

LEE MYUNG-BAK, CHEONAN, AND THE NEW COLD WAR

Tim Beal

Outline

- ▣ Cheonan incident and its context
- ▣ The fabricated investigation
- ▣ New Cold War
 - Danger of hot war

Cheonan

ROKS Cheonan sank 26 March 2010 in the West Sea, claiming 46 lives while massive US/ROK military exercises were taking place in the vicinity



Sinking and its context

- ▣ Cause uncertain and contested
- ▣ Important to understand it within its context
- ▣ Two aspects now – others later
 - Military exercises
 - Location

US/ROK Military exercises



ROK corvettes on patrol



Anti-submarine warfare



Amphibious invasion exercises



Amphibious invasion exercises



Amphibious invasion exercises



Location – Northern Limit Line



Cheonan
sinking

The investigation (s)

- ▣ ROK military
- ▣ Russian navy
- ▣ Innumerable dissections
 - National Defence Commission (DPRK)
 - Korean scientists in North America
 - Civil groups in ROK
 - Cyberworld.....

ROK military

- ▣ Officially Civilian-Military Joint Investigation Group (JIG)
- ▣ Token civilians
 - One (Shin Sang-cheol) expelled for dissent
- ▣ Also billed as 'international' / 'multinational'
 - US, Australia, UK, Sweden
 - China and Russia not invited
 - DPRK requests refused

'smoking gun' at last moment

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english.chosun.com

Serial Number of Torpedo Traced to N.Korea

Investigators have found at the 11th hour found a desperately needed smoking gun linking North Korea to the sinking of the Navy corvette Cheonan, a government official claimed Tuesday. Investigators apparently discovered a propeller from the torpedo that likely sank the ship in relatively good condition in waters where it sank and the serial number handwritten on it is North Korean.

Interim report



Embargo



Investigation Result on the Sinking of ROKS "Cheonan"

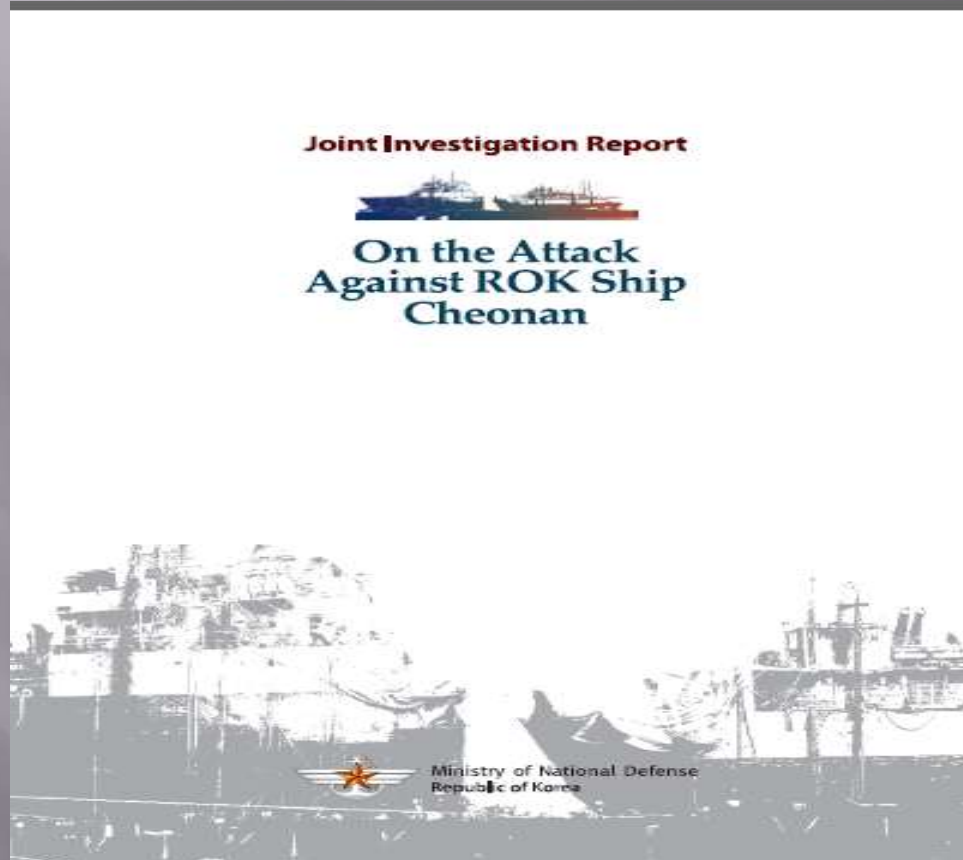
THU, 20 MAY, 2010

The Joint Civilian-Military
Investigation Group

Verdict

○ Based on all such relevant facts and classified analysis, we have reached the clear conclusion that ROKS "Cheonan" was sunk as the result of an external underwater explosion caused by a torpedo made in North Korea. The evidence points overwhelmingly to the conclusion that the torpedo was fired by a North Korean submarine. There is no other plausible explanation.

Final report - September



Joint Investigation Report: On the Attack Against ROK Ship Cheonan. Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, 2010.
<<http://www.nautilus.org/publications/essays/napsnet/sr/Cheonan.pdf>>

Russian investigation

- ▣ Not invited to original investigation
 - Subsequently to review the evidence compiled by ROK military

The invitation of Russian and Chinese experts into the team of foreign investigators should have been done from the outset. It was strange to see the investigation team composed only of ROK's allies (US, Australia, Canada, UK and neutral Sweden). This can only be explained by the sensitivity of joint ROK-US military and naval exercises which were going on in the area where Cheonan sank.

Now, two months after the incident, inviting Russian experts does not make much sense because they will get access only to the second-hand evidence and convenient answers rather than the crime scene. I doubt that they will be allowed to inspect the incident site and examine the seabed as thoroughly as it was done by their predecessors

Petrov, Leonid. "Interview." *Radio Free Asia*, 28 May 2010.

- Russia has big debt with ROK
 - ▣ Lee Myung-bak thought it a safe way to add credibility

Russian naval team of torpedo experts



A group of Russian Navy experts visited the Republic of Korea from May 30 to June 7, 2010, reviewed the ROK sponsored Joint Investigation Group (JIG) report and collected material necessary for analysis and experiments

Russians cagey

- ▣ Frequent reports in South Korean press that Russian investigation 'inconclusive'

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Russian Investigators' Report on Cheonan Sinking 'Inconclusive'

Russian investigators submitted their final report on the sinking of the South Korean Navy corvette Cheonan to the National Security Council, an agency under presidential supervision, the RIA Novosti news agency reported Saturday. The news agency did not say what their conclusion was.

Russian report not published

- ▣ Copies to China and US, but not to either Korea
- ▣ Why was it not published?
- ▣ Was it saying something more than 'not proven'?

Donald Gregg

- ▣ Former CIA operative, Bush Sr ambassador to ROK, Chairman of the Korea Society:
 - South Korea has not officially referred to the Russian conclusions. When I asked a well-placed Russian friend why the report has not been made public, he replied, “Because it would do much political damage to President Lee Myung-bak and would embarrass President Obama.”

Gregg, Donald P. "Testing North Korean Waters." *International Herald Tribune*, 31 August 2010.

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/01/opinion/01iht-edgregg.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print

What did the Russians conclude?

- ▣ Though not officially published, the conclusions were leaked to the South Korean newspaper Hankyoreh

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Editorial
Opinion
National
> North Korea
International
Business
Arts & Entertainment
Hot issue

- About Us

Introduction
Sister Journals
Historic Frontpages
Advertising

← BACK

FONT FONT



Russia's Cheonan investigation suspects that the sinking Cheonan ship was caused by a mine in water

Russia's Cheonan investigation findings contrast with S.Korea's report
S.Korea's joint civilian-military investigation team concluded the sinking was caused by a torpedo attack by N.Korea

The Hankyoreh

① 폭발 시간 4분전까지 CCTV찍혀...어뢰공격 의문



the accident occurred when "the vessel's propeller happened to get caught in a net as it was sailing through shallow waters near the coast, and as the vessel was trying to extricate itself to deep waters, its lower part struck a [mine] antenna and set off the triggering device."

"Russia's Cheonan investigation suspects that the sinking Cheonan ship was caused by a mine in water." *Hankyoreh*, 28 July 2010.
http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/432232.html

Cheonan sinking an accident

- ▣ Accident rather than NK attack
- ▣ Mine was South Korean

....there is a risk of mines in the area where damage to the vessel occurred....," the Russian team said.

Analysts are interpreting this as referring to the large-scale placement of depth charges by the South Korean government in the 1970s to prevent a North Korean landing on Baengnyeong Island.

Another possibility raised by the Russian investigation team was that the explosion occurred from of the **South Korean military's own torpedoes.**

"Complex combination of factors" responsible for Cheonan sinking, Russian investigation concludes
". *Hankyoreh*, 28 July 2010.

<http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/ISSUE/75/432233.html>

And the smoking gun?

- ▣ The torpedo part that ROK presented seems to be an electronic torpedo with a radius of 533mm. However, **we do not conclude that this particular torpedo was launched to and impacted on the Cheonan ship.**

"Russian Navy Expert Team's analysis on the Cheonan incident." *Hankyoreh*, 29 July 2010.

<http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/ENGISSUE/75/432230.html>

- ▣ Probably a mine, possibly a SK torpedo, but not this NK torpedo
- ▣ The only piece of evidence incriminating DPRK discounted by Russian torpedo experts on technical grounds
- ▣ But they went further

Corrosion

- ▣ The Russians confirmed what South Korean critics had long pointed out
- ▣ 'Visual examination of the torpedo part indicates that **the torpedo had been in the water for more than 6 months.**'

"Russian Navy Expert Team's analysis on the Cheonan incident." *Hankyoreh*, 29 July 2010.

- ▣ But ROK claimed that it had been responsible for sinking on 26 March (ie 2 months)

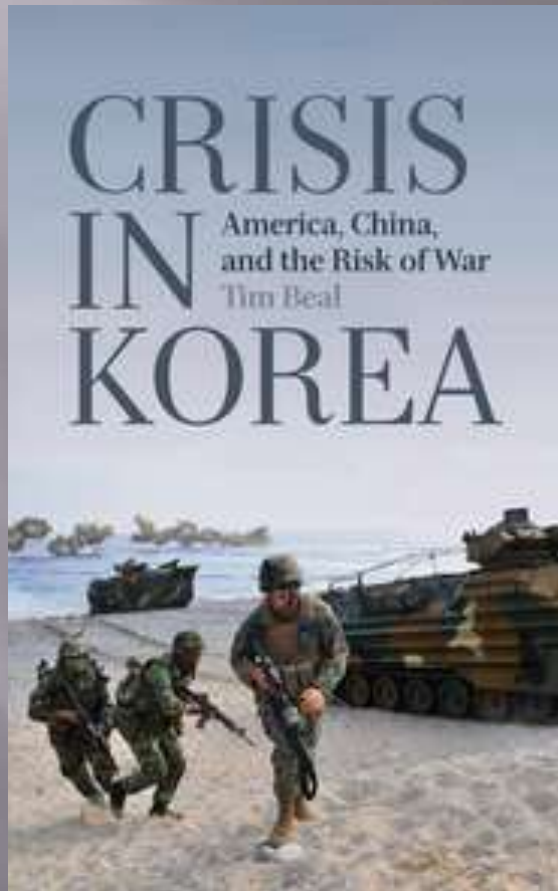
Implications of corrosion

- ▣ Virtually certain that torpedo remnant was planted in order to incriminate DPRK
 - There is no other plausible explanation
- ▣ Did Lee Myung-bak know and authorise?
 - Almost certainly
- ▣ Did Hillary Clinton know?
 - Probably
 - Russian report did go to US government

New Cold War

- ▣ Actions, such as military exercises, not to deter NK aggression but to build up tension
- ▣ For US
 - Used as an excuse to sink Six Party Talks
 - Used to increase confrontation with China
- ▣ Lee Myung-bak
 - Consistent with policy to destabilise DPRK, precipitate a collapse, and absorb into ROK

To be continued....



Pluto Press, London
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<http://www.plutobooks.com/display.asp?K=9780745331621&>