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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.¹ On 4 August 2015, a landmine severely wounded two South Korean staff sergeants patrolling the DMZ.² 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.³ The explosives found were placed in wooden boxes, not unlike mines previously used by North Korea.³

South Korea responded to the incident with loudspeakers broadcasting propaganda across the border, a Cold War tactic not used in over a decade.¹ The loudspeakers broadcasted pro-democratic content, the weather and world news.⁴ Pyongyang threatened severe and imminent retaliation should South Korean loudspeakers continue broadcasting, and increased their country's military alert to a "semi-war state."¹

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.¹ During these events, the South Korean government asked the citizens in neighboring towns to evacuate the area due to "a danger of bombing."⁴

Officials from both countries met on 22–23 August 2015 and discussed resolving the current situation and furthering positive country relations.⁴ 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.⁵ The status of landmines in the DMZ was not part of the truce agreement. ©

~ Heather Funkhouser, CISR staff

Contact Information

Center for International Stabilization and Recovery

James Madison University MSC 4902
Harrisonburg, VA 22807 / USA
Email: cisr@jmu.edu
Website: <http://www.jmu.edu/cisr>

Endnotes

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