

Partisans, Pilots, PSYOPS, and Prisoners: North Korea's Vietnam Odyssey

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Abstract

This paper examines North Korea's dispatch of pilots, psychological operations, and tunneling specialists to aid the Democratic Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Growing American and South Korean involvement in Vietnam provided an opportunity for North Korea's increasingly assertive military leaders to better understand their adversaries. Pyongyang's secret deployment was facilitated by the "Partisan Generals," who sought to fight the Americans in the sky, demoralize the South Koreans on the ground, and perfect the techniques of underground warfare. North Korea provided material assistance that was significant given its limited resources. Additionally, North Korea detained South Korean Prisoners of War captured by the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong. English, Korean, and Vietnamese language materials are used throughout this paper.

Keywords: South Korea, North Korea, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, United States, ROK Forces Vietnam, partisans, Kim Il Sung, Choi Kwang, Ho Chi Minh, Vo Nguyen Giap, Le Thanh Nghi, Group Z, Psychological Operations, Underground Facilities, Prisoners of War, Missing in Action

Introduction

Addressing North Korean Air Force pilots departing for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, North Korean President Kim Il Sung told the assembled aviators "to fight thinking of Vietnam's sky as your own sky, Hanoi as Pyongyang and Ho Chi Minh as your own leader."¹ The aviators were among the estimated 1000 North Koreans secretly dispatched to support their Communist ally during the Vietnam War. In addition to the pilots, mechanics, support personnel, psychological operations (PSYOPS) specialists and engineers served in Vietnam from 1966 to 1971.

North Korea's dispatch of forces is dwarfed by the Republic of Korea's (ROK) deployment of over 325,000 military personnel and

100,000 civilian specialists from 1965 to 1973.² North Korea's military leaders viewed the growing American and South Korean involvement in Vietnam as an opportunity to better understand their adversaries. Although political and military leaders in Hanoi feared that accepting foreign fighters would undermine their nationalist credentials, they nonetheless accepted Pyongyang's initial offer to send pilots to North Vietnam. Yet before the first aviators departed North Korea, Pyongyang responded to Hanoi's urgent request for PSYOPS specialists to assist the North Vietnamese in their efforts to "proselytize" South Korean soldiers. North Korea would later provide tunneling experts, as well as material assistance that was significant, given its limited resources.

This paper examines North Korea's participation in the Vietnam War, beginning with an analysis of the military leaders who fought as partisans alongside Kim Il Sung in Manchuria and now served at the highest levels of the government. Next, it provides an overview of the aviation, PSYOPS, engineering, and material support Pyongyang provided to Hanoi during the war. The paper examines North Korea's receipt and detention of South Korean combatants captured by the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong. It concludes with an analysis of how the outcome of the attacks on the South Korean presidential compound and *USS Pueblo* in January 1968 led Kim Il Sung to reconsider his military strategy and North Vietnamese leaders to question their relationship with North Korea. In the same manner in which the rise of the partisan generals facilitated Pyongyang's involvement in the Vietnam War, their downfall contributed to the end of North Korea's support to North Vietnam.

North Korea and North Vietnam

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) established diplomatic relations on January 31, 1950. The signing came one day after the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China established ties with the DRV and ahead of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Soviet-bloc states including Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania.

President Ho Chi Minh visited North Korea from July 8 to 12, 1957, the first visit between the leaders of the two countries.³ In a meeting with the Soviet ambassador to the DPRK in the weeks following the visit, Ambassador A.M. Puzanov informed President Kim that Ho Chi Minh had requested aid. The Soviet Union was planning to provide one billion rubles

(\$250 million) to help the people of North Vietnam recover from devastating floods. Kim said that the population of North Vietnam “needed to be helped” and that the DPRK would give aid; Pyongyang contributed the equivalent of 50,000 (\$12,500) rubles to the aid fund.⁴

The next year, Kim Il Sung visited North Vietnam following a trip to China. President Ho Chi Minh hosted Kim from November 28 to December 2, 1958; the two leaders attended a mass rally in Hanoi. Kim visited an agricultural cooperative, a textile factory, and the Vietnamese Military Officers’ School.⁵

In November 1964, Kim Il Sung visited Vietnam for a second and final time. Coming in the wake of the August Tonkin Gulf Incident, neither the itinerary nor outcomes of Kim’s visit were made public. He met with Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi and visited Ha Long Bay in Quang Ninh Province.⁶

Changes to the International Security Environment

Pyongyang’s secret dispatch of pilots and PSYOPS specialists to North Vietnam occurred at a time of significant changes among North Korea’s allies and adversaries. Attempts to remain neutral in the Sino-Soviet Dispute proved futile, leading to the Soviet-Korean and Sino-Korean Disputes in the 1960s.⁷ The Soviet-Korean Dispute had a significant impact upon the North Korean military, which depended on the Soviet Union for not only weapons, parts, and supplies that Pyongyang’s scientists and technicians were unable to produce, but also food for its soldiers and fabric for their uniforms.⁸ During the Sino-Korean Dispute, the Red Guards put up wall posters criticizing Kim Il Sung and his government. A poster signed by Chinese Veterans of the Korean War labeled Kim a “revisionist and a disciple of Khrushchev.”⁹ Another poster faulted Kim for failing to send North Korean volunteers to aid the Vietnamese in their just struggle.¹⁰

At the same time, North Korea’s principal adversaries became more capable and threatening. The U.S. forced the Soviet Union to dismantle and remove ballistic missiles from Cuba. Washington increased its presence in Southeast Asia, significantly expanding the number of advisors in South Vietnam and deploying the first combat troops in 1965. During the same period, Park Chung-hee’s military revolution led to the establishment of a staunchly anti-Communist government focused on modernization and economic development. Under pressure from Washington, Park’s government normalized relations with Japan in 1965. However, Pyongyang’s indignation at Seoul’s establishment of ties with

its former colonial occupier was not the North Korean leader's greatest concern at the time. Suh Dae-sook notes:

What infuriated Kim and his generals even more was the agreement between the United States and Korea to send South Korean troops to Vietnam. The first noncombat troops left Korea in January 1965. Shortly thereafter, in February 1965, the United States began to bomb North Vietnamese targets. Kim on numerous occasions condemned South Korea's decision to send soldiers and said he stood ready to send North Korean troops to Vietnam. What he really wanted was to form an international army of the socialist and Communist countries to aid Vietnam, but such cooperation in the midst of the Sino-Soviet dispute was not feasible.¹¹

The month following the first American air attacks, the North Korean government offered its support to North Vietnam in a front-page article in the *Rodong Sinmun*. The government statement was published under the headline, "The Korean people will provide any kind of support, including weapons, to the Vietnamese comrades and upon request will send volunteer forces." Benjamin R. Young, a postdoctoral fellow at the U.S. Naval War College, notes that this was the "first time that Kim Il Sung explicitly offered military support to a foreign leader . . ."¹²

Choi Kwang and the Rise of the Partisan Generals

Kim's offer of military support was fully supported by the generals who occupied the nation's highest military and political positions in the North Korean government. These generals had ascended to positions of power following the fifth plenum of the Central Committee of the Korean Workers' Party in 1962 as part of Kim Il Sung's reshuffling of the highest levels of government. Kim replaced 20 of the 30 ministers with technocrats or active duty and retired generals. These generals had fought alongside Kim in anti-Japanese guerilla activities in southern Manchuria, leading Suh Dae-sook to describe the event as the "Rise of the Partisan Generals."¹³

Choi Kwang fought alongside Kim Il Sung's partisans beginning in 1935. He returned to Korea with the Soviets on August 15, 1945 and led efforts to establish the Korean People's Army, commanding the 1st

Division. Choi led the 13th Division at the outset of the Korean War, but was relieved of command and expelled from the party by Kim as part of a broad effort to assign blame for mismanagement of the war.¹⁴ His exile was short, as Kim recalled him and the majority of the other banished partisans as the situation along the front stabilized following China's intervention in the war.¹⁵ Choi later served as superintendent of the Kanggon Military Academy. His loyalty to Kim Il Sung and partisan background earned him promotions and postings to key positions, including V Corps commander, 1st Artillery Group chief of staff, and North Korean Air Force commander. Choi was promoted to general in 1962 and appointed Chief of the North Korean General Staff the following year.

The generals surrounding Kim Il Sung were acutely aware of the changes to the international security environment and the need to strengthen their military capabilities. They revealed the party's four basic military policies at the fifth party plenum in 1962: "to arm the entire populace, to fortify the entire country; to train every soldier to become cadre, and to modernize military weapons and equipment."¹⁶ The policy was famously summed up in the slogan, "arms on the one hand and hammer and sickle on the other."¹⁷ Under the partisan generals, the government's priorities shifted from economic development to military preparedness and modernization.

Initial Aid

The partisan generals enthusiastically backed the opportunity to support the North Vietnamese as the Vietnam War escalated. Kim Ok-sun, a partisan who was married to Choi Kwang, offered one of the first public statements advocating the deployment of forces to North Vietnam. As the First Vice Chairman of the Korean Democratic Women's Union, she wrote a column in the *Rodong Sinmun* on April 7, 1965 stating, "Korean women will send their husbands, sons, and daughters as volunteer forces to support the Vietnamese people."¹⁸

The partisan generals emphasized military preparedness over economic development, a choice Kim Il Sung supported. Pyongyang sent significant amounts of aid to Hanoi early in the Vietnam War. Kim met with North Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister Le Thanh Nghi in Pyongyang during the summer of 1965.¹⁹ In his report of the visit, the deputy prime minister recalled Kim's offer:

We are determined to provide aid to Vietnam and we do not view such aid as constituting a heavy burden on North Korea. We will strive to ensure that Vietnam will defeat the American imperialists, even if it means that North Korea's own economic plan will be delayed.²⁰

The North Korean government quickly dispatched large shipments of construction materials, engineering equipment, and automobiles to North Vietnam. A cable from the Chinese embassy in Pyongyang reported that the North Koreans had shipped 2000 tons of construction materials and automobiles to Vietnam aboard 80 rail cars. The aid was sent via China and coordinated by North Korea's Foreign Economic Assistance Administration.²¹ The same cable notes that the North Koreans had previously sent military supplies to Vietnam aboard 52 rail cars.²²

Pilots and Parachutes

The partisan generals were eager to send pilots to Vietnam to better understand American air combat tactics. After extensive lobbying, the North Korean government officially requested to send an air force regiment to North Vietnam; all personnel would be volunteers. In their request, the North Koreans offered to integrate their personnel into North Vietnamese Air Force regiments, operate from the same air bases, and wear North Vietnamese uniforms. In addition to pilots, the North Koreans agreed to provide technical support personnel, but requested the North Vietnamese provide ground support and logistics.

General Vo Nguyen Giap chaired a meeting of the Central Military Party Committee and Air Force Command on September 21, 1966 to consider the North Korean request. The North Vietnamese leaders were reluctant to agree to the deployment of foreign forces, believing their presence would undermine the narrative that this was a Vietnamese-led struggle. However, General Giap agreed to support the deployment of North Korean pilots. Similar to the South Koreans, Americans, and South Vietnamese, North Vietnamese and North Korean commanders were forced to address key military issues at the outset, including the command and control of North Korean specialists operating in Vietnam. While the North Koreans would be allowed to command their own forces, they would operate under the control of the North Vietnamese, who would assign them specific operational missions. Additionally, General Giap directed that the North Korean volunteers be referred to as "specialists."²³

Following General Giap's decision, General Choi led a delegation and met with the Chief of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) Van Tien Dung from September 24 to 30. The two sides agreed that Pyongyang would provide the pilots for the regiment, while Hanoi would provide the aircraft, maintenance and logistical support.

The first North Koreans arrived in North Vietnam in the Winter of 1967. Under the command of Colonel Kim Chang-yon, the specialists included 24 pilots and 113 mechanics, ground crew and political officers. Ten pilots were qualified in the MiG 17-B and 14 qualified in the MiG-17C. The North Koreans weren't permitted to fly the MiG-21s due to Chinese concerns.²⁴ The PAVN designated the North Korean unit "Group Z," and assigned them to the 923rd Air Force Regiment at Kep Air Base northeast of Hanoi.²⁵

The North Korean pilots were expected to be technically and tactically proficient upon arrival. North Vietnamese aviators trained them in tactics the Americans employed. The North Vietnamese Air Defense Command exercised command and control over the North Korean aviators.²⁶ Korean-speaking Vietnamese interpreters supported ground instruction and training flights.²⁷

Group Z pilots flew their first sorties in February 1967. In April 1967, they engaged American aviators for the first time and suffered their first losses. Four MiG-17s piloted by North Koreans and two MiG-21s flown by North Vietnamese aviators were scrambled to intercept a flight of 24 American F-4s. Lacking interpreters and unable to communicate with either the North Vietnamese ground controllers or MiG-21 pilots, the North Korean pilots were quickly overwhelmed by the Americans, who destroyed two aircraft. Although both pilots escaped the aircraft, they died as a result of the ejection.²⁸ The North Korean pilots appeared to have difficulty in mastering the MiG-17's ejection procedures, which required the pilot to pull his legs back against the ejection seat. A North Vietnamese pilot recalled that 10 pilots from Group Z lost both legs while ejecting from the aircraft.²⁹

North Korean aviators were no more successful in subsequent engagements. The North Vietnamese became alarmed at the mounting aircraft losses and suspended the program in early 1969. By the time Group Z was shuttered, an estimated 384 North Korean Air Force personnel had served in Vietnam. Of the 96 pilots, 87 are believed to have flown in combat.³⁰

Official records state that 12 pilots were killed in combat and two specialists died in noncombat situations, though senior North Korean officials and defectors conceded the figure might be higher.³¹ Lieutenant General Trần Hanh, a North Vietnamese MiG-17 pilot who is credited with shooting down two American aircraft during the war and ultimately served as Deputy Minister of Defense of Vietnam, commented on the North Korea pilots' spirit: "We found them to be very brave. Their national pride was so high. They feared nothing, even death."³²

North Vietnamese and Soviet records state that North Korea pilots shot down 26 American aircraft.³³ However, American combat records reviewed following media reports of North Korean pilots fighting in the war don't back up these assertions. A more accurate account came from the former commander of the 9th Viet Cong Division. Colonel Ta Minh Kham summed up Group Z's performance, "We allowed the North Koreans to come, as they wanted to practice their tactics against the Americans. They had their practice—and they died."³⁴

Proselytizers and PSYOPS

North Vietnamese government officials quickly realized that their PSYOPS program targeting the South Korean military personnel in Vietnam was ineffective due to the limited number of Korean language speakers in the country. In the fall of 1966, the Central Committees of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Korean Workers' Party agreed to "launch an ideological offensive aimed at South Korean troops."³⁵ Shortly thereafter, Pyongyang "sent a cadre team to Region V to proselytize South Korean soldiers."³⁶ Three or four North Korean soldiers worked as part of the PVAN's Enemy Proselyting Department, assisting in the production of news reports and voicing the broadcasts.

Senior Colonel Nguyen Nhat Tien served as chief of the editorial staff of the Korean Proselyting Broadcasting program. In a 2010 interview with the Vietnamese military newspaper, *People's Army*, he recalled,

"... the program was organized into news, commentary, current events stories, and stories of their homeland. The goals of the program were to remind the South Korean soldiers of their homes and their native country and to appeal to them to return home and not participate in the war."³⁷

Despite their common mission, the North Koreans and North Vietnamese clashed over both the content and tone of PSYOPS. North Vietnamese editors frequently redid entire broadcasts to reflect the most current developments on the battlefield, much to the consternation of North Korean announcers. In contrast to the bombast and invective that characterized the PSYOPS on the Korean Peninsula, the North Vietnamese preferred a more subtle and gentle tone, as Colonel Nguyen recalls:

One could not simply put out propaganda statements saying that ‘we are winning and the enemy is losing,’ and the programs could not contain a lot of insults and threats. Instead, the primary content had to be appeals and persuasion. One had to use stratagems as part of the art of making enemy proselyting propaganda: when necessary, one could say things designed to make your target think.³⁸

In addition to broadcasts, the PSYOPS effort included producing Korean language leaflets that were dropped or fired into areas controlled by ROK Army and Marine Corps units. The black and white materials promoted the virtues of Communism and encouraged the South Koreans to defect. Cao Van Hoach, the former Deputy Chief of the Administrative Office of the Phu Yen Province Party Committee, recalled working with North Korean specialists to target South Korean soldiers operating in western Phu Yen, a province on Vietnam’s south-central coast:

The Phuoc Tan Forest was the place where the North Korean specialist group lived. Even in 1969 South Korean soldiers, and especially the 26th Regiment of the Tiger Division, were still very aggressive. They constantly conducted protracted sweep operations into our base areas, blocked our movement corridors, attacked us and caused us numerous losses. We decided to step up our enemy proselyting operations against them. At that time there was a North Korean specialist group in our province. Comrade Bac [Bắc] was in charge of the North Korean specialists, and the group consisted of military specialists, military proselyting specialists, and a number of interpreters. The group conducted research into how to

proselytize the South Korean soldiers, including sending handwritten letters to South Korean commanders and distributing Korean-language leaflets to the South Korean soldiers. The North Korean specialists lived in a row of huts in the southwestern part of the Phuoc Tan Forest. During this period I was assigned to the Propaganda and Training Section, and I and several of the province's military proselyting cadres occasionally personally met with the North Koreans to discuss ideas with them and to request sample letters and leaflets, which we took back, copied, and sent to our agents so that they could distribute them to South Korean troops. . .³⁹

According to the ROK Ministry of National Defense, three South Koreans are believed to have defected during the war.⁴⁰ However, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of North Vietnam's PSYOPS program targeting South Korean forces. The Headquarters, ROK Forces Vietnam (ROKFV) operated its own PSYOPS program designed to improve morale among frontline troops. From December 1965 until February 1973, ROKFV operated the nation's first overseas broadcasting system. The Korea Force Vietnam Network (KFVN) broadcast news, entertainment, music and educational programs to South Korean forces, as well as Vietnamese language messages for the South Vietnamese people. KFVN largely counteracted North Korea's PSYOPS efforts, improved the morale of South Korean servicemen, supported the command's broader PSYOPS campaign, and improved the ROK military's broadcasting capabilities.⁴¹

Lastly, proselytizing operations also included re-educating enemy combatants. A 2015 article in the *Quang Nam Online* entitled, "The Silent War," describes how North Korean enemy proselytizing specialists "conducted Korean language training classes for military proselyting cadres."⁴² The cadres sought to re-educate captured South Korean prisoners, including Corporal Nam Sang-wook:

Through the use of our policy of leniency and our humane treatment of them, we were able to awaken the consciences of many American and South Korean troops. . . Another example is the case of Corporal Nam Xang Uc [Nam - Xang - Úc], a South Korean soldier who was captured in Hoi An during the 1968 Tet Offensive

attack. After a year of reeducation at the A2 Prisoner of War camp at Doc Gio [Windy Slope - Đốc Gió] in Dai Loc Zone B, we released him in Xuyen Chau Village, Duy Xuyen District.⁴³

An estimated 100 North Korean PSYOPS personnel were active during the Vietnam War, with the last confirmed operations having taken place in May 1971.⁴⁴

Engineers and Other Material Support

In his 1965 meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Nghi, Kim Il Sung emphasized the importance of building underground facilities to protect factories and military assets from American air attack. Drawing on his experience from the Korean War, Kim advised that the North Vietnamese, “build your important factories in the mountain jungle areas, half of the factories inside the mountains and half outside — dig caves and place the factories half inside the caves and half outside.”⁴⁵ The North Korean leader said that his engineers had built caves to house a regiment of 32 jet aircraft, boasting that the Chinese had sent a delegation to North Korea to gain expertise in this area. Kim offered to send 500 North Koreans specialists to assist the North Vietnamese build underground facilities.⁴⁶ The deployment coincides with a period in which North Korean engineers were actively building tunnels under the Demilitarized Zone.

Pyongyang continued to provide Hanoi with weapons, explosives and ammunition during the early years of the war. In addition to the 1965 shipments previously mentioned, North Korea gave 12.3 million rubles (\$13.7 million) in economic and military assistance the following year. The items provided during 1966 included steel, diesel engines, iron plates, tractors, generators, and irrigation equipment.⁴⁷ Pyongyang’s material support paralleled its personnel contributions, peaking in 1967 at 20 million rubles (\$22 million). North Korea provided arms, pontoons over two million uniforms to the North Vietnamese Army; nonmilitary assistance included steel, diesel engines and tractors.⁴⁸ Without specifying Vietnam, President Kim Il Sung boasted that North Korea was providing aid to a “less fortunate country” in a speech to youth on April 13, 1968.⁴⁹ Among the small to mid-sized Socialist-bloc countries, only Poland’s contributions exceeded North Korea’s material support to North Vietnam.⁵⁰

Lastly, Kim Il Sung's government sponsored Vietnamese students to study at North Korean educational institutions during the war. During 1966, an estimated 400 Vietnamese students studied in North Korea. According to declassified documents, another 200 students were scheduled to travel to North Korea for study in 1967. Pyongyang covered all costs associated with the students' education.⁵¹

Prisoners of War

Perhaps no topics are as controversial as South Korean Prisoners of War (POW) and North Korea's role in receiving and detaining prisoners captured on Vietnam's battlefields. Fearing criticism from the opposition political parties, President Park Chung-hee and senior government officials denied there were South Korean POWs, and minimized the number of those classified as Missing in Action (MIA).⁵² The reluctance to address the issue of POWs and MIAs extended to South Koreans serving in Vietnam. Lieutenant General Lee Sae-ho, who commanded ROKFV when the final South Korean soldiers left Saigon, didn't mention POWs or MIAs in his redeployment report on March 20, 1973.⁵³ This omission continued the pattern of other senior officials, including Lieutenant General Chae Myung-shin, Lee's predecessor, Ambassador Yoo Sang-su, South Korea's ambassador to Vietnam during the war, and Mr. Yi Dae-yong, Legal Attaché at the South Korean embassy. In short, none of the senior diplomatic or military officials addressed the issue of POWs and MIAs when ROKFV was deactivated and the final South Koreans returned home.

Questioning Official Accounts

The official silence continued for two decades. On April 15, 1994, Seoul National University hosted a conference on "POWs and MIAs from the Vietnam War." Anthropology Professor Jeon Kyeong-su asserted that there were likely over 900 South Korean MIAs from the Vietnam War. The *JoongAng Ilbo* reported the assertion the following day, leading the ROK Ministry of National Defense (MND) to examine the issue. Two months later, the MND-affiliated Research Center on National Defense and Military History denied Jeon's assertion in its report, "Examination of those Missing in Action from the Vietnam War."⁵⁴ As shown in Table 1, the report identified eight MIAs, which the government classified as four dead, three defectors, and one deserter.

Table 1: Third Announcement on the Status of South Korean MIAs

Name	Unit	Date Missing	Status
Sergeant Park Seong-yeol	Capital Division	November 3, 1965	Defected to North Korea
Staff Sergeant Ahn Hak-soo	Construction Support Unit	March 22, 1967	Defected to North Korea
Staff Sergeant Jeong Joon-taek	Headquarters, ROKFV	May 7, 1967	Deserted
Captain Park Woo-shik	29 th Regiment, 9 th Infantry Division	December 2, 1967	Killed in Action
Corporal Kim In-soo	9 th Infantry Division	February 18, 1968	Killed in the Line of Duty
Corporal Ahn Sam-i	2 nd Marine Brigade	July 27, 1969	Killed in Action
Sergeant Yi Yong-seon	2 nd Marine Brigade	November 2, 1969	Killed in Action
Captain Kim In-shik	Taekwondo Instructor	July 19, 1971	Defected to North Korea

Source: ROK MND, April 22, 1994, cited in Heo Man-soo, “North Korea’s Continued Detention of South Korean POWs since the Korean and Vietnam Wars,” revised by the author.⁵⁵

The final government report prepared in response to Professor Jeon’s assertions proposed “avoiding any further mention of the issue to prevent public outcry.”⁵⁶

Undeterred, South Korean researcher Heo Man-soo examined North Korea’s detention of South Korean POWs from the Vietnam War in a 2002 article in *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*. He compared the number of declared South Korean MIAs during the war with the number of operations conducted and U.S. Government reports from the same period. Heo also examines media reports and personal accounts of captured South Korean soldiers who were either sent, or threatened with being sent, to North Korea. This paper continues Heo’s analysis using the most recent data available.

South Korean soldiers and Marines were involved in 577,487 operations from 1965 to 1972.⁵⁷ As shown in Table 2, ROKFV’s three main combat units conducted 1,175 large unit operations; e.g., operations by a battalion, regiment, brigade, division or corps.

Table 2: Battalion-Level and Larger Unit Operations

		'65	'66	'67	'68	'69	'70	'71	'72	Total
Marine Brigade	Bde			2			1	1		4
	Regt	1	9	13	17	9	9	4		62
	Bn	4	3	3	8	35	25	36		114
	Total	5	12	18	25	44	35	41		180
Capital Division	Div		3	3	5	1	2	2		16
	Regt	1	11	7	11	18	4	4	4	60
	Bn	9	21	27	35	88	143	93	25	441
	Total	10	35	37	51	107	149	99	29	517
9 th Division	Div			4	2	1	1	1	1	10
	Regt		4	11	20	10	8	7	4	64
	Bn		12	23	72	54	107	108	24	400
	Total		16	38	94	65	116	116	29	474
Total	Corps			2				1	1	4
	Div		3	9	7	2	4	4	1	30
	Regt	2	24	31	48	37	21	15	8	186
	Bn	13	36	53	115	177	275	237	49	955
	Total	15	63	95	170	216	301	257	58	1,175

**Source: ROK MND Institute for Military History.
Translated and adapted by the author.⁵⁸**

Accordingly, the vast majority of operations—576,312—were small-unit operations. Reflecting the nature of the war, South Korean squads, platoons, and companies constantly patrolled Vietnam’s coastal areas and jungles in search of regular and guerilla forces. These operations were frequently conducted at night, increasing the likelihood of being captured or becoming lost. However, the ROK Government acknowledges only four MIAs from all operations during the Vietnam War:

**Table 3: South Korea Troop Strength and Losses
(September 1964 to March 1973)**

Service	Total Participants	Deaths	Wounded	MIA
Army	288,656	3,859	8,211	4
Marine Corps and Navy	36,246	1,240	3,021	
Air Force	615			
Total	325,517	5,099	11,232	4

**Source: ROK MND Institute for Military History.
Translated and adapted by author.⁵⁹**

U.S. Government Accounts of South Korean POWs and MIAs

From 1966 to 1970, various agencies of the U.S. Government, to include the Central Intelligence Agency, reported that South Korean servicemen were held prisoner across Vietnam. The 149th Military Intelligence Group, a theater-level command responsible for collecting and analyzing Human Intelligence, issued the following report on May 31, 1967:

In January 1967, dated undetermined, a Korean prisoner in ragged [illegible] was delivered to the VC Prison Camp in the vicinity of BN 781 579. The [illegible] was held for three days then moved during the night to an undetermined location.⁶⁰

Another report, released after the withdrawal of the ROKFV, describes the detention of prisoners at the Ong Hai camp, located on the border between the Quang Ngai Province and the former Quang Tin Province: “the source met a Korean corporal name [sic] “Xoi” who was with the Korean Tiger Division. The PW was released on 25 Mar 73.”⁶¹ A confidential ROK Foreign Ministry document later identified the prisoner as Corporal Yoo Jong-cheol.⁶² Table 4 depicts the number and location of South Korean POWs reported by the U.S. Government, as well as the U.S. and ROK strength in each year South Korean forces were deployed to Vietnam:

Table 4: U.S. Government Reports of South Korean POWs and ROK Troop Strength (1964 to 1972)

Year	U.S. Government Reports of South Korean POWs and Locations	U.S. Troop Strength	ROK Troop Strength
1964	None	23,300	140
1965	None	184,300	20,541
1966	Phu Yen Province (3)	385,300	45,604
1967	Ninh Thuan Province (1), Quang Ngai Province (1)	485,600	48,839
1968	Quang Tri Province (5), Quang Nam Province (1), Kien Phong Province (5), Lam Dong Province (1)	536,100	49,869
1969	Phu Yen Province (3)	475,200	49,755
1970	Binh Dinh Province (1)	334,600	48,510
1971	None	156,800	45,694
1972	None	24,200	37,438
1973	Quang Ngai Province (1)	50	-

Source: Developed by the author from multiple sources.⁶³

As the table shows, U.S. Government-affiliated organizations and entities reported South Korean POWs at various locations in South Vietnam from 1966 to 1973. When reports included information on South Korean POWs, the intelligence brigades included ROKFV among the message recipients. It should be noted that the U.S. Government was not responsible for accounting for South Korean or other allied personnel serving in the Republic of Vietnam. Military Assistance Command-Vietnam (MAC-V), the senior U.S. military headquarters, was equal to ROKFV, the senior South Korean military headquarters in Vietnam. South Korean military commanders were under no obligation to report the number of POWs or MIAs to MAC-V.

In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) established the Central Identification Laboratory-Thailand to coordinate POW/MIA recover efforts in Southeast Asia. The laboratory's successor, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, is responsible for providing "the fullest possible accounting for our missing personnel."⁶⁴ Table 5 summarizes the agency's records on South Korean POWs and MIAs, along with the ROK Government's accounts:

Table 5: DoD Records of South Korean POWs and MIAs

Name	Date Missing	U.S. Status	ROK Status
Pak Seong-yeol	November 3, 1965	Died in Captivity	Defector
Lee Chang-hoon	January 20, 1967	Prisoner of War	
Lee Kil-yong	January 20, 1967	Prisoner of War	
Min Kyung-yoon	January 20, 1967	Prisoner of War	
Kim Soo-keun	March 20, 1967	Missing in Action	
Ahn Hak-soo	March 25, 1967	Unknown	Defector
Jeong Joon-taek	May 7, 1967	Unknown	Deserted
Chae Kyu-chang	January 20, 1968	Missing in Action	
Kim Heung-sam	June 26, 1968	Died in Captivity	
Kim Sung-ho	June 26, 1968	Died in Captivity	
Ahn Sam-i	July 27, 1969	Unknown	Killed in Action
Yi Yong-seon	November 2, 1969	Unknown	Killed in Action
Shin Chang-wha	January 5, 1970	Prisoner of War	
Kim In-shik	July 19, 1971	Unknown	Defector
Cho Joon-bun	March 23, 1972	Unknown	
Lee Yoon-dong	March 24, 1972	Unknown	
Park Yang-chung	Unknown	Unknown	

Source: *U.S. Personnel Missing, Southeast Asia (and Selected Foreign Nationals)*, Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Reference Document, U.S. DoD, May 1997.⁶⁵

As the table shows, Washington and Seoul differ on the number and classification of South Korean MIAs. Of note, the ROK Government continues to deny the existence of South Korean POWs from the Vietnam War. As Heo concluded in his 2002 article, “the absence of any South Korean POWs is clearly dubious.”⁶⁶

North Korea’s Detention of South Korean Prisoners of War

Few U.S. and ROK government reports address the possibility that South Korean POWs were sent to North Korea. However, media accounts and personal diaries of Park Jeong-hwan, Ahn Hak-soo, and Rhee Dae-yong provide insight into the relationship between South Korean POWs, the Viet Minh, and the North Korean government during and after the war. Their stories indicate that at least one, and perhaps more, South Korean POWs were sent to North Korea.

Second Lieutenant Park Jeong-hwan: Korean Papillon

On January 30, 1968, Viet Cong militia captured Second Lieutenant Park Jeong-hwan and Mr. Kim Kyu-shik in My Tho City as part of the Tet Offensive. As the youngest South Korean to earn a 5th Degree Black Belt, Lieutenant Park was serving as a Tae Kwon Do instructor at the South Vietnamese Army’s 7th Division’s Recruit Training Center when he was captured. Kim was a civilian electrical technician working as a contractor in support of the 9th (U.S.) Infantry Division.

Early in his captivity, Park overpowered two guards and escaped the Viet Minh with Kim. The Viet Cong recaptured the pair and tortured Park as punishment for injuring the Vietnamese guards during his escape. Shortly thereafter, North Vietnamese Colonel Ly Qui visited Park, saying, “Rejoice, the Liberation Army has decided to send you to North Korea via Hanoi.”⁶⁷ In a 2008 interview, Park recounted the colonel’s offer:

If a South Korean soldier becomes a POW, the only alternative to death is to become propaganda material for our closest ally, North Korea. Like American soldiers, you will be held in a Hanoi prison camp until the end of the war. This is because Korean soldiers are mercenaries

in America's proxy war. There will be no negotiations with the South Korean government. Fortunately, your true fatherland is North Korea.⁶⁸

Colonel Ly continued to urge Park to defect, telling him that a South Korean captain and several soldiers had gone to North Korea.⁶⁹

As the prisoners were being moved along the Ho Chi Minh Trail towards Hanoi, Lieutenant Park attempted to escape a second time. On April 2, Park overpowered two guards and escaped into the jungle with Kim. The two Koreans reached a Cambodian village, where they were turned over to local militia. They were subsequently tried as spies and sent to a military prison. Lieutenant Park managed to send a message that the two Koreans were imprisoned in Cambodia. The Australian Embassy in Phnom Penh secured release of Park Jeong-hwan and Kim Kyu-shik after 502 days in captivity. Second Lieutenant Park became was later known as the "Korean Papillion."

Heo Man-ho noted that while Park and Kim escaped, others South Koreans were likely sent to North Korea. In a 2001 interview with Heo, Park recalled seeing lists of South Korean soldiers who had been sent to North Korea.⁷⁰ Heo also notes that Kim Kyu-shik's capture raises the possibility that South Korean civilians were taken by the Viet Cong and sent to North Korea. Over 100,000 South Korean civilians were in South Vietnam during the war, serving as developmental specialists and working as contractors. However, the ROK Government never provided any information on civilian POWs or MIAs, ordering those sent to Vietnam not to disclose their experience when they returned.⁷¹

Staff Sergeant Ahn Hak-soo: The First Prisoner of War

On September 9, 1966, Staff Sergeant Ahn Hak-soo was declared missing from the 1st Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) in Vung Tau. Assigned to the hospital as a radio operator, Ahn often traveled to the American supply base in Saigon to obtain medicine and consumables for the ROK MASH. In his final letter home, Ahn wrote, "Mom, please do not respond to this letter as I will be returning to Korea very soon. Since I will travel to Seoul by plane with surgeons, please wait for me at granny's home in Seoul."⁷² When he failed to arrive as scheduled, his family contacted the Ministry of National Defense. Officials repeatedly told the family to wait.

Six months later, Staff Sergeant Ahn announced he had defected to North Korea. In a radio broadcast from Pyongyang on March 27, 1966, Ahn said, "I now know the unlimited happiness of the warm embrace of the fatherland and Marshal Kim Il Sung."⁷³ The following day the *Rodong Sinmun* reported that Staff Sergeant Ahn received a bouquet of flowers and applause when he visited the Moranbong Youth Cultural Theater. Ahn's photo with a military welcoming committee appeared in the same edition.

Alerted to the broadcast, Ahn's family listened in the following day when their son haltingly said, "Rather than smoking American soldier's cigarette butts, I'm infinitely happy in the warm embrace of the Leader Kim Il Sung."⁷⁴ The family was soon contacted by the Korean Central Intelligence Agency. According to the family's account, the agent told the Ahn's father:

Staff Sergeant Ahn was captured by the Viet Cong while he was on official business. He was handed over to the North Korean military advisory group in Vietnam and taken to Pyongyang took via China. Our government will soon request repatriation through the International Red Cross.⁷⁵

Under the agent's direction, the family made audio recordings urging the immediate repatriation of their son and brother.⁷⁶

The agents' attitude had changed when they visited agents visited Ahn's family two months later. North Korean broadcasts to the South referred to the family as "South Korean defectors."⁷⁷ The family came under government suspicion. Ahn's father was forced to resign his position as an elementary school principal and his brothers were subject to frequent investigations throughout their lives.

Agencies of the ROK Government classified Staff Sergeant Ahn as a prisoner in confidential communications. Nearly three years after Ahn emerged in Pyongyang, the Vice Minister of Defense for Personnel Planning wrote the Foreign Minister an official letter. In the January 30, 1969 letter, the military classified Ahn as a "person detained by the enemy (prisoner)" and requested assistance from the International Red Cross in securing his release and repatriation.⁷⁸

Ahn's status was supported by statements from North Korean defectors. Jeong Sang-hwan, who defected in September 1969, reported

living with Ahn at the Repatriates Political School in Pyongan Province. Jeong reported that “Ahn was taken captive by Viet Cong and then brought to Pyongyang via China.”⁷⁹ In addition to Staff Sergeant Ahn, Sergeant Pak Seong-yeol and an unnamed officer were at the school, which sought to reeducate those who had lived in capitalist societies.⁸⁰ Jeong Cha-rang, who defected to South Korea the following year, reported meeting Ahn, who said that he had been wounded while being taken to North Korea and showed him his deeply scarred legs.⁸¹

These accounts remained secret until the *Kyungghyang Shinmun* published an interview with Jeong Sang-hwan on May 5, 1992. Ahn’s family began a decades-long legal battle with the ROK Government to draw attention to his disappearance and detention. In the course of the proceedings, government documents revealed that Staff Sergeant Ahn had died around 1975. Kim Yong-kyu, who defected from the Liaison Bureau of the Korean Workers revealed that Ahn had been caught while trying to escape, tortured, and shot; his wife and son were sent to a political prison camp.⁸² On August 28, 2009, the Ministry of National Defense finally declared Staff Sergeant Ahn a POW. In December, the ROK Army Chief of Staff issued a Death Certificate listing the date of Ahn’s death as March 15, 1974 and classifying it as a combat fatality.⁸³

Minister Rhee Dae-yong: The Vietnam War’s Last Prisoner

On October 3, 1975, police operating under the Provisional Revolutionary Government arrested Rhee Dae-yong, the economic minister at the ROK Embassy in Saigon. Rhee was one of the most experienced and knowledgeable South Korean diplomats in Vietnam, having served as the military attaché and political minister. As the security situation worsened in the spring of 1975, the retired brigadier general had been responsible for coordinating the departure of over 200 South Korean diplomats, family members, and Korean residents of Vietnam. When the final helicopters departed the evacuation point at the U.S. Embassy, Minister Rhee was left behind. He became the senior South Korean diplomat in Vietnam.⁸⁴

Rhee’s efforts to repatriate South Koreans in Vietnam were thwarted by North Korean agents who arrived in Saigon following the collapse of the South Vietnamese government on April 30. Members of North Korea’s diplomatic mission occupied the Continental Paris Hotel, and Pyongyang’s ambassador traveled the streets of Saigon with a police escort. Agents began to surveil the South Korean diplomats and question

members of the Korean community. Consuls Ahn Hee-whan and Suh Byung-ho were arrested in June.

The pressure increased when the U.S. vetoed UN Resolutions on August 12 that would have admitted North and South Vietnam to the world body. The Provisional Revolutionary Government suspended the return of diplomats from allied governments that had supported the Republic of Vietnam during the war. Following strong criticism from U.S. President Gerald Ford, the provisional Saigon government allowed diplomats from Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Republic of China, Thailand and the U.S. to return. However, under likely pressure from North Korea, the Provisional Revolutionary Government refused to allow South Korean diplomats to leave the country. North Korean agents increased their surveillance of Minister Rhee and began interrogating embassy personnel. Police arrested 15 South Korean diplomats, sending them to Chihwa Prison in Saigon. Over the next year, the Vietnamese released all the diplomats except for Minister Rhee and Consuls Ahn and Suh.

Minister Rhee's greatest fear was that he would be sent to North Korea. For the first three years, a Vietnamese officer who had been educated in North Korea interrogated the imprisoned diplomats. In late September 1978, Minister Rhee was taken to a private residence in Saigon where two North Korean agents called Rhee a war criminal and promised that he would be pardoned if he went to Pyongyang. Their tactics became increasingly personal as the sessions progressed. Minister Rhee had been raised by a sister in Hwanghae Province, who remained in the north when he had left for the south. The older agent recounted stories from their youth, intimating that they had questioned Rhee's sister at length.⁸⁵ Their tone alternated between accommodating and threatening. In an English-language diary that he kept throughout his captivity, Rhee recalled:

Your sister asked the International Red Cross to bring you back to her. You will go to Pyongyang [sic]. You should write your statement as to why you choose North Korea over South Korea. If you don't, we will write it for you and distribute it to news media people.⁸⁶

Minister Rhee repeatedly refused the agents' entreaties and threats; the North Korean agents ended their interrogations in mid-October.

At the same time Rhee, Ahn and Suh were being questioned in Saigon, diplomats from North Korea, South Korea, and Vietnam were meeting in

New Delhi. The closed-door tripartite conference ran from July 1978 to May 1979, facilitated by the International Committee of the Red Cross. Although Vietnam appeared willing to release the envoys, North Korea scuttled the talks. Seoul and Hanoi continued the talks with Sweden serving as an intermediary. After five years in captivity, Minister Rhee and Consuls Ahn and Suh arrived in Seoul on April 12, 1980, the last prisoners of the Vietnam War.⁸⁷

The Fall of the Partisan Generals

On January 19, 1968, North Korean operatives attacked the ROK Presidential Residence. Although South Korean military and police forces repelled the attack by killing 30 and capturing one, the North Koreans had crossed the Demilitarized Zone and approached within 500 meters of the Blue House.

Two days later, North Korean air and naval forces attacked and seized the *USS Pueblo*. The two incidents, which occurred at the same time as the Tet Offensive in Vietnam, brought about an immediate reaction from the U.S. and ROK Governments. Washington ordered the aircraft carrier *USS Enterprise* to a station off the North Korean coast. Park Chung-hee, who was shaken by the attack on his residence, placed all forces on high alert.

The two attacks strained relations between North Vietnam and North Korea. The Romanian ambassador to North Korea reported “a conspicuous cold attitude on behalf of the Vietnamese diplomats (from the delegation of the National Liberation Front, NLF, and from the Embassy of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam) toward the North Korean comrades.”⁸⁸

We believe that there are other factors contributing to this deterioration [of relations between the Vietnamese and the North Koreans], namely the *USS Pueblo* incident and the incident in Seoul, through which the North Koreans muted any similarity of the events in Vietnam, which took place at the same time, attracting the attention of the international public opinion on contingent actions without any prospects and without an adequate revolutionary basis (in South Korea—our note).

The North Vietnamese ambassador and the NLF Representative in Pyongyang skipped the February 8 Army Day Anniversary to express their displeasure with North Korea's actions.⁸⁹

The failure of the Blue House raid to achieve its objectives, combined with a strong show of force by the U.S. following the *Pueblo* incident, was disconcerting to Kim Il Sung. The raid on the Blue House failed to kill President Park or incite a popular uprising against his government. The seizure of the *USS Pueblo* placed Kim in conflict with the U.S. at the same time support from his traditional allies was in question. Despite the efforts of the partisan generals, the North Korean military remained inferior to the forces arrayed across the Demilitarized Zone and positioned in the East Sea. In the months that followed, Kim removed the partisan generals from positions of influence in his government. Choi Kwang was relieved as Chief of the North Korean General Staff in 1969.⁹⁰ His wife, Kim Ok-sun, was forced to step down as Chairman of the Korean Democratic Women's Union.

Conclusion

North Korea's secret war in Vietnam was linked to the partisan generals. Their rise facilitated Pyongyang's early support to Hanoi and their downfall contributed to the end of North Korea's support to North Vietnam. As noted, material support appears to have peaked in 1967; scholars who have examined the limited information on North Korean aid to North Vietnam have yet to find any evidence of Pyongyang providing Hanoi with material support after 1968. The two governments curtailed the deployment of North Korean aviators in early 1969. However, the poor performance of North Korean Air Force pilots no doubt contributed to this decision. A small number of PSYOPS specialists continued to support the North Vietnamese Army until 1971. There is no information on when the last engineers and tunneling specialists left Vietnam.

On March 27, 2000, Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun visited the graves of the 14 North Koreans killed during the Vietnam War. It was the first official recognition of North Korea's involvement in the war. The following year, Kim Yong-nam, ceremonial Head of State, visited the tombs. On June 19, 2002, diplomats from the North Korean Embassy in Hanoi and Vietnamese provincial Communist Party officials held a graveside ceremony, bringing an end to North Korea's war in Vietnam. The remains were disinterred and flown back to North Korea. They left

the headstones behind, the most visible reminder of Pyongyang's support for its socialist ally.

Notes:

¹ "N. Korea sent pilots, military supplies during Vietnam War," Kyodo, July 7, 2001

² Christos G. Frentzos, "Casualties of War: The Legacy of South Korean Participation in the Vietnam Conflict," *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Volume XXIII, Number 1 (Spring/Summer 2019), p. 2.

³ "Journal of Soviet Ambassador to the DPRK A.M. Puzanov for 7 July 1957," July 7, 1957, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF F. 0102, Op. 13, P. 72, Delo 5, Listy 131-145. Translated for NKIDP by Gary Goldberg. Available online at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115632>

⁴ "Journal of Soviet Ambassador to the DPRK A.M. Puzanov for 1 August 1957," August 1, 1957, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF F. 0102, Op. 13, P. 72, Delo 5, Listy 165-192. Translated for NKIDP by Gary Goldberg. Available online at <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115641> and "Journal of Soviet Ambassador to the DPRK A.M. Puzanov for 7 August 1957," August 7, 1957, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF F. 0102, Op. 13, P. 72, Delo 5, Listy 165-192. Translated for NKIDP by Gary Goldberg. Available online at <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115643>

⁵ "Amid Warm Welcome of Chinese and Vietnamese Friends," *Korea Today*, Number 33, (Pyongyang: DPRK Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959), cited in Benjamin R. Young, "The Origins of North Korea-Vietnam Solidarity: The Vietnam War and the DPRK," North Korea International Documentation Project Working Paper #7, (Washington: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars: 2019), p. 3.

⁶ 이광길, "김정은 위원장은 '할아버지 길' 따라 갈까?" *통일뉴스*, February 20, 2019, Available online at <http://www.tongilnews.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=127869>.

⁷ Dae-sook Suh, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 176-208.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 212-3 and p. 217.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 226-7.

¹² "Chosŏn inminŭn hyŏnggjejŏng wŏllam inminege mugirŭl modŭn p'ohamhan hyŏngt'aeuŭi chiwŏnŭl tahal kŏshimyo yoch'ŏngi issŭl kyŏngue chiwŏn'gunŭl p'agyŏnhanŭn choch'irŭl ch'wihal kŏshida,," *Rodong Sinmun*, March 27, 1965, cited in Young.

¹³ Dae-sook Suh, "Arms and the Hammer and Sickle: Kim Il Sung and the Rise of the Partisan Generals in the 1960s," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Volume 1, Issue 2 (1989), pp. 217-239.

¹⁴ Dae-sook Suh, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader*, p. 122.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 122-3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

- ¹⁸ “Chosŏn nyŏsŏngdŭrŭn namp’yŏn’gwa adŭltaltŭrŭl nambu wŏllam inminŭl chijihanŭn chiwŏn’gunŭro ttŏna ponael kŏshida,” *Rodong Sinmun*, April 7, 1965, cited in Young.
- ¹⁹ Pierre Asselin, “Le Thanh Nghi’s Tour of the Socialist Bloc, 1965: Vietnamese Evidence on Hanoi’s Foreign Relations and the Onset of the American War,” *CWIHP e-Dossier*, Number 77 (November 2016), cited in Young, p. 7.
- ²⁰ “Lê Thanh Nghi, ‘Report on Meetings with Party Leaders of Eight Socialist Countries,’” 1965, 8058 – “Báo cáo của Phó Thủ tướng Lê Thanh Nghi về việc gặp các đồng chí lãnh đạo của Đảng và Nhà nước 8 nước xã hội chủ nghĩa năm 1965,” Phủ Thủ tướng, Vietnam National Archives Center 3 (Hanoi), obtained by Pierre Asselin and translated by Merle Pribbenow, cited in Young, p. 7.
- ²¹ “Cable from the Chinese Embassy in North Korea, ‘Supplement to the Cable of 25 September 1965,’” September 26, 1965, PRC FMA 109-02845-01, 4, translated by Charles Kraus, cited in Young, p. 8.
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ Ministry of Defense Central Archives, Central Military Part Committee Collection, File Number 433, cited in *Bien Nien su kien BTM trong KCCM 1954-1975 [The General Staff During the Resistance War Against the United States, 1954-1975: Chronology of Events]*.
- ²⁴ Memorandum by the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, July 2, 1968, in MOL, KTS, 1968, 58. doboz, 2, 002374/1968, cited in Balazs Szalontai, “In the Shadow of Vietnam: A New Look at North Korea’s Militant Strategy, 1962–1970,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Volume 14, Issue 4 (Fall 2012), p.139.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ Merle Pribbenow, “North Korean Pilots in the Skies over Vietnam,” *North Korea International Documentation Project*, (Washington: The Wilson Center, November 2011), pp. 2-5, available online at https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/NKIDP_eDossier_2_North_Korean_Pilots_in_Vietnam_War.pdf
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- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ Luu Huy Chao [Luu Huy Chao] (with Thuy Huong Duong [Thùy Hương Dương] *Us and the MiG-17s [Chúng tôi và MiG-17]*, [Translated by Merle Pribbenow], (Hanoi: People’s Public Security Publishing House, Hanoi, 2009), p. 186.
- ³⁰ *Tuoi Tre* Weekend Edition, August 17, 2007 cited in Pribbenow, p. 1.
- ³¹ Young, p. 10.
- ³² Kham Nguyen and Ju-min Park, “From comrades to assassins, North Korea and Vietnam eye new chapter with Trump-Kim summit,” *Reuters*, February 15, 2019. Available online at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-usa-vietnam-analysis/from-comrades-to-assassins-north-korea-and-vietnam-eye-new-chapter-with-trump-kim-summit-idUSKCN1Q40U6>
- ³³ *History of the General Staff During the Resistance War Against the Americans to Save the Nation (1954-1975)*, Volume 3 (1965-1968), Tran Quoc Tuan, Editor, (Hanoi: People’s Army Publishing House, 2007), p. 157.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 84-85.
- ³⁵ Colonel Nguyễn Văn Minh, ed., *Lịch Sử Kháng Chiến Chống Mỹ Cứu Nước, Tập V, Tổng Tiến Công và Nổi Dậy Năm 1968* (History of the Resistance War Against the Americans to Save the Nation, 1954-1975, Volume V: The 1968 General Offensive and

Uprisings) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2001), 271, quoted in Merle Pribbenow, “North Korean Psychological Warfare in Vietnam,” March 19, 2018, The Wilson Center, available online at <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/north-korean-psychological-warfare-operations-south-vietnam>

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Bui Vu Minh, “Nhớ ngày “tác chiến” trên làn sóng,” [Remembering the Time of “Battles” Over the Airwaves], *People’s Army*, Translated by Merle Pribbenow, April 28, 2010, Available online at

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Cao Van Hoach, “Rừng Phước Tân, Khu Rừng “Bốn Chống”” [Phuoc Tan Forest, the “Four Oppose” Forest], Translated by Merle Pribbenow, Unpublished manuscript held at the Hai Phu Library, August 2002, Available online <http://www.thuvienhaiphu.com.vn/datafile1/pymtdn/rungphuocan.pdf>

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⁴¹ Sin-jae Lee, “A Study on the Korea Force Vietnam Network (KFVN)’s Installation and Operation during the Vietnam War,” [Korean], *Military History*, Volume 92 (September 2014), pp. 65-101.

⁴² Ha Van Ngoc, “Cuộc chiến không tiếng súng,” [The Silent War (literal translation: The War Fought Without the Sound of Gunfire)], Part 1, Translated by Merle Pribbenow, *Quang Nam Online*, March 12, 2015, <http://baoquangnam.vn/dat-va-nguoi-xu-quang/viet-ve-de-tai-chien-tranh-cach-mang/201503/cuoc-chien-khong-tieng-sung-592721/>

⁴³ Ha Van Ngoc, “Cuộc chiến không tiếng súng,” [The Silent War (literal translation: The War Fought Without the Sound of Gunfire)], Part 2, Translated by Merle Pribbenow, *Quang Nam Online*, March 13, 2015, <http://baoquangnam.vn/dat-va-nguoi-xu-quang/viet-ve-de-tai-chien-tranh-cach-mang/201503/cuoc-chien-khong-tieng-sung-593027/>

⁴⁴ Merle Pribbenow, “North Korean Psychological Warfare in Vietnam,”

⁴⁵ Lê Thanh Nghị, ‘Report on Meetings with Party Leaders of Eight Socialist Countries,’ 1965, cited in Young, pp. 7-8.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Balazs Szalontai, “In the Shadow of Vietnam: A New Look at North Korea’s Militant Strategy, 1962–1970,” p.139.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Referenced in Suh, p. 385.

⁵⁰ Balazs Szalontai, “How the North Korean-Vietnamese friendship turned sour”

NKNews, November 1, 2017, available online at <https://www.nknews.org/2017/10/how-the-north-korean-vietnamese-friendship-turned-sour/>

⁵¹ Young, p. 10.

⁵² Heo, p. 152.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 147.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 146.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 147.

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- ⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 152.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 147.
- ⁵⁸ 최용호, *한권으로 읽는 베트남전쟁과 한국군*, (서울: 국방부 군사편찬연구소, 2004), p. 223.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 429.
- ⁶⁰ *South Vietnam, pre-1975: Korean Prisoner*. 1967. Manuscript/Mixed Material. <https://www.loc.gov/item/powmia/pw121614/>.
- ⁶¹ *South Vietnam, pre-1975: U.S. and Korean PWs, and German Civilians Detained in VS*. 1973. Manuscript/Mixed Material. <https://www.loc.gov/item/powmia/pw129264/>.
- ⁶² 고경태, “남북이 모두 버린 국군 포로 안학수 하사를 아십니까?” *한겨레*, 2014.1.3, available online at http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/618308.html#csidxea0649f329db159b43f75d11adbd11a
- ⁶³ U.S. Government reports on the number and location of South Korean POWs compiled by Heo Man-ho from The Vietnam-Era Prisoner of War/Missing-in-Action Database, The Library of Congress Federal Research Division, available online at <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pow/powhome.html>; Statistics on U.S. Troop Strength were compiled by the Defense Manpower Data Center and listed on The American War Library, available at <https://www.americanwarlibrary.com/vietnam/vwatl.htm>; Statistics on ROK Troop Strength depicted in 최용호, p.429.
- ⁶⁴ Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency website, available online at <https://www.dpaa.mil/About/Vision-Mission-Values/>
- ⁶⁵ Heo, p. 147.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 141.
- ⁶⁷ 조성식, “한국판 빠삐용’, 베트남전 포로 박정환의 격투 인생,” *신동아*, 2008.7.4, available online at <https://shindonga.donga.com/Library/3/02/13/107602/1>
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid.
- ⁷⁰ Man-ho Heo interview with Park Jeong-hwan on November 11, 2001, cited in Heo, p. 153.
- ⁷¹ Ibid.
- ⁷² Ibid, p. 154.
- ⁷³ 고경태, “남북이 모두 버린 국군 포로 안학수 하사를 아십니까?”
- ⁷⁴ 고경태, “베트남전 국군포로 1호” *한겨레*, 2014.1.3, available online at http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/618306.html
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- ⁷⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid.
- ⁷⁸ 고경태, “남북이 모두 버린 국군 포로 안학수 하사를 아십니까?”

⁷⁹ 조성관.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Heo, p. 154.

⁸² 고경태, “남북이 모두 버린 국군 포로 안학수 하사를 아십니까?”

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Memoir of Minister Lee Daeyong [Former Re-education Camp Prisoner] - LN775-86, “Story of A Vietnamese POW In Vietnam,” September 1, 1981, p. 19, Box 11, Folder 7, Sedgwick Tourison Collection, Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/items.php?item=2861107001>, Accessed November 14, 2019.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 194

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 193.

⁸⁷ “3 Diplomats Return Home After Released by Vietnam: Detained Amid ’75 Fall of Saigon,” *The Korea Herald*, April 20, 1980, p. 1.

⁸⁸ Telegram from Pyongyang to Bucharest, Top Secret, No. 76.044, Regular, February 16, 1968, available online at

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Choi Kwang returned to the highest levels of the North Korean government when he was named Vice Chairman of the DPRK National Defence Commission in 1990. He served as Minister of the People’s Armed Forces from 1995 until his death in 1997. Choi Kwang is the only person outside of the Kim Family to have been awarded the title Marshal of the Korean People’s Army.