



North Korea: National Military Overview



U.S. ARMY

(U) This infographic provides a National Military Overview of North Korea. North Korea's perception that the outside world is inherently hostile drives its security strategy and pursuit of specific military developments. The region's history is filled with invasions and subjugations by stronger powers stretching back centuries. Currently, North Korea views the United States as its primary and immediate external security threat. This perception is strongly rooted in the U.S. support of South Korea during the Korean War, the continued U.S. military presence on the peninsula since the armistice, and the leading role Washington has played in attempting to modify Pyongyang's behavior and constrain its nuclear ambitions.

The Korean People's Army at a Glance

Services: Ground Forces, Air Force, Navy, Special Operations, Strategic Force (ballistic missiles)

Personnel: Over 1.3 million (plus approximately 7 million paramilitary, reservists and bodyguard command personnel)

Recruit base: Universal conscription

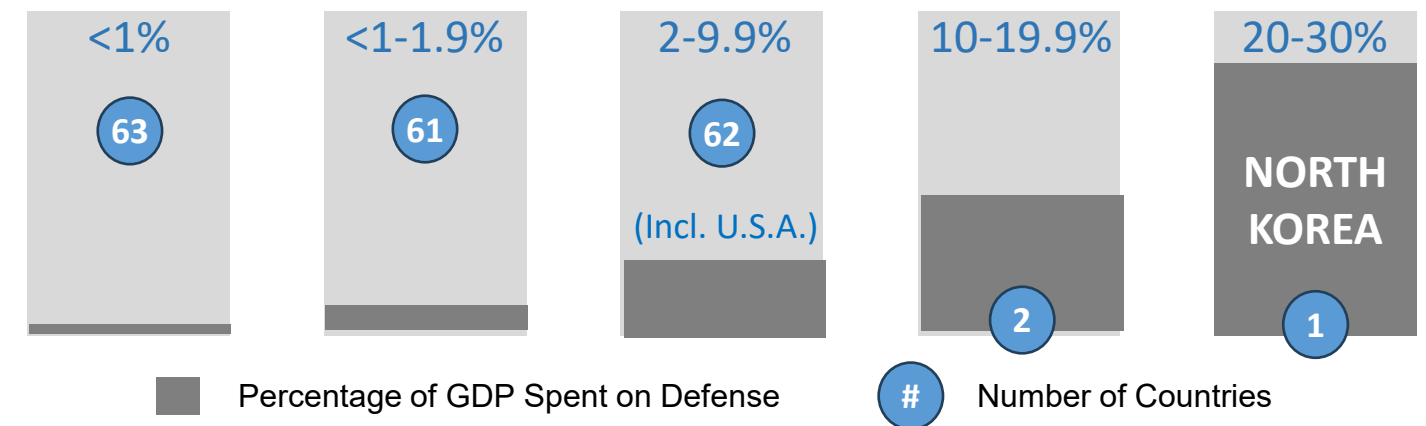
Equipment profile: Primarily Soviet-era systems; some newer systems in each service

Core strength: Massed artillery threat to South Korea, Special Operations, underground facilities, defensive fortifications

Developing strengths: Strategic ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons

Key vulnerabilities: Logistics for sustained combat operations

National Defense Burden Comparison, 2020 Global Baseline



National Security Strategy

North Korea's national security strategy has two main objectives: to ensure the regime's long-term security, which the leadership defines as North Korea remaining a sovereign, independent country ruled by the Kim family and to retain the capability to exercise dominant influence over the Korean Peninsula.



Defense spending is a regime priority. Spending estimates range from \$7 billion to \$11 billion. 20–30 percent of North Korea's GDP is allocated to the military. This level of commitment makes North Korea the highest spending nation in the world for defense as a percentage of GDP.

Sources: [North Korea Military Power](#) (DIA)