



Courtesy John A. Wickham

# The Struggle for Dominance KOREA ON THE BRINK, 1979–1980

By JOHN A. WICKHAM, JR.

**I**N OCTOBER 1979, the head of Korean Central Intelligence assassinated President Park Chung-hee. At midnight on December 12, 1979—in what became known as the “12/12 incident”—a coup led by General Chun Doo-hwan overthrew the civilian government under Choi Kyu-ha. Five months later bloody protests erupted in Kwangju. During this period of violence and unrest American and South Korean troops warily watched the demilitarized zone (DMZ), fearful that Pyongyang might exploit instability in Seoul as an invitation for aggression. General John Wickham, the U.S. and combined forces

commander on the scene, now has recounted his role in those turbulent events in a new book, *Korea on the Brink: From the “12/12 Incident” to the Kwangju Uprising, 1979–1980*. The following excerpt describes the reaction of a commander in chief when faced with a military coup by an ally.

## A Countercoup Declined

It was early morning when the visitor was ushered into my office in the Combined Forces Command headquarters. His visit was unexpected, which was unusual because Koreans rarely show up unannounced. Although I had known him for several months, our official contacts were infrequent and seldom on a personal basis.

He was a lieutenant general stationed in Seoul, impressive-looking and, from what I knew

---

**General John A. Wickham, Jr., USA (Ret.), served as 13<sup>th</sup> Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army. He was Commander in Chief, United Nations Command and Combined Forces Command, as well as Commander, U.S. Forces Korea and Eighth U.S. Army, from July 1979 to June 1982.**

### The Demilitarized Zone and Border Area



about him, well-connected in the army. His English was fluent enough that he did not need an interpreter, and he specifically asked that none attend our meeting. We talked alone with the door closed for more than half an hour.

It was obvious that he wanted to speak in confidentiality. After a short period of candid talk about the existing situation and the North Korean threat, he asked if he could speak frankly about the incident on December 12. When I told him he could, he bluntly asked if the "Americans would be prepared to support a counter coup. The purpose of this counter coup would be to eject Major General Chun Doo-hwan and his group of supporters and restore power to legitimate civil and military authorities." He said he "spoke for an important faction within the military that was very upset with events and what they might portend for the future." Leaning closer, he said he "was deadly serious with the proposal and did you understand it?"

I was astonished. Only a few days earlier General Lee Hyong-kon, the former Chairman of the Republic of Korea Joint Chiefs of Staff, told me that Americans would be the last people to get any reliable information about the possibilities of insurgent action. This was more than information; it was advance warning.

Before responding, I took a moment to think through the ramifications. As a minimum, his group obviously wanted a tacit go-ahead for their endeavor, and it probably wanted an assurance that the United States would withhold the kind of withering criticism that was being heaped on Chun. But perhaps he and his faction wanted more than political support. Perhaps, just in case things went awry, they wanted an assurance that U.S. forces would intervene on their behalf.

Obviously, I could not speak for the U.S. Government or Ambassador to Korea Bill Gleysteen. But we had already come close to civil war on the night of December 12. The general's offer reopened that possibility with its inherent dangers, both for America to become caught between several contending factions and for North Korea to exploit the situation. I was tempted to ask him about his military faction, the scope and nature of their plan, and their specific goals, but such questions might have been misinterpreted as more than passing interest on my part.

I told him that "the United States is not in the business of supporting coups and absolutely would not support any counteraction by the military faction he represented or any other faction." He paused for a moment, apparently to be sure that he fully understood, and then awkwardly thanked me for the opportunity to discuss such important matters. His face and manner revealed his disappointment, but he expressed his appreciation for my unequivocal answer. When I escorted him out of the building we parted amicably.

I probably should have consulted with Bill Gleysteen and my military superiors before I answered him, but I thought any delay might be misconstrued as interest. As soon as he was gone, though, I briefed Bill on the secure phone. He agreed with what I had done, but we wondered whether my response was enough to stop the general's faction dead in its tracks and, even if it was, whether other factions would appear in the months to come. CIA station chief Bob Brewster and his operatives had surfaced any number of reports of unrest within the military over Chun's actions.

In hindsight, I suppose a critical argument could be made that by spurning the proposed counter coup, we were thrust into the position of tacitly supporting Chun and his group. It was U.S. policy not to do so at the time, but rather to keep Chun at arm's length and to deal only with

the legitimate authorities, although the faction the general represented undoubtedly perceived my response as a vote of support for Chun.

There were a great many what ifs. Perhaps the general and his faction were sincere in their promise to restore civilian leadership and the constitutional process, in which case my response

### **we could protest and cajole, but direct intervention or internal conspiracy was out of bounds**

was antithetical to the Carter administration's avid desire to advance the democratization of South Korea.

But the reality was that we knew nothing about this particular faction. Another reality was that it would have been wrong to meddle in our ally's political fate. We could protest and cajole, but a direct intervention or an alliance with an internal conspiracy was out of bounds.

Bob Brewster visited a few days later for one of our regular weekly meetings. Bill Gleysteen had already told him about my meeting with the general who represented the countercoup faction, and Bob said he was in complete agreement with my response. Aside from the other considerations, if Chun were to discover U.S. support for an effort to overthrow him, we would face real trouble.

Bob then went on to point out that Chun was the "only horse in town and we have to work with him, even if it has to be at arm's length." He said, "We have to do our best to assure that Chun's movement toward total control over the political structure, if that's what Chun intends, is accomplished in legitimate ways and without jeopardizing domestic stability or provoking a North Korean intervention."

He said he recognized that U.S. policy was to avoid any actions that implied an endorsement of Chun or what he had done, but it was still "absolutely essential to maintain an open dialogue with Chun and his cohorts." Chun could not be ignored since he had already moved with surprising swiftness to grasp control over the military and to install his own people in a number of key positions, including the minister of defense and the army chief of staff.

I told Bob that my intelligence advisers, Jim Hausman, Steve Bradner, and Bruce Grant, shared his practical views, although they were less congenial toward Chun. Of course they did not know Chun and were therefore suspicious. Bob answered that he had developed a close relationship with Chun—not close enough to have been

warned in advance of Chun's move on December 12, but close enough that the two frequently consulted on important matters. He offered me that channel if I ever needed it.

### **Chun Restricts Contacts with U.S. Officials**

Chun must have realized that pockets of resistance were forming inside the military. Instructions were issued from Defense Security Command (DSC) headquarters to all its agents to report immediately on any unusual meetings, secret gatherings, or comments by senior officers that hinted at resistance to Chun. Officers known to have been loyal to the recently arrested army chief of staff, General Chung Sung-hwa (who had been implicated by Chun in the assassination plot), were to be watched closely, and those holding command positions were to be replaced as soon as possible with officers loyal to Chun. That was one of the first instructions given to the new army chief of staff, General Lee Hee-sung.

Chun also seemed to recognize that the Americans might be approached by potential countercoup groups, so he issued blanket instructions that all high-level contacts with American officials were to be cleared with the DSC. Hidden tape recorders were to be used at all high-level meetings, and the transcriptions were to be reviewed by key officers in the DSC. Any suspicious items were to be reported directly to Chun. Also, he instructed that all official sedans would have their windows blackened so observers on the streets and potential assassins could not see who was inside. Chun was taking no chances.

My office was notified that it was time for a routine reassignment for my ROK army aide. A new aide, an ROK army lieutenant colonel, began work right away. After a few weeks he was observed rifling through some in-boxes in the outer office, obviously searching for information. We had him checked and it turned out he was a DSC officer and had been making secret reports on his observations. Afterward we made certain that all office correspondence and sensitive conversations were shielded from him and that no important discussions were held in the official sedan or the command helicopter when he was present.

### **Tactical Seminars on Korean Defense**

I held several lengthy discussions with the key American military leaders in Korea to obtain their sensing of the situation and how we should redirect the military's attention toward security matters. Included in these discussions were my level-headed deputy, Lieutenant General Evan Rosencrans, USAF; Major General Robert Kingston, USA, commander of the 2<sup>d</sup> Infantry Division; Major General Kenneth Dohleman, USA,

## Korean Command Structure

**T**he organizational framework for defending the Republic of Korea (ROK) has taken shape in the wake of the outbreak of the Korean War on June 25, 1950. When General John Wickham served as the senior American officer in Korea during 1979 and 1980 he commanded four distinct organizations which encompassed every aspect of alliance, coalition, joint, and service component command. That framework continues to this day and includes:

- **Commander in Chief, United Nations Command.** In response to the invasion of South Korea, the U.N. Security Council approved Resolution 84 naming the United States as executive agent for military operations. During the height of the conflict the command included forces from 22 nations. Despite the Korean Armistice Agreement, which was signed in July 1953 by U.N. Command (UNC) and the Chinese-North Korean Command, the resolution and the U.S. command responsibilities remained unchanged. In 1955, UNC headquarters were relocated from Tokyo to Seoul.

- **United States-Republic of Korea Combined Forces Command.** A combined operational planning staff was developed in 1968 as an adjunct to multinational, joint, and service commands that already existed. By 1971 the staff had evolved into an integrated field army headquarters. In 1978, as a result of bilateral agreement for the planned withdrawal of U.S. ground combat forces, the headquarters was formally reorganized as a combined staff. The ROK/U.S. Combined Forces Command (CFC) became an integrated combined warfighting headquarters, controlling both U.S. and ROK forces in the theater of operations. The withdrawal of American forces was put on hold in 1979 and then canceled in 1981; however, the CFC command structure stayed in place. Today, throughout the command, binational manning is apparent: if the position of chief of a staff is Korean, the deputy is an American officer, and vice versa. This structure exists in component commands as well as headquarters. Currently, CFC includes over 600,000 active duty personnel.

- **Commander, U.S. Forces Korea.** At the outbreak of the Korean War, General Douglas MacArthur served as Commander in Chief, Far East, which included all land, sea, and air forces located in the western Pacific area of Far East Command with headquarters in Japan. In 1954, the command was redesignated Headquarters, Armed Forces Far East/Eighth Army (Rear). In the reorganization of the Pacific Armed Forces in 1957, Far East Command and Armed Forces Far East stood down. U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) was formed in Seoul to coordinate planning among U.S. component commands and exercises operational control of assigned forces as directed by commander in chief, Pacific. Today USFK also coordinates U.S. military assistance to South Korean forces, functions as defense representative in Korea, and oversees U.S. government administrative coordination. Its component commands are Eighth U.S. Army, U.S. Naval Forces Korea, U.S. Air Forces Korea, U.S. Marine Forces Korea, and U.S. Special Operations Command Korea.

- **Commander, Eighth U.S. Army.** Originally deployed to the Pacific area in 1944, Eighth Army provided most of the ground forces for the occupation of Japan following World War II. In 1950 it deployed to Korea for the defense of the Pusan perimeter, the counterattack after the Inchon landings, the offensive in North Korea, and the reestablishment of the demilitarized zone. In 1954 its headquarters were combined with U.S. Army Forces Far East as a major command. This headquarters was moved to Seoul in 1955. Later redesignated as Eighth U.S. Army, the command is the Army component of USFK with 36,000 soldiers including the 2<sup>d</sup> Infantry Division. JFQ

my chief of staff; Major General Robert Sennewald, the Combined Forces Command, Korea (CFC) operations chief; and Lieutenant General Gene Forrester, USA, commander of the I Corps (ROK-U.S.) Group (soon to be redesignated as the Combined Field Army (CFA). I Corps Group was responsible for defending perhaps the most dangerous invasion corridor into the ROK. Forrester had arrived in Korea only a few months earlier.

Nearly all of us agreed that the ROK military needed to be less absorbed with intrigue in Seoul

and more with professional matters. I was struck, however, by the fact that Forrester was less troubled than the others by what he observed in the ROK military. He insisted that he had not sensed any undue concerns about the intrigues in Seoul and that the senior ROK officers he had daily contact with were not overly alarmed by Chun's actions. In fact, he believed that many of them strongly supported Chun. He implied that the United States should be more understanding of the situation.

Inaugurating ROK/US  
Combined Field Army,  
1980.



Courtesy John A. Wickham

Gene's views surprised me. I knew that two of his corps commanders, Yu Hak-san and newly designated corps commander Kim Yoon-ho, were participants in "the 12/12 Incident." Yu had been much more directly involved than Kim, but both were part of Chun's clique. Gene undoubtedly was being barraged with daily justifications about why Chun and his group had acted as they did and why they could be trusted. Still I was bothered and shortly afterward shared Gene's views with Bill Gleysteen. He was equally surprised.

The result of these meetings with my U.S. leaders was an idea for CFC to hold "tactical seminars" over several months at each army corps and tactical air wing and at the naval base at Chinhae. Forrester wholeheartedly agreed and suggested that the seminars should begin in his command in early 1980. The stated purpose was to review our war plans and identify areas that needed improvement. An equally important purpose was to get the ROK military to "face north," to become focused on their war plans and our preparations for war.

We decided to start with Lieutenant General Kim Yoon-ho's corps, which occupied a key defensive position in the CFA area of operations. Kim was the Infantry School commander who had been recruited by Chun after the night of the

12<sup>th</sup> and had just been promoted to three stars. He had a reputation for professional competence, and his experience heading up the Infantry School meant that he should be conversant in the newest military doctrine. We wanted to use Kim first in hopes that he could set an impressive example for the other corps commanders. He did, although there was some criticism among the Korean officers because he conducted a fast-paced seminar completely in English and acted like an overbearing tactical instructor.

The seminars unfolded even better than we hoped. The first day of each began with a terrain walk to study the ground of the battle. The second day focused on how to fight. The seminars improved as we moved among the corps, tactical air wings, and the naval base. The audiences grew as junior officers began to see the seminars as opportunities to acquire greater professional knowledge. The discussions were frank and informal.

One of the last corps seminars was conducted by Lieutenant General Chung Ho-young, one of Chun's core group. After a few minutes of broader discussion, Chung suggested that the current war plan was seriously flawed because it

withheld any offensive actions until adequate ammunition and reinforcements could be introduced on the Korean peninsula. Thus the plan was too defensive. It could take up to two months

### **it could take up to two months to bring in enough reinforcements to mount a counteroffensive**

to bring in enough ammunition and troop reinforcements to mount a continuous counteroffensive. Chung felt that was too long. In a very forceful presentation around tactical maps in the CFA conference room, he proposed that CFC go on the offensive within several weeks of a North Korean attack and not wait for reinforcements. Capitalizing on existing ammunition reserves in Korea, the CFC counteroffensive would be designed to break the momentum of the North's attack by seizing a pocket of high, defensive ground just north of the DMZ.

It was a good point and the CFC plan was eventually altered to accommodate a variant of the option suggested by Chung.

#### **Discussions with the Minister of Defense**

Shortly thereafter, I met with the new Minister of Defense, Chu Yong-bok, at the Ministry of National Defense. The entrance still showed the evidence of gunfire from the night of the coup, although workmen were busily replacing tiles and glass doors. In an unusual courtesy Chu met me at the entrance. He was short, affable, and energetic and spoke some English, although like many, he understood it better than he spoke it. Chu had been the ROK air force chief of staff for five years, an unusually long time and an indication that President Park held him in high favor.

It was a lengthy discussion, and Chu smoked continuously, lighting each cigarette with the discarded one. I took that as a sign that he was anxious and noted a tape recorder in operation, even though the interpreter, Mr. Han, was making copious notes.

I began by congratulating him on his appointment. I noted that he enjoyed a fine reputation among U.S. officials for his superb leadership of the ROK air force. He laughed and recounted some humorous "war stories" of his long service in uniform, a career that began when Japan still occupied Korea. I told him that Minister Rho and I had developed a very close relationship, that we had always been frank with one another, and that frankness was essential if we were to achieve a better understanding of each other's positions on

complex issues. As I was telling him I looked forward to establishing a similar relationship with him, he quickly interrupted to say we should meet every week, perhaps even at breakfast or lunch.

Because he had retired from active duty before CFC was created, I explained my roles as CFC commander and senior U.S. military officer. I then reiterated much of what I had told General Lee about our concerns over the December 12 incident and its potential for souring our relationship.

Chu listened carefully and smiled often, which struck me as odd but appeared to be a natural part of his manner. He replied, "I am devoted wholeheartedly to reestablishing a firm chain of command system in the military. Throughout my 30 years of service I was dedicated to the principle that military officers should be neutral in political affairs. I will make every effort to assure that this principle is observed in the future." Laughing, he said he knew how to deal with generals. "Rest assured that the generals will behave themselves under my command as minister of national defense!" He said he would hold a meeting of commanders on December 26 "to emphasize, among other things, that the command authority and chain of command must be strictly observed."

Elaborating on his goals, Chu said he fully recognized the threat from North Korea and promised to devote his efforts to improving the readiness and training of the military. As a last thought, he assured me that he had no political ambitions and no objective other than defending the nation.

I passed him a memorandum that reviewed the missions of CFC and listed the ROK units placed under the operational control (OPCON) of CFC by Strategic Directive One. My memo noted that several of those units had been moved without authority during December 12–13, raising serious concerns about the nature of CFC control over the ROK units and the effectiveness of the chain of command. My memo respectfully requested an official explanation. After a quick glance at it, Chu said that this type of incident would not happen again, and he regretted that units were moved without my knowledge.

I noted that any U.S. officer who moved a unit without authority from the legitimate chain of command would be court-martialed. I was surprised to see that the officers involved in the incident of December 12 had either been promoted or moved to positions of increased authority. At that point, Chu became highly agitated and began waving his arms in the air. His earlier joviality was dropped and he began to read from a clutch of notes placed in front of him. He said he wanted to be sure that I had the facts with regard to the December 12 incident. Since assuming the position of minister, he said, he had researched the



Courtesy John A. Wickham

Generals Vessey and Wickham, 1979.

incident, to include calling in the generals individually to query them. All of them had said that there was no plot, that the incident was “blown out of all proportion by Chung Sung-hwa’s action to begin shooting at his quarters, and the incident was purely accidental.” Chu then proceeded to read me the same version of the December 12 incident I had heard several times before, emphasizing the spontaneous nature of the generals’ actions. He apologized for going through this formality but insisted that he had to. Then he leaned back and asked for my comments.

I told him I had great respect for his judgment and personal views and that I took note of

the explanation he just read. However, I suggested that he must give me some credit for my knowledge of what happened that night and that I could not believe the explanation. I told him I had evidence that the insurgent group had begun plotting as early as November 30, almost two weeks before the incident. Also, as a professional soldier I knew that the nighttime seizure of a number of key installations in and around Seoul by major elements of several divisions could not have been carried out so swiftly and efficiently without advance preparation. It simply was not credible that the events of that night were the result of a spontaneous order sent out after 8 p.m. Chu merely took notes as I spoke.

That first meeting with Chu lasted more than an hour and a half, with many cups of ginseng tea. It was for the most part a friendly discussion until Chu felt obliged to convey almost in rote form the story that the insurgent group wanted portrayed. He left me with the impression that he would have difficulty becoming the strong minister his predecessor was. His word-for-word recitation of the insurgents’ explanation suggested that he was unlikely to be his own man, at least in the beginning, and that while his stated objective was to restore cohesion in the army, he had little idea of how to go about it except by issuing orders. When I pointed out that the sweeping assignment and promotion changes being made in the army could lead to speculation and unrest, he merely nodded and gave his curious smile as he explained that it was necessary to remove Chung’s supporters. He said he had always been suspicious of Chung’s involvement in the assassination. Now that he was the minister and knew all the facts, he was convinced that not only Chung but also the former ROK army commander, General Lee Kun-young, and the former Special Forces commander, Major General Chung Byong-joo, were all implicated in the plot to kill Park.

Not long afterward, a chance meeting between us took place at the CFC headquarters following the honor ceremonies for the new CFC deputy CINC, General Baek Sok-chu, who replaced General Rhu. Chu approached me and asked if we could have a private word in my office. He began by asking—in fact he used the word begging—the United States to accept the fact that the generals had made a gross error with the December 12 incident and we must forget it. We must work on the future. We Koreans are keenly aware of what the United States wants from us. Surprised by his emotional plea, I answered that American security interests were served by maintaining peace and stability on the

Patrol route along southern edge of DMZ.



Courtesy John A. Wickham

peninsula and by improving our mutual capability to deter external aggression. I continued, "At the same time, our long-term interests in the military, economic, and political arenas must be taken fully into account."

### **Chu was telling me that the insurgent generals admitted they had made a mistake**

again. You should pay no more attention to this matter or be nervous about reoccurrence of this wrongdoing!"

In short, Chu was telling me that the insurgent generals admitted they had made a mistake, promised that it would not be repeated, and asked Americans to put it behind them. Chu said he preferred not to give a formal written response to the memo I had given him concerning the unauthorized movement of units under CFC OPCON, but rather to let his frank oral explanation suffice. I accepted. I knew a written explanation would probably be less frank and that insisting on it would be counterproductive if not insulting. Chu said he appreciated that. Then he told me that he had uncovered some unrest within the military. He and the new army chief of

Chu agreed, then assured me, "Chun Doo-hwan is a devoted soldier, concerned with combat readiness, and I am confident that no wrongdoing by him will happen

staff, General Lee, had agreed to eliminate 15 major generals who were "talking too much and were not sufficiently concerned with their military duties." In addition, to placate some senior elements in the army, three major generals would be promoted, but only for a limited two-year term, and then retired.

Unrest, of course, had nothing to do with the decisions. Most if not all of the eliminated generals had probably been loyal to General Chung and were being purged. I checked, and the lieutenant general who had visited me with the countercoup proposal was not among the group to be retired, so the plot remained secret.

### **North Korean Infiltrators**

It was a dark, bitterly cold early January night when the report came in. A light snow was falling, just enough to obscure visibility. A few kilometers north of the DMZ and slightly east of the truce village at Panmunjom, a team of North Korean paramilitary agents waited until darkness. The two infiltrators had rehearsed for several weeks for this special mission. Their task was to cross the DMZ, infiltrate through combat elements of the U.S. 2<sup>d</sup> Infantry Division and the ROK 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, and cross the swift, icy Imjin River. They were to make their way to Seoul, where they were to contact agents already in the city, and gather firsthand information on the unusual political and military developments there. The agents had been briefed on the most recent intercepts of ROK military communications, which suggested that there was growing political unrest in Seoul, enough that a number of ROK army units had been placed at a high state of alert and ordered to prepare for domestic instability.

Their routes had been carefully chosen to avoid the known locations of ROK army ambush patrols and field police listening posts. These locations had been pinpointed by previous infiltrators and agents. As the night became darker, the agents, clad in black and without any identification, crept into the DMZ. They had been warned that U.S. troops relied on radar and night vision devices to detect unusual activity, so they stuck to the trails used by the abundant wildlife and wound their way through the dense foliage. The frozen ground and wildlife trails also helped the infiltrators avoid the numerous antipersonnel mines still scattered throughout the DMZ from the Korean War.

An alert ambush patrol of U.S. combat troops detected the sounds of movement near them. They were authorized to shoot at any suspected targets and immediately opened up with

small arms and machine guns in the direction of the noise. At the same time, the patrol reported the possible contact to Outpost Oulette, located on a hilltop several hundred meters south of the military demarcation line that marked the center of the DMZ. The other U.S. outpost, Collier, was further south and also on a hilltop and was similarly notified. However, the combination of darkness and light snow prevented any radar or infrared detection from either outpost.

The agents eluded the defenders and within two hours reached the northern bank of the Imjin River near Liberty Bridge, a rusting, single lane military link over the river. Donning wet suits and inflatable vests, they entered the frigid, swiftly flowing water. As they made their way along the southern bank they repeatedly had to climb over wires that spanned the river to interfere with infiltrators and catch debris. An ROK ambush patrol along the bank detected activity in the water and opened fire. In the ensuing confusion both agents escaped again. They continued their journey into Seoul, although it became more difficult because one of them was wounded.

Shortly after dawn I visited the site of the encounter because I wanted to see firsthand just what was going on with infiltration attempts. CFC had been receiving numerous reports of infiltration activity all along the DMZ.

The ROK commander showed me the blood trails and the abandoned swim gear near the river's edge, an indication that at least one of the agents had been wounded. He was obviously pleased that his soldiers had been alert enough to detect the infiltration, but he was also disappointed that the weather conditions and visibility had hampered their ability to kill or track the agents. He told me that the reports of agent activity in his sector had increased, with several "hot" trails a month. No agents had been captured or killed, although some may have drowned in the river. The highly trained agents were very difficult to detect, and they would either fight to the death or kill themselves to avoid capture.

This incident and many others reported along the DMZ were a matter of growing concern. They indicated that the North Koreans were either trying to improve their intelligence about the political unrest and military dispositions in the South or augmenting their already extensive agent network in preparation for an attack. In addition, our ongoing tunnel detection work had noted an increase in unusual sounds in a number of locations, possibly because of digging. Extensive drilling and acoustic analysis by experts did not discover any new tunnels, but the underground noises continued to alarm us. We had already discovered and destroyed two tunnels carved through solid granite under the DMZ. With a diameter about the size of a standard auto, each was large enough to permit the transit of a regiment of several thousand combat troops within an hour or two.

As the reports continued, we kept CFC forces at a high state of alert and increased our intelligence collection efforts. **JFQ**

**This article is an abridged version of chapter 4, "The Struggle for Dominance," in *Korea on the Brink: From the "12/12 Incident" to the Kwangju Uprising, 1979-1980* by John A. Wickham (National Defense University Press, 1999).**