

Team Spirit

A Case Study on the Value of Military Exercises as a Show of Force in the Aftermath of Combat Operations

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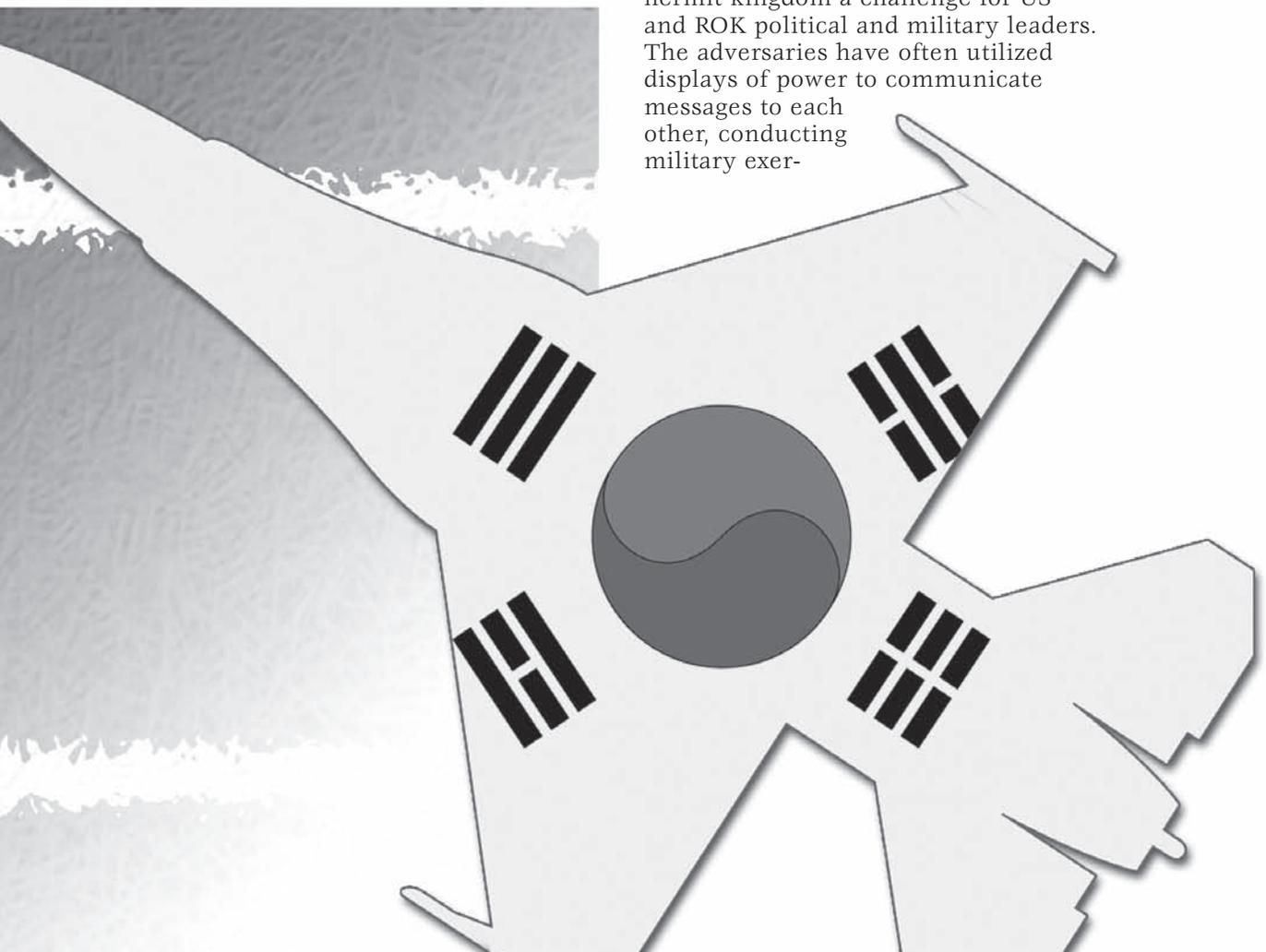
Political concerns dominate a show of force operation, and as such, military forces often are under significant legal and political constraints. The military force coordinates its operations with the country teams affected. A show of force can involve a wide range of military forces including joint US military or multinational forces. Additionally, a show of force may include or transition to joint or multinational exercises.

—Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations*,
17 September 2006

Although an armistice ending combat operations was signed on 27 July 1953, no formal peace treaty ever concluded the Korean War. Consequently, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) technically has remained at war with the Republic of

Korea (ROK) and the United States for well over half a century. Skirmishes between the two sides have erupted periodically, but no major combat has taken place since the cease-fire.

This uneasy peace that has settled over the land of the morning calm has made dealing with the North Korean hermit kingdom a challenge for US and ROK political and military leaders. The adversaries have often utilized displays of power to communicate messages to each other, conducting military exer-



cises to demonstrate political and military resolve.

Commanders have long valued the efficacy of exercises. In World War II, Army leaders benefited from the Louisiana maneuvers. REFORGER exercises during the Cold War ensured the capability of US forces to deploy to Europe. Modern exercises at the national and joint readiness training centers, as well as the simulated air wars of the Air Warrior and Flag exercises, have proven invaluable in preparing forces for conflict. Short of actual combat, realistic training exercises are considered the best vehicles to prepare armed forces for war.

Military exercises, however, can have value beyond the obvious benefit of readying troops for battle. Just as Carl von Clausewitz postulated that opponents wage war for political purposes, so can the preparation for war have value in the political realm. Such was the case with Team Spirit, an annual combined exercise held in the ROK. Born during a time of political controversy in the 1970s, this exercise, directed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, took on a life of its own as it became an effective tool for the United States when negotiating with both South and North Korea. Now dormant, Team Spirit nevertheless serves to further US and ROK political aims on the Korean peninsula, especially in ensuring that North Korea lives up to its nuclear treaty obligations. Skillfully employed, military exercises such as Team Spirit can serve as a show of force to extract concessions from adversaries without having to resort to direct military intervention.

Evolution of Team Spirit

The United States and ROK originally designed Team Spirit with both military and political objectives, agreeing during the annual Security Consultative Meeting in 1975 to consolidate several

smaller exercises conducted since 1969 into a comprehensive field-maneuver exercise held each spring.¹ During the first exercise, held in 1976, America sought to demonstrate to North Korea its commitment to the ROK, as well as give troops realistic training in combined military operations.

However, Team Spirit soon generated more profound political ramifications than originally envisioned. Though not created with 1976's election of Jimmy Carter in mind, the exercise proved somewhat serendipitous to the new American president's administration. Since January 1975, Carter had been promising that if elected he would withdraw the nearly 40,000 American troops from South Korea. After his inauguration in early 1977, he seemed committed to carrying out his campaign pledge.² Holding a major military exercise annually in the face of proposed troop withdrawals would serve to convince the South and North Koreans that America remained committed to the ROK's defense. Michael Armacost, a member of Carter's National Security Council, stated in a classified memorandum of 1977 that Team Spirit "is a large exercise, but is consistent with the guidance that exercises in Korea shall be larger, more frequent *and* more visible during our ground troop withdrawals" (emphasis in original).³ To enhance that visibility, over 300 reporters were invited to cover Team Spirit 78, the first time the media had access to the exercise. Deputy Secretary of Defense Charles W. Duncan referred to Team Spirit 78 as "a clear demonstration of our ability to rapidly augment forces in Korea."⁴ Resistance to Carter's policy soon forced him to postpone and eventually reverse his decision to withdraw American forces, but Team Spirit continued to grow in numbers and significance.

Almost immediately, it became US Pacific Command's largest exercise, with 107,000 ROK and US personnel partici-

pating in 1978.⁵ That number increased to 168,000 for Team Spirit 79.⁶ Total participation dropped to 145,000 in 1980 due to funding and “real-world activities,” but it climbed to 156,700 the next year.⁷ Team Spirit 82 saw an increase to over 167,000 participants, and the exercise continued to expand, as Team Spirit 83 boasted 192,000 personnel.⁸ With over 200,000 personnel participating in 1986, 1988, and 1989, Team Spirit became the free world’s largest military exercise until the 1990s, when the size and scope of the exercise began to draw down.⁹ In 1991 Operation Desert Storm forced a significant scaling down, restricting Team Spirit to largely in-country forces.¹⁰ When it resumed in 1993 after a cancellation the previous year, only 19,000 personnel reinforced US and Korean forces, for a total participation of 120,000 troops.¹¹ The 1993 exercise marked the last year Team Spirit was held.

North Korean Reaction to Team Spirit

Judging by the reaction of the North Koreans, one could argue that Team Spirit represented a potent show of force because DPRK resistance to it grew as the exercise expanded. Kim Il Sung, the president of North Korea, believed that Carter’s promise to withdraw US forces from South Korea was genuine and presented an opportunity for rapprochement between North Korea and the United States. However, Kim soon grew increasingly frustrated at Carter’s delay in the withdrawal, seeing the initiation and expansion of Team Spirit as a further revision of the American president’s stated policy. Although no evidence of a direct connection exists, the first Team Spirit may have contributed to the tension that resulted in the slaying of two American officers by North Korean guards at Panmunjom on 18 August 1976.¹² Otherwise, the DPRK’s annual

protests to the exercise were limited to propaganda statements from state-run media.¹³ Reports coming from the official DPRK news agency, however, indicate that the North Koreans’ alarm grew precipitously prior to the start of the 1983 exercise.¹⁴ Team Spirit definitely had their attention.

Although the United States billed Team Spirit as a completely defensive exercise, the North Koreans contended that it prepared for an invasion of the North. They had always considered Team Spirit a nuclear-war exercise, a charge somewhat validated by the introduction of B-52 nuclear bombers in 1977 and nuclear-capable Lance long-range missile systems a year later.¹⁵ In their minds, they had ample cause to be wary. After all, prior to their invasion of the South in 1950, DPRK forces used military maneuvers to mask troop movements.¹⁶ Prof. Andrew Mack of the Australian National University challenges us to consider how the United States and ROK might have reacted had the shoe been on the other foot:

How would the South have felt if during the 1980s the Soviets had 44,000 military personnel and advanced military equipment (including nuclear weapons) based in the North, while there were no American troops or nuclear weapons in the South? Imagine further that the Soviets and the DPRK ran an annual 200,000-strong joint exercise involving nuclear-capable ships and aircraft, and that the exercise was unambiguously intended as training for a major war with the South. It is not surprising that the North finds Team Spirit threatening.¹⁷

The North had a major problem with Team Spirit, feeling that it had no choice other than put DPRK forces on alert for the duration of the exercise. In a speech to the Supreme People’s Assembly, Ho Tam, chairman of the Committee for Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland and a member of the Korean Workers’ Party, explained that military forces in the North went on a “war foot-

ing” for the first time in 1983 because Team Spirit was such a large exercise involving the use of dangerous weaponry.¹⁸ Subsequently, putting forces on alert in North Korea for Team Spirit became a yearly ritual. Kim Il Sung told East German president Erich Honecker in 1984 that “every time the opponent carries out such a maneuver, we must take counteractions.”¹⁹ Indeed, a North Korean defector reported that DPRK soldiers, normally not issued live ammunition for fear of a military coup, carried bullets during these alerts.²⁰ The North felt that it had to forward-deploy troops lest its long supply lines become vulnerable to the threat of air interdiction should hostilities commence. Gen James Clapper Jr., director of the Defense Intelligence Agency from 1991 to 1994, identified that vulnerability as the reason the North Koreans “go nuts at Team Spirit.”²¹ Placing an entire nation on a “semi-war footing” also proved expensive, especially with the collapse of the North’s chief benefactor, the Soviet Union. North Korea had to move several military units, ground equipment, and aircraft during a time of severe fuel shortages. According to Kim, his call-up of reservists to augment regular troops cost “one and a half months of working shifts . . . a great loss.”²² Members of the general population also dug themselves bomb shelters and were subject to mandatory participation in anti-American rallies, air-raid drills, curfews, and imposed blackouts. One Westerner living in Pyongyang described his somewhat humorous experience of being caught outside in a spotlight during his first Team Spirit blackout: “I waited for a shouted order, the sound of a rifle being cocked. Instead, I heard a giggle, and then another. I squinted, and just about made out two female forms, dressed in baggy military uniforms and soft Mao caps.”²³

The North’s animosity toward the exercise became almost visceral. Kim Il Sung’s voice reportedly “quivered” and

his hands “shook with anger” when discussing Team Spirit with New York congressman Gary Ackerman during the latter’s official visit to Pyongyang in 1993.²⁴ The resumption of Team Spirit in 1993 was particularly galling to Kim Jong Il, Kim Il Sung’s son, who then served as supreme commander of the armed forces. He had taken personal credit for the cancellation of the previous year’s exercise, thus sparing his people the annual ordeal of putting the nation on alert. Resumption of the exercise might suggest failure on his part at a time when he was trying to consolidate his position as the heir apparent.²⁵ Additionally, Kim Il Sung was in poor health in 1993, and many people doubted Kim Jong Il’s ability to hold the regime together, particularly during threatening military maneuvers in the South.²⁶ Some even conjectured that North Korean military leaders might use military maneuvers in response to Team Spirit as a cover for a coup d’etat.²⁷ Hence, it was clearly in the DPRK leadership’s interest to seek the elimination of this exercise.

Team Spirit: The Carrot and the Stick

By 1985 the DPRK’s economic and foreign-policy decisions indicated just how much Team Spirit had become a thorn in its side. In protest of the exercise, the North Koreans suspended trade talks with the South and negotiations with the Red Cross in January.²⁸ The North claimed that Vice Premier Kim Hwan had tried to meet with a South Korean deputy minister to discuss the issue.²⁹ The North agreed to resume talks in April following completion of Team Spirit, repeating this move in January 1986 but then insisting on the end of the exercise prior to the resumption of talks.³⁰ Attempts at reunification through interparliamentary talks ended in February 1989 when the North ceased all meetings in protest of that year’s

Team Spirit. Again, the North Koreans suspended all inter-Korean talks in February 1990, as well as scheduled prime-ministerial talks in February 1991, due to the exercise.³¹

Team Spirit played a pivotal role in nuclear negotiations. Fearing that North Korea was embarking on the development of nuclear weapons, the United States persuaded the Soviet Union to convince the DPRK to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) on 12 December 1985 in exchange for four Soviet-supplied light-water nuclear reactors to ease its energy shortage. The NPT required the North to admit inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency although the North never signed the subsequent safeguards agreement permitting the inspections. After the United States offered the cancellation of Team Spirit as an inducement, the North signed a joint nonnuclear declaration with the South on 31 December 1991, agreeing to use nuclear power only for peaceful purposes.³² According to the declaration, "South and North Korea shall conduct inspections of particular subjects chosen by the other side and agreed upon between the two sides."³³ In a joint news conference with South Korean president Roh Tae Woo in Seoul on 6 January 1992, Pres. George H. W. Bush stated that if North Korea "fulfills its obligation and takes steps to implement the inspection agreements, then President Roh and I are prepared to forego the Team Spirit exercise for this year."³⁴ South Korea officially announced the cancellation of the exercise the next day.³⁵ The ROK Defense Ministry cautioned, however, that if the North intended to use "intra-Korean accords to play political games, without any real interest in implementing them, Team Spirit exercises can be resumed at any time."³⁶ Team Spirit had served its purpose as a carrot to negotiations with the North, as well as a po-

tential stick should the North renege on the agreement.

Team Spirit's role as a stick came into play the next year. As North Korean intransigence on the issue of inspections dragged on throughout 1992, both the US and ROK defense ministers announced in October that planning for Team Spirit 93 would commence.³⁷ The South offered to cancel the exercise only if the North adopted guidelines for inspections by November and if the first inspection began by 20 December. The two countries could not reach an agreement, so the South announced on 25 January 1993 that Team Spirit would take place that year. Not wanting to alienate their military constituencies after just taking office, both South Korean president Kim Young Sam and US president Bill Clinton allowed the exercise to proceed.³⁸ In response, on 12 March the DPRK announced its withdrawal from the NPT effective 12 June, after the treaty's prescribed three-month waiting period.³⁹

Team Spirit then switched back from the stick to the carrot. During Team Spirit 93, the South indicated on 27 March that it would consider a permanent cancellation of future Team Spirit exercises if the North reversed its decision to withdraw from the NPT.⁴⁰ The North Koreans suspended their withdrawal on 11 June after meeting with US negotiators. Despite the lack of any formal mention of Team Spirit, the parties had an implicit understanding that compliance would result in no further exercises.⁴¹

Continued resistance by the North to allowing inspections throughout the remainder of 1993 and into early 1994 led to the South's again using Team Spirit as a cudgel. On 31 January 1994, the ROK declared that it would proceed with Team Spirit 94 if the North did not allow nuclear inspections.⁴² In response, the DPRK repeated its threat to pull out of the NPT. Consequently, the Pentagon began preparing for Team Spirit deploy-

ments.⁴³ In early February, Seoul's Defense Ministry scheduled the beginning of Team Spirit for 22 March.⁴⁴ Then, in accordance with an Agreed Conclusion negotiated on 25 February, the North would admit inspectors if South Korea cancelled Team Spirit 94.⁴⁵ When North Korea later denied them access, the inspectors were ordered home on 15 March. Even though it was too late to hold Team Spirit during its normal time in March, the US military began consulting with Seoul over rescheduling the exercise later in the year.⁴⁶ One possibility called for combining Team Spirit with August's command-post exercise, known as Ulchi Focus Lens, to make "one helluva [*sic*] big exercise."⁴⁷ When the North Koreans walked out of talks on 19 March, an interviewer asked Warren Christopher, the US secretary of state, whether holding Team Spirit was inevitable. "Yes," he replied, "it's a matter of timing."⁴⁸ After months of negotiations dragged on, punctuated by the visit of former president Jimmy Carter to North Korea and the death of Kim Il Sung, ROK president Kim announced on 11 October that his government had decided "to go ahead with Team Spirit military exercises next month unless the North shows sincerity to resolve the nuclear problem."⁴⁹ Finally, on 21 October, in accordance with an Agreed Framework signed by the United States and North Korea in Geneva, Switzerland, the North agreed to dismantle its existing nuclear facilities and comply with the International Atomic Energy Agency in exchange for light-water reactors and other economic aid. Based on this agreement, the United States cancelled Team Spirit for 1994.⁵⁰ As of this writing, it has not been held again.

Although Team Spirit had proven an efficacious negotiating tool, several supporters did not want the exercise sacrificed on the altar of nuclear compliance. Individuals in the ROK government later saw the advantage of using Team Spirit as a bargaining chip during nu-

clear negotiations, but prior to 1991 the ROK government and military viewed the exercise as invaluable in maintaining military readiness and conducting a show of force against the North. Hence, the United States was not about to cancel an exercise demonstrating its commitment to the ROK without the concurrence of the South Korean government. When a Clinton administration proposal to cancel Team Spirit 94 in exchange for nuclear inspections of DPRK facilities leaked to the press in November 1993, Kim Young Sam, during his first official visit to Washington, voiced his displeasure in the Oval Office at America's not including his government in the decision process and declared that he—not the Americans—would make the final decision as to the disposition of Team Spirit. The White House agreed that Kim would make any announcement concerning the future of the exercise.⁵¹ Several Americans also opposed cancelling Team Spirit. Columnist Charles Krauthammer described it as "the foremost symbolic expression of America's commitment—a solemn, binding treaty commitment—to the defense of South Korea."⁵² Former secretary of defense Caspar Weinberger also objected to the cancellation of the exercise in 1994:

We have an offer on the table to them which I think is totally misplaced: to cancel the "Team Spirit" exercise on the grounds that, yes, maybe it is provocative. It did not seem provocative to me during the years we held it regularly when I was in office. It seemed absolutely vital to me that we have the training and the experience and the practice of working together with our South Korean allies, and that we continue to do that on the scale that has been involved in those exercises in the past.⁵³

Despite the utility of the exercise, several US government and military officials did not want Team Spirit held hostage to North Korean threats or promises. When the Clinton administration was considering deferring the exercise in 1993, Joint Chiefs of Staff

chairman Colin Powell resisted its efforts.⁵⁴ Several US senators also opposed cancellation of the 1994 Team Spirit exercise. Senator Bob Smith (R-NH) noted that the NPT required the inspections and that they should not have been contingent upon holding the exercise: "The cancellation of Team Spirit rewards North Korean intransigence and sends a terrible message to the international community that treaty accountabilities can be bargained away." Senator William Cohen (R-ME) expressed concern that cancellation of the exercise would make it difficult to restart because the United States "will be accused of ratcheting up the tension."⁵⁵ To Senator John McCain (R-AZ), cancelling Team Spirit "for the sake of a single concession which is entirely inadequate as a means of determining the extent of North Korea's nuclear program is without a doubt the worst signal the United States could send."⁵⁶

Team Spirit's Value

Continuing Team Spirit, however, was becoming increasingly costly. Transportation expenses for deploying and redeploying forces to the peninsula and sustaining them in the field for at least a month had become enormous. In 1984 the cost to the Air Force alone amounted to \$30 million.⁵⁷ By 1991 total outlay for the exercise had reached \$150 million.⁵⁸ By 1993 the combined cost of all exercises since Team Spirit's inception in 1976 approached \$900 million.⁵⁹ For budgetary reasons, some people in the Defense Department wanted to change Team Spirit from an annual to a biannual exercise.⁶⁰ In 1991 Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney considered eliminating the exercise altogether as a cost-saving measure.⁶¹ Maintaining the most expensive exercise held by the Pentagon was becoming financially onerous when post-Cold War defense budgets were being trimmed.

Additionally, several individuals in the Defense Department wondered if the military value of Team Spirit justified the cost. Although billed as a capabilities exercise to defend against a North Korean invasion, since 1979 the field maneuver had never exercised the war operation plan (OPLAN). Despite objections from the Air Force and Navy component commanders of Pacific Command, Gen John A. Wickham Jr., commander of US Forces in Korea, indicated that he wanted to concentrate the exercise on activities that would produce the greatest benefit for forces facing a contingency and did not want to "fetter" Team Spirit with "the rigid test of war plans."⁶² Hence, units were divided into Blue and Orange forces, fighting a simulated east-west rather than north-south battle scenario. Some units switched sides during the exercise or played on both sides simultaneously. In addition, several units participating in Team Spirit exercises were not tasked by the OPLAN, and those participating units with a wartime tasking were often not put in their OPLAN deployment locations. An Air Force audit of the 1984 Team Spirit exercise noted that none of the seven engineering units from Tactical Air Command tasked in the OPLAN had participated in any of the previous three Team Spirit exercises.⁶³

Questions on the military value of Team Spirit emerged during the early 1990s. After substantial curtailment of Team Spirit in 1991 due to Desert Storm, Gen Robert W. RisCassi, commander of US Forces in Korea, still commented that "exercise objectives were maintained and accomplished."⁶⁴ Secretary of Defense Les Aspin inquired in 1993 if suspending the exercise would have ramifications for military preparedness on the Korean Peninsula.⁶⁵ After the United States cancelled Team Spirit 94 to facilitate NPT negotiations with North Korea, State Department spokesman Michael McCurry released a statement saying that "the suspension of Team Spirit '94 will not weaken our joint defensive capabilities."⁶⁶ Gen Gary Luck,

commander of US Forces in Korea at the time, concurred, noting that the scheduled exercise would have been small: “We didn’t have a lot programmed for it. If we can get a breakthrough [over nuclear inspections] it would be prudent” to cancel the exercise.⁶⁷

Alternatives to Team Spirit

In 1991 Secretary Cheney proposed enlarging other exercises on the Korean Peninsula to replace Team Spirit, prompting a military official to comment that if the North Koreans “missed Desert Storm . . . this is a chance to catch a re-run.”⁶⁸ General Luck remarked that the cancellation of Team Spirit was not a great loss and that, although military needs had to be met, “there are lots of ways to skin this cat.”⁶⁹ Responding to criticism for cancelling the exercise, Undersecretary of State for International Security Affairs Lynn Davis stated that “we plan to continue our other major joint exercises in South Korea.”⁷⁰ A spokesman for the US/ROK Combined Military Command repeated this assurance in 1997, declaring that the cancellation of Team Spirit for the fourth year in a row would not affect readiness because several smaller exercises would fill the void.⁷¹

The exercises slated to replace Team Spirit were smaller but considered more realistic, at least in terms of the OPLAN. The most established one, Foal Eagle, originated in 1961 as an ROK battalion-level exercise. In 1975 it expanded into a combined special forces exercise that tested OPLAN taskings. In the absence of Team Spirit, Foal Eagle expanded again in 1997 to include a corps-level field-training exercise component, later reduced to brigade level.⁷² Since 2001, Foal Eagle has occurred in conjunction with the annual reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOI) exercise.⁷³ The reception, staging, and onward-movement operation, which reunited a unit’s personnel and equipment following deployment,

traditionally took place during Team Spirit.⁷⁴ The cancellation of Team Spirit, however, also eliminated the exercise designed to prepare for deploying personnel to Korea, thus leading to the initiation of RSOI in 1994. Primarily a computer-simulation exercise, RSOI utilizes the OPLAN time-phased force and deployment data—the database that lists the forces, beddown locations, and movement requirements.⁷⁵ The combined Foal Eagle / RSOI exercise takes up the scheduled slot in the spring, when Team Spirit was normally held, but brings only 4,000–7,000 additional personnel into the Korean Peninsula, compared to the nearly 200,000 at Team Spirit’s peak.⁷⁶ Another replacement exercise, Ulchi Focus Lens, began as separate ROK and US war-readiness exercises in 1969 that combined in 1976. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, it evolved into a computer-simulated command-post exercise to train staff at corps level and above on the OPLAN and to review the time-phased force and deployment data.⁷⁷ Held every August, Ulchi Focus Lens has normally brought 3,000 additional personnel into South Korea.⁷⁸ Having accomplished its goal of eliminating Team Spirit, North Korea has predictably revised its propaganda to aim at these alternate exercises by calling RSOI and Foal Eagle “an enlarged version of the ‘Team Spirit’ joint military exercises.” The DPRK further charges, with some degree of accuracy, that after the suspension of Team Spirit, “the U.S. and South Korean authorities have included its function in other large-scale joint military exercises and staged combined offensive maneuvers against the DPRK without interruption.”⁷⁹ In the tradition of Team Spirit, Pyongyang cited these exercises as a reason for withdrawing from the NPT in 2003.⁸⁰

Team Spirit’s Legacy

Although Team Spirit has not been conducted since 1993, the United States

has never permanently cancelled it, at least not officially. Each year the government makes a decision as to the disposition of the exercise, contingent upon North Korea's compliance with the NPT. The United States occasionally brings up Team Spirit to threaten the North should it choose not to honor treaty commitments. After the first cancellation in 1992, General RisCassi warned that stalling from the North "could well reverse the progress made to date," a prediction that came true with the one-time resumption of the exercise the following year.⁸¹ Gen John Shalikashvili, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that he agreed with the cancellation of the 1994 Team Spirit exercise but indicated that he wanted the maneuvers to return the next year.⁸² Gen Thomas Schwartz, commander of US forces in Korea in 2000, stated before the Senate Armed Services Committee that, although Team Spirit had been suspended, "the option remains open to conduct the large-scale dramatic demonstration of South Korean and United States resolve to defend against North Korean aggression."⁸³ The ghost of Team Spirit still seems to haunt the Korean Peninsula.

Few doubt this exercise's military value in that it effectively trained US and ROK personnel in the field. Its political value in intimidating the North and eventually persuading the North Koreans to adhere to treaty obligations, however, appears to have been worth the sacrifice of cancelling an exercise that had become quite expensive and did not exercise the actual war plan, especially when several smaller and less costly exercises could adequately fill that bill.

One could well argue that, since the North eventually violated the 1994 Agreed Framework by developing and testing a nuclear device on 6 October 2006, the entire venture of including Team Spirit in nuclear negotiations came to naught. If one takes the longer view and looks at denuclearizing the Korean peninsula as a process rather

than as a single result, however, then utilizing the exercise to achieve political purposes has proven beneficial. At this writing, the North Koreans have allowed inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency into their nuclear facilities and appear willing to exchange their ambitions of nuclear weaponry for economic relief and assistance. The role that Team Spirit played, and still plays, in that process was, and remains, significant.

Conclusion

Even though he referred to them as a "feeble substitute for the real thing," Clausewitz recognized military exercises as the next best method in preparing troops for war: "Even they can give an army an advantage over others whose training is confined to routine, mechanical drill. To plan maneuvers so that some of the elements of friction are involved, which will train officers' judgment, common sense, and resolution is far more worthwhile than inexperienced people might think."⁸⁴

The show of force that a military exercise such as Team Spirit brings to the political situation following the cessation of major combat operations could also be worthwhile. Considering the political as well as the combat efficacy when initiating, planning, conducting, and possibly cancelling military exercises can become important when dealing not only with adversaries but also allies. People should bear in mind their goals when weighing the options and the military or political gains that they can realize by continuing or cancelling an exercise. Finally, pondering these considerations in light of the cost, the exercise's realism in the field (as well as its relevance to actual war plans), and the question of whether alternative military exercises can achieve the same or similar objectives, can prove beneficial in making these decisions. ✪

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