Landmine Detonates on South Korean Side of Demilitarized Zone

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Tensions between North Korea and South Korea rose as a result of the first major exchange of artillery fire in five years. On 4 August 2015, a landmine severely wounded two South Korean staff sergeants patrolling the DMZ. Officials from Seoul accused North Korea of planting three mines near the guard post on the south side of the DMZ, 440 meters (481 yards) away from the demarcation line; officials from Pyongyang denied these accusations. The explosives found were placed in wooden boxes, not unlike mines previously used by North Korea.

South Korea responded to the incident with loudspeakers broadcasting propaganda across the border, a Cold War tactic not used in over a decade. The loudspeakers broadcasted pro-democratic content, the weather and world news. Pyongyang threatened severe and imminent retaliation should South Korean loudspeakers continue broadcasting, and increased their country’s military alert to a “semi-war state.”

On 20 August 2015, North Korea fired rockets in the general direction of the loudspeakers, and exchanged artillery fire across the border with soldiers from South Korea. During these events, the South Korean government asked the citizens in neighboring towns to evacuate the area due to “a danger of bombing.”

Officials from both countries met on 22–23 August 2015 and discussed resolving the current situation and furthering positive country relations. On 24 August 2015, the opposing sides agreed on a truce; Pyongyang stated “regret” for the landmine explosion and lowered its defense status, and Seoul agreed to cease using their loudspeakers on the DMZ. The status of landmines in the DMZ was not part of the truce agreement.

~ Heather Funkhouser, CISR staff

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Endnotes