



NORTH KOREA SECURITY ANALYSIS REPORT

AI-Assisted Open Source Intelligence Assessment

Analysis Period: April 30, 2026 - May 07, 2026

This report was produced using open-source intelligence analysis. The assessment is grounded in publicly available reporting and should be cross-referenced with primary sources. RSS feed articles are listed in the annex for reference.

Comprehensive Security Analysis Report: North Korea (April 30, 2026 - May 07, 2026)

Executive Summary

During the period of April 30 to May 07, 2026, North Korea significantly escalated its assertive security posture, marked by continued advancements in its nuclear and ballistic missile programs and a formal rejection of denuclearization. Pyongyang's constitutional revision to define South Korea as a separate, hostile state underscores a profound shift in inter-Korean relations, eliminating the prospect of reunification. Concurrently, North Korea intensified its cyber warfare activities, responsible for a substantial portion of global cryptocurrency theft, aimed at funding its weapons development. Diplomatic efforts focused on solidifying strategic alignments with China and Russia, while explicitly demanding recognition as a nuclear power for any engagement with the United States. These developments collectively indicate a heightened and irreversible commitment to military modernization and nuclear deterrence, posing a critical challenge to regional stability.

Key Security Developments

- Continued Nuclear and Ballistic Missile Development

On April 30, 2026, UN political affairs chief Rosemary DiCarlo expressed "serious concern" to the Security Council regarding North Korea's ongoing pursuit of nuclear weapons and ballistic missile development, which violates multiple Security Council resolutions. This follows North Korea's new five-year military development plan, endorsed in February 2026, which reaffirms its commitment to advancing these capabilities. Throughout 2025 and early 2026, North Korea has consistently conducted ballistic missile launches, including short-range projectiles, multiple launch rocket systems, long-range strategic cruise missiles, and anti-ship missiles.

- Increased Fissile Material Production

Earlier in April 2026, the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Grossi, warned of a "very serious increase" in North Korea's fissile material production capacity at the Yongbyon nuclear site. South Korean estimates, reported on April 28, suggest North Korea could produce enough fissile material for as

many as 20 nuclear warheads annually, potentially leading to an arsenal of 290 warheads by 2035. This expansion is in line with Kim Jong Un's directive at the 9th Party Congress in February to develop large nuclear warheads for the US and smaller tactical warheads for South Korea.

- Ballistic Missile Launches from Sinpho

North Korea conducted its seventh missile test of 2026 and its fourth in April alone, launching multiple short-range ballistic missiles towards the East Sea on a Sunday in late April (reported April 21 and May 2). These projectiles, fired from the Sinpho area, flew approximately 140 kilometers (87 miles). South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) condemned the launch as a violation of UN Security Council resolutions.

- Formal Rejection of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

On May 7, 2026, North Korea's envoy to the United Nations, Ambassador Kim Song, declared that Pyongyang is not bound by any treaty on atomic weapons and that its status as a nuclear-armed state is irreversible and enshrined in its constitution. This statement was made during an ongoing UN conference reviewing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), where the United States and other countries criticized North Korea's nuclear program.

- Constitutional Revision to Define South Korea as Hostile State

North Korea revised its constitution, believed to have been adopted at a March 2026 meeting of the Supreme People's Assembly, to define its territory as bordering South Korea and remove references to reunification. This codifies leader Kim Jong Un's "two hostile states" doctrine, framing South Korea as an external adversary rather than a national counterpart and eliminating normative constraints associated with unification discourse. The revised constitution also explicitly places command over North Korea's nuclear forces in Kim's hands and describes North Korea as a "responsible nuclear weapons state."

- Significant Cryptocurrency Theft by State-Sponsored Hackers

North Korean hacking groups accounted for 76% of all crypto hack losses in 2026 through April, totaling approximately \$577 million from just two major attacks. These incidents include the Drift Protocol breach on April 1 (\$285 million) and the KelpDAO bridge exploit on April 18 (\$292 million). The Lazarus Group, a North Korean state-sponsored hacking entity, was reportedly responsible for about 95% of the over \$635 million in losses from 29 hacks in April 2026.

- Cyberattack on Widely Used Software Tool

On April 1, 2026, hackers linked to North Korea were suspected of a major cyberattack targeting "Axios," a widely used software package with tens of millions of weekly downloads. Google analysts stated that the attack, which involved adding malicious software to an Axios update, could have broad implications by potentially exposing

login credentials and enabling future, more sophisticated cyber operations, including ransomware and cryptocurrency theft.

- Deepening Strategic Alignment with Russia and China

North Korea continues to deepen its strategic partnerships with Russia and China. Pyongyang's open support for Russia and a 2024 treaty for mutual military assistance, including troop deployments to Ukraine, demonstrate ideological alignment and strategic opportunism. Kim Jong Un's planned visit to Russia in 2026 is expected to further strengthen military ties. With China, high-level exchanges, such as Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to Pyongyang on April 9, 2026, reflect efforts to secure a long-term safety net and boost bilateral relations.

- Emphasis on Conventional Weapons Development and Green-Water Navy

At its Ninth Party Congress in February 2026, North Korea explicitly highlighted conventional weapons development for the first time. Cooperation with Russia has reportedly contributed to advances in North Korea's drone production, doctrine, and modern warfare capabilities. Furthermore, North Korea may be preparing to deploy its Choe Hyon-class guided missile destroyers beyond its immediate waters as part of its efforts to build a green-water navy, with these vessels likely serving as nuclear missile platforms.

- Targeting of Yanbian Gamers by APT Group ScarCruft

On May 5, 2026, it was reported that the North Korean Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) group ScarCruft (also known as APT37, Reaper, and Ricochet Chollima) targeted Yanbian gamers via a trojanized card game platform. This espionage group, active since at least 2012, historically focuses on South Korean government, military, and defector-related targets, indicating continued intelligence activities in border regions and against specific demographics.

Geopolitical Impact and Regional Dynamics

North Korea's recent security developments have significantly reshaped the geopolitical landscape of Northeast Asia. The constitutional amendment formally abandoning reunification and defining South Korea as a hostile state marks a profound conceptual shift, solidifying a "two hostile states" doctrine. This move eliminates the normative constraints of unification discourse, enabling a more flexible and assertive security posture for Pyongyang and reinforcing its regime legitimacy by portraying South Korea as an external adversary. South Korea, in response, is exploring a policy of "peaceful coexistence" and even considering changing North Korea's official name to "Joseon," implicitly recognizing it as a separate state, which could be perceived by Pyongyang as an acceptance of its preferred regional order.

The deepening trilateral alignment between North Korea, China, and Russia is a critical dynamic. Pyongyang is actively exploiting the competition among the United States, China, and Russia to expand its strategic space, reminiscent of its Cold War-era maneuvering. The 2024 treaty with Moscow, including provisions for mutual military assistance and troop deployments to Ukraine, demonstrates a strong anti-Western axis. While China views North Korea as both a strategic asset and a liability, recent high-level exchanges, such as Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to Pyongyang in April 2026, indicate a calibrated engagement to secure a long-term safety net within this multipolar system. This "northern turn" by Pyongyang is reshaping the Korean Peninsula, with North Korea seeking to engage Washington with confidence derived from its strengthened ties, bypassing Seoul.

Relations with the United States remain strained, with North Korea explicitly stating that any bilateral talks require Washington to recognize its status as a nuclear-armed state. The US strategic posture, reportedly deprioritizing the Indo-Pacific in favor of the Western Hemisphere and favoring "decent peace" with China over direct confrontation, presents both risks and opportunities for Pyongyang. Reduced US attention could weaken deterrence and allow North Korea to consolidate strategic gains, while deeper integration of the North Korean issue into US-China relations could constrain Pyongyang's autonomy. Japan, in conjunction with the US and South Korea, maintains an unwavering commitment to denuclearization and trilateral cooperation to deter North Korea, viewing Pyongyang's actions as a threat to regional and international peace. The overall regional dynamic is characterized by an unstable multipolar order with fluid alignments and persistent uncertainty.

Military and Defense Analysis

North Korea's military and defense posture during this period reflects an accelerated modernization program and an unwavering commitment to nuclear deterrence. The new Five-Year Military Development Plan (2026-2030), unveiled at the 9th Party Congress in February 2026, outlines the introduction of "new secret arsenals and special strategic assets," specifically mentioning ground and underwater launching ICBM complexes. This indicates a strategic focus on diversifying its nuclear delivery platforms and enhancing survivability. The directive to develop both large nuclear warheads capable of threatening the United States and smaller tactical nuclear warheads for South Korea further illustrates a comprehensive nuclear strategy.

Defense spending trends are not explicitly detailed in the available news, but the significant and continuous investment in missile tests, fissile material production, and cyber warfare activities strongly implies a substantial allocation of resources towards military capabilities. The reported "very serious increase" in fissile material production at the Yongbyon nuclear site, potentially enabling the production of 20 nuclear

warheads annually, highlights a rapid expansion of its nuclear arsenal. Furthermore, North Korea's cooperation with Russia has reportedly led to advances in drone production, doctrine, and modern warfare capabilities, suggesting a focus on asymmetric warfare and leveraging external technological assistance. The emphasis on conventional weapons development, alongside nuclear forces, indicates a dual-track approach to strengthening its military might. The potential deployment of Choe Hyon-class guided missile destroyers as nuclear missile platforms also signals an ambition to develop a "green-water navy" capable of operating beyond immediate coastal waters, further extending its threat projection.

Outlook and Forecast

Short-term trends (1-3 months): In the immediate future, North Korea is highly likely to continue its trajectory of military modernization and assertive diplomatic posturing. We can anticipate further missile tests, potentially including new types of short-range or cruise missiles, to refine capabilities and demonstrate resolve. The constitutional changes solidifying the "two hostile states" doctrine will likely translate into continued rhetorical condemnation of South Korea and a rejection of inter-Korean dialogue focused on reunification. Cybersecurity operations, particularly cryptocurrency theft, are expected to persist as a primary means of funding the regime's illicit weapons programs. North Korea will also likely seek to further institutionalize its trilateral alignment with China and Russia, potentially through additional high-level exchanges or symbolic gestures, while maintaining a cautious stance towards engagement with the United States without prior recognition of its nuclear status.

Critical flashpoints and risk areas: The most critical flashpoints remain the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and the Northern Limit Line (NLL) in the Yellow Sea, where North Korea's increasingly hostile rhetoric and military exercises could lead to accidental or intentional escalation. Any perceived infringement of its newly defined territorial boundaries, even without explicit demarcation of the inter-Korean border, could trigger a response. The continued expansion of fissile material production at sites like Yongbyon poses a significant proliferation risk and could provoke stronger international condemnation, though unified action remains challenging given Russia's stance. Furthermore, sophisticated cyberattacks targeting critical infrastructure or financial systems in South Korea or other nations could lead to retaliatory measures in the cyber domain.

Indicators to monitor: Key indicators to monitor include the frequency and type of North Korean missile launches, particularly any tests involving new technologies or longer ranges. Statements from North Korean state media regarding its nuclear program, military exercises, and inter-Korean relations will provide insight into its strategic intentions. The nature and frequency of diplomatic engagements with China

and Russia, as well as any shifts in their support for North Korea, are crucial. Monitoring international responses to North Korean provocations, especially from the UN Security Council and the US-South Korea-Japan trilateral alliance, will be important. Finally, tracking reports of North Korean cyber activities and their financial impact will indicate the regime's resource generation capabilities.

Strategic recommendations: Given North Korea's entrenched nuclear status and hostile posture, a multi-faceted approach is required. Firstly, strengthening extended deterrence capabilities of the US-South Korea-Japan alliance, including missile defense systems and joint exercises, is paramount to deter further aggression. Secondly, maintaining and adapting sanctions enforcement is crucial, while acknowledging the challenges posed by Russia and China's reduced adherence. Thirdly, exploring calibrated diplomatic engagement with North Korea, even if it involves acknowledging its de facto nuclear status as a starting point for arms control rather than denuclearization, might be necessary to prevent further escalation. Fourthly, enhancing cybersecurity defenses globally, particularly in the financial sector, is essential to counter North Korea's illicit funding activities. Lastly, fostering regional dialogue among concerned parties, including South Korea's pursuit of "peaceful coexistence," could help manage tensions and prevent miscalculation, even in the absence of a unified denuclearization strategy.

Structured Assessment

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ANNEX: COLLECTED ARTICLES BY SOURCE

Source: NK News

- [US ‘laptop farmers’ get jail time for aiding DPRK IT workers scam local firms](#) (2026-05-07 03:23)

U.S. federal courts have imposed 18-month prison sentences on two American citizens for running laptop farms and helping North Korean information technology (IT) workers generate over \$1.2 million in revenue for Pyongyang’s weapons programs. The Department of Justice (DOJ) announced the sentences in two separate cases involving Matthew Issac Knoot of Nashville, Tenn., and Erick [...]

- [North Korea’s amended constitution redefines borders, but remains vague: source](#) (2026-05-06 09:44)

North Korea’s amended constitution has demarcated new territorial boundaries on the peninsula, effectively formalizing the irreversible separation from the South, according to a document detailing the purported charter, as seen by NK News. The document — which represents the most recent version approved by North Korea’s rubber-stamp parliament in March — reveals the regime has [...]

- [Ukraine unveils new regulation granting student permits for North Koreans](#) (2026-05-06 07:34)

Ukraine has launched a mechanism for granting student permits to North Korean nationals, a government order shows, which an expert believes Kyiv won’t use to legalize the status of captured DPRK prisoners of war. Ukraine’s education ministry released Order No. 666 on April 21, creating a temporary commission charged with granting individual permissions to pursue [...]

- [Pyongyang gasoline prices surpass Seoul’s amid Middle East supply shock](#) (2026-05-06 06:40)

Gasoline prices in Pyongyang jumped sharply amid the U.S.-Iran conflict and supply disruptions in the Middle East, informed sources told NK News, with fuel in the North Korean capital now reportedly more expensive than in South Korea. One kilogram of gasoline currently retails in Pyongyang at \$2, while one liter goes for \$1.56, sources familiar [...]

- [Lee Hong-koo, key official in inter-Korean negotiations, dies at 92](#) (2026-05-06 05:22)

Lee Hong-koo, the former South Korean prime minister who helped shape Seoul’s early post-Cold War unification strategy and negotiated terms with North Korea for a hopeful

inter-Korean summit in 1994, died Tuesday at 92. Lee's role in politics was described as a "consensus builder" and he was a central figure across multiple presidential administrations following [...]

- [Drone strike near DPRK embassy dims prospects for a Kim Jong Un visit to Moscow](#) (2026-05-05 10:46)

A Ukrainian drone strike near the North Korean Embassy in Russia this week has likely dimmed the prospects of a visit by DPRK leader Kim Jong Un and heightened security measures ahead of a major Russian military parade. Kim's potential visit at the invitation of President Vladimir Putin has been in the works for years, [...]

- [What happened to denuclearizing North Korea?](#) (2026-05-05 10:20)

A former National Security Council official who long championed the U.S.'s policy on North Korea's denuclearization has declared it a "failure," saying Washington's "overreliance on sanctions" was a mistake. In a Foreign Affairs essay that drew weeks of editorials and ministerial-level responses in Seoul, Victor Cha, the NSC's director for Asian Affairs during the George [...]

- [China's envoy to North Korea pledges more taekwondo exchanges](#) (2026-05-05 05:13)

China's ambassador to North Korea on Saturday visited Pyongyang's preeminent training ground for taekwondo, praising the martial art with "a history of more than 2,000 years" that reflects the "perseverance and resilience of the North Korean people," according to a news release from the Chinese embassy. Chinese Ambassador to North Korea Wang Yajun and North [...]

- [Fear from a vibrating cellphone: A North Korean defector's tale of grief](#) (2026-05-05 04:14)

"Ask a North Korean" is an NK News series featuring interviews with and columns by North Korean defectors, most of whom left the DPRK within the last few years. Readers may submit their questions for defectors by emailing ask@nknews.org and including their first name and city of residence. This week, "Ask A North Korean" columnist [...]

- [Jacco Zwetsloot: A look back and a new chapter for the NK News Podcast](#) (2026-05-05 03:33)

In this handover episode of the NK News Podcast, new host Alannah Hill sits down with longtime host Jacco Zwetsloot to look back on his time leading the show since its launch in Feb. 2018. They revisit the podcast's first episode with Andrei Lankov, the major North Korea stories that defined that period and how [...]

- [Westerners enter North Korea for spring trade fair for the first time in 7 years](#) (2026-05-04 08:53)

A business delegation traveled to Pyongyang by train to participate in a spring trade fair, the first time in seven years Western visitors are participating in the annual exhibition. Rowan Beard, a tour manager at the Young Pioneer Tours (YPT) travel agency, said on social media Monday that the group traveled to North Korea for [...]

- [North Korea warns of retaliation over US ‘slander’ of DPRK cyber threats](#) (2026-05-04 07:17)

North Korea denounced the U.S. on Sunday for its persistent warnings of Pyongyang’s growing “cyber threat,” saying attempts at “confrontation” in the digital realm will lead to retaliation. In a statement published by the state-owned Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), a DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesperson disputed the warnings given by “U.S. government organs, reptile media [...]

- [Vietnam appoints new ambassador to North Korea after envoy’s lengthy term](#) (2026-05-04 07:01)

Vietnam recently appointed a new ambassador to North Korea, replacing its previous envoy after a longer-than-usual tenure in Pyongyang. Vietnamese President To Lam on Tuesday designated as ambassador to the DPRK Doan Khanh Tam, the deputy director of the Foreign Ministry’s Information and Documentation Center at the Diplomatic Academy, according to Hanoi’s state-run Vietnam News [...]

- [More than 14K North Koreans currently fighting for Russia against Ukraine: Kyiv](#) (2026-05-04 05:50)

Over 14,000 North Korean soldiers are currently fighting for Russia against Ukraine alongside mercenaries from 136 countries, including South Korea, according to Kyiv’s military intelligence. Dmytro Usov, a Ukraine’s Defense Intelligence representative and Secretary of the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, announced the figures at a Friday presentation of a new [...]

- [Russian farm celebrates North Korean female workers with concert](#) (2026-05-04 05:23)

A large Russian farm celebrated its female North Korean workers by throwing a concert, releasing a video of dozens of DPRK laborers likely employed at the facility in violation of U.N. sanctions. The Agro-Invest agricultural complex, based in Russia’s Kaluga region southwest of Moscow, held a tree-planting procession and a concert “with the participation of [...]

- [North Korean women’s soccer team to play in South for first time in 12 years](#) (2026-05-04 04:04)

A North Korean women’s soccer club is scheduled to visit South Korea for the first time in about 12 years, in a rare instance of cross-border sports amid frozen ties between the two countries. North Korea’s Naegohyang Women’s Football Club is scheduled to arrive in South Korea on May 17 to compete in the final [...]

- [North Korean youth vow to become the ‘militant reserve’ of country](#) (2026-05-01 08:53)

North Korea this week emphasized the need for the country’s youth to maintain utmost loyalty to Kim Jong Un during a once-in-five-years political gathering, positioning the DPRK’s leading youth organization as the “militant reserve” dedicated to advancing the ruling party’s vision. The 11th Congress of the Socialist Patriotic Youth League, held in Pyongyang from Tuesday [...]

- [Former DPRK diplomat peels back curtain on Pyongyang’s foreign policy apparatus](#) (2026-05-01 07:44)

North Korea’s diplomats are often seen delivering rigid statements from behind podiums, but a new insider account suggests the real work of Pyongyang’s foreign service happens far from public view. Drafting reports for Kim Jong Un. Navigating turf battles between rival state and party organs. Moving hard currency through overseas embassies under mounting pressure. That [...]

- [Russia, China back North Korea’s rejection to follow UN sanctions](#) (2026-05-01 07:29)

Russia, China and North Korea mounted a joint defense of Pyongyang at a U.N. Security Council (UNSC) meeting, attacking sanctions and dismissing evidence of alleged DPRK violations, two years after Moscow’s veto dismantled the U.N. panel charged with monitoring restrictions against North Korea. The UNSC convened on Thursday to discuss North Korea’s nuclear issue at [...]

- [South Korea’s top court upholds jail sentence for man who hired DPRK hacker](#) (2026-04-30 09:57)

South Korea’s highest court upheld the one-year prison sentence of a man who hired a North Korean cybercriminal to carry out attacks in support of an illegal gaming server. The Supreme Court’s First Division on Thursday delivered the judgement against the South Korean national, identified solely by his surname Oh, for violating the National Security [...]

- [5 Korean War POWs forced to work in North Korean coal mine are suing the regime](#) (2026-04-30 09:23)

Five prisoners of war seeking compensation for physical and psychological damages after the Korean War filed a joint lawsuit against North Korea and leader Kim Jong Un in Seoul Central District Court on Thursday. The POWs are each suing for 21 million won (\$14,187) after alleging they were forcibly sent to work in North Korean [...]

- [Police bust Donbas-tied arms dealers peddling guns for Kim Jong Un: Kyiv](#) (2026-04-30 08:49)

Ukraine claimed to have busted an arms smuggling network used by a Donbas warlord to procure “award” weapons for high-profile individuals, including DPRK leader Kim Jong Un,

actor Steven Seagal and Russian officials. Ukraine's National Police said Tuesday that Kyiv disrupted a smuggling route controlled by Donbas warlord Denis Pushilin, who has served as the [...]

- [Russian Far East plans to boost trade with North Korea: officials](#) (2026-04-30 08:34)

A region in Russia's Far East is seeking to boost trade with North Korea by setting up a new trade promotion body, local authorities said, ahead of the opening of a cross-border road bridge between their two countries. Primorsky Krai plans to establish a working group under its Vladivostok-based Export Council tasked with "expanding trade [...]"

- [South Korea's navy to lead around 40 warships in large-scale RIMPAC exercise](#) (2026-04-30 05:39)

A South Korean navy admiral will command warships during the U.S.-led Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC) for the first time, a milestone one expert says could bolster Seoul's ability to lead allied naval forces in a contingency with North Korea. Troops from 30 countries will participate in the biennial exercise scheduled June 24 to [...]

Source: NK Pro

- [North Korean hackers poison Chinese games in apparent bid to spy on refugees](#) (2026-05-06 04:14)

A North Korean cybercrime group compromised a Chinese gaming platform popular with ethnic Koreans living near the DPRK-China border and used it to plant spyware on the devices of unsuspecting players, according to security researchers. The attackers, identified by researchers as the espionage-focused group ScarCruft, tampered with Android and Microsoft Windows games hosted on sqgame[.]net, [...] The post North Korean hackers poison Chinese games in apparent bid to spy on refugees appeared first on NK PRO.

- [How military AI is changing warfare on the Korean Peninsula](#) (2026-05-04 09:11)

As North and South Korea pursue contrasting approaches to integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into their militaries, the Korean Peninsula is racing toward becoming a testing ground for the promises — and perils — of algorithmic warfare. Both sides are compressing decision-making timelines in ways that could reshape deterrence and crisis stability: from Pyongyang's pursuit of [...] The post How military AI is changing warfare on the Korean Peninsula appeared first on NK PRO.

- [North Korea in April 2026: A month in review and what's ahead](#) (2026-05-01 09:07)

About the Month in Review Every month, NK Pro conducts an in-depth analytic review of news on the Korean Peninsula. This Month in Review covers the period of April 1, 2026 to April 30, 2026. In addition to an executive summary providing top-line findings, the following review

includes detailed analysis on a wide range of [...] The post North Korea in April 2026: A month in review and what' s ahead appeared first on NK PRO.

- [Blood-stained letters on display at North Korea' s new war memorial museum](#)
(2026-05-01 01:49)

The opening of North Korea' s Memorial Museum of Combat Feats at the Overseas Military Operations dominated state media this week, carrying both diplomatic and domestic significance. Visits by Russian State Duma Chairman Viacheslav Volodin and Defense Minister Andrei Belousov underscored the deepening Pyongyang-Moscow ties, while at home, the memorial was used to glorify troops killed [...] The post Blood-stained letters on display at North Korea' s new war memorial museum appeared first on NK PRO.