

Study Series 12-01

Study of Disciplinary Problems in the North Korean Army

Lee Kyo Duk, Chung Kyu Sup

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[The analyses, comments and other opinions contained in this monograph are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Korea Institute for National Unification.]

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I . Introduction

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1. Purpose of Study

The word that best represents the Kim Jong-il regime is the “Military-First” policy. In order to attribute more historical significance and legitimacy onto Kim Jong-il’s “Military-First” policy, North Korea expedited the date of its inception from January 1, 1995 to August 25, 1960. However, it is evident that the “Military-First” system is a political system unique to Kim Jong-il.¹⁾

The purpose of the “Military-First” policy, which puts the military at the forefront of politics, is a response to external threats by strengthening North Korea’s military capabilities, while internally highlighting the importance of the Korean People’s Army (KPA) as a means of preventing the disintegration of the regime.

In order for the “Military-First” policy to succeed in stabilizing and strengthening the regime, the ideological education of the military must first be perfected. The degree of ideological discipline within the North Korean military is measured by the level of troop morale and close compliance to regulations. As a result, North Korean authorities have emphasized that “regulations are the heart of the military. An army without regulations will be defeated in battle. Therefore, adherence to military regulations with an iron will is the foundation of the revolutionary army.”²⁾

1) An editorial in the *Rodong Sinmun* entitled “The Korean People’s Army, which inherits the Military-First tradition of Baekdu, will always be victorious” stressed that Kim Jong-il “established and realized the “Military-First” policy in the 1990s as the basic political socialist system.” *Rodong Sinmun*, April 25, 2011.

2) Re-quoted from Republic of Korea Defense Intelligence Command, *Republic of Korea Defense Intelligence Command Sourcebook*, Kim Jin Man, “A study

However, according to numerous recent accounts via internet media, organizations and the general media covering North Korea-related news, deviating behavior within the North Korean military is prevalent and very serious.³⁾ Despite the various efforts of the North Korean authorities to rectify this situation, reports claim that military regulations are in disarray while corrupted activities are rife within the military. The North Korean military is on the verge of collapse should these reports hold any credibility. If the violations of regulations as well as dishonest and corrupted activities are rampant, then the North Korean military will no longer function as the bastion for regime stability and will ultimately serve as a major factor in undermining the continuity of the North Korean regime.

With limited accurate information concerning the North Korean military, it would be undoubtedly dangerous for South Koreans to subjectively interpret the conditions in the North Korean military with unreliable sources and prejudices. Often, those who provide information about North Korea exaggerate and generalize isolated incidents as widespread phenomenon to justify their beliefs or attract attention. As a result, it is important to focus on examining the types of disciplinary problems that

on the formation of the psychological military competence of the North Korean military,” Kyungbook National University doctoral thesis, December 2001, p. 17. Kim Jong-il had stressed that “Iron-clad rules are the life of the People’s Army” (KPA Publishing Company, 2009), *Soldiers’ Life*, Issue 3, p. 69.

- 3) Examples include “The North Korean military’s infatuation with the Korean wave,” *Chosun Ilbo*, July 5, 2011 and “Desertion and robberies persist as soldiers are starving from the North Korean food shortage,” *Segye Ilbo*, July 18, 2011.

occur within the North Korean military and the extent of these problems. The purpose of this study is to analyze the various cases of disciplinary problems within the North Korean military and to assess the severity of these problems.

2. Research Method

The fundamental research method selected for this paper is the content analysis of relevant documents. The main resources are the *Study Materials for Psychological Training* (Hakseup Jegang) and *Papers on Instigation* (Seondong Jaryo), which were created for indoctrination of the North Korean military. These previously classified internal documents, which were distributed to a limited number of people, were used as materials for both lectures and mass education. Numerous cases in which classified information has leaked outside its borders include these cases, although the number of instances has decreased since 2005 due to increased security by the North Korean authorities. This paper will analyze the issues that are specified in these documents as serious problems that require urgent rectification. It is also important to note that the period of time in which these issues are addressed occur after 2000.

Along with the content analysis of these documents, another method of research adopted by this paper is the testimony records of people who have been recently discharged from the North Korean military service or have defected from North Korea during

their military service and entered South Korea. These cases have been selected based on a variety of factors. Initially, a high number of interviewees were selected in order to increase the level of reliability among the witness accounts. However, as the interview process proceeded, it was concluded that the contents of the interviews were very similar and that the number of interviews conducted thus far were sufficient to represent the sample population. Ultimately, 11 interviews were recorded, which was a much smaller sample portion than initially planned.

In order to compensate for the limited number of interviews, surveys were conducted among 200 former soldiers who had defected from the North Korean military. Although surveys are subject to personal memories and are easily tainted by subjective opinions, no other method of investigation can be used to generalize such a broad sample population. This method of utilizing interviews and surveys proves to be the only available means of acquiring information on the realities of North Korean society in regards to the North Korean people's attitudes, opinions, motivations and values. As a consequence, interviews of North Korean defectors are commonly used in research. However, the interpretation and use of information from the interviews requires a great deal of caution.

The paper's analysis is divided into two chapters. Chapter Two analyzes the *Study Materials for Psychological Training*, the *Papers on Instigation* and other classified North Korean documents including periodicals, such as *The Soldier's Life* (Gunin Senghwal), and memoirs and testimonies written by North Korean escapees.

By using these materials, this analysis presents the types of disciplinary problems that occur within the North Korean military. Chapter Three assesses the severity of the disciplinary problems analyzed in Chapter Two. Subsequently, the two chapters are intricately connected and their structures are identical. As previously stated, the assessment process involves a survey conducted among 200 North Korean defectors. The answers provided by the survey participants on 8 different questions are divided into levels ranging from 1 through 5 and graded on a scale from 1 point to 5 points as a means to calculate a specific average value.

II. Types of Disciplinary Problems: Content Analysis

1. Negligence in the Execution of Kim Jong-il's Directives

North Korean authorities have forced its people to zealously worship the Great Leader in accordance with the “revolutionary principle of the Great Leader.” This claims that revolution can be achieved only under the guidance of the “Great Leader,” who the “most exalted being among the working people.” However, absolute loyalty for Kim Jong-il is believed to have weakened within the North Korean military. There are several instances in which Kim Jong-il's directives have not been properly delivered. For example, according to the *Study Materials for Psychological Training* written in 2001 for military officers, “select members of the People's Army habitually and repeatedly assert that the Supreme Commander's directives must absolutely be executed, and they must unconditionally demonstrate their commitment. However, these principles are rarely put into practice.” *The Study Materials for Psychological Training* also emphasizes that the following actions must be eradicated.⁴⁾

- Neglecting the directives of the Supreme Commander or the policies of the Party and accomplishing tasks only after being pressed into action

4) “On the necessity of servicemen in command to take a leadership role in illuminating the life force of the “Military-First” Policy under the Dear Supreme Commander, Comrade Kim Jong-il,” *Study Materials for Psychological Training (For Officers and High-ranking Officials)* 4 (KPA Publishing Company, 2001), p. 26.

-
- Complaining and giving excuses when the Party issues orders, despite the fact that ‘yes’ is the only acceptable answer
 - Completing only the minimum amount of the organized work that is enough to evade criticisms and being indifferent to the consequences of that work

These examples also appear in documents written in 2003, which state that “there are still some soldiers and members of the military who do not accept the directives and instructions of the Supreme Leader and the policies of the Party as the absolute truth, and they do not devote themselves to following such orders.”⁵⁾ This statement may describe commonly observed incidents, such as bureaucratic red-tape or evasive behavior found in other working environments. Since the same document criticizes these people for either “questioning or half-believing the legitimacy” of Kim Jong-il’s guidelines or the Party’s policies, statements including “refusing to accept them as absolute truths” cannot simply be overlooked. Rather, it is possible to interpret these statements as confirmation that the absolute and infallible nature of Kim Jong-il’s influence are eroding.

The fact that North Korea has relentlessly stressed “faith in the leadership” and “defending the Supreme Leader to the death” may conversely indicate that solidarity under the Supreme Leader-centered regime has weakened. This weakening effect also appears

5) “Let everyone lead the way in unity toward realizing the slogans of the Central Committee of the Worker’s Party of Korea,” *Lecture Materials* (KPA Publishing Company, May 2003), p. 5.

within the military, as the Supreme Commander's instructions are not properly executed. Written in 2007, the *Study Materials for Psychological Training* specifies that "lessons from history show that if soldiers who hold the weapons do not have enduring faith in their commanders, then they cannot defend the Party and the commanders as well as the country and the fate of the people." This document also maintains that the soldiers must "firmly believe and follow the heart of the Supreme Commander as well as possess the resolute faith that we will always be victorious as long as the Supreme Commander is by our side."⁶⁾

According to the 2009 *Study Materials for Psychological Training*, Kim Jong-il stated on January 2, in that year that "the will to defend the Supreme Leader to the death is the fundamental core of the ten million-strong army. Without the fortitude to defend the leaders of the revolution to the death, unity and solidarity will be impossible to achieve and the will of the ten million-strong army cannot be realized." Kim Jong-il also ordered the entire Party, military and people to embody the will to defend the Supreme Leader to the death, defend and protect the leaders of the revolution, and support and adhere to the Supreme Leader's philosophy and achievements.⁷⁾ During the celebrations for the

6) "On the resolute destruction of the enemy's psychological strategies in order to deteriorate and disintegrate our third and fourth generation servicemen," *Study Materials for Psychological Training (For Soldiers and Officers)* (KPA Publishing Company, 2007). This document is printed in full in NKchosun.com (September 1, 2007). On the full text, <http://218.145.28.29/news/news.html?ACT=detail&res_id=99357>.

7) "Study Materials for Psychological Training (3) on the words spoken to the KPA by the Dear Supreme Commander, comrade Kim Jong-il" (KPA Publishing

founding of the army at the Central Reporting Rally in April 2011, Kim Young Choon declared that “admiration for the will to defend the Supreme Leader to the death as the highest priority and the enduring resolve to sacrifice one’s life in battle for the Party and the Supreme Leader is the most sublime philosophy and spiritual achievement for the Korean People’s Army. Unity between the Supreme Commander and the soldiers as well as the revolutionary camaraderie of the entire army is the fundamental motivation for victory in every battle.”⁸⁾

This along with the prevalent and varied misconduct within the military, including testimonies from soldiers who claim that they have no interest in Kim Jong-un, Kim Jong-il’s successor, indicate that the military does not comply with the Supreme Leader’s directives.⁹⁾

Company, 2009), p. 2.

8) *Korean Central News Agency*, April 24, 2011.

9) “Many soldiers stationed in Gosung-gun of Gangwon province are unaware that Kim Jong-un is now a general, and many are even ignorant of Kim Jong-un’s name. Through the Political Commissar, the soldiers in this area have been informed of the news that Kim Jong-un has been designated as the successor to power as well as general, but they are completely disinterested and have no willingness to know.” Recent North Korean news according to “North Korea People’s Liberation Front,” <<http://222.nkplf.com>> (May 20, 2011).

2. Misappropriation and Diversion of Military Supplies

In regards to the disciplinary issues in the North Korean military are the pervasion of unfair practices and corruption, such as the misappropriation and diversion of military goods. This behavior is widespread throughout the military and independent of the rank of the perpetrator.

The problem of the misappropriation of military goods is linked to food shortages in North Korea. This has resulted in the misappropriation of rice for military use. Even in the face of chronic food shortages, North Korea has made great efforts to provide rice, first and foremost, to the military as well as resolve the supplementary foods issue. However, higher-ranked units steal some of the supplies and send it to lower-ranked units during the process of distributing rice for military use. The lower-ranked units will exchange the rice supplies with other resources, which ultimately results in a severe lack of rice for the soldiers.

Apparently, Kim Jong-il was aware of this situation. One of the *Study Materials for Psychological Training* states that Kim Jong-il had “spoken of the determination to completely eradicate the individualistic and selfish tendency of people who violate the State and people’s assets and steal military goods to meet their own needs.” The exact text is as follows:¹⁰⁾

10) “On the bitter fight to eradicate the invasion of imperialistic ideologies, cultures and anti-socialist thought,” *Study Materials for Psychological Training (For Soldiers and Officers) 4* (KPA Publishing Company, 2002), p. 29.

Apparently, there are some soldiers who profligately deal military goods, taking food and clothing from the military into society to exchange with other goods. If this tendency within the People's Army is not immediately rectified, the soldiers' problems cannot be resolved and will ultimately lead to even heavier burdens on the State.

By thoroughly carrying out the ideological education project that will teach soldiers to value and save military goods, we can prevent such misconduct from ever happening again, which include the exchange or selling of the blankets or clothing provided by the State in the farmers' market.

Kim Jong-il's statement confirms that there was an extensive tendency for soldiers to misappropriate food, blankets and clothing to sell in the market. The topics for discussion that were presented in this *Study Materials for Psychological Training* were “① stealing food and subsidiary goods from the military to use on drinking parties or food parties, ② stealing munitions to exchange or sell in the market or engaging in fraud or swindling in order to offer gifts to people outside the military in exchange for alcohol-filled entertainment, ③ taking the assets from the State and military in order to fulfill one's own needs and using the stolen goods as bribes.”¹¹⁾ These discussion topics are actual examples of misappropriation and diversion of military goods committed by the officers and soldiers within the KPA.

In regards to the misappropriation of food in units smaller than a battalion, Kim Jong-il stated in 2004 that “there are many

11) *Ibid*, p. 40.

cases in which officers in units ranked lower than the battalions play the role of ‘little king’ and take soldiers’ food supplies. The Korean People’s Army must take control so that officers in the units ranked lower than the battalions do not, under any circumstances, lay their hands on the food supplies meant for the soldiers.”¹²⁾ This statement demonstrates the seriousness of the problem of officers in smaller units misappropriating the military’s rice.

This statement also indicates that not only high-ranked officials, but also mid-level officers and low-ranked soldiers routinely embezzle and misappropriate military goods. In order to prevent such behavior, authorities have ordered military leaders to conduct a “revolutionizing” project by indoctrinating soldiers and officers to avoid contact with society outside the military and to abstain from alcohol.

However, these efforts made by the authorities do not appear to have an effect. Recently, there have been cases of officers stealing the new recruits’ fresh uniforms and shoes in exchange for rice in the markets.¹³⁾ Apparently, this is also common among soldiers who are about to be discharged from the military as a means to divert resources and buy clothes or exchange for money.¹⁴⁾ This is common at every level of every unit, and there have

12) “Words from the Supreme Commander of the KPA, Comrade Kim Jong-il, on the commanding headquarters of Unit 131 of the KPA, its subordinate corps of engineers and the tank training complex on the 93rd year of Juche (2004), February 24,” p. 11.

13) Free North Korea Radio, January 21, 2011; February 14, 2011.

14) Free North Korea Radio, August 24, 2010.

even been cases in which large-scale misappropriation of military materials by military leaders have become serious problems. From early December 2010 to February 2011, Defense Headquarters dispatched investigation teams to military bases and major constructions sites nationwide and found that the storage units for food and munitions were completely empty because military leaders and managers of the construction sites had taken all the supplies.¹⁵⁾

The main reason for the widespread misappropriation and diversion of military goods is the economic difficulties in North Korea. These chronic economic problems have influenced the military, resulting in a vicious cycle where the misappropriation of goods has exacerbated the shortage of food and munitions within the military.

3. Abuse on the Public

There have been several cases in which civilians have been abused by the military under the “Military-First” policy established by Kim Jong-il. In response, the North Korean authorities have made efforts to improve relations between the military and the public. In the clause for judgment in the “Oh Joon Hup 7th Regiment’s Movement to Gain Status,” which was issued by the KPA in 1996, the improvement of relations between the military

¹⁵⁾ Open Radio for North Korea, February 9, 2011.

and the public has not been mentioned. However, a clause on “improving military-public relations” was included under the instructions of Kim Jong-il on June 25, 1998.¹⁶⁾ This illustrates that not long after the implementation of the “Military-First” policy civilians regularly experienced abuses from the military. According to the witness account of one soldier who had escaped from North Korea in 2010 and entered South Korea, “periodically, either weekly or monthly, the KPA General Political Bureau would publish lecture materials containing various policies and directives from the Supreme Commander. The first instruction was to improve the military-public relations within the Korean People’s Army. The second was to eradicate the culture of drinking. The third was to eradicate desertion from the military and liberalism. All three directives were issued at least once a week.”¹⁷⁾

The abuses that the civilians endured from the military can be summarized as the following: intimidation, demand for privileges, arrogant and offensive behavior, and violation of lives and assets.¹⁸⁾

During a speech entitled “On the several issues concerning the improvement and reinforcement of the current military-public joint projects” at the Central Military Commission of the Workers’

16) “Study Materials on Psychological Education concerning the major points of the speech to the KPA by the Supreme Commander, Comrade Kim Jong-il,” *Study Materials on Psychological Education* (KPA Publishing Company, 1998), p. 5.

17) Testimony of North Korean defector OOO, April 26, 2011.

18) “On loving and respecting the people like your own parents and siblings,” *Study Materials on Psychological Education (For Soldiers and Officers) 4* (KPA Publishing Company, 2003), p. 19.

Party of Korea on June 28, 2003, Kim Jong-il stated that “the People’s Army views the military-public relations problem as a serious issue on which lies the very existence of the military. In order to raise and venerate the traditional values of unity between the military and the public, utmost efforts must be ensured in order to implement this project.”¹⁹⁾ This speech illustrates that unity between the military and civilians had become strained under such difficulties to the extent that the expression, “a serious issue on which the very existence of the military depends upon,” was used to describe the state of military-public relations.²⁰⁾

Despite the North Korean authorities’ efforts to emphasize the importance of unity between the military and the public, more severe food shortages within the military have led to greater abuses inflicted upon civilians by soldiers. Some have expressed

19) “On the speech by the Supreme Commander, Comrade Kim Jong-il, on June 28, 2003 at the Central Military Commission of the Workers’ Party of Korea entitled ‘On the several issues concerning the improvement and reinforcement of the current joint military-public projects,’” (Plans for discussion guides), *Study Materials on Psychological Education (For Soldiers and Officers) 1* (KPA Publishing Company, 2004), p. 7.

20) According to this document, the answer to the question “Why is the military-public unity the root of our society?” is given as thus. “This is because our society and our form of socialism are based on the unity and solidarity of the Great Leader, the Party, the military and the people. In this state of oneness and unity, the Party, military and people are firmly situated around the Great Leader, who is the foundation of our revolutionary nation and a more fearsome weapon than the nuclear bomb. The basis is the two capacities of our revolution: the military and the people becoming one in a state of unified solidarity. When the military and the people come together under the leadership of the Party under one mind and one will, devotion to the ideology and commands of the Great Leader in addition to the superiority of our socialist system will be even more uplifted.” *Ibid.*

the situation as “looting” by the military. According to one North Korean defector from Chung Jin, who escaped in February 2009, “when word gets around that the military is coming to town during the day, the townspeople quickly lock their animals in the house, close the gates, lock the storage facilities, and even hide the laundry they had set outside to dry along with their shoes.” The escapee added that despite these efforts, dozens of soldiers still managed to steal over 30 bags of beans, 1 ton of corn, and livestock in one instance.²¹⁾

The emphasis that the North Korean authorities place on military-public unity has also been expressed in the *Study Materials for Psychological Training* of 2009. It states that on December 18, 2008, Kim Jong-il “commented that as the units uphold the slogan ‘Help the People!’ while workers and soldiers are united in the project to support civilians, military-public relations improve. The Supreme Leader also stated that it was good that the workers and civilians are helping the units with all their body and soul.” Furthermore, it reports that Kim Jong-il issued that “the military must continue to improve its relations with the locals, who live near the stationed units, and actively help these people at all times.”²²⁾

In addition, the Papers on Instigation in 2009 emphasized that “there is a saying that hard work may be wasted overnight. Even if we attempt to support the civilians with our best efforts,

21) Free North Korea Radio, December 12, 2008.

22) “Study Materials on Psychological Education (3) on the words that the Supreme Commander, Comrade Kim Jong-il, had spoken to the People’s Army,” p. 7.

nothing can compensate for the losses resulting from the misconducts that contradict the project to support civilians. Therefore, any minor faults or misconducts will never be tolerated, and these sorts of misbehaviors will be strictly punished as an act of evil in weakening military-public relations.”²³⁾

At the same time, it is estimated that the public abuse inflicted by the KPA has increased, due to the food shortages within the military. One example is an incident in which the commanding officers of a battalion stationed at the 8.15 training camp at Eunpa-gun in the North Hwanghae Province ordered soldiers to procure food by collectively looting the town. These crimes were later exposed when the townspeople filed a complaint.²⁴⁾ As looting by the KPA have become more and more severe, locals have warned one another by claiming, “When you meet soldiers, comply with their every demand in order to save your life and don’t wear nice clothes when going about.” Transport vehicles owned by manufacturing plants, farms and businesses travel with soldiers from the surrounding military posts for protection from looting by other soldiers.²⁵⁾ It can be assumed that since the food shortages in North Korea will not be resolved in the near future, the public abuses inflicted by the military will persist and may even increase. In response, the only course of action that the North Korean authorities have taken is emphasizing the

23) “Uphold the slogan ‘Help the People!’ high and fervently demonstrate the will to help the people,” *Papers on Instigation* (KPA Publishing Company, March 2009), p. 4.

24) Free North Korea Radio, January 24, 2011.

25) Free North Korea Radio, January 24, 2011; February 8, 2011.

importance of “total solidarity of the military and the people” and “Military-Public unity.”²⁶⁾

4. Alcoholism in Military Units

Another indication of disciplinary problems within the KPA is the prevalence of drunken behavior. North Korean authorities believe that various criminal activities, such as violence, murder and desertion from the military, are caused by excessive alcohol consumption. In response, authorities have exhausted numerous efforts to eradicate the phenomenon with little results.

In October 2001, Kim Jong-il commanded “for a strong wind of change blow and eradicate excessive drunken behaviors in the entire military by the first quarter of 2002.”²⁷⁾ Nevertheless, alcoholism continues to persist within the military. In the “Commentary and Discussion Material” entitled “Never drink,” it states that “① One must clearly understand that alcoholism and drunken behavior are poisonous actions that undermine the

26) In a *Rodong Sinmun* editorial on April 25, 2011, entitled “The Korean People’s Army, which inherits the Military-First tradition of Baekdu will always be victorious,” it stated that “the military-public unity is the endless source of strength for our People’s Army and a powerful weapon in realizing the foundation of a strong and prosperous nation. The officers of the People’s Army must firmly establish the military-public unity, the root of our great North Korea, and the people must wholeheartedly love and support the military like their own blood. These are the traditional values of our society that we must uphold.”

27) “Never drink,” *Materials for Commentary and Discussions* (KPA Publishing Company, January 2002), p. 1.

People's Army, ② One must not even think about consuming alcohol, ③ One must not make any contact with civilians, ④ Officers and soldiers must not encourage food and drinking parties; and ⑤ One must courageously fight the inclination to drink."²⁸⁾

The 2002 *Lecture Materials* for officers states that ① officers should not create an environment or conditions conducive to alcoholism, and ② forcefully fight against drunken behavior. This material also describes an incident in 2001 when the officers of a unit squandered several hundred kilograms of the food for soldiers during drinking parties, along with other cases in which military families brewed alcohol in their homes. These instances demonstrate the frequency of the misappropriation of military goods for the purpose of alcohol consumption. The *Lecture Material* concludes by asserting that anyone caught consuming alcohol must receive a trial from the Secretariat of the Committee of the Korean People's Army and Party.²⁹⁾

- When an officer is found guilty of consuming alcohol once, he must engage in ideological battles in the Party and the Youth League.
- When an officer is found guilty of consuming alcohol twice, he or she will be subject to a peer trial or an honor trial.
- When an officer is found guilty of consuming alcohol three times, he will be demoted.

28) *Ibid*, pp. 2~4.

29) "Engage in a fierce battle to eradicate drinking among the soldiers," *Lecture Material for Officers* (KPA Publishing Company, 2002), p. 5.

- When an officer is found guilty of consuming alcohol four times, he will be sent to the Laborer's Alliance without exception or depending on the severity of the crime, will be discharged from military service.

Despite stringent measures to prevent misconduct, it seems that the consumption of alcohol within the KPA has persisted without abating. This can be examined in the *Study Materials for Psychological Training* issued in 2007, which stress, “alcohol, women and money are like poison that ruins ideology and faith ... Therefore soldiers must never drink alcohol. Alcohol paralyzes the healthy ideological minds of the soldiers and leads to various crimes.”³⁰⁾

5. Assault

Along with alcoholism, assault is also another prevalent issue, indicating a level of disciplinary difficulties in the KPA. Along with desertion, absence without notice and abuse of the public, assault is one of the most persistent problems that the KPA faces. According to a 2002 Lecture Material focusing on the establishment of courtesy and morals in the military, “officers do not see their subordinates as true revolutionary comrades. They do not treat

30) “On the resolute destruction of the enemy’s psychological strategies in order to deteriorate and disintegrate our third and fourth generation servicemen,” <http://218.145.28.29/news/news.html?ACT=detail&res_id=99357>.

subordinates with courtesy and even insult their dignity or engage in physical violence.”³¹⁾

As quoted above, the 2002 *Study Materials for Psychological Training* not only details the various problems including desertion, absence without notice, assault, abuse of the public, alcohol consumption, and violation of laws and regulations, but it also mentions a specific case concerning assault.³²⁾ The document claims that the superiority of the KPA lies in the fact that soldiers help and guide one another. However, this superiority will be lost should superiors assault their subordinates or soldiers assault their peers. Camaraderie and unity will weaken, ultimately resulting in difficulties during preparations for battle and even political incidents. The North Korean authorities believe that officers hold the key in solving the problems of assault and continue to emphasize the need to eradicate violence.³³⁾ North Korean authorities also encourage the unity of the military by underscoring the importance of “camaraderie and good behavior” to the soldiers and officers.³⁴⁾

31) “Let us build a sophisticated and civilized environment in the military through manners and morals,” *Lecture Materials* (KPA Publishing Company, 2002), p. 3.

32) “On the willingness to strenuously engage in aggressive projects to meet the demands for the era of the Military-First policy,” *Study Materials for the Lecture of Beginning Level Aggressive Servicemen* (KPA General Political Bureau, 2002), pp. 34~35.

33) “On the need for officers to be the standard-bearers and reflections for the soldiers in every aspect of military life,” *Study Materials for Psychological Education (For Soldiers and Officers)* 5 (KPA Publishing Company, 2002), p. 17.

34) “On understanding the values of camaraderie in mutual faith, love and guidance,” *Study Materials for Psychological Education (For Soldiers and Officers)* (KPA Publishing Company, 2003), pp. 18~29.

It is presumed, however, that regardless of such efforts, assault within the KPA has not been eradicated and remains unabated. According to the testimony of a North Korean defector, all soldiers signed pledges as a means to prohibit assault under the command of Kim Jong-il in 2008. Nevertheless, violence persists. The escapee provided the following details.

The lecture material or political problems that are constantly emphasized within the units are about officer-soldier relations and hierarchical relations. Officer-soldier relations deal with the relationship between officers and soldiers, and hierarchical relations deal with established soldiers and new recruits. The second most common problem in the Korean People's Army after alcoholism is assault. Many accidents have occurred because of assault. In February 2010 and November 2009, a young soldier in the unit stationed at Ingye-ri of Hwoeryung City suffered so much abuse that he took a weapon and went on a shooting rampage in the platoon. After three people died, the young soldier took his own life as well. These sorts of political incidents do not only take place in command centers near the borders, but they also occur in the Ministry of People's Armed Forces. This happens about once a month, which is quite frequent.³⁵⁾

35) Testimony of North Korean defector OOO, April 25, 2011

6. Desertion

Another indication that the KPA is experiencing serious disciplinary problems is the soldiers' desertion of their posts. The North Korean authorities categorize the desertion as a misdemeanor, which is as serious as absence without notice, assault and abuse of civilians, so they have devised various solutions but with little avail.

According to the 2001 *Study Materials for Psychological Training for officers*, the commanding headquarters of the KPA had devised solutions to bring order to the chaos and constant violation of rules, issuing directives along with specific measures to be implemented in the military. The results, however, were not satisfactory to the Party. The document states an example in which “desertions and absences without notice are occurring persistently, and order has not been restored to quell the various misdemeanors and violation of military regulations.”³⁶⁾

In the 2002 *Study Materials for Psychological Training for soldiers and officers*, absence without notice is described as “liberal and unregulated actions.” The gravity, consequences and countermeasures of these actions are clarified in detail.³⁷⁾

36) “On decisively resolving the military regulation issue by raising the revolutionary spirit of the military and establishing a command and direction system,” *Study Materials for Psychological Education (For Officers)* 3 (KPA Publishing Company, 2001), p. 11.

37) “On the bitter fight to eradicate the invasion of imperialistic ideologies, cultures and anti-socialism,” *Study Materials for Psychological Training (For Soldiers and Officers)* 4 (KPA Publishing Company, 2002), p. 43.

- Desertion or absence without notice is the act of leaving one's post (unit or squad) through one's own volition and without permission from one's superior.
- Desertion or absence without notice represents an act of treason and the refusal to serve the military, regardless of the cause of the act.
- These acts are the equivalent to cowardice and fleeing the scene of battle during war because one is afraid of fighting.
- Desertion or absence without notice is the source of various anti-socialist tendencies and crimes.
- A soldier who has deserted his post or left the unit without permission will, with no exception, aimlessly wander and commit a variety of misdemeanors before being eventually pulled into groups of rebellious factions and falling into a path of crime and self-destruction.
- Officers must not send soldiers outside the barracks to obtain goods for personal reasons.

The problem of soldiers deserting the KPA is caused by an accumulation of unique, individual cases. However, desertion remains unabated due to food shortages and fatigue from long-term services. Authorities are making great efforts to prevent the soldiers from leaving the military.

Yet since 2000, the number of runaway soldiers has risen exponentially, as food shortages have worsened. There are accounts that in May 2010, 13 soldiers deserted their 110-man squadron within the 81st regiment of the fifth corps, and a training session

for 65 new recruits ended with only 18 soldiers. This indicates the frequency desertion in the military.³⁸⁾ According to another testimony, the rate of desertion is “roughly 10 soldiers for a 120-man infantry division,” or “around 30 soldiers, the size of a squadron, for a 600-man mechanized battalion.”³⁹⁾ This means that roughly 5 to 10% of all North Korean soldiers are runaway soldiers. Some witnesses claim that the military leadership is incapable of devising any countermeasure, since there are currently more runaway soldiers than starving street children in North Korea.⁴⁰⁾

7. Disclosing Classified Information

It also seems that classified information from the KPA is frequently leaked outside its borders, as authorities vigorously attempt to prevent this from happening. North Korean authorities have stated that “classified information must not be known by the people who have no need for them.” On July 14, 1998, Kim Jong-il stated that “not only do some soldiers leak Party and State secrets to their families and employees in their letters, but they also reveal secrets concerning important events.” On August 10, Kim Jong-il gave orders that “the People’s Army must devise measures to protect classified information and be diligent

38) Free North Korea Radio, June 18, 2010; March 8, 2011.

39) *Daily NK*, April 25, 2011.

40) Free North Korea Radio, February 25, 2011.

in its efforts to protect the secrets within the Party.”⁴¹⁾ The intention of Kim Jong-il is “to establish an atmosphere in which secrets are strictly protected so that, like an object surrounded by heavy mist, no one can know the truth in regards to classified information,” and he added that all endeavors conducted by the military are sensitive information.⁴²⁾ As such, the unit, the position in the division, arms equipment and battle units, training methods and details, daily life processes as well as personal information about the soldiers, such as name, age, personality and hobbies, are all defined as classified information.⁴³⁾

In May 2004, a *Study Materials for Psychological Training* entitled “We must scrupulously protect our classified information in response to the lax environment” details the problems in maintaining classified information. This document reminds readers that Kim Jong-il has commanded that “more than ever, the current lax environment demands that we thoroughly defend the secrets of the Party, State and the military with the highest sense of revolutionary awareness.” It emphasizes the fact that “recently, the scrupulous protection of classified information is mentioned as a grave problem intertwined with the fate of the Party, Supreme Commander and the country.”⁴⁴⁾ Therefore, in order to protect

41) “Study Materials on Psychological Education concerning the major points of the words the Supreme Commander, Comrade Kim Jong-il, spoke to the KPA,” p. 11.

42) “Prevent military secrets from leaking out through letters,” *Papers on Instigation*, Issue 16 (KPA Publishing Company, August 2002), p. 7.

43) *Ibid*, p. 8.

44) “Strictly protect military secrets to tackle the political circumstances,” *Lecture Materials* (KPA Publishing Company, May 2004), p. 5.

sensitive information, soldiers should “① maintain a strict sense of secrecy and be cautious with every word and every gesture, ② Never take a single letter, piece of tissue, document or any material published by the military out of the barracks, and ③ Ensure that no secrets are leaked through any telecommunications device.”

The examples above demonstrate the efforts of the KPA leadership to maintain classified information. At the same time, this also indicates that the disclosure of secrets remains a serious problem. One North Korean defector goes so far as to say that civilians know things about the military even before many soldiers do.⁴⁵⁾ From the surveys conducted by escapees who had served in the military, it seems that although the disclosure of secrets by soldiers is not prevalent, soldiers frequently sell internal information to earn money. An escaped former soldier, who was interviewed by the author, claimed that the cause of the disclosure of secrets was to earn money. He explains:

Sometimes there are instances in which we talk about critical information concerning the military. When top-secret documents or confidential documents disappeared, the liaison officer was beaten because it was believed that he took them. We would think, who would want North Korean secret documents? It was concluded that the South Koreans wanted it and without a doubt, must have taken them. We didn't believe that the South Koreans had stolen them. However, word did on occasion get around that if you took these documents, then South

45) Testimony of North Korean defector OOO, April 25, 2011.

Koreans would pay you for them. So, people were encouraged to try to sell them. If you did steal them in such a way, the liaison officer would be blamed, so the soldiers would simply take the secrets and sell them.⁴⁶⁾

8. Prevalence of Western Influences and South Korean Culture

The North Korean authorities have cracked down on religion and superstitious behavior, gambling, business activities and other actions, which were labeled as capitalist and anti-socialist lifestyles. However, these illicit activities have quickly spread throughout North Korea due to the relentless economic crisis and an influx of information from the outside world. The KPA leadership has responded with efforts to prevent this trend from proliferating in the military.

Efforts of the KPA to curb the spread of anti-socialist influences can be observed in the 2002 *Study Materials for Psychological Training* entitled “On the bitter fight to eradicate the invasion of imperialistic ideologies, cultures and anti-socialism.” Interestingly, this document mentions “singing South Korean songs,” which indicates that South Korean influences are already prevalent within the KPA. Furthermore, the document asserts, “The consumption or illicit sales of narcotics, participation in gambling and belief in superstitions are activities that are traitorous to the State...”

⁴⁶⁾ Testimony of North Korean defector OOO, April 6, 2011.

This demonstrates that drug use has become widespread in North Korean society and that there are increasingly heavier restrictions against religious and superstitious behavior.⁴⁷⁾

North Korean authorities believe that the “enemy’s psychological warfare” is the prevalence of foreign ideologies in society. A 2004 *Study Materials for Psychological Training*, written for Party members and workers presents, specific methodological examples of psychological warfare. First, the enemy sneaks many broadcasting devices into North Korea including small radios. Second, the enemy “professionally broadcasts their messages” at the border areas and sends recording devices, cassettes and published material through tourism and smuggling. Third, the enemy engages in “horrific deeds,” even through humanitarian means, and it “vilely uses” the channels of human communication and exchanges of goods for its own benefit. Furthermore, the enemy is involved in “a variety of schemes to spread superstitions, baseless ideas and vicious rumors,” as well as falsehood, deceptive aggression and the “exaggeration of their power.”⁴⁸⁾ In response to these threats, the document stresses that “the acts of smuggling, illicitly selling and giving, or watching and listening to small radios and illegal recordings are equivalent to aiding the enemy and are extremely serious offenses. Therefore, these acts must be suppressed without mercy and be reported to the relevant

47) “On the bitter fight to eradicate the invasion of imperialistic ideologies, cultures and anti-socialism,” pp. 35, 44.

48) “On completely destroying the enemy’s psychological warfare with a strong class consciousness,” *Study Materials for Psychological Education (For Party Members and Workers)* (KPA Publishing Company, 2004), pp. 2~3.

authorities. Specifically, disciplinary education on the families must be rigorous so that the younger generations are not, in the least, influenced by or attracted to these kinds of activities.”⁴⁹⁾

The 2007 *Study Materials for Psychological Training* also states that the “enemy” is engaged in “psychological warfare” with the third and fourth generation soldiers of the KPA. It stresses that soldiers “must not watch or listen to enemy broadcasts, recorded audio or video material and read any documents published by the enemy,” and they “must aggressively fight against religion and superstition.”⁵⁰⁾ The 2008 *Papers on Instigation* further assert that “currently, the enemy is skillfully incorporating lies with facts and news as well as twisting the truth to falsely interpret it through audio and television broadcasts in addition to illegal audio and video recordings. These acts aim to provoke chaos and prompt the collapse of our society.”⁵¹⁾ The statement indicates that Western and South Korean influences have already deeply penetrated the KPA.

To no surprise, North Korean authorities have made tremendous efforts to prevent foreign ideologies from infiltrating the military. This can be seen in the 2009 *Study Materials for Psychological Training*. The document claims that on January 2, 2009, Kim Jong-il said, “Soldiers must not harbor even the slightest hint

49) *Ibid*, pp. 7~8.

50) “On the resolute destruction of the enemy’s psychological strategies in order to deteriorate and disintegrate our third and fourth generation servicemen,” <http://218.145.28.29/news/news.html?ACT=detail&res_id=99357>.

51) “Never heed false rumors,” *Papers on Instigation* (KPA Publishing Company, November 2008), p. 2.

of illusions about the enemy” and ordered that “we must fight vigorously to stomp out the imperialists’ ideological and cultural invasion and psychological warfare.” Kim Jong-il also accentuated that “in order to protect the youth so that they are never influenced by any false ideology or indecent lifestyle, we must intensify our ideological education and effort to prevent the invasion of imperialist ideologies and culture.”⁵²⁾ In keeping with these directives, North Korean authorities have invested significant efforts into the ideological education of the civilian youth and new recruits in the military.

However, in interviews with North Korean defectors, most answered that they had seen South Korean movies and television shows on CDs and USBs. This implies that South Korean culture is already prevalent within the KPA. A North Korean refugee, who until recently had been serving in the broadcast media unit for psychological warfare against South Korea and entered South Korea in 2010, presents the following account.

It was probably in 2005 when I first saw a South Korean movie. I had never seen one when I was a civilian, but while serving in the military, I had a chance to see a South Korean movie for the first time when one was smuggled through the port of Wonsan. We decided to watch the movie quietly at night and ordered the younger staff bring the video. The officers, of course, restrict the viewership of such movies. However,

52) “Study Materials on Psychological Education (3) concerning the major points of the words the Supreme Commander, Comrade Kim Jong-il, spoke to the KPA,” p. 4.

people who are interested still watch the movies. They simply smuggle in the movies without getting caught and secretly watch them.⁵³⁾

53) Testimony of North Korean defector OOO, July 26, 2011.

III. The Extent and Characteristics of Disciplinary Problems: Quantitative Analysis

As mentioned in the previous chapter, how often do disciplinary problems occur as described in the confidential documents of the KPA and in the testimonies of North Korean defectors?

To estimate the frequency of disciplinary problems, 200 recently discharged North Korean soldiers, who escaped to South Korea, have been surveyed. The frequency had been calculated based on the results through a scale from 1 point to 5 points for each type of problems. For instance, on the category of “Misappropriation and Diversion of Military Goods,” the answers are divided as “very frequently” for 5 points, “frequently” for 4 points, “sometimes” for 3 points, “rarely” for 2 points, and “very rarely” for 1 point. Finally, the average of all the answers provided by the participants is calculated.

1. Negligence in the Execution of Kim Jong-il’s Directives: Degree of Loyalty toward Kim Jong-il (4.00)

The KPA is said to be the “Great Leader’s Army” and the “Party’s Army.” Therefore, the military demands that the soldiers unconditionally worship the Great Leader, an absolute being in achieving the revolution. However, as discussed in Chapter II, the *Study Materials for Psychological Training* often mention that soldiers “question or even doubt the validity” of the Kim Jong-il’s

commands and Party policies, and “do not accept them as absolute truths.” Negligence in implementing his orders implies that the soldiers lack the absolute respect and loyalty for Kim Jong-il. With this in mind, 200 participants were asked the question “What was degree of loyalty toward Kim Jong-il among the low-ranked officers and soldiers in the unit that you have served?” The results are as follows.

Table 1. Degree of Loyalty toward Kim Jong-il

What Was the Level of Loyalty toward Kim Jong-il of the Low-ranking Officers and Soldiers?

	Frequency (number of persons)	Accumulated Percentage (%)
Very High	55	27.5
High	94	47.0
Average	47	23.5
Low	4	2.0
Very Low	0	0.0
Total	200	100.0

As demonstrated in the table above, the percentage for “low” or “very low” only consisted of 2.0% of the total results. On the other hand, the answers for “very high” and “high” collectively composed of 74.5% of the total.

With the 5 different answers categorized as “very high” for 5 points, “generally high” for 4 points, “average” for 3 points, “generally low” for 2 points and “very low” for 1 point in a scale of 1 point to 5 points, the total average result for the

question is 4.00. This puts the average rank as “generally high.” Documents, including the *Study Materials for Psychological Training*, cite military negligence in the implementation of Kim Jong-il’s orders. However, the figures in the survey indicate that the degree of loyalty among the officers and soldiers towards Kim Jong-il remains relatively high.

2. Misappropriation and Diversion of Military Supplies (3.30)

North Korea gives top priority to the military for the necessary supplies despite the economic difficulties under the “Military-First” policy. However, it is not uncommon for soldiers to squander resources or embezzle and misappropriate these supplies for personal gains.

Misappropriation and diversion of military goods is common in underdeveloped nations. However, circumstances are harsher in North Korea, since the funds for the management of the units must be self-procured.

The 200 participants in this survey analyzed the frequency of misappropriation and diversion of military goods in the North Korean military.

Table 2. Frequency of Misappropriation and Diversion of Military Supplies

How Frequently Does the Misappropriation and Diversion of Military Supplies Occur?

		Frequency (number of persons)	Percentage (%)	Accumulated Percentage (%)
Validity	Very Frequent	35	17.5	17.5
	Frequent	65	32.5	50.0
	Sometimes	46	23.0	73.0
	Rare	32	16.0	89.0
	Very Rare	22	11.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	

In Table 2, the responses “very frequent” and “frequent” encompass exactly half of all the answers. On the other hand, the percentage of the combined answers of “rare” and “very rare” account for only 27.0%. Based on the assumption that the misappropriation and diversion of military goods is common and considering the prevalence of misconduct and corruption in North Korea as well as its economic difficulties, the resulting figures are relatively low.

The responses to this question are categorized as “very frequent” for 5 points, “frequent” for 4 points, “sometimes” for 3 points, “rare” for 2 points and “very rare” for 1 point. The average of the total answers is 3.30, indicating that this occurs slightly more frequently than “sometimes.”

3. Abuse on the Public (3.28)

Under the North Korean “Military-First” policy, the military acts as “not only the guardian of socialism but also the creator of happiness,”⁵⁴⁾ and has become involved in various development projects as well as agricultural work to recover North Korea’s weakened agricultural productivity.

The KPA, which is the self-professed to be the “People’s Army,” become increasingly involved in acts of aggression against civilians as military contact with civilians increase and food become scarce. When military-public relations strained, North Korean authorities attempted to rectify the situation by emphasizing the importance of “helping the people, helping the military.” The “military-public unity” motto was also utilized but yielded little improvement.

In order to ascertain the level of abuse, 200 former North Korean soldiers were asked, “Have there been instances in which the unit you had served was involved in the looting and stealing civilian homes or any other activity that abused civilians?” The options that were provided for answers ranged from “very frequent,” “frequent,” “sometimes,” “rare,” to “very rare.” The results are as follows.

54) Kim Chul Woo, *Military-first Policy of General Kim Jong-il* (Pyongyang: Pyongyang Publishing Company, 2000).

Table 3. Frequency of Abuse on the Public

Have There Been Instances of Military Abuse of Civilians, such as Looting and Stealing Civilian Homes?

		Frequency (number of persons)	Percentage (%)	Accumulated Percentage (%)
Validity	Very Frequent	50	25.0	25.0
	Frequent	51	25.5	50.5
	Sometimes	39	19.5	70.0
	Rare	24	12.0	82.0
	Very Rare	36	18.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	

Table 3 demonstrates that the proportion of the answers for “very frequent” is at 25.0% and “frequent” is at 25.5%, which combine to a total of 50.5%. This figure is almost identical to that of the previous question concerning the misappropriation and diversion of military goods.

The scores for the 5-point scale are also very similar to that of the misappropriation and diversion of military goods, which scored 3.30 while abuse of the public totaled 3.28. This suggests that both problems occur slightly more often than “sometimes.” Many sources in regards to the KPA have circulated in South Korea, claiming that military abuse of the public is very serious. However, these figures suggest that those sources may contain inaccurate information.

4. Alcoholism in Military Units (3.16)

According to internal military documents, it is assumed that one of the primary causes of the North Korean soldiers' various misconducts and criminal behavior is the consumption of alcohol. It is often stressed in the documents that alcoholism is one of the most urgent problems that must be eradicated.

The consumption of alcohol is prevalent not only among soldiers but also officers. As contact between the military and public has increased due to the "Military-First" policy, the level of alcohol consumption also appears to have risen. As the role of the military expanded to rural areas and extra-military projects, soldiers frequently enter civilian homes and have greater opportunity for contact with civilians. The increased level of interaction has been pointed out as one of the reasons soldiers have started to consume more alcohol.

The results for the survey on the frequency of alcoholism within military unit show that 51.5% of the interviewees responded that alcoholism occur almost weekly or 2 to 3 times a month.

This survey delegates scores within a scale from 1 point to 5 points for each answer, with 5 points awarded for "very frequent," 4 points for "frequent," 3 points for "sometimes," 2 points for "rare" and 1 point for "very rare." The average results to 3.16, which is closer to "sometimes." 11 North Korean defectors, who have served in the military and interviewed with the author, all admitted to the prevalence of excessive alcoholism in the military. Consequently, the results of this survey are unexpected.

Table 4. Degree of Alcoholism in Military Units

How Common is Alcoholism in Military Units?

		Frequency (number of persons)	Percentage (%)	Accumulated Percentage (%)
Validity	Very Frequent (almost weekly)	29	14.5	14.6
	Frequent (2-3 times a month)	73	36.5	51.5
	Sometimes (once a month)	37	18.5	70.2
	Rare (a few times a year)	19	9.5	79.8
	Never	40	20.0	100.0
	Total	198	99.0	
Systemic Assessment	Systemic Assessment Value	2	1.0	
Total		200	100.0	

5. Assault (2.80)

One of the issues that have been repeatedly underscored in the KPA's internal documents, such as the *Study Materials for Psychological Training*, includes the need to eradicate assault and other acts of cruelty. If brutality leads to hate between officers and soldiers or among the soldiers, then the solidarity and organization of the military is likely to suffer.

200 participants for this survey were asked, "How often did

assault occur in the unit?” 5 options were provided as shown in Table 5. The results are as follows.

Table 5. Frequency of Assault

How Often Did Assault Occur in the Units?

		Frequency (number of persons)	Percentage (%)	Accumulated Percentage (%)
Validity	Very Frequent	15	7.5	7.5
	Frequent	55	27.5	35.0
	Sometimes	43	21.5	56.5
	Rare	49	24.5	81.0
	Very Rare	38	19.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	

35.0% of the participants chose “very frequent” and “frequent” and admitted to the prevalence of assault. 43.5% answered “rare” or “very rare,” which is a higher figure than expected.

The average value within the 5-point scale is 2.80. This score is within the range of “not very frequent,” since 2 points is “rare” and 3 points is “sometimes.” In other words, even as assault occurs, it only occurs every now and then.

If soldiers perceive assault as a routine activity in the military, then the possibility of assault influencing the relationship among soldiers is potentially lower. Therefore, another question was posed in the survey: “What influence does assault have on the relationship among soldiers?” Two options were provided as answers, which are “Assaults are routine in the military, so they do not have

any significant influence” and “Assaulted soldiers have very strong complaints, so the assaults have significant influence on relationship among soldiers.” Table 6 shows the results from the survey.

Table 6. Degree of Influence that Assault Has on the Relationship among Soldiers

What Influence Does Assault Have on the Relationship among Soldiers?

		Frequency (number of persons)	Percentage (%)
Validity	Little Influence	77	38.5
	Strong Influence	54	27.0
	Total	131	65.5
Systemic Assessment	Systemic Assessment Value	69	34.5
	Total	200	100.0

Among the 131 responses, 77 persons or 38.5% of all participants answered “little influence,” while 54 persons or 27.0% of participants answered “strong influence.” The majority of the participants believe that assault did not have a significant influence on the relationships among soldiers. However, some others believe that assault did have a significant influence.

It is important to note that morale and battle capacity are significantly influenced by inter-soldier relations. If soldiers are not united by a sense of camaraderie or in an atmosphere of trust, then the possibility of hostile behavior or misconduct increases.

An example is the recent deaths in South Korea's Marine Corps. The deaths are alleged due to severe ostracism. The soldiers' relationships exhibit such bitterness and resentment that it is natural to assume that morale and battle capabilities will also be low. The North Korean KPA also places a high priority on relationships among soldier, stressing amicable relations between senior soldiers and new recruits. Similar to the South Korean military, assault is strictly prohibited.

200 participants of this survey were asked, "How was the relationship between senior soldiers and new recruits?" and given a choice of answers ranging from "very positive," "positive," "fair," "negative" to "very negative." The results can be observed in Table 7.

Table 7. Relationship among the Soldiers

How Was the Relationship among the Soldiers?

		Frequency (number of persons)	Percentage (%)	Accumulated Percentage (%)
Validity	Very Positive	17	8.5	8.5
	Positive	76	38.0	46.5
	Average	81	40.5	87.0
	Negative	25	12.5	99.5
	Very Negative	1	0.5	100
	Total	200	100	

As presented in Table 7, 8.5% of the interviewees answered “very good” and 38.0% answered “good,” which combine to 46.5%. “Fair” was the most common answer comprising 40.5%, and only 13.0% claimed that relationships were negative.

Similarly to the other questions, a 5-point scale was used to score the answers, with 5 points for “very positive,” 4 points for “positive,” 3 points for “fair,” 2 points for “negative” and 1 point for “very negative.” The final average value is 3.42. This value lies in between “fair” and “positive.”

6. Desertion (2.73)

There have been recent reports of desertion in the KPA. The causes are said to be of fatigue from 10 years of service and severe food shortages within the units.

200 participants in this survey were asked whether there have been any desertions in the unit during their service. As seen below, 11.5% of the interviewees answered “very frequent” and 23.5% answered “frequent” for a combined total of 35.5%. With the exception of “very frequent,” the four remaining answers have a similar number of responses, making it difficult to arrive at a general conclusion.

Using a 5-point scoring system for the answers, with 5 points for “very frequent,” 4 points for “frequent,” 3 points for “sometimes,” 2 points for “rare” and 1 point for “very rare,” the average value is 2.73. Reports claim that there are many desertions

in the KPA. However, the 200 North Korean defectors surveyed here observed that the level of desertion was average.

Table 8. Frequency of Desertion

How Frequent Were Desertions?

		Frequency (number of persons)	Percentage (%)	Accumulated Percentage (%)
Validity	Very Frequent	23	11.5	11.5
	Frequent	47	23.5	35.0
	Sometimes	34	17.0	52.0
	Rare	45	22.5	74.5
	Very rare	51	25.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	

7. Disclosing Classified Information (2.17)

The Study Materials for Psychological Training and other documents stress the importance of security to prevent the disclosure of secrets. Throughout the world, military-related information is commonly classified, so it is difficult to ascertain the exact level of confidentiality that the documents are subject to. However, one indication comes from Kim Jong-il, who stated on July 14, 1998, “not only Party and State secrets, but also secrets concerning major events are being leaked,” implying that highly classified information has been disclosed from North Korea.

To assess the level of disclose, 200 participants were asked,

“How often do you think the unit’s classified information were leaked?” Participants were given five options: “very frequent,” “frequent,” “sometimes,” “rare” and “very rare.” The range of answers is shown below in Table 9.

Table 9. Level of Disclosure of Classified Information

How Often Were the Unit’s Secrets Leaked?

		Frequency (number of persons)	Percentage (%)	Accumulated Percentage (%)
Validity	Very Frequent	0	0.0	0.0
	Frequent	28	14.0	14.0
	Sometimes	43	21.5	35.5
	Rare	64	32	67.5
	Very Rare	65	32.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	

32.0% and 32.5% of respondents answered “rare” and “very rare” respectively, with the total of the two responses being 64.5%. Within the 5-point scale, 5 points refer to “very frequent,” 4 points for “frequent,” 3 points for “sometimes,” 2 points for “rare” and 1 point for “very rare,” the total average is 2.17. This indicates that the disclosure of secrets did not occur very often.

8. Prevalence of Western Influences and South Korean Culture (2.31)

It is a well-known fact that since 2000, the values and social consciousness of the North Korean people has rapidly changed. Television, DVD players, South Korean and foreign movies, and videos, along with other foreign products of cultural value and information are becoming readily accessible.

This social trend also appears to have affected the military. One of the channels through which these social trends may continue to filter into the military are the new recruits, which are a consistent trend.

200 North Korean defectors, who had served in the military, were asked about the prevalence of Western influences and South Korean culture. 39 persons or 19.5% answered “very high” and “high,” while 31.0% answered “very low.”

In the 5-point scale, each answer is awarded points, with 5 points for “very high,” 4 points for “high,” 3 points for “fair,” 2 points for “low” and 1 point for “very low.” The total average score is 2.16. This number indicates that although there is a degree of Western influences and South Korean culture within North Korea, this influence remains “relatively low” within the KPA.

Table 10. Degree of Prevalence of Western Influences and South Korean Culture

What is the Degree of Prevalence of Western Influences or Culture (Westernization, viewership of South Korean material or usage of South Korean goods, capitalistic behavior, etc.)?

		Frequency (number of persons)	Percentage (%)	Accumulated Percentage (%)
Validity	Very High	8	4.0	4.0
	High	31	15.5	19.5
	Fair	38	19.0	38.5
	Low	61	30.5	69.0
	Very Low	62	31.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	

IV. Conclusion

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In order for the military to be the ultimate bastion that prevents the disintegration and collapse of the regime under North Korea's "Military-First" policy, the military must be disciplined, ideologically armed, and strictly uphold the regulations of the regime. According to a variety of recent reports on North Korea, however, the lack of regulatory control and lax discipline in the KPA has become quite serious. This paper is attempting to address the accuracy of these reports.

By examining *Study Materials for Psychological Training, Papers on Instigation* and other previously classified documents issued by the Korean People's Army Publishing Company and distributed within the military, it is apparent that the KPA faces a variety of problems. Kim Jong-il has specified this disregard for regulations as the most worrisome problem in the military.⁵⁵⁾

Above all, the most noteworthy aspect of the disciplinary problem is that Kim Jong-il's orders have not been properly executed. The content of *the Study Materials for Psychological Training* admits that the directives of Kim Jong-il, the absolute being, are not honored, which is a shock for North Korea. Despite this, the survey responses provided by the 200 North Korean refugees, who served in the military, indicate that the North Korean soldiers' loyalty toward Kim Jong-il remains firm.

Another disciplinary problem that frequently occurs in the KPA and is the target of Kim Jong-il's criticism is the misappropriation

55) "A commentary on the basic ideology of the immortal classical work of the Supreme Commander, Comrade Kim Jong-il, 'The People's Army must be the flag-bearers and storm troopers in upholding the Military-First tradition of our Party,'" p. 13.

and diversion of military goods. The misappropriation and diversion of military goods is not simply a moral issue of the individual character, but also a structural problem caused by economic crisis. With a lack of available supplies and a need for the units to procure the management funds, the embezzlement of supplies is inevitable. In regard to the frequency of the misappropriation and diversion of military goods, the responses from the 200 North Korean refugees who served in the military averaged 3.30 out of 5 points. The score signifies that the actions occurred slightly higher than “sometimes.”

Although the misappropriation and diversion of military goods may be common in any underdeveloped nation, the unique conditions under the “Military-First” policy create a serious disciplinary problem in the abuse of the public. While the military is generally required to live in austere conditions similar to that of the anti-Japanese guerilla units of the colonial period, it is also regularly involved in various projects that involve civilians. This interaction leads to an increase in public abuses inflicted by the military. The military, which is supposed to protect the lives and possessions of the people, is often involved in stealing their grain, livestock, equipment, and tools.

The degree of abuse on the public is 3.28 out of 5 points. This figure is similar to that of the misappropriation and diversion of military supplies. Both are slightly higher than “sometimes.” The result indicates that the information widely accepted in South Korea regarding the degree of the abuse on the public inflicted by the KPA may, in fact, be an overstatement.

According to internal KPA documents, alcohol consumption is presumed to be the cause of the various misdemeanors and crimes committed by North Korean soldiers. Consequently, these internal documents emphasize that alcoholism is a problem that must be immediately addressed. Alcoholism is not only prevalent among soldiers but also among officers as well, and it is presumed that alcoholism has become more excessive, as contact between the military and civilians have significantly increased under the “Military-First” policy. The results from the survey regarding the frequency of alcoholism within the units demonstrate that 51.5% of the survey participants answered that alcoholism occurred quite frequently, weekly or 2 to 3 times a month, and in the 5-point scale, it averaged a score of 3.16, which is close to “sometimes.” However, according to the interviews conducted by the author with 11 North Korean defectors who served in the military, most admitted that alcoholism was prevalent, which is unexpected in comparison to the survey results.

Another issue that is regularly emphasized in the *Study Materials for Psychological Training* and other internal KPA documents is the need to eradicate assault and other cruel behaviors. If hate is fostered between officers and soldiers and among fellow soldiers due to cruel behavior, then the unity and organization of the military will be adversely affected. While only 35.0% of the survey participants answered “very frequent” or “frequent” and admitted to the prevalence of assaults, 43.5% responded “rare” or “very rare,” the lack of the frequency of assaults has received more positive answers. In a 5-point scale, the result averaged 2.80.

As 2 points is designated for “rarely” and 3 points for “sometimes,” the average score is closer to “rare” but also leans toward “sometimes.” This indicates that should assault occur, it takes place on a less frequent basis.

Desertion is another problem, aggravated by fatigue from 10 long years of service as well as severe food shortages within units. The result from the survey demonstrates that the average score is 2.73 out of 5 points. Since 3 points refers “sometimes,” the results indicate that North Korean escapees, who served in the military, believe that desertions only occur on an occasional basis. This contradicts the reports in South Korea that describe frequent desertions from the military. Furthermore, according to the *Study Materials for Psychological Training*, a strong sense of security has been emphasized in order to prevent the disclosure of classified information. The results averaged 2.17 out of 5 points, which imply that this problem only occurs “rarely.”

The greatest interest in this report is the degree of prevalence of Western influences and South Korean culture within the KPA. Since 2000, exposure to foreign culture and information in North Korea has significantly increased due to the distribution of televisions and DVD players. This social trend appears to be influencing the military as well. 19.5% or 39 persons out of the 200 survey participants responded “very high” or “high,” while 31.0% denied the ubiquity of Western influences and South Korean culture, answering “very low.” The result averaged 2.31 out of 5 points. This denotes that despite the prevalence of Western influences and South Korean culture in North Korean society,

the impact remains limited within the military.

There are various causes to disciplinary problems in the KPA; however these problems fundamentally originate from chronic food shortages. Food shortages have affected the soldiers' loyalty towards Kim Jong-il, and in certain ways, have also resulted in the misappropriation and diversion of military good, the abuse of the public, desertion, and the disclosure of classified information.

57% of survey participants acknowledged food security as either "very lacking" or "somewhat lacking." However, 30.0% of participants answered that there was no shortage, an unexpectedly high figure. The average result was 3.53 out of 5 points, which is the halfway between "normal" and "somewhat lacking." This finding slightly differs from the generally accepted perception in South Korea that the KPA suffers from severe food shortages.

In conclusion, the questions to the extent of the problems in regard to misconduct and food shortages within the KPA and how these problems influence the soldiers' loyalty toward Kim Jong-il, morale and ideological discipline remain. The collective answer to these questions from the 200 participants of this survey can be concluded as follows: "Disorderly conduct occurs occasionally when soldiers have complaints. This has a slightly negative effect on loyalty toward Kim Jong-il, morale, and ideological discipline." The results further indicate that misdemeanors in the military are not prevalent enough and soldiers' complaints are not strong enough to adversely affect

the military's loyalty toward Kim Jong-il, morale or the ideological discipline of the "Military-First" policy.

Study of Disciplinary Problems in the North Korean Army

