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Army manual warns of U.S. psychological tactics

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SEOUL -- A recently published North Korean army manual warns that the United States may use bribery and psychological warfare to weaken allegiance to the regime of Kim Jong-il, noting methods used in the Iraq war.

The 39-page manual, obtained by the Korean daily JoongAng Ilbo, says the CIA will focus on destroying the country's military hierarchy rather than nuclear facilities.

Published last year by the North Korean People's Army, the manual pulls out all stop to praise Mr. Kim, known officially as "dear leader."

"Our chief commander is a general who is equally distinguished in military and literary spheres," the newspaper quoted the manual as saying.

"He not only has a thorough knowledge of science technologies, but also is a master of computer science."

The manual has been vetted by South Korean intelligence, the newspaper wrote, and it is thought to be aimed at general-level officers.

Mentioning the fall of the Soviet Union, Romania and Iraq, the booklet presents a stark warning of how the United States might try to undermine the military's leadership.

"Saddam's 100,000 soldiers had pledged loyalty to their leader, but abandoned the president as the enemies' psychological warfare reached a peak," the manual says of the former Iraqi dictator.

"Benefiting from bribery in Iraq, the United States has been trying to use the same tactic toward North Korea. The main targets of such bribery operatives are our military officers."

North Korea has followed the war in Iraq very closely, said Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., author of several books on North Korean military capabilities.

According to high-level U.S. government, as well as accounts by North Korean defectors, Mr. Kim gave a lecture in March 2004 about U.S. psychological warfare operations.

The North Korean government created a film compiling foreign footage of the U.S. war in Iraq to brief its officials on U.S. tactics, Mr. Bermudez said.

"They've done extensive studies ... of all the recent operations that the U.S. has been involved in," he said.

The manual says: "The United States and its running dogs have founded new terror information organizations and are infiltrating spies and terrorists into our country.

"Officers must teach their soldiers in great detail about the U.S. concentration of advanced murder

weapons and psychological warfare on North Korean operations."

Because of its self-enforced isolation, North Korea has proved to be one of the world's most challenging countries from which to obtain intelligence. Nevertheless, the flow of information into North Korea is greater than ever before, Mr. Bermudez said.

"The North is actually porous as far as information available to the upper leadership, and because of that, they are more suspicious than they ever have been of psychological warfare operations," he said.

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