

## COUNTRY PROFILE: NORTH KOREA

July 2007

### COUNTRY

**Formal Name:** Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK; Chosŏn Minjujuŭi Inmin Konghwaguk).

조선 민주주의 인민 공화국

**Short Form:** North Korea (Chosŏn). 조선

**Term for Citizen(s):** North Korean(s) (Chosŏn Inmin). 조선 인민

**Capital:** P'yŏngyang. 평양

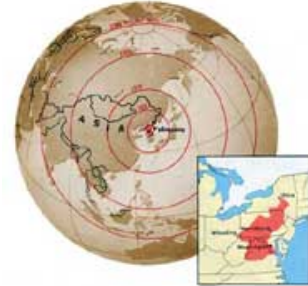
**Major Cities:** The largest city is P'yŏngyang, with a reported 3.3 million inhabitants in 2005. According to the 1993 census, others, based on population size, are Namp'o, Hamhŭng, Ch'ŏngjin, Kaesŏng, Sinŭiju, and Wŏnsan (all with populations of more than 300,000).

**Independence:** August 15, 1945, from Japan; Democratic People's Republic of Korea founded September 9, 1948.

**National Public Holidays:** New Year's Day (January 1), Kim Jong Il's Birthday (February 16–17), International Women's Day (March 8), Day of the Sun (Kim Il Sung's Birthday, April 15–16), Army Day (April 25), International Workers' Day (May 1), Fatherland Liberation War Victory Day (July 27), National Liberation Day (August 15), Democratic People's Republic of Korea Founding Day (September 9), Korean Workers' Party Founding Day (October 10), and Constitution Day (December 27). Also celebrated are Lunar New Year's Day (variable date in January or February), Surinal (spring festival, variable date in April or May, formerly called Tano or Dano), and Han'gawi (autumn festival, September 28–30, formerly called Ch'usŏk).

**Flag:** The North Korean flag has three horizontal bands of blue (top), red (triple width), and blue; the red band is edged in white; on the hoist side of the red band is a white disk with a red five-pointed star. The two blue stripes symbolize peace, the red stripe stands for socialism, and the white stripes represent the purity of the North Korean ideals.

The five-pointed red star indicates the leadership of the Korean Workers' Party. The white disc surrounding the star suggests the traditional symbol for the universe—T'aeguk.



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## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

**Prehistory:** Paleolithic excavations show that humans inhabited the Korean Peninsula 500,000 years ago. From around 7,000 to 8,000 years ago, Neolithic humans also inhabited the area, leaving behind pottery and ground and polished stone tools. Around 2000 B.C., a new pottery culture spread into the peninsula from China.

**Early History:** By the fourth century B.C., a number of walled-town states had been noted in Korea by Chinese officials. The most illustrious site, known to historians as Old Chosŏn, was located in what today is the southern part of northeastern China and northwestern Korea. Old Chosŏn civilization was based on bronze culture and consisted of a political federation of walled towns. The boundary formed by the Amnok (Yalu) and Tuman (Tumen) rivers has been recognized for centuries as Korea's northern limit. However, this was not always the case; Koreans ranged far beyond this border into northeastern China and Siberia, where sizable Korean minorities still live in the twenty-first century.

**Three Kingdoms:** With the rise of the power and expansion of the Han empire in China (206 B.C.–A.D. 220), Old Chosŏn declined. A new iron culture gradually emerged on the Korean Peninsula, and in the first three centuries A.D. a large number of walled-town states developed in southern Korea. Among them, the state of Paekche was the most important as it conquered its southern neighboring states and expanded northward to the area around present-day Seoul. To the north, near the Amnok, the state of Koguryŏ had emerged by the first century A.D. and expanded in all directions up through 313 A.D. A third state—Silla—developed in the central part of the peninsula. These three states give name to the Three Kingdoms period (A.D. 246–668). Although eventually Silla, allied with China, defeated both Paekche and Koguryŏ to unify the peninsula by 668, modern-day North Korean historians claim the Koguryŏ legacy as a key development in their history. During the Three Kingdoms period, Confucian statecraft and Buddhism were introduced to the Korean Peninsula and served as unifying factors. By 671 Silla had seized Chinese-held territories in the south and pushed the remnants of Koguryŏ farther northward; Chinese commandaries (which dated back at least to the second century B.C.) had been driven off the peninsula by 676, thereby guaranteeing that the Korean people would develop independently, largely without outside influences.

**Koryŏ Dynasty:** Silla's indigenous civilization flourished. Its aristocracy, centered in the capital, Kyŏngju, located in southeastern Korea near the modern-day port of Pusan, was renowned for its high level of culture. Among its most notable artifacts is the world's oldest example of woodblock printing, the Dharani Sutra, dating back to 751. As Silla declined, a new state, known to historians as Later Koguryŏ, emerged in the central peninsula. When Wang Kŏn, the founder of the new state, assumed the throne in 918, he shortened the dynastic name from Koguryŏ to Koryŏ, the word from which the modern name Korea emerged. In 930 Koryŏ defeated the forces of Later Paekche (which also had emerged as Silla declined) and the remnants of Silla. The Koryŏ Dynasty (918–1392), with its capital at Kaesŏng, forged a tradition of aristocratic continuity that lasted well beyond Koryŏ itself into the modern era. The Koryŏ elite admired the civilization that emerged from China's Song Dynasty (618–1279), and an active exchange of trade goods and artistic styles took place during this period. In the thirteenth century, Koryŏ was subjected to invasions by the Mongols. Once defeated, Koryŏ's armies, using Korean ships,

participated in the ill-fated Mongol invasions of Japan in 1274 and 1281. The Mongols continued to hold domains in Koryŏ even after their defeat by China's Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), and the Koryŏ court divided into pro-Mongol and pro-Ming factions.

**Chosŏn Dynasty:** The pro-Ming faction at the Koryŏ court was victorious, and its leader, Yi Sŏng-gye, founded Korea's longest dynasty, the Chosŏn (1392–1910), with its capital at Seoul. Yi Sŏng-gye initiated land reforms, declared state ownership of property, and built a new tax base. Although there were some traditional class structures that were uniquely Korean, Chosŏn society became deeply influenced by Confucianism; a new secular society developed, and a new Korean mass culture emerged. A phonetic-based alphabet—*han'gŭl*—was developed in the fifteenth century by a king who also fostered the extensive use of movable metal type for book publications. *Han'gŭl* did not come into general use until the twentieth century. North Korea now uses *han'gŭl* exclusively, whereas in the South, Chinese characters are also used along with *han'gŭl*.

Chosŏn faced major Japanese invasions in 1592 and 1597 that brought devastation to the peninsula. Although the Japanese were defeated and Chosŏn began to recover, a new emerging force—the Manchu—invaded both Korea and China. The Manchu established a new dynasty in China—the Qing (1644–1911)—and established tributary relations with Chosŏn. Chosŏn then experienced a long period of peace. However, as China declined and Japan emerged as a modernizing regional power in the late nineteenth century, Seoul began reforms in an effort to keep the foreign powers at bay. Nevertheless, in 1876 Japan imposed an unequal treaty on the Chosŏn court that opened three Korean ports to Japanese commerce and gave Japanese nationals extraterritorial rights. China's influence over Korea came to a definitive end as a result of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95. At the same time, a large peasant rebellion—led by Tonghak (Eastern Learning) Movement advocates—broke out, and the Chosŏn court invited in Chinese troops. By 1900 the Korean Peninsula had become the focus of an intense rivalry among the foreign powers then seeking to carve out spheres of influence in East Asia. Japan and Russia both sought to protect their own interests in Korea by dividing the kingdom in two at the thirty-eighth parallel. Following the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05, in which Japan was victorious, Russia recognized Japan's paramount rights in Korea. Unchallenged internationally, Japan turned Korea into its colony in 1910.

**Japanese Occupation:** From 1910 to 1945, Korea was under the yoke of Japanese colonial control. Tokyo imposed a Japanese ruling elite, a new central state administration, a modern non-Confucian education system, Japanese investment, and even the Japanese language. This unwelcome imposition was considered illegitimate and humiliating by Koreans and built on a traditional love (by some of the elite)/hate relationship with the island empire. Inevitably, Korean nationalism and an armed resistance emerged. Nationalist and communist groups developed in the 1920s to set the scene for the future divisiveness on the Korean Peninsula. The Korean Communist Party (KCP) was founded in Seoul in 1925. At the same time, various nationalist groups emerged, including an exiled Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai. When Japan invaded neighboring Manchuria in 1931, Korean and Chinese guerrillas joined forces to fight the common enemy. After the defeat of Japan in 1945, resistance to Japan became the main legitimating doctrine of North Korea; North Koreans trace the origin of their army, leadership, and ideology back to this resistance. For the next five decades, the top North Korean leadership

would be dominated by a core group that had fought the Japanese in the old Manchu homeland, Manchuria. One of the guerrilla leaders was Kim Il Sung (1912–94).

**Divided Nation and the Korean War:** Despite Koreans' aspiration for independence and unity, the end of World War II in the Pacific saw the division of the Korean Peninsula at the thirty-eighth parallel. Soviet troops, including Korean resistance fighters, occupied the northern half in August 1945, and U.S. troops occupied the southern half in September. The Cold War had arrived in Korea. Separate state institutions emerged on both sides of the thirty-eighth parallel, and in February 1946 an Interim People's Committee led by Kim Il Sung became the first central government. Land reform followed, and the KCP merged with other political forces to create the new and powerful Korean Workers' Party (KWP) in August 1946. During the next two years, Kim and his allies consolidated their political power, and he became the preeminent figure in the North. On September 9, 1948, three weeks after the Republic of Korea was established in the South, Kim declared the establishment of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea) with its capital at P'yŏngyang. While balancing relations with both a newly unified and communist-led People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union, Kim prepared for war with the South. South Korea, with U.S. help, had suppressed the guerrilla threat in the South, but Kim ordered his troops across the thirty-eighth parallel, and the Korean War, or, as the North Koreans call it, the Fatherland Liberation War (1950–53) broke out on June 25, 1950. North Korea's successful drive deep into the South was countered by the combined U.S. and South Korean attack all the way to the Amnok (Yalu) River in the fall of 1950. At that point, China sent its own troops to fight with the Korean People's Army, and the U.S.–South Korea forces were driven out of the North. After a two-year stalemate, an armistice was signed on July 27, 1953, and a demilitarized zone (DMZ) was established at the thirty-eighth parallel. The armistice and the heavily guarded DMZ are still in effect and are symbolic of both the division of the Korean Peninsula and the commitment of the United States to contain the North.

**The Era of Kim Il Sung:** Kim's regime established a socialist command economy, with priority development of heavy industry. Agriculture was collectivized. A Marxist-Leninist political model of autonomy and self-reliance—called *chuch'e* (sometimes rendered *juch'e*)—was popularized starting in 1955 as the guiding ideology in politics, economics, national defense, and foreign policy. By 1956, Kim Il Sung had achieved unchallenged supremacy in the KWP. With tight control over all aspects of the North Korean polity and society, Kim Il Sung became the "Great Leader" and the object of a pervasive personality cult.

After years of intransigence between North and South, meetings were held that led to the July 4, 1972, announcement that both sides would seek reunification peacefully, independent of outside forces, and with common efforts toward creating a "great national unity" that would transcend the many differences between the two systems. Despite this announcement, when the United States dropped its decision to withdraw troops from Korea in 1979, North Korea upgraded its army and began building invasion tunnels under the DMZ. In the early 1980s, there were three-way talks among the United States, North Korea, and South Korea, and China sponsored talks between P'yŏngyang and Washington. U.S.–Soviet détente also mitigated North Korea's warlike stance, although South Korea's growing prestige and economic success put P'yŏngyang on the defensive. Some breakthroughs occurred, such as the visits of southerners from divided families to the North and South Korean economic investment in the North. Nevertheless, other tensions,

such as those created by North Korea's development of nuclear weapons capability, arms sales to nations opposed to the United States, and support to terrorist activities and international drug trafficking, fueled the divisiveness.

**The Era of Kim Jong Il:** The Kim Il Sung era suddenly came to an end when Kim died unexpectedly on July 8, 1994. Planned North Korean-U.S. talks in Geneva were postponed. The succession was publicly slow in coming. Although Kim's son, Kim Jong Il, had been groomed as heir apparent since 1980 and had succeeded his father as chairman of the National Defense Commission and commander in chief of the armed forces in April 1993, he did not emerge as general secretary of the KWP until October 1997. Like his father before him, Kim Jong Il, the "Dear Leader," continued to rule in dictatorial fashion, and North Korea continued as the world's most reclusive society amidst severe economic decline, famine, and an increasingly disaffected society.

## GEOGRAPHY

**Location:** North Korea is located in the northern half of the Korean Peninsula, which extends southward from the northeastern part of the Asian continent and is surrounded on three sides by water. North Korea is bordered by the Republic of Korea (South Korea) to the south, China to the north and northwest, and Russia to the northeast.



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**Size:** North Korea occupies about 55 percent of the total land area of the Korean Peninsula, or approximately 120,410 square kilometers of land area and 130 square kilometers of water area.

**Land Boundaries:** The three nations that border North Korea are to the south, South Korea (a 238-kilometer border); to the north, China (a 1,416-kilometer border); and to the northeast, Russia (a 19-kilometer border). The border with South Korea is marked by a 4-kilometer-wide Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The DMZ extends 238 kilometers over land and 3 kilometers over the sea.

**Length of Coastline:** The total coastline measures 2,495 kilometers. The west coast is on West Korea Bay and the Yellow Sea (or West Sea, as known to Koreans). The east coast is on the East Korea Bay and what Koreans call the East Sea but which is recognized by the United Nations and the U.S. Board on Geographic Names as the Sea of Japan.

**Maritime Claims:** North Korea claims a 12-nautical-mile territorial sea and an exclusive economic zone of 200 nautical miles. It also has established a military boundary line of 50 nautical miles from its coast on the Sea of Japan (East Sea) side of the peninsula and the exclusive economic zone limit in the Yellow Sea (West Sea) in which all foreign ships and aircraft without permission from the North Korean government are banned.

**Topography:** Approximately 80 percent of the land area is made up of mountain ranges separated by deep, narrow valleys. All mountains on the Korean Peninsula higher than 2,000

meters above sea level are in North Korea. The highest peak, on the northern border with China, is Paektu-san at 2,744 meters above sea level. There are wide coastal plains on the west coast and discontinuous coastal plains on the east coast.

**Principal Rivers:** North Korea's longest river is the Amnok (Yalu) River (790 kilometers), which flows west into northern part of West Korea Bay. It is navigable for 678 kilometers. The Tuman (Tumen) is the second longest (521 kilometers); it flows into the East Korea Bay but is navigable for only 81 kilometers. Both the Amnok and Tuman rivers form part of the boundary between North Korea and China. The third longest river is the Taedong (397 kilometers and navigable for 245 kilometers), which flows through P'yŏngyang and into the southern part of West Korea Bay.

**Climate:** North Korea has long, cold, dry winters and short, hot, humid summers. The temperatures range between  $-8^{\circ}$  C in December and  $27^{\circ}$  C in August. Approximately 60 percent of the annual rainfall occurs between June and September; August is the wettest month with an average rainfall of 317 millimeters.

**Natural Resources:** North Korea's major natural resources include coal, copper, fluor spar, gold, graphite, iron ore, lead, magnesite, pyrites, salt, tungsten, and zinc. Water is an important source of hydroelectric power generation.

**Land Use:** About 80 percent of North Korea's land is mountainous. According to U.S. Government estimates, only 22.4 percent of the land is arable, and only 1.6 percent is in permanent crops. Based on 2002 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates, 20.7 percent of the land, or 25,000 square kilometers, is arable. Of this arable land, about 8 percent is in permanent crops. According to a 1998 U.S. government estimate, North Korea had about 14,600 square kilometers of irrigated land.

**Environmental Factors:** Current environmental concerns include water pollution, inadequate supplies of potable water, water-borne diseases, deforestation, and soil erosion and degradation.

**Time Zone:** North Korea has one time zone: P'yŏngyang Standard Time (Greenwich Mean Time—GMT—plus nine hours).

## SOCIETY

**Population:** North Korea's population was estimated in July 2006 at 23,113,019. The annual population growth rate for the same year was 0.8 percent. United Nations (UN) estimates for 2007 indicate that North Korea's population density stands at 188 persons per square kilometer; 40 percent of the population lives in rural and 60 percent in urban areas. There is no legal migration from North Korea, and after the Korean War (1950–53) only 5,000 North Koreans successfully reached South Korea until the turn of the century. However, in 2003 and 2004 unprecedented numbers of North Koreans—estimates range between 140,000 and 300,000—fled to China with hopes of reaching South Korea. Only a relative few did reach South Korea but, according to the South Korean Ministry of Unification, as of February 2007, more than 10,000

North Koreans were living in the South. This number contrasts with only nine living there in 1990, 41 in 1995, and 312 in 2000.

**Demography:** According to U.S. estimates of North Korea's age structure, 23.8 percent of inhabitants are zero to 14 years of age, 68 percent are 15 to 64 years of age, and 8.2 percent are 65 and older. Estimates made in 2006 indicate a birthrate of nearly 15.5 births per 1,000 population and a death rate of just over 7.1 deaths per 1,000. In 2006 life expectancy was estimated at 74.5 years for women and 68.9 for men, or nearly 71.6 years total. Other projections are much lower for both women and men. Life expectancy is not expected to improve as the first decade of the twenty-first century proceeds. The infant mortality rate was estimated at nearly 22.3 per 1,000 live births in 2006. The total fertility rate for 2006 has been estimated at 2.1 children per woman.

**Ethnic Groups:** Ethnic Koreans constitute the vast majority of the racially homogeneous population. North Korea has a few Chinese- and Japanese-speaking communities.

**Language:** Korean is the national language. Dialects of Korean, some of which are not mutually intelligible, are spoken throughout the country and generally coincide with provincial boundaries. The written language employs the phonetic-based Han'gŭl (or Chosŏn'gul) alphabet.

**Religion:** Traditionally, Koreans have practiced Buddhism and observed the tenets of Confucianism. Besides a small number of practicing Buddhists (about 10,000, under the auspices of the official Korean Buddhist Federation), North Korea also has some Christians (about 10,000 Protestants and 4,000 Roman Catholics, under the auspices of the Korean Christian Federation) and some 2.7 million indigenous Ch'ŏndogyo (Heavenly Way) adherents. However, religious activities are almost nonexistent. Three hundred Buddhist temples exist, but they are considered cultural relics rather than active places of worship. There are several schools for religious education, including three-year religious colleges for training Protestant and Buddhist clergy. In 1989 Kim Il Sung University established a religious studies program, but its graduates usually go on to work in the foreign trade sector. Although the constitution provides for freedom of religious belief, in practice the government severely discourages organized religious activity except as supervised by the aforementioned officially recognized groups. Constitutional changes made in 1992 allow authorized religious gatherings and the construction of buildings for religious use and deleted a clause about freedom of antireligious propaganda. The constitution also stipulates that religion "should not be used for purposes of dragging in foreign powers or endangering public security."

**Education and Literacy:** Education in North Korea is free, compulsory, and universal for 11 years, from ages four to 15, in state-run schools. The national literacy rate for citizens 15 years of age and older is 99 percent. According to North Korean-supplied figures provided in 2000, there were 1.5 million children in 27,017 nursery schools, 748,416 children in 14,167 kindergartens, 1.6 million students in 4,886 four-year primary schools, and 2.1 million students in 4,772 six-year secondary schools. Nearly 1.9 million students attended more than 300 colleges and universities. Data on teachers are much older. In 1988 the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reported that North Korea had 35,000

preprimary, 59,000 primary, 111,000 secondary, 23,000 college and university, and 4,000 other postsecondary teachers.

**Health:** North Korea has a national medical service and health insurance system. As of 2000, some 99 percent of the population had access to sanitation, and 100 percent had access to water, but water was not always potable. Medical treatment is free. In the past, there reportedly has been one doctor for every 700 inhabitants and one hospital bed for every 350 inhabitants. Health expenditures in 2001 were 2.5 percent of gross domestic product, and 73 percent of health expenditures were made in the public sector. There were no reported human immuno-deficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) cases as of 2007. However, it is estimated that between 500,000 and 3 million people died from famine in the 1990s, and a 1998 United Nations (UN) World Food Program report revealed that 60 percent of children suffered from malnutrition, and 16 percent were acutely malnourished. UN statistics for the period 1999–2001 reveal that North Korea’s daily per capita food supply was one of the lowest in Asia, exceeding only that of Cambodia, Laos, and Tajikistan, and one of the lowest worldwide. Because of continuing economic problems, food shortages and chronic malnutrition prevail in the 2000s.

**Welfare:** Housing and food rations traditionally have been heavily subsidized, and health care has been offered for free. However, the party, state, and military elites have had much better care than the average citizen, and there are great inequalities among the various social classes. Natural disasters in the 1990s led to a breakdown in food rationing and a rising inequality of services to the extent that upward of 300,000 North Koreans may have succeeded in fleeing to China in search of food. According to United Nations data, 27 percent of North Korea’s population is at or below the absolute poverty level, living on less than US\$1 per day.

## ECONOMY

**Overview:** North Korea has long had a socialized, centrally planned, and primarily industrialized command economy isolated from the rest of the world. The means of production, which are largely obsolete, are owned by the state through state-run enterprises or collectivized farms. Prices, wages, trade, budget, and banking are under strict government control. Traditionally, poor domestic economic performance was offset with infusions of Soviet aid. But after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the aid stopped and the economy was adversely affected. This situation was then further complicated by severe food shortages that began in 1995–96 and continued in 2007. Massive international food aid deliveries have allowed North Korea to escape mass starvation since the mid-1990s, but the population remains the victim of prolonged malnutrition and deteriorating living conditions. This situation was brought about by a shortage of arable land, collective farming, weather-related problems, and chronic shortages of fertilizer and fuel. In addition, large-scale military expenditures consume resources needed for investment and civilian consumption.

On July 1, 2002, the government announced “economic improvement measures” (use of the term “reform” is avoided), such as creating incentives for factories to operate on a more profitable basis by allowing salaries to increase and prices to rise. Thereafter, more products became



available to cash-paying consumers. The state rationing system also was abolished, foreign-exchange rates were adjusted, free currency exchange was allowed to strengthen popular consumption, and the economy was partially monetized. The adjustments were all aimed at developing a market economy. New management techniques also were introduced with the goal of creating incentives and accountability. Product markets were established, improvements were made to agricultural organizing principles, and agricultural products were allowed to be brought to market using self-managed distribution systems. In June 2003, restrictions also were relaxed on farmers' market activities, which led to an expansion of market activity. At the same time, the regime showed flexibility by increasing the pace of economic reforms, allowing younger-generation, more reform-minded individuals into the leadership, and encouraging further economic cooperation with the South.

**Gross Domestic Product (GDP)/Gross National Product (GNP):** The GDP growth rate was 1 percent per annum in 2006. Based on 2006 estimates, North Korea's purchasing parity power was US\$40 billion.

**Government Budget:** In 2002 projected total revenue and expenditures were US\$10.1 billion.

**Inflation:** The government's all-at-once approach to economic adjustments had the expected effect of generating high levels of inflation. Estimates on the inflation rate are not available, but after the government lifted controls over wages and prices in 2002, the won decreased in value by some 300 percent in a year, and inflation has been chronic.

**Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries:** Agriculture has long been the traditional source of employment and income but, under state control, secondary to industry in emphasis. The agricultural sector was collectivized by 1958. An estimated 30 percent of the land was in agricultural use in 2002, and agriculture produces approximately 30 percent of gross domestic product. Most agricultural land is on plains in the south and west and was subject to flooding in 1995 and 1996 and to drought in 1997 and 2000. The principal crops, according to the size of the yield in 2002, are rice, potatoes, corn, cabbages, apples, soybeans, pulses, and sweet potatoes. Other vegetables, fruits, and berries also make up important parts of the annual crop. In 2002 North Korea reportedly had 48,000 horses, 575,000 head of cattle, and 2.6 million goats. Livestock production, in order of volume, includes pork, eggs, cows' milk, poultry meat, beef and veal, and goat meat. North Korea has always been faced with food shortages, but since the mid-1990s they have become more severe.

Because of oil shortages, most forestry products are used for fuel, with only small amounts of timber (roundwood) going for construction and manufacturing. In 2002, according to Food and Agriculture Organization estimates, North Korea produced 7.1 million meters of roundwood. Fishing provides an important supplement to the diet and for export. The catch in 2001 totaled 200,000 tons of fresh and saltwater fish, shellfish, and mollusks and about 63,700 tons produced using aquaculture.

**Mining and Minerals:** North Korea's major minerals, which are found throughout the nation, are coal, iron ore, cement, nonferrous metals (copper, lead, and zinc), and precious metals (gold and silver). It also has large deposits of magnesite. North Korea exports many of its minerals in

order to gain foreign currency but also uses them domestically for industrial and military purposes. Mining contributed 7.8 percent of gross domestic product in 2002.

**Industry and Manufacturing:** The major industries are machine building, armaments, electric power, chemicals, metallurgy, textiles, and food processing. Industry produced 34 percent of gross domestic product in 2002.

**Energy:** The predominant domestic sources of commercial energy are coal and hydroelectric power. In 2003 about 82 percent of North Korea's primary energy consumption was coal. In that year, North Korea produced an estimated 32.3 million tons (in oil equivalent) of hard coal, lignite, and peat. In 2001 hydroelectric power plants generated about 69 percent of North Korea's electricity, and coal-fired thermal plants produced about 31 percent. Thermal generating capacity is underused because of the shortage of thermal sources. Electricity consumption in 2003 was 17.4 billion kilowatt-hours, accounting for only 55 percent of the previous year's total.

About 6 percent of North Korea's primary energy consumption is from oil. In 2005 North Korea consumed about 25,000 barrels of oil per day and produced only 138 barrels per day. Thus, the country is dependent to the extreme on imports, some of which have been suspended because of international disputes over North Korea's nuclear weapons program. In 2002 an estimated 1 million tons of light petroleum products and 1,529 tons of heavy petroleum products were produced. There may be some oil reserves in West Korea Bay, but exploration efforts have failed to find commercially viable quantities. Seismic survey data have indicated modest deposits of probable oil and natural gas in the Tachon–Najin area near the Tuman River border with China.

The nuclear energy generation sector is involved in major international political discord because of suspicions about the militarization of this capability. Several agreements have been signed that would have led to the construction of light water reactors and training for technical staff to operate them. However, disclosures about North Korea's nuclear weapons program raised international protests and have kept this energy sector from developing.

**Services:** This sector produced 36 percent of gross domestic product in 2002.

**Banking and Finance:** Banks in North Korea, with the exception of the Central Bank and the Farmers Bank, were closed in 1946 and 1947. In 1959 the Farmers Bank was incorporated into the Central Bank, and the Foreign Trade Bank was founded to conduct international business for the Central Bank. Since 1978, six other state banks have been founded to deal with foreign exchange and foreign enterprise exchanges. Moreover, between 1987 and 1996, nine joint-venture and foreign-investment banks were established to attract Koreans overseas to invest in North Korea. North Korea also has four insurance companies.

**Tourism:** North Korea has been a member of the World Tourism Organization since 1987 and allows tourism via the National Directorate of Tourism. By 1999 there were 60 tourist hotels with some 7,500 beds. North Korea's tourist attractions are its extensive mountain scenery and skiing and, for some, its "retro-Stalinist atmosphere." In 2000, the latest year for which tourism figures are available, some 130,000 tourists visited one of the world's most reclusive states. Prices are extremely high. Starting in 1998, officially sponsored tourism from South Korea has been allowed to Mount Kūmgang Tourist Zone, a joint venture between the North Korean

government and South Korea's Hyundai Corporation for a scenic sport area on the southeast coast, near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). In 2003 agreement was reached allowing South Korean tourists to also visit P'yŏngyang. As of October 2004, North Korea held the vice chairmanship of the World Tourism Organization's Commission for East Asia and the Pacific.

**Labor:** The labor force was estimated at about 9.6 million workers in 2007, approximately 36 percent of whom worked in agriculture, 64 percent in industry and services. There is a general shortage of both skilled and unskilled labor.

**Foreign Economic Relations:** Based on 2005 figures, North Korea's major import partners are China (42 percent), South Korea (28 percent), Russia (9 percent), and Thailand (8 percent). As of 2005, imports totaled US\$2.6 billion c.i.f (cost, insurance, and freight). The major imported commodities were petroleum, coking coal, machinery and equipment, textiles, and grain. North Korea's main export partners in 2005 were China (35 percent), South Korea (24 percent), Thailand (9 percent), and Japan (9 percent). In 2005 exports totaled an estimated US\$1.4 billion f.o.b (free on board). The main export commodities were minerals, metallurgical products, manufactures (including armaments), textiles, and fishery products. Until 1988 there was no trade between North and South Korea; since then it has increased steadily, reaching more than US\$1 billion in both 2005 and 2006, which placed South Korea as North Korea's second-largest trade partner after China.

**Trade Balance:** North Korea has a poor balance of trade. In 2005 imports totaled US\$2.6 billion while exports were only US\$1.4 billion.

**Balance of Payments:** No information available.

**External Debt:** Since the 1970s, North Korea has been in debt to many nations, including France, Germany, Sweden, Austria, and Japan. Additionally, North Korea is in debt to its communist allies, the Soviet Union—with Russia as the successor to old Soviet debts—and China. Only a few of these creditors have been paid since the 1980s. As of 1996, North Korea had an estimated US\$12 billion in external debts, mostly owed to Russia and China (US\$7.4 billion, or 62 percent) and the rest to Western nations and Japan (US\$4.6 billion, or 38 percent). Between 1999 and 2001, North Korea received a total of US\$394.8 million in bilateral and multilateral official development assistance. In 2001 and 2002, P'yŏngyang was the recipient of some US\$367.9 million in socioeconomic development assistance from the United Nations system.

**Foreign Investment:** North Korea has a limited ability to attract foreign investments because of the amount of debt that is owed to so many different countries. However, this impediment has not stopped North Korea from pursuing new foreign investments, particularly for its first special economic, or free-trade, zone at Najin–Sonbŏng in northeast North Korea. This zone is accessible to Russia by railroad and to China by road but to the rest of North Korea only by helicopter. The Sinŭiju Special Administrative Region, located on the western end of the border with China, is a self-managed entity aimed at fostering bilateral trade. Two other economic zones are the Mount Kŭmgang scenic and sport-tourist zone and the Kaesŏng Special Industrial Zone,

both in southeast North Korea. The nuclear proliferation issue also has had a negative impact on foreign investment.

**Currency and Exchange Rate:** 1 wŏn = 100 chŏn. As of July 1, 2007, the interbank exchange rate was US\$1 = 2.20 wŏn. The internal rate was much different. In an effort to reduce the gap between the official and black market rates and to remove U.S. dollars used on the black market (in favor of the euro), the government devalued the wŏn in 2003, making the internal exchange rate 900 wŏn to the dollar. But, by 2005, black-market exchanges continued, and the rate soared to 3,000 wŏn to the dollar.

**Fiscal Year:** Calendar year.

## TRANSPORTATION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

**Overview:** Rail, road, air, and water transportation all are used in North Korea. Railroads are the most important mode of transportation, linking all major cities and accounting for about 70 percent of cargo and about 80 percent of passenger transportation. Roads, on the other hand, support only 12 percent of the cargo transporting capacity, and rivers and the sea, only 2 percent. Transportation by air other than for military purposes within North Korea is negligible.

**Roads:** North Korea's road network was estimated at 31,200 kilometers in 1999 (latest figure available). Of this total, only 1,997 kilometers were paved, and some 682 kilometers were multilane highways. A major expressway links Wŏnsan on the east coast with P'yŏngyang inland and Namp'o on the west coast. However, 29,203 kilometers (93.6 percent of the total) of North Korea's roads are unpaved and covered with gravel or crushed stone, or have dirt surfaces and are considered poorly maintained.

**Railroads:** Railroads are operated by the Korean State Railway, which is subordinate to the Ministry of Railways. The total rail network in 2002 was approximately 5,214 kilometers, although officially P'yŏngyang claimed 8,500 kilometers as a result of infrastructure modernization efforts that started in 1992. The 1.435-meter standard gauge roadbeds are located primarily along the east and west coasts. Some 3,500 kilometers are electrified, and more routes are being electrified and built. The government claims 90 percent of its routes are electrified, and it is believed to have about 300 electric and numerous diesel locomotives. About 35 million passenger journeys occur each year, and about 70 percent of North Korea's freight is carried by rail, annually amounting to about 38.5 million tons. A subway system opened in P'yŏngyang in 1973 with one line; another added in 1978. The system covers an estimated 22.5 kilometers and 17 stations.

**Ports:** The major port facilities—all ice-free—are at Namp'o and Haeju on the west coast and Najin, Ch'ŏngjin, Hŭngnam, and Wŏnsan on the east coast. United Nations statistics for 2002 report that North Korea had ships totaling 870,000 gross registered tons. The merchant fleet itself is composed of 232 ships of 1,000 gross registered tons or more. These ships include, by type, the following: bulk carrier (14), cargo (176), chemical tanker (1), container (4), livestock carrier

(3), passenger/cargo (5), petroleum tanker (17), refrigerated cargo (3), roll on/roll off (8), and vehicle carrier (1).

**Inland Waterways:** Inland waterways in North Korea total about 2,250 kilometers, and most can be used only by small boats. The Amnok (Yalu), Tuman (Tumen), and Taedong are the most important navigable rivers in North Korea.

**Civil Aviation and Airports:** In 2003 North Korea had an estimated 78 usable airports, 35 of which had permanent-surface runways and 43, unpaved runways. North Korea's Sunan International Airport is located 20 kilometers north of P'yongyang. It offers about 20 flights per week on North Korean, Chinese, and Russian carriers. Other airports are located at Ch'ŏngjin, Hamhŭng, Najin, and Wŏnsan. There also are 19 heliports. The state-run airline, which uses a fleet of 15 Soviet-made planes, is Air Koryo. It provides domestic service to three airports and foreign service to eight cities in China, Thailand, Germany, and Russia. North Korean aircraft are seldom used for transporting cargo. In 2001, according to United Nations statistics, only 5 tons per kilometer were carried by air, as compared to South Korea's 11,503 tons per kilometer.

**Pipelines:** There were 154 kilometers of oil pipelines in North Korea in 2006.

**Telecommunications:** Domestic and international communications are controlled by the Korean Workers' Party (KWP). Most national broadcasting is via the Korean Central Broadcasting Station in P'yongyang. Radio service was provided by approximately 17 AM, 14 FM, and 14 shortwave government-controlled stations in 2006. Nearly all households have access to broadcasts from radios or public loudspeakers. According to 2001 information, North Korea had 4.7 million radio sets. International medium-wave (AM) and shortwave broadcasting is by Voice of Korea in P'yongyang, with daily propaganda broadcasts in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Russian, and Spanish. As of 2006, there were four main television broadcast stations, all in P'yongyang: Korean Central Television, Mansudae Television, Korean Educational and Cultural Network, and Kaesŏng Television, which targets South Korea. There were 55 television sets per 1,000 population in the early twenty-first century.

In 2003 North Korea may have had some 938,000 telephones in use, although lower numbers also are cited; the number of cellular phones, which first came into use in 2002 and were withdrawn in May 2004, is not known. However, it has been reported that North Koreans living in border towns near China are using prepaid Chinese cellular phones, routed via relay stations constructed in 2004 along the Chinese side of the border, to call relatives and reporters in South Korea. International telecommunications are via an Intelsat satellite and a Russian satellite, both over the Indian Ocean. Fiber-optic lines have been reported between some cities. Other international connections are through Beijing and Moscow. North Korea launched its first e-mail service in 2001; although some deluxe hotels in P'yongyang offer Internet services to foreigners, public Internet access is restricted to high-ranking officials and other designated elites, including selected university students. Foreign reports indicated that in 2004 North Korea established an "Intranet" for use by an elite grade school, selected research institutions, universities, factories, and a few individuals. The Korean Communication Corporation acts as the gatekeeper, downloading only acceptable information for access through the Intranet. Reporters Without Borders has reported that some e-mail access exists through this network.

## GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

**Government Overview:** North Korea is a communist state under the one-man leadership of Kim Jong Il, chairman of the National Defense Commission—the nation’s “highest administrative authority,” supreme commander of the Korean People’s Army (KPA), and general secretary of the Korean Workers’ Party (KWP). Kim was first appointed to the National Defense Commission by his father, President Kim Il Sung, in April 1993, and he was reelected to this position in 1998 and 2003. Despite the consolidation of party, state, and military structures under the leadership of one man, some analysts see these three power centers as rivals for power, with the military in the ascendant. In true dynastic fashion, Kim Jong Il appears to be grooming one or the other of his sons—Kim Jong Chul and Kim Jong Woon—as his successor. Signs of possible change in the leadership structure and succession scenario—or at least a reduction in Kim’s personality cult—emerged in the summer and fall of 2004, when reports were received that portraits of Kim Jong Il were being removed from public sites.

The position of president ceased to exist with the elder Kim’s death in 1994. The premier (currently Kim Yong-il) is head of government (since April 2007) and is assisted by three vice premiers and a cabinet of 27 ministers, all of whom are appointed by the Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA). A twenty-eighth minister, the minister of the People’s Armed Forces (Kim Il-ch’ol), is not subordinate to the cabinet but answers directly to Kim Jong Il. However, observers believe that Cho Myōng-nok, first vice chairman of the National Defense Commission, is North Korea’s most powerful military figure. The SPA is a unicameral legislative body with 687 members who are elected by popular vote for five-year terms. The president of the SPA Presidium (Kim Yong-nam) is North Korea’s titular head of state. The KWP approves a list of SPA candidates who are elected without opposition, but some seats are held by approved minor parties. The constitution was adopted in 1948, completely revised in December 1972, and revised again in April 1992 and September 1998.

**Administrative Divisions:** North Korea is divided into nine provinces (*do*)—Chagang, North Hamgyōng, South Hamgyōng, North Hwanghae, South Hwanghae, Kangwōn, North P’yōngan, South P’yōngan, and Yanggang; two province-level municipalities (*chikalsi* or *jikhalsi*)—P’yōngyang and Najin-Sōnbong; and one special city (*t’ukpyōlsi*)—Namp’o. Other cities are under provincial control.

**Provincial and Local Government:** There are three levels of local government. The first level includes provinces (*do*) and province-level municipalities (*chikalsi* or *jikhalsi*). The second level includes ordinary cities (*si* or *shi*), urban districts (*kuyōk*), and counties (*gun* or *kun*). The third level is made up of traditional villages (*ri*, or *ni*). Cities are subdivided into wards (*gu*), and some cities and wards are subdivided into neighborhoods (*dong*), the lowest level of urban government to have its own office and staff. Officials leading these various levels of government are elected by local Korean Workers’ Party (KWP) committees, local people’s assemblies, and local administrative committees. Local people’s assemblies at all levels perform the same symbolic legislative duties as the Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA).

**Judicial and Legal System:** The three-level judicial system is patterned after the Soviet model. The Central Court is the highest court and has judges appointed by the Supreme People’s

Assembly (SPA). According to the constitution, the Central Court is accountable to the SPA, and the penal code subjects judges to criminal liability for handing down “unjust judgments.” The legal system does not acknowledge individual rights. The Ministry of People’s Security routinely dispenses with trials in political cases and refers prisoners to the Ministry of State Security for punishment. In addition to the Central Court, there are provincial courts at the intermediate level, and “people’s courts” at the lowest level. Prosecutors are grouped under separate, parallel chains of command subordinate to the Central Procurator’s Office, which supervises local procurators’ offices at provincial and county levels.

Based on defector and refugee reports, the U.S. Department of State has noted that the regime has executed political prisoners, opponents of the regime, some repatriated defectors, and others, including military officers suspected of espionage or of plotting against Kim Jong Il. The death penalty is mandatory for activities carried out “in collusion with imperialists” or those aimed at “suppressing the national liberation struggle.” Prisoners have been sentenced to death for such ill-defined “crimes” as “ideological divergence,” “opposing socialism,” and “counterrevolutionary crimes.” Defectors have claimed that individuals suspected of political crimes have been taken from their homes by state security officials and sent without trial directly to political prison camps. According to a report by the U.S. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, torture “is routine and severe.” There are no practical restrictions on the ability of the government to detain and imprison persons at will and to hold them incommunicado. Prison conditions have been described as “harsh” and “starvation and executions were common.” A common punishment is “reeducation through labor.” This practice consists of forced labor, such as logging, mining, or tending crops under harsh conditions, and reeducation consisting of memorizing Kim Jong Il’s speeches and being forced to participate in self-criticism sessions. It was reported in 2003 and again in 2006 that an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 persons were being held in detention camps in remote areas for political reasons.

**Electoral System:** Elections are held sporadically for Korean Workers’ Party (KWP)-approved delegates to the Supreme People’s Assembly and provincial and local people’s assemblies. One hundred percent of the vote for a single candidate is not unusual. Elections were held in 1990, 1998, and 2003. The assemblies meet only for a few days each year to give formal approval to state directives.

**Politics and Political Parties:** The Korean Workers’ Party (KWP) is the ruling party of North Korea. The secretary general of the KWP is Kim Jong Il, and he runs the party with few formal meetings. The KWP’s last full party congress was in 1980, and the Central Committee last met in 1994. To provide a semblance of multiparty politics and as a mechanism for unification of North and South, the Democratic Front for the Reunification of the Fatherland was established. Other parties include the Chongu (Friends) Party, the Korean Social Democratic Party, and the KWP. An opposition party in exile, with branches in Tokyo, Beijing, and Moscow, is the Salvation Front for the Democratic Unification of Chosŏn. It was established in the early 1990s.

**Mass Media:** The constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press; however, the government prohibits the exercise of these rights in practice. Domestic media censorship is enforced strictly, and no deviation from the official government line is tolerated. The government prohibits listening to foreign media broadcasts except by the political elite, and

violators are subject to severe punishment. Radios and television sets, unless altered, receive only domestic programming; radios obtained from abroad are altered to operate in a similar manner. In 2007, as in earlier years, the government attempted to jam all foreign radio broadcasts. The communication systems that are active in North Korea include telephones (main lines in use totaled 938,000 in 2003), international telephone systems with two satellite earth stations (one Intelsat and one Russian; all other international connections are through Moscow and Beijing), radio broadcast stations (17 AM, 14 FM, and 14 shortwave as of 2006), and television broadcast stations (four as of 2006). Although the majority of households contain radios and television sets, reception is restricted to government broadcasts. North Korea has 12 principal newspapers and 20 major periodicals, all of varying periodicity and all published in P'yŏngyang. Like electronic media, print media are all controlled by the state. The Korean Central News Agency (KNCA) is the sole news distributor in North Korea. KCNA broadcasts in Korean, English, Spanish, and Russian and offers an English-language Web site. The major newspaper is *Nodong shinmun* (Workers' Daily).

**Foreign Relations:** North Korea's foreign relations expanded significantly after its traditional close allies, the Soviet Union and China, established diplomatic relations with South Korea in 1990 and 1992, respectively. North Korea has diplomatic relations with 150 nations and maintains full embassies in 27 nations. North Korea does not have diplomatic relations with the United States. The Swedish Embassy in P'yŏngyang represents the United States as a consular protecting power.

The major issues shaping North Korea's relations with its neighbors and the United States are nuclear weapons proliferation and missile sales. North Korea was a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons but suspended its membership in 1994 and withdrew in 2003 in defiance of Washington's refusal to hold bilateral talks and the International Atomic Energy Agency's resolution calling on North Korea to comply with the nonproliferation treaty. While Washington insists on multilateral talks (including the United States, North Korea, South Korea, China, Japan, and Russia) and the dismantling of North Korea's nuclear weapons program prior to negotiations, P'yŏngyang demands bilateral negotiations with Washington and the negotiation of a nonaggression treaty. Three-Party Talks (North Korea, the United States, and China) also have failed to achieve agreement. When Six-Party Talks were finally initiated in August 2003, no real progress was achieved until February 2007, at the fifth session, when North Korea agreed to shut down its nuclear facilities in exchange for fuel aid and steps toward normalization of relations with the United States and Japan. As of early July 2007, final resolution of the nuclear facilities closure issue was still pending following the U.S. government's release of blocked North Korean funds held by American financial institutions which had dealings with Banco Delta Asia, a Macau bank that has provided financial services to North Korea since the 1980s.

To court old allies, the reclusive Kim Jong Il made several trips to Russia and China in 2001 and 2002. He also made trips to China in 2004 and 2006. China is wary of the collapse of the North Korean regime as it would likely be faced with a massive flood of refugees seeking food across the border. And, should China crack down on such activities, international human rights advocates would turn their criticism on Beijing. In a sign of slightly improved relations with an old enemy, Japan's prime minister, Koizumi Junichiro, visited P'yŏngyang in 2002 and 2004 to



hold talks about abducted Japanese nationals, economic cooperation, and the North Korean nuclear program.

**Inter-Korean Relations:** The Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression, Exchanges, and Cooperation was signed in 1991 by officials from P'yŏngyang and Seoul. The agreement defined the basic relationship between the two Koreas as a period of transition to peaceful unification. The two sides also agreed to a declaration on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula to take effect in 1992 under the North-South Joint Nuclear Control Committee. The agreement allowed for mutual inspection of nuclear facilities. The agreements were never implemented, and actions to do so have an on-again-off-again character, with delays caused by economic crises, nuclear proliferation issues, and bilateral political discord. The first-ever summit between North and South Korean leaders—Kim Jong Il and South Korea's President Kim Dae Jung—was held in June 2000. South Korean officials are concerned that a sudden collapse of the North Korean state would cause an extreme economic burden on the South. The obsolescence of the North Korean economic infrastructure, low worker wages, chronic inflation, and the weakening wŏn have made South Korean investors wary of imminent reunification. Observers have stated that a forced reunification could cost the South from US\$330 billion to more than US\$1 trillion over a five-year period. An agreed-upon reunification between the South and a post-Kim Jong Il regime willing to work for political and economic integration might cost around US\$600 billion over 10 years. In a move that might foster this kind of integration, in 2003 North Korea and South Korea enacted agreements reached in December 2000 on investment guarantees, tax issues, business dispute resolution, and account settlement. At the same time, inter-Korean trade increased.

**International Memberships:** North Korea and South Korea both became members of the United Nations (UN) in 1991. P'yŏngyang maintains a permanent mission in New York and participates in many UN specialized agencies, including those under the UN General Assembly: the UN Conference on Trade and Development, UN Development Programme, UN Fund for Population Activities, UN Children's Fund, and World Food Program. Under the UN Economic and Social Council, North Korea belongs to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. Among UN special organizations, North Korea belongs to the Food and Agriculture Organization, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Civil Aviation Organization, International Finance Corporation, International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Labor Organization, International Maritime Organization, International Monetary Fund, International Telecommunication Union, Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UN Industrial Development Organization, Universal Postal Union, World Health Organization, World Intellectual Property Organization, and World Meteorological Organization. Other international memberships include the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum, Group of 77, Inter-Parliamentary Union, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Hydrographic Organization, International Olympic Committee, International Organization for Standardization, International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Non-Aligned Movement, World Federation of Trade Unions, and World Tourism Organization.

**Major International Treaties:** North Korea has signed the Antarctic, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Environmental Modification, Ozone Layer Protection, and Ship Pollution conventions and has signed, but not ratified, the Law of the Sea Treaty. Other United Nations (UN)

conventions it has acceded to include the International Atomic Energy Agency Safeguards Agreement, Geneva Protocol, and Partial Test Ban Treaty. It also is a state party to various antiterrorism conventions, including those Against the Taking of Hostages; on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed Onboard Aircraft; Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents; Protocol on the Suppression of Unlawful Acts of Violence at Airports Serving International Civil Aviation; Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation; and Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft. North Korea was a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons but suspended its membership in 1994 and withdrew in 2003.

## NATIONAL SECURITY

**Armed Forces Overview:** The armed forces, known collectively as the Korean People's Army (KPA), totaled about 1,170,000 personnel in 2006. Components are the army (approximately 1 million, including 87,000 special operations troops), navy (60,000), and air force (110,000, including 7,000 special forces troops). There also are paramilitary security troops, including border guards and public safety personnel, who number around 189,000. The armed forces are under the direction and control of Kim Jong Il, who is supreme commander of the KPA with the title of grand marshal, general secretary of the Korean Workers' Party (KWP), and chairman of the state National Defense Commission. The KWP Military Affairs Committee and the National Defense Commission hold coordinated authority over the armed forces. North Korea is a heavily militarized state with the fourth largest population under arms, after China, the United States, and India. The active military structure is supported by a 7.7 million-strong reserve component, of which 620,000 personnel are assigned to training units, 420,000 are in paramilitary units, and approximately 6.6 million are members of the Workers and Peasants Red Guards, Red Guard Youth, and college training units. An estimated 27 percent of gross national income in 2003 went for defense expenditures.

**Foreign Military Relations:** North Korea has military advisers in 12 African nations.

**External Threat:** The major threat perceived by North Korea is from the United States, South Korea, and Japan. Despite its periodic assurances to the contrary, North Korea continues to take actions to further develop its nuclear weapons program as a counter to foreign nuclear weapons dominance. North Korea has refused to dismantle its nuclear weapons program despite repeated calls to do so from the United States, South Korea, Japan, and other nations and international organizations. In February 2005, North Korea confirmed that it had manufactured nuclear weapons to defend itself against the United States.

**Defense Budget:** The North Korean government announced that the military expenditure for fiscal year 2003 was US\$1.7 billion, or about 15.7 percent of the total government budget. However, the South Korean government believed that the figure supporting defense in 2003 was more likely around an estimated US\$5 billion, representing 27.2 percent of the gross national income and 44.4 percent of the total government budget.

**Major Military Units:** The army has 19 corps: 1 tank, 4 mechanized, 9 infantry, 1 artillery, the P'yongyang Defense Command, Border Security Command, Missile Guidance Bureau, and Light Infantry Training Guidance Bureau. Among these 19 corps are 27 infantry divisions, 15 armored brigades, 9 multiple rocket launcher brigades, 14 infantry brigades, and 21 artillery brigades. The total ground forces strength in 2006 was about 1 million troops. These included 87,000 organized into the Special Purpose Forces Command, which had 10 sniper brigades, 12 light infantry brigades, 17 reconnaissance brigades, 1 airborne battalion, and 8 battalions organized as the Bureau of Reconnaissance Special Forces. There were 40 infantry divisions in reserve status. The navy, primarily a coastal defense force, is headquartered in P'yongyang and has a strength of 60,000. It has two fleets, the East Sea Fleet, headquartered at T'oejo-dong, and the West Sea Fleet, headquartered at Namp'o. The East Sea Fleet has nine naval bases, and the West Sea Fleet has 10 naval bases. The air force has a strength of 110,000, with four air divisions organized into 33 air regiments plus three independent air battalions. Three of the divisions are responsible for north, east, and south defense sectors; a fourth—a training division—is responsible for the northeast sector. The air force has 11 airbases located at strategic points—many aimed at lightning strikes against key South Korean targets—mostly in southern North Korea, with some in rear areas closer to the border with China.

**Major Military Equipment:** The army's major military equipment includes 3,500 main battle tanks, 560 light tanks, 2,500 armored personnel carriers, 3,500 pieces of towed artillery, 4,400 pieces of self-propelled artillery, 2,500 multiple rocket launchers, 7,500 mortars, 24 surface-to-surface rockets and missiles, an unknown number of antitank guided weapons, 1,700 recoilless launchers, and 11,000 air defense guns. The navy has 92 submarines, 3 frigates, 6 corvettes, 43 missile craft, 158 large patrol craft, 103 fast torpedo craft, more than 334 patrol force craft, 10 amphibious ships, 2 coastal defense missile batteries, 130 hovercraft, 23 minesweepers, 1 depot ship, 8 midget ships, and 4 survey vessels. The air force has 80 bombers, 541 fighters and ground attack fighters, an estimated 316 transports, 588 transport helicopters (supported by 24 armed helicopters), 228 training aircraft, at least 1 unmanned air vehicle, and a large inventory of air-to-air missiles and surface-to-air missiles.

**Military Service:** Conscription starts at age 17 for at least 10 years, usually to age 30, followed by part-time compulsory service in the Workers and Peasants Red Guards until age 60. All men are eligible for service; some women also serve in the armed forces.

**Paramilitary Forces:** The Ministry of People's Security has an estimated 189,000 troops, including border guards and police. Approximately 3.5 million North Koreans also are members of the Red Guard Youth (ages 14 to 17) and Workers and Peasants Red Guards (ages 40 to 60). These militia-type forces are organized at the provincial, town, and village levels into brigades, battalions, companies, and platoons. Some militia units have small arms and mortars; others have no weapons. Together with college training units, Workers and Peasants Red Guards and Red Guard Youth make up the majority of the 7.7 million reserve forces of North Korea.

**Foreign Military Forces:** None.

**Police and Internal Security:** Internal security and maintenance of law and order are controlled by the paramilitary forces subordinate to the Ministry of People's Security. The Ministry of

People's Security is responsible for internal security, social control, and basic police duties, including border control, employing some 189,000 security personnel in 2002. There are public security bureaus in each province, county, city, and some city substations; each village has a police force. The rest of the internal security apparatus includes the State Security Department, the National Security Agency, the National Security Police, and the Korean Workers' Party (KWP). The entire conventional and secret police apparatus is tightly controlled by the KWP. Movement by citizens is strictly controlled.

**Terrorism:** No international terrorist attacks have been attributed to North Korea since 1987, when it conducted the mid-flight bombing of a Korean Air (KAL) airliner, killing all 115 persons aboard. Despite North Korean statements that it opposed terrorism and any assistance to it, political sanctuary was granted to members of the Japanese Red Army Faction hijackers of a Japanese Airlines (JAL) flight to North Korea in 1970. Because of these and other North Korean activities, North Korea has been on the U.S. list of countries supporting international terrorism since 1988. Although the United States has had many interventions to remove North Korea from the list, North Korea is viewed as uncooperative in agreeing to stop its missile threats and therefore has remained on the terrorism list. However, North Korea is indifferent to U.S. decisions and outlook.

**Human Rights:** According to the U.S. Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* for 2006, North Korea's human rights record was rated as poor, and the regime was noted as having committed numerous serious abuses. The regime subjects its citizens to rigid controls over many aspects of their lives. Citizens do not have the right to change their government. In 2006 there were reports of extrajudicial killings, disappearances, and arbitrary detention, including of political prisoners. Prison conditions were harsh and life-threatening, and torture reportedly was common. Pregnant female prisoners reportedly underwent forced abortions, and in other cases infants reportedly were killed at birth in prisons. The judiciary is not independent and does not provide fair trials. Citizens are denied freedom of speech, the press, assembly, and association, and the government attempts to control all information. The government restricts freedom of religion, citizens' movement, and worker rights. In 2006 there were continued reports of severe punishment of some repatriated refugees. Political prisoners, opponents of the regime, repatriated defectors, and military officers suspected of espionage or plotting against Kim Jong Il have been executed, and others have been sentenced to death for ill-defined "crimes" against the state. Others, including foreigners, have disappeared into the harsh system of prison camps, where deprivation, torture, and other inhumane treatment are routine. Defectors have reported human experimentation using chemical and biological agents and lethal gases. There also were widespread reports of trafficking of women and girls into China, where they were forced to become wives or concubines.





Image courtesy of the CIA World Factbook



Image courtesy of the CIA World Factbook