

War Pretext Incident? The Sinking of the South Korean Corvette in the Yellow Sea.

Was the Evidence Forged?

By [Oleg Revenko](#) and [Alexander Vorontsov](#)

Global Research, May 26, 2010

[Strategic Culture Foundation](#) 26 May 2010

Region: [Asia](#)

In-depth Report: [NORTH KOREA](#)

Seoul has unveiled the results of the investigation into the sinking of the Cheonan corvette in the Yellow Sea on March 26. According to the report put together by a commission of South Korean military and unnamed experts from the US, Canada, Great Britain, and Sweden, Cheonan was sunk as the result of an external underwater explosion caused by a torpedo made in the DPRK. The evidence points overwhelmingly to the conclusion that the torpedo was fired by a North Korean submarine.

Responsibility for stating that evidence points to the conclusion “overwhelmingly” rests entirely with the authors of the document. The key piece of evidence cited is a fragment of a torpedo propeller – somehow recovered at the final phase of the investigation – with a marking which reads “No. 1” and matches a North Korean torpedo found 7 years ago in the Yellow Sea. Considering that the blast was allegedly caused by a torpedo carrying a net explosive weight of 250 kg, investigators must have been remarkably lucky to find the right fragment with the marking implicating North Korea. **The simple marking “No 1”, which is the sole indication of the country of origin of the torpedo, possibly could write in the same manner on a South Korean torpedo too.**

The commission is churning out new facts and details evidently meant to shatter one’s imagination. Reportedly, several North Korean mini subs and a mother-ship left the country’s unspecified naval base in the Yellow Sea 2-3 days before the incident, headed for an unknown destination, and returned 2-3 days after the incident. Though the subs had to be maneuvering in a heavily monitored zone near the maritime border between the Koreas, their routes had not been tracked as they managed to evade radars. The version contradicts the previous US claim that satellite and acoustic reconnaissance showed no signs of presence of any North Korean ships or subs in the region of the Cheonan sinking.

The spin-off of the version offered by the report commenced immediately upon its being circulated, and **there is a distinct impression that the developments are following an a priori blueprint.** The White House endorsed the commission’s conclusions implicating the DPRK and condemned “the act of aggression” in a statement made available almost synchronously with the report. Even earlier, US President B. Obama talked to the ROK President Lee Myung-bak over the phone and agreed that all contacts with North Korea should be suspended until it becomes clear what caused the tragedy and who perpetrated the attack. Japan, the country espousing greater pressure on North Korea and its international isolation as a universal approach, also expressed full support for Seoul in no way assessing the data collected by the investigation.

In South Korea, the campaign was led by President Lee Myung-bak who instructed the country's armed forces to take resolute countermeasures against N. Korea to make new "provocations" impossible. The political and even more so the military circles are whispering that some form of retaliation, even including military acts of point character, might be feasible. The set of ideas was voiced by Korean minister of national defense Kim Tae-Young who said North Korea must pay full price for what it had done. Crisis control centers probing into the state of national security, the readiness of state institutions to face an emergency situation, etc. are mushrooming in Seoul, and **there is a general feeling of sitting on a powder keg.**

Seoul is nevertheless aware of the potential consequences of a military offensive against N. Korea for the entire Korean Peninsula and clearly regards it as an option of last resort. The solution ideal from Seoul's perspective is ever greater diplomatic pressure on Pyongyang, preferably with the blessing of the UN Security Council. To put the plan into practice, Korea needs the support of the countries playing the key roles in the region, notably that of the six-party talks partners and the UN Security Council permanent members. The position of the West being fully cooperative, Seoul's current priority is to convince Russia and China to consent to "punishing" Pyongyang.

On May 21, Russia's foreign minister S. Lavrov talked over the phone to his Korean counterpart Yu Myung-hwan. The latter reiterated that the evidence obtained by the investigation pointed to Pyongyang, but the reply of the former – as the official account posted by the Russian foreign ministry shows – was diplomatically cautious. Lavrov said Moscow would carefully review the pertinent materials, both those from South Korea and "from other sources". Thus he made it clear that Moscow **had reservations about the South Korean version of the incident** and deemed further verification necessary. Lavrov also urged restraint on both sides of the conflict to prevent escalation on the Korean Peninsula. This is exactly the responsible type of behavior required under the current circumstances, and hopefully Moscow's position will remain unchanged.

China's position over the matter is generally the same. Its foreign ministry spokesman described the sinking of Cheonan as a tragic incident and opined that the priority in dealing with it should be to sustain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in the entire North East Asia. Beijing is calling for calm and restraint until it transpires what exactly happened. **Unofficially, China criticizes the evidence at South Korea's disposal as unconvincing, patchy, and contradictory** and says it is going to assess the situation independently.

Three significant documents rejecting North Korea's connection to the incident – statements by the DPRK's national defense commission, foreign ministry, and the committee for the peaceful reunification of Korea – saw the light of day in the country over the past several days. According to the statements, the evidence was forged and the DPRK is ready to send its inspectors to assess it. Pyongyang is directing heavy criticism at the campaign around the sinking of Cheonan, calling the current situation "a phase of the war" with all the corresponding consequences. Under the conditions, North Korea pledges to mobilize its resources to protect national sovereignty and **to respond with a full-scale war and unlimited use of force in case South Korea decides in favor of "retaliation"**. No doubt, these are not just words.

Pyongyang's offer to delegate representatives to review South Korea's "evidence" is a timely and rational initiative. This form of cooperation should keep the inter-Korean dialog

a float during the crisis and, if both sides approach the problem honestly, help defuse the conflict. A lot depends on how Seoul reacts to the proposal but, sadly, initial reports seem to indicate that the ROK leadership is under various pretexts trying to dodge the issue. South Korea's stonewalling Pyongyang would further diminish the credibility of the evidence.

Alexander Vorontsov, Head Korea and Mongolia Department, Institute for Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Science

Oleg Revenko, Political analyst

(To be continued)

The original source of this article is [Strategic Culture Foundation](#)

Copyright © [Oleg Revenko](#) and [Alexander Vorontsov](#), [Strategic Culture Foundation](#), 2010

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Oleg Revenko](#)
and [Alexander Vorontsov](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long as the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca