Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1988

During the eight-year-long Iran-Iraq War Iraq the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) was one of Iran's more significant suppliers of arms and technology. The DPRK sold Iran tanks, self-propelled artillery, aircraft, SAMs, small arms, spare parts, and served as a conduit for aid from the PRC. Most significant, however, was that the DPRK was Iran's primary supplier of Scud B ballistic missiles. Since that time a strong political and military relationship has developed between the two nations and they have cooperated extensively in the field of ballistic missile and nuclear development.

While the Korean People's Army (KPA) derived many lessons learned from the Iran-Iraq War among the areas that stand out are: ballistic missile, chemical warfare and naval mine operations.

During the Iran-Iraq War both sides launched a combined total of approximately 881 ballistic missiles and long-range artillery rockets. Of these, Iran launched approximately 454 missiles (including 122 Scud Bs) and Iraq 427 missiles (including 352 Scud B and al-Husayn). The Iranians provided the KPA with unfettered access to its ballistic missile operations, information concerning Iraqi ballistic missile operations and access to the wreckage of Iraqi missiles. This remarkable situation allowed the KPA to:

- Operationally evaluate the Scud missiles it was providing and thereby gain valuable knowledge to improve the reliability and manufacturing methodology for Scuds it was assembling and would eventually produce.
- Observe Iranian and Iraqi missile operations under combat conditions. Including the effects of Scud and al-Husayn strikes in various environments. The KPA would utilize these battle tested tactics and operating procedures to develop lessons learned that were subsequently incorporated in KPA missile operations and the emerging Deep Strike doctrine.

The Iran-Iraq War also witnessed Iraq engage in the largest use of chemical weapons (e.g., mustard, sarin, etc.) since World War I. As with ballistic missiles the ability to...
observe first-hand the use of chemical weapons in combat was of enormous value to the KPA. It is likely that this information resulted in updated tactics and doctrine for chemical use by the KPA—including the large-scale use of such weapons for breakthrough operations.

During the war the DPRK supplied Iran with large quantities of naval mines and naval mine production technology. During the later part of that war, Iran covertly laid numerous small offensive minefields and drifting (i.e., floating) mines in Kuwaiti waters and international shipping lanes in the Gulf of Arabia. The intention of these operations was to disrupt the flow of oil from the Gulf States that were supporting Iraq and a number of vessels were extensively damaged or sunk. In June 1987 ten moored M-08 mines manufactured in the DPRK were swept from the approaches to the Kuwaiti port of Ahmadi. Later, in September of that year, U.S. special operations forces captured the 1,662-ton Iranian amphibious landing ship the Iran Ajr, while clandestinely engaged in mine-laying operations 50 miles northeast of Bahrain. The mines on board the Iran Ajr were Iranian copies of the DPRK M-08. These mines had been modified with a larger explosive charge than the original and the removal of safety devices.

Interestingly, during the 1990s the DPRK was itself a victim of naval mine warfare. On 2 August 1994, the 14,000 ton ocean-going merchant vessel Dae Hung Dan-ho (a.k.a., Dai Hong Dan) was damaged by one of approximately 190 naval mines clandestinely laid in the Gulf of Suez and Red Sea by Libya.

The Iranian use of naval mines was studied by the Korean People’s Navy (KPN). While the results of these studies are unclear it is believed that the Iranian experiences reinforced existing KPN naval mine warfare doctrine. Which is based upon a combination of experiences gained during the Fatherland Liberation War (i.e., Korean War) and Soviet post-World War II doctrine. The Iranian use of drifting mines may have provided the KPN with data that could be applied to future operations in the East Sea (i.e., Sea of Japan).

**Operation DESERT STORM, 1991**

As with the various Arab-Israeli conflicts Operation DESERT STORM has proven to be a seminal event providing the DPRK with a wealth of data from which it has gleaned numerous military lessons. Some lessons learned have reinforced existing doctrines and tactics, others have been used to develop new doctrines or tactics, and still other potential lessons have been ignored.

Among the more notable aspects of the war believed to have been studied by the KPA were: the effectiveness and diversity cruise missile attacks; effectiveness of precision guided munitions; vulnerability of hardened fortifications; camouflage, concealment and deception (CCD); air base defenses; command, control, communications, computers, intelligence surveillance and radars (C4ISR); unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV); special operations; ballistic missile operations; electronic warfare (EW); and psychological warfare operations.

Iraqi deception activities achieved some successes especially in air base defense where obsolete and unserviceable aircraft were employed as decoys to attract Coalition forces. A majority of operational aircraft were placed in hardened bunkers around air bases. These hardened bunkers, however, proved to be totally inadequate in protecting the aircraft in the face of latest generation Coalition precision guided munitions that quickly neutralized them. Other operational aircraft were hidden among civilian buildings or buried in the desert in an effort to protect them. The down side of this was that there were enough Coalition air capacity to destroy both the dummy and operational aircraft. The KPAF response to this has reportedly been to reinforce its underground facilities and improve camouflage and deception efforts to reduce the effectiveness of ROK and U.S. air strikes. Air defense troops have been instructed in the importance of destroying Tomahawk cruise missiles and UAVs. Additionally, the Coalition use of cluster, penetrating and unique (e.g., carbon fiber thread) warheads on cruise missiles and precision-guided munitions may have resulted in changes to the defense preparations for some DPRK facilities.

While air operations during the war were spectacular the MPAF also judged the Coalition’s EW, SIGINT and IW activities to be effective against the Iraqis. That the U.S. would use such operations against them in any future war is a foregone conclusion and justified dramatic expansion of EW and SIGINT capabilities in the mid 1980s. Combined with lessons learned from the various Arab-Israeli wars, those learned in Operation DESERT STORM, contributed significantly to the KPA’s development of its Electronic Intelligence Warfare doctrine.

The KPA has judged the Iraqi failure to employ special operations forces against coalition air bases and C4ISR assets within Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf States, as a major failure. It is also viewed as a major contributing factor in the rapid Coalition victory. This only reinforces the correctness of their own special operations forces doctrine, which heavily emphasizes the neutralization of such targets. The wide range and impressive effectiveness of U.S. special operations has been noted by the KPA. To combat these forces in a future war the KPA has tasked all units, especially rear area

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and paramilitary units, with the responsibility of quickly isolating and neutralizing them.

Interestingly, the MPAF views the Iraqi ballistic missile operations during the war as a great success. Their reasoning is that despite being faced with arguably the greatest concentration of air power since World War II the Iraqi missiles forces were able to continue ballistic missiles operations against Israel and coalition bases in Saudi Arabia for three weeks. All this without a single loss to a launcher, or the successful interception of an incoming missiles. The Iraqis achieved this remarkable record with a small number of launchers, in a desert environment, by: utilizing well trained and motivated troops; employing effective camouflage and deception tactics; and a streamlined command and control network. The KPA believes given the large size of its missile forces, the mountainous nature of the Korean peninsula, numerous fortified underground facilities, and superior tactics and training, that it can achieve similar or better results.

U.S. psychological warfare operations during Operation DESERT STORM, especially those targeted against senior Iraqi Army officers, were of deep concern for Kim Chong-il, the KWP and KPA. The extent of these concerns is evident by the dramatic increase in DPRK statements concerning the subject since the war. What is remarkable is the depth these pronouncements go to rally the KPA and people to the defense of Kim Chong-il and the nation. It is apparent that both offensive and defense psychological warfare has been expanded since the war.

Despite the opportunity to learn valuable lessons from Operation DESERT STORM, defectors report that some were simply not learned. Rather a lens of self deception pervaded the process and the real lessons were ignored. This resulted, in part, from an attitude among middle and upper level leadership that,

*The DPRK is no Iraq. ...the top military leaders and strategists...studied Operation DESERT STORM and concluded that it was not a real war... any new war [on the Korean peninsula] ...would not be anything like it. What would the U.S. call a war against the DPRK...Mountain Storm? [The U.S.] ...believes our technology its down here. The U.S. would be surprised by our technology. Satellite pictures and intelligence doesn’t know everything about our country. [The DPRK] has technology and methods that the U.S. doesn’t know about.*

**Operation ALLIED FORCE, 1999**

During March-June 1991 U.S. forces under NATO auspices conducted a bombing campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) as part of the war in Kosovo. This was the first time that the KPA had the opportunity to observe modern U.S. military operations in an environment that was roughly equivalent to that experienced on the Korean Peninsula. While the FRY armed forces suffered considerable losses they were not decimated and they scored occasional successes against NATO forces. Rather than simply being a repeat of Operation DESERT STORM, there were a number of new lessons learned by the KPA during Operation ALLIED FORCE. The KPA viewed with interest the effectiveness of FRY air defense, camouflage, deception, and information warfare operations.

NATO aircraft flew over 38,000 combat missions during the approximately ten weeks of the bombing campaign. During which it reported the loss of three helicopters, 32 UAVs and five aircraft. Notable for the KPAAF was that all the aircraft lost were U.S., and that these included a F-117 brought down by a SA-3 battery—a system in service with the KPAF. The FRY armed forces also had several notable successes in deceiving the most advanced U.S./NATO sensors and intelligence collection systems using low-tech devices and tactics (e.g., space heaters under canvas tarps, etc.). This appealed to the KPA as it reflected the use of “… old style weapons along with modern weapons…” of their Combined Operations doctrine.

Also of great interest to the KPA was the use of IW by both sides. NATO web sites were attacked by a denial-of-services attacks, viruses, and an attempts to corrupt its e-mail system. Allied governments’ web sites were also targeted during the war, from servers located not only within the FRY, but in Russia and China also. Simultaneously, FRY government web sites and servers were reported to have been attacked. The lessons learned from these experiences were apparently incorporated into the KPA's evolving EIW doctrine.

The use of the BLU-114B carbon fiber bombs to neutralize FRY radars and power stations, similar to the attacks against Iraqi facilities during Operation DESERT STORM is believed to have been a subject of interest to the KPA.

**Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, 2001-Present**

Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (U.S. and allied forces operations against the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan) began in October 2001 and continues today. It is mention frequently in reports emanating from the DPRK. Kim Chong-il and the KPA have examined U.S. psychological warfare operations in Afghanistan and arrived at a number of lessons learned. The three most often referred to are that: psychological warfare operations are a key component of modern warfare; the KPA must utilize it now against ROK and U.S. forces; and that the U.S. is currently employing similar psychological warfare operations against the KPA and the DPRK.

*The lesson we learned from the Afghan War is that we must familiarize ourselves with modern warfare in which enemy force breakup operation is gaining importance. The Afghan War showed that, if we want to win in...*
our war of revolution to liberate the southern half of the country, we must get thoroughly prepared not only to destroy enemy forces, but also to conduct enemy force breakup operations effectively, using all possible means and ways.7

It should be noted that these lessons learned both, reinforced longstanding KPA and KWP psychological warfare doctrines; and built upon DPRK concerns regarding these activities during Operation DESERT STORM.

Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, 2003-Present 8

Operation IRAQI FREEDOM began in March 2003 and officially ended on August 31, 2010. While it is mentioned frequently in reports emanating from with the DPRK and from statements by defectors, descriptions of lessons learned—other than psychological warfare—are limited. The Wartime Guidelines (see above) published by the KWP Central Military Committee are reported to reflect lessons learned from Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, but this is not necessarily correct.

For Kim Chong-il and the KPA, U.S. psychological warfare operations during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM built upon concerns of over these activities during Operations DESERT STORM and ENDURING FREEDOM. This was especially true concerning the susceptibility of military units and commanders to them. In describing the lessons learned from the war, a 2004 KPA Study Guide entitled "On Resolutely Smashing the Strategic Psychological Warfare of the Enemy Who Aims To Cause Our Internal Collapse and Degeneration," states,

The lesson of the war in Iraq shows this.
The US imperialists enjoyed the war in Iraq, and they are persistently holding to strategic psychological warfare to prearrange a war of invasion against the DPRK and achieve their aggressive objectives.

During the war, the US imperialists used broadcasts and leaflets in vicious psychological war maneuvers that claimed Husayn was making "human shields" of the people to maintain his own power; that he had built scores of palaces in the past and lived in opulence; that Husayn’s son had taken considerable money out of the national bank; that Husayn had died in a missile strike and air raid; and that he had fled the country in a military aircraft.

Quite a few Iraqi military commanders, who fell for this, betrayed Saddam Husayn and surrendered to the enemy.9

This and numerous other KPA pronouncements indicate that U.S. psychological warfare operations are of grave concern. This itself is suggestive of Kim Chong-il’s personal concerns that the KPA might also be susceptible to such operations. Perhaps, this is one of the factors contributing to Kim Chong-il having gone into seclusion during the build up to, and early combat stages of, Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.10

Operation IRAQI FREEDOM also appears to have been a defining moment for the KPAs development of its deterrence doctrine and the subsequent incorporation of nuclear weapons into the deterrence formula.11

The bloody lesson of the war in Iraq for the world is that only when a country has physical deterrent forces and massive military deterrent forces that are capable of overwhelmingly defeating any attack by state-of-the-art weapons, can it prevent war and defend its independence and national security.12

Miscellaneous

Although it is reported that the KPA has studied them it in detail, is unclear what lessons learned it might have drawn from the wars in Afghanistan and the Falklands. Certainly, the ballistic missile operations in Afghanistan between 1998-1991 were the largest (over 1,200 Scuds launched) since the German V-1/V-2 attacks during World War Two and must have been of interest.13 Likewise, the Afghani guerrilla resistance must have been of interest. It is equally unclear what lesson learned might have been developed from the various India-Pakistan Wars, or the numerous small and guerrilla conflicts throughout Africa and South America.14

Correction

In Part I of this article (Vol. 1, No. 9) the following sentence was inadvertently omitted from the end of the fifth paragraph in the Vietnam, 1959-1975 subsection: “Significantly, the Vietnam experience reinforced Kim Il-sung’s belief that it was possible to fight and defeat the U.S. by employing guerrilla warfare.” This correction has been added to the copy of the issue that is available online.

Ri Chun Hui15

By Michael Madden

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Ri Chun Hui (a.k.a., Ri Chun-hee) is the main news anchor for Korean Central Television (KCTV), a radio broadcaster on Korean Central Broadcasting Station and voiceover actor in DPRK documentary propaganda films. Ri is one of the country’s most famous faces and voices, having announced the death of DPRK President Kim Il Sung and the country’s 2006 nuclear test, among other events. Ri also serves as a presenter (host) on KCTV television specials aired on, or around, national holidays.

Career

Ri Chun Hui was born in 1943. Ri received a performing arts education. She began her career as an actress in radio and at Korean Film Studios. She started working at KCTV.
in 1971, eight years after the TV network was established. She appeared in KCTV’s first color broadcast in 1974.

Ri became a constant presence on KCTV in the 1980s. She has read numerous reports about the country’s leadership, national events and official government statements and commentaries. Ri Chun Hui has also narrated P’yongyang rallies and parades, as well as documentary films about the lives and activities of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il.

Ri’s career is rather remarkable for the DPRK media business in that she has never been purged or demoted. KCTV, Korean Central Broadcasting System, the DPRK’s publishing and film entities and the government and party organizations that control them (i.e., Central Broadcasting Committee, of the Korean Workers’ Party’s Propaganda and Agitation Department) are routinely subjected to generational and political personnel attrition. Ri has seen many of her colleagues and supervisors dismissed, demoted or sent for re-education.

Ri Chun Hui has had professional and personal ties to Kim Jong Il since the early 1970s when she was working as an actress. Members of Ri’s extended family work in the DPRK’s media and publishing industries. In November 2009 she was profiled in a feature in Choson Sinbo, a DPRK newsweekly, which reported that she lived in P’yongyang and was taking care of her grandchildren.

Ri’s tone is passionate and vaguely menacing and her vocal delivery formal and matter-of-fact. Taken with her long career and popularity with the DPRK leadership, Ri is most likely the standard by which other DPRK broadcasters are assessed.

“She has a very aggressive voice, one that North Koreans would say ‘fills up the screen,’ ” said Kim Yong, who defected from the North and became a TV personality in South Korea.

“Listening to South Korean newscasters when I first arrived sounded like hearing mom and dad talk in their room. The newscasters sometimes stumbled on words, while the ones in North Korea are never allowed to, or they’ll get fired,” Kim said.

**Kim Jong-il Issues Order on Promoting Military Ranks**

(For some time now the DPRK has routinely published the promotion orders for general grade officers. The latest of these was published on September 27 and is provided in its entirety here.)

Pyongyang, September 27 (KCNA) -- General Secretary Kim Jong II on Monday issued Order No. 0051 on promoting the military ranks of commanding officers of the KPA.

He said in his order that all the servicepersons of the People’s Army and people are now significantly celebrating the 65th anniversary of the founding of the Workers’ Party of Korea with unbounded reverence for President Kim II Sung who made a new history of building a revolutionary party in the era of independence and strengthened and developed the WPK into vanguard ranks of revolution with high prestige and invincible might.

He stressed that the WPK born from the deep and strong roots struck in the anti-Japanese revolution has honorably discharged its mission and duty as a political staff of the Korean revolution since the very day of its founding and performed immortal exploits to shine long in the history of the country.

The KPA is demonstrating its might before the world as a powerful revolutionary army of Mt. Paektu after growing to be a strong army of the leader and the party, devotedly defending the headquarters of the revolution with arms and
performing heroic feats to shine long in history in the defense of the country and building of a thriving socialist nation, he noted.

Expressing the firm belief that the commanding officers of the KPA who have grown up under the care of the party and the leader would creditably discharge their honorable missions and duties as the mainstay and main force of the revolution in accomplishing with arms the revolutionary cause of Juche which started in Mt. Paektu, remaining true to the Party’s leadership in the future, too, he issued an order on promoting the military ranks of KPA commanding officers on the occasion of the 65th anniversary of the glorious Workers’ Party of Korea.

It is noted in the order that the military ranks of Kim Kyong Hui, Kim Jong Un and Choe Ryong Hae and three others are promoted to general, the military rank of Ryu Kyong to colonel general, the military ranks of Ro Hung Se and Ri Tu Song and four others to lieutenant general and those of Jo Kyong Jun, Jang To Yong and Mun Jong Choi and 24 others to major general.

The KPA employs a four tiered ranking system for general grade officers.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>U.S. Equivalent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taejang</td>
<td>General</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sangjang</td>
<td>Colonel General</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chungjang</td>
<td>Lieutenant General</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sojang</td>
<td>Major General</td>
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KPA General Political Department died at 10:30 that day from heart disease. An obituary jointly issued by the Party Central Committee, Party Central Military Commission (CMC), the NDC and the Supreme People’s Assembly Pre-sidium said in part:

All of the men and officers of the people’s army and the people are engulfed by a poignant grief because they have lost an outstanding activist of our party, state and army…the death of Comrade Jo Myong Rok is a great loss to our party, army and people…even if Comrade Jo Myong Rok has passed away the feats he has performed for the party revolution and for the fatherland and the people will eternally shine bright along with the victorious advance of the cause of the juche revolution.

On 7 November KCNA announced a state funeral committee headed by Kim Jong Il, followed by: hereditary successor and CMC Vice Chairman, Kim Jong Un; Chief of the KPA General Staff and CMC Vice Chairman, VMAR Ri Yong Ho; and, Minister of the People’s Armed Forces and NDC Vice Chairman, VMAR Kim Yong Chun. Jo Myong Rok’s casket was placed in the Central Youth Hall in east Pyongyang where it remained from 8-10 November. Jo’s interim successor as GPD Director, his primary deputy and NDC Member Gen. Kim Jong Gak, directed the funeral’s logistics.

On 8 November the DPRK media reported that Kim Jong Il visited Jo Myong Rok’s casket bier. Among those in attendance with Kim Jong Il were Kim Jong Un, Ri Yong Ho, Kim Yong Chun, Jang Song Taek, Kim Kyong Hui, Kim Yong Nam, O Kuk Ryol, Ri Yong Mu, Kim Ki Nam and Choe Tae Bok. Kim Jong II and Kim Jong Un greeted members of Jo Myong Rok’s family. On 9 November the DPRK media broadcasted a brief film digest of the Kims’ attendance of Jo Myong Rok’s wake.

On 10 November Jo Myong Rok’s casket was placed on an armored personnel carrier and his funeral cortege processed through central Pyongyang. At the Revolutionary
Editor’s Note

I would like to thank all the readers of KPA Journal for their prolonged patience with my delay in publishing the journal. This delay was the result of extended travel and numerous commitments concerning the DRPK. With this issue, and the accompanying Issues 11 and 12, KPA Journal is once again back on schedule.

Beginning with this issue those readers who have subscribed to the mailing list will receive notice of a new issue's being posted to the website rather than the issue itself. This will hopefully alleviate some of the problems that readers have been experiencing with the journal being rejected by their email servers.

I have also slowly begun posting on the website some of the many declassified documents that I have acquired over the years.

I appreciate all the comments, corrections and suggestions that readers have contributed during the year and look forward to receiving more. While it may take me some time, I do read all the email that readers send and I attempt to answer as many questions as possible. I encourage all readers to share ideas of what they would like to see in future issues of KPA Journal. Thank you all for your encouragement and support.

I would like to thank Bob Collins, Keith Jacobs, Michael Madden and Dwight Rider for their assistance and contributions in preparing this issue.

—Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.

Endnotes


5 Interview data acquired by Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.


7 “DPRK Document Shows Kim Chong-il Has Not Changed his Mind about War with South Korea,” Bungeo Shinju, January 1, 2003, pp. 138-143.


14 Information concerning DPRK involvement in South/Central America and Africa can be found in Bermudez Jr., Joseph S. Terrorism: The North Korean Connection, Taylor & Francis, New York, October 1990.

This announcement was graciously provided by Mr. Bob Collins.


Former CNN correspondent and writer Mike Chinoy wrote a fascinating essay on VMAR Jo’s trip on 38 North at, http://38north.org/2010/11/jomyongrok_chinoy/.