like to thank Mr. Michael Madden (<http://nkleadershipwatch.wordpress.com/>) and Mr. Dwight Rider for their assistance in the preparation of this issue.

—Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.

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## Editor's Note

With this issue I've concluded the overview of the DPRK's intelligence services during the 1960s. I hope that the coverage of the Reconnaissance Bureau in this issue will serve as a useful background in understanding some of these changes which have occurred during the past ten years.

Beginning in next issue I hope to begin a semi-regular series on the missions and organization of various battalions within the KPA. It is likely that I will begin with either the light infantry battalion or the tank battalion. If time permits I will include a short article, or photo essays, on the M-1985 light tank.

Michael Dougherty has provided me with a link to a website called *Records of War* ([www.recordsofwar.com](http://www.recordsofwar.com)). The site is authored by Mr. Ray Backstrom who has undertaken to post scans of official Marine Corps documents from the Korean and Vietnam Wars that are held in the Texas Tech University and Marine Corps University libraries. These are valuable primary source documents and will be of great interest to anyone interested in these wars and Marine Corps operations. I have downloaded a number of documents from the site and can highly recommend it to readers.

Due to travel and research commitments I have not been able to work on the *KPA Journal* website, but still have

## Endnotes

- 1 Aside from the cited sources 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 and from the author's books *North Korean Special Forces: Second Edition*, U.S. Naval Institute Press, Annapolis November 1997 and *The Armed Forces of North Korea*, I.B. Taurus, London, 2001
- 2 Kim Chong-tae (a.k.a., Kim Ch'ong-t'ae) was the second son of General Kim Chaek, an Anti-Japanese partisan and Commander of the KPA's Front Headquarters during 1950-1951. He was killed in 1951 and is regarded as hero.
- 3 Probably, just as significant to their military failures was their opposition to the rising influence of Kim Il-sung's younger brother Kim Yong-chu who was director of the KWP's powerful Organizations and Guidance Department.<sup>3</sup> It is presently unclear who succeeded Lieutenant General Kim Chong-tae as the director of the Reconnaissance Bureau.

It is interesting to note that the purge occurred in the midst of the embarrassing failure of the 124<sup>th</sup> Army Unit's operations on the East coast of the ROK.

"Japanese Academic on Background to DPRK Military Purge," *Kin Seinichi Taisei no Kitachosen* [Japanese] 25 September 2004, pp. 149-190, *Open Source Center*, KPP20050624000165; and "Monthly Examines Political Hierarchy in the DPRK Following the Ninth Supreme People's Assembly Elections," *Wolgan Choson*, July 1990, pp. 214-227, *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*.
- 4 "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, *FBIS-EAS-95-238*, *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*; and "Narrative Biographies of DPRK Figures," *Sindong-A*, January 1995, (Supplement) pp. 210-278, *FBIS-EAS-95-015-S*, *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*.
- 5 "Kim Chung-nin's Background Detailed," *Pukhan*, January 1992, pp. 91-100, *FBIS-EAS-92-050*, *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*.
- 6 This is a simplified organizational description, as defectors since the 1960s have reported numerous other small components of the Reconnaissance Bureau during this period. Interview data acquired by Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. and Defense Intelligence Agency. *North Korean Armed Forces Handbook (U)*, January 1971, pp. 119-146.
- 7 "Kim Chung-nin's Background Detailed," *Pukhan*, January 1992, pp. 91-100, *FBIS-EAS-92-050*, *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*.
- 8 *Ibid.*; interview data acquired by Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.; Defense Intelligence Agency. *North Korean Armed Forces Handbook (U)*, DDI-2680-37-77, July 1977, pp. 6-1 - 6-8; Defense Intelligence Agency. *North Korean Armed Forces Handbook (U)*, January 1971, pp. 119-146; and "Monthly Examines Political Hierarchy in the DPRK Following the Ninth Supreme People's Assembly Elections," *Wolgan Choson*, July 1990, pp. 214-227, *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*.
- 9 This is a simplified organizational description, as defectors since the 1960s have reported numerous other small components of the Reconnaissance Bureau during this period. The 907<sup>th</sup> Army Unit was located at Taedong and was sometimes referred to as the "Taedong School." Interview data acquired by Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.; and Defense Intelligence Agency. *North Korean Armed Forces Handbook (U)*, DDI-2680-37-77, July 1977, pp. 6-1 - 6-8.
- 10 The Foot Reconnaissance Department was sometimes referred to as the "Foot Operations Department."
- 11 The personnel strength of the Foot Reconnaissance Stations is unclear. It appears that they were relatively small—approximately 300—during the early 1960s. A U.S. intelligence report states the Foot Reconnaissance Stations "...were reorganized and expanded in 1968 to approximately 9,000 personnel, but in the latter half of 1969 reductions were effected and 3,000 is now [i.e., 1971] the estimated total personnel strength of the three stations." These figures appear to be too high and are probably including the 124<sup>th</sup> and 283<sup>rd</sup> Army units. Interview data acquired by Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. and Defense Intelligence Agency. *North Korean Armed Forces Handbook (U)*, January 1971, pp. 119-146.
- 12 Defense Intelligence Agency. *North Korean Armed Forces Handbook (U)*, January 1971, pp. 119-146.
- 13 Korean Central Intelligence Agency. *History Of North Korea's Operations Against South Korea*, Vol. 2, Seoul, Korean Central Intelligence Agency, 1973, pp. 655-6.
- 14 "Large-scale Red Guerrillas Sneak into South. Communist Intrusion Becomes More Heinous." *Korean Report*, Vol. VIII, No. 4, October December 1968, pp. 12-14.
- 15 Hubbell, John G. and Reed, David. "Mission: To Murder A President," *Reader's Digest*, July 1968, pp. 142-147.
- 16 This organizational structure closely paralleled that of the Foot Reconnaissance Stations. One contemporaneous source presents a slightly different organizational structure for the 124<sup>th</sup> Army Unit with the unit consisting of eight "sub-units" with 300 troops in each. For a total strength of approximately 2,400. "Large-scale Red Guerrillas Sneak into South. Communist Intrusion Becomes More Heinous." *Korean Report*, Vol. VIII, No. 4, October December 1968, pp. 12-14.
- 17 A future issue of *KPA Journal* will describe these operations in detail.

- <sup>18</sup> Contemporaneous intelligence documents most frequently identified this unit as the 17<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Brigade. While ROK sources and frequently identify it as the 17<sup>th</sup> Air Transport Parachute Reconnaissance Brigade. Interview data acquired by Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. and Defense Intelligence Agency. *North Korean Armed Forces Handbook (U)*, January 1971, pp. 119-146.
- A contemporaneous CIA document identified the headquarters of the 17<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Brigade being located at Saesulmak, 38° 32' 10" N, 125° 47' 20" E. These coordinates, however, are for the village of Kung-dong, Sariwon-si, Hwanghae-bukto. National Photographic Interpretation Center. *KH-4 Mission 1109, IPIR Number 16, Oak Supplement Part XII*, 5-23 March 1970.
- <sup>19</sup> It should be noted that actual personnel strength of the 17<sup>th</sup> Foot Reconnaissance Brigade is believed to have varied considerably over time with estimates as high as 9,300, and as low as 4,000 to 5,000. This was apparently due to a number of factors including organizational changes within the brigade itself and the use of brigade personnel to establish the 38<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade and 124<sup>th</sup> Army Unit.
- <sup>20</sup> Care should be used in accepting the designation of the 71<sup>st</sup> Airborne Reconnaissance Battalion as it is only mentioned by defectors whom might be confusing it with elements of the 17<sup>th</sup> Foot Reconnaissance Brigade. Interview data acquired by Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.; "Ex-DPRK Major Unveils KPA Military Plan," *Pukhan*, February 1, 2000, pp. 92-99, *Open Source Center, KPP20000210000060*; Defense Intelligence Agency. *North Korean Armed Forces Handbook (U)*, DDI-2680-37-77, July 1977, pp. 6-1 - 6-8; and Defense Intelligence Agency. *North Korean Armed Forces Handbook (U)*, January 1971, pp. 119-146.
- <sup>21</sup> As note above care should be used in accepting the designation of the 71<sup>st</sup> Airborne Reconnaissance Battalion. Interview data acquired by Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.; "Ex-DPRK Major Unveils KPA Military Plan," *Pukhan*, February 1, 2000, pp. 92-99, *Open Source Center, KPP20000210000060*; Defense Intelligence Agency. *North Korean Armed Forces Handbook (U)*, DDI-2680-37-77, July 1977, pp. 6-1 - 6-8; Korean Central Intelligence Agency. *History Of North Korea's Operations Against South Korea, Vol. 2*, Seoul, Korean Central Intelligence Agency, 1973, pp. 655-6 and Defense Intelligence Agency. *North Korean Armed Forces Handbook (U)*, January 1971, pp. 119-146.
- <sup>22</sup> It is possible that the location of the parachute/paratroop training was in P'yongyang. The Korean People's Aviation Association (later to become the Korean People's Air Force) apparently began very limited parachute training for its pilots sometime during 1946-1947. By early 1949 this capability was expanded with the construction of a parachute training center located in P'yongyang, on the West bank of the Taedong-gang (i.e., Taedong River), opposite the P'yongyang Airfield. Reportedly, it was here that an estimated 500-600 KPA personnel and KPAF pilots received parachute training. At present there is no evidence to suggest that an actual KPA paratroop unit was established during this period. There were no KPA paratroop operations during the Fatherland Liberation War.
- The airborne training company is sometimes identified as the "Air Transport Training Company." It is unclear whether this new unit was subordinate to the Reconnaissance Bureau or the III Army Group (later the III Corps). The Reconnaissance Bureau headquarters was located in P'yongyang and the III Army Group area of responsibility covered the P'yongyang area.
- Interview data acquired by Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.; Bermudez Jr., Joseph S., *North Korean Special Forces - 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, U.S. Naval Institute Press, Annapolis November 1997; Korean Central Intelligence Agency. *History Of North Korea's Operations Against South Korea, Vol. 2*, Seoul, Korean Central Intelligence Agency, 1973, pp. 655-6; and U.S. Air Force. "Airborne Training Center in Pyongyang, North Korea," HQ 5<sup>th</sup> AF, Deputy for Intelligence, A-2, Special Activities Unit, letter dated 6 March 1951.
- <sup>23</sup> Email messages from James Warford to Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. dated May 6, 2010 and May 11, 2010. Used with permission.