

THE CHOSON CONUNDRUM



ISMOR 35

July 17-19, 2018

STANDARD DISCLAIMER

These are my views,
observations, findings and
judgments and not those of
anyone else.

This presentation is
descriptive, not prescriptive.
It is drawn from many years
experience in China and
South Korea and numerous
trips to the China-North
Korea frontier.



FOR CONSIDERATION

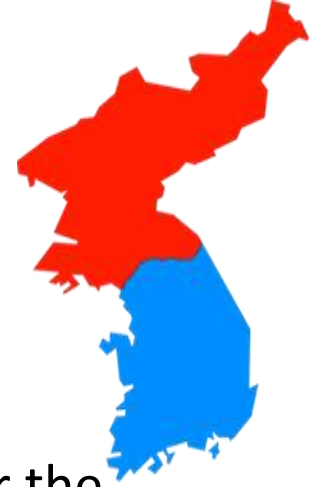
The kind of war you fight should be informed by how you want it to end.

- ‘We’ (defense community) do not think about the end-of-war as much as we do the start-of-war
 - Known conditions v. unknown
 - More satisfying to plan the start than to imagine the end
 - Someone else will take care of things after ‘we’ win (DOS, UN, USAID, etc.) (or if ‘we’ lose)
- Combat culture is THE demand function
 - Find it, target it, shoot it, kill it
 - But if this isn’t supported adequately it’ll get messed up and ‘we’ll’ have to do it over again, and that is where all the supporting functions leverage the efficacy of the combat function

A PERSONAL ZERO-SUM CONUNDRUM

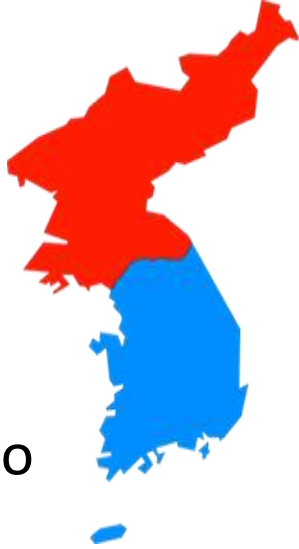
- Every time I visit China and the North Korean frontier I learn something I never knew before
- Every time I visit China and the North Korean frontier I learn that something I thought I knew from previous visits is wrong

CONUNDRUM AND CONSEQUENCES



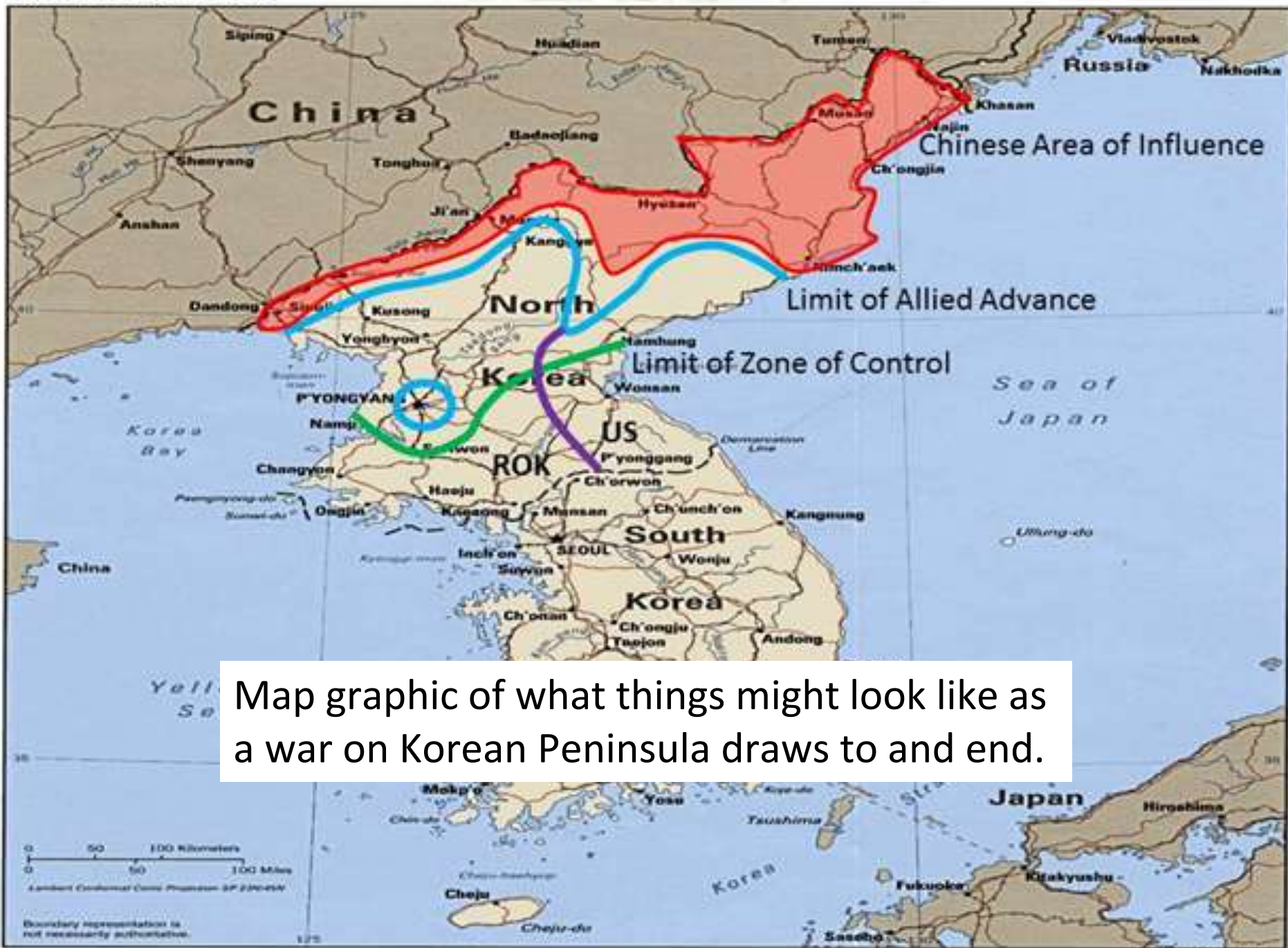
- The 'End of a War'
 - Be it war or denuclearization, we need to be prepared for the consequences – this is the basis for tomorrow's class and table top exercise
- We don't think about or plan for the end of war very often; denuclearization of NK poses many of the same challenges
 - We did plan successfully for the end of WWII in Europe (British-US cooperation/coordination in North Africa, Italy, Germany)
- Two extant plans for K-Pen:
 - USFK plan for NK regime collapse dealing with instability
 - ROK plan for unification
- Planning, preparing for consequences poses issues for the operational analysis community

THE CHOSON CONUNDRUM



- KJU will not give up nuclear weapons
 - Kim has no money; lengthy negotiations could lead to sanctions relief; China is already cheating
 - Beijing is abetting Pyongyang in its slow roll strategy
 - Kim hopes to buy time until Pres. Trump is out of office: Keep an eye on 2020 or 2024
 - The ‘other’ challenge is proliferation of nukes and ICBMs
- US demands denuclearization of DPRK
 - What are US options if no progress by NK?
 - Even if NK makes progress it will be step by step and a long, drawn out process... anything could happen
- Either way things are going to get messy

Korean Peninsula



Map graphic of what things might look like as a war on Korean Peninsula draws to and end.

THE SINO-NORTH KOREAN FRONTIER

A cook's tour of where I've been on the frontier, what I've observed, and why it matters



OPERATIONAL LANDSCAPE

North Korea's frontier
region:

- China
 - Liaoning Province along the Yalu River
 - Jilin Province and Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture on the Tumen River and upper reaches of the Yalu River
- Russia
- South Korea



NORTH KOREA'S GATEWAY TO CHINA: THE YALU RIVER



Dandong – Sinuiju



THE YALU

- Stagnation → 2003
 - Status quo
 - Trade is routine
- Development 2004 → 2015
 - Six-party talks spurred growth
 - Dandong/Sinuiju reaped rewards
 - Development then moved north
- Sanctions 2016 → ?



YALU: MILITARY ACTIVITY



YALU: DEVELOPMENT AND TRADE



YALU: CONSTRUCTION IN SINUIJU



YALU: THE NORTH KOREAN SIDE



NORTH KOREA BUILDS A FENCE ON THE YALU



YANBIAN RISING

A Tour of the Tumen River

- Rapid growth and development, 2005-2013
- In 2014 things began to slow down
 - Major effort at border control
 - Big push to get rid of NK refugees/illegals
- NK-SK crisis in August 2015 brought thousands of Chinese PLA troops to assembly areas on the border

CHINA'S NE FRONTIER PROVINCES



Jilin Province

- 27 million total
- 91% Han
- 4% Korean

Yanbian Prefecture

- 2.3 million total
- 58% Han
- 39% Korean



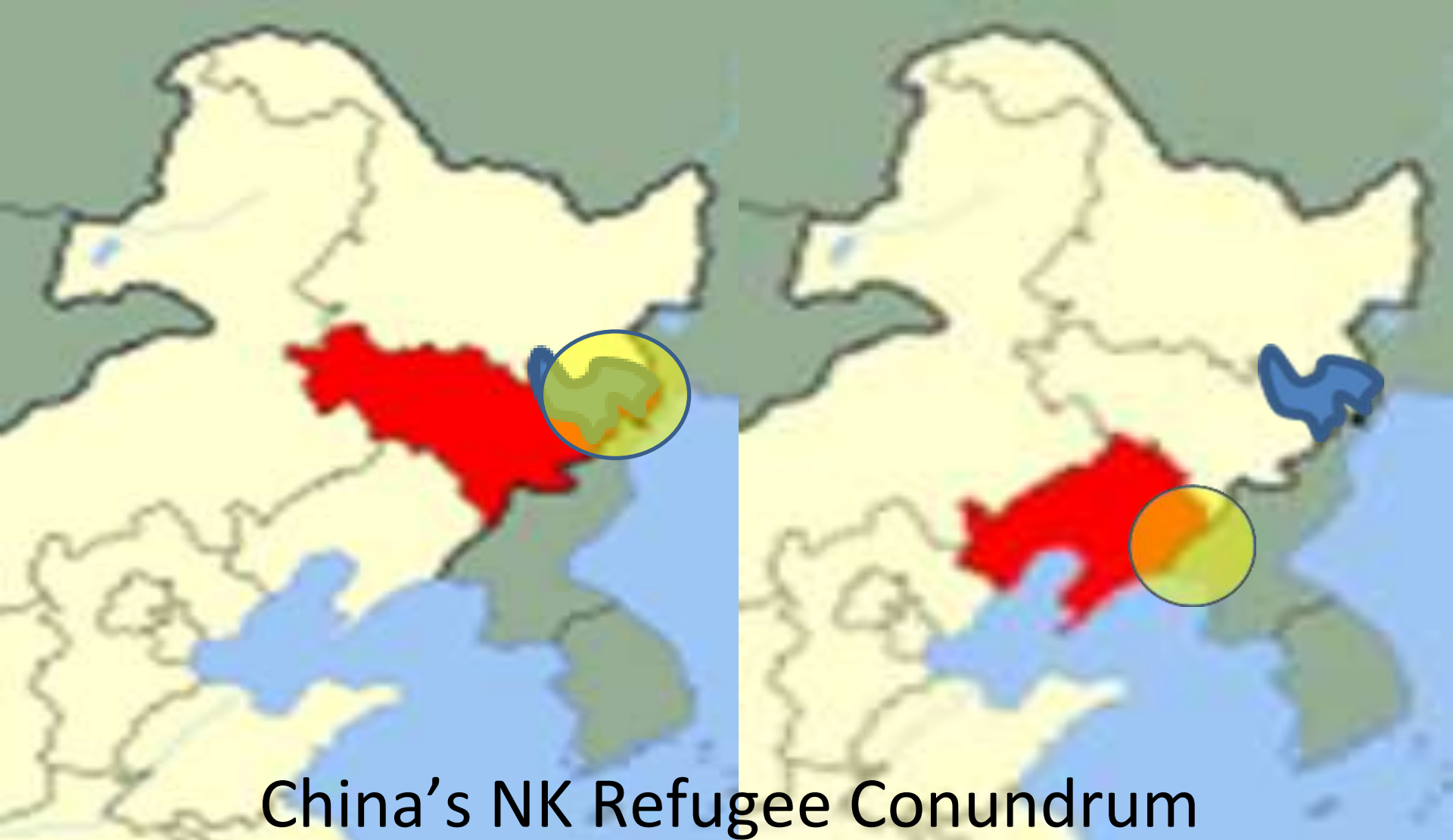
Heilongjiang Province

- 36 million total
- 95% Han
- 1% Korean



Liaoning Province

- 42 million total
- 94% Han
- 0.5% Korean



China's NK Refugee Conundrum

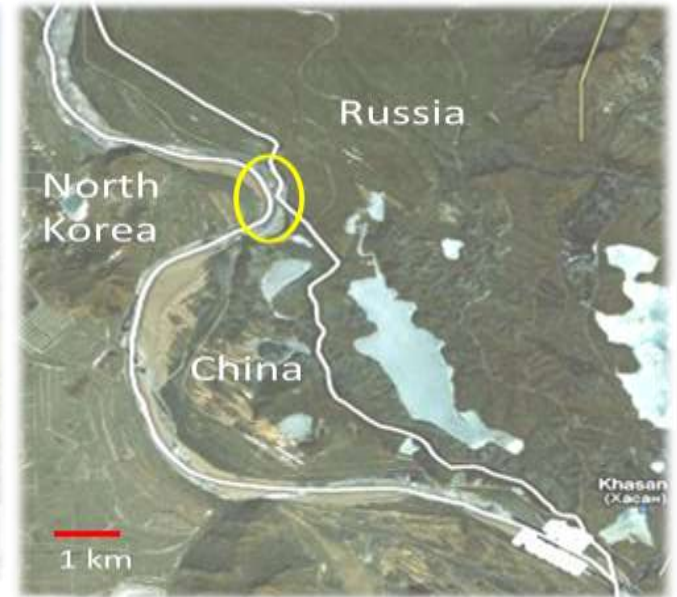
In normal times most refugees cross the Tumen
In time of crisis most refugees will cross the Yalu

THE TUMEN

Winter & Summer: Rugged & Swift, Flat & Slow, Narrow & Wide, Easy to Cross



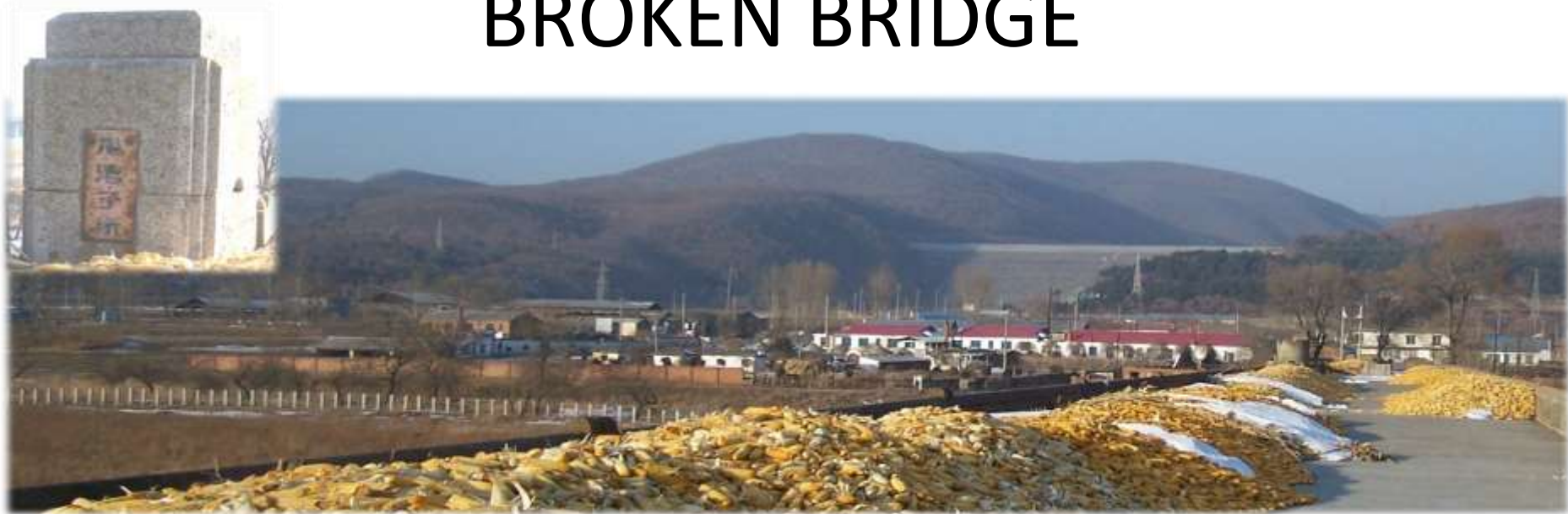
TUMEN: RUSSIA, CHINA, NORTH KOREA



TUMEN: UP RIVER



BROKEN BRIDGE



Top: Chinese mining community with dam in background.
Above left: NK border guards. Above center: Bridge with break on the North Korean side. Right: My driver looking toward the NK side.

NANPING PORT

How can sanctions be enforced

Far, far away from prying eyes.



... in such a remote location?

A CHINESE TRUCK CONVOY



Thirty-seven Chinese trucks with identical markings enter North Korea at Nanping Port.

CROSSING INTO NORTH KOREA



TO GET A LOAD OF NORTH KOREAN ORE



REFUGEES/ESCAPEES



Chinese Detention Facility on the Tumen



NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES: ESCAPE TO CHINA AND THEN?

- Tim Peters/Christianity
- Detention on the Tumen
- Snakeheads



Grace (Kim Songhua)

- Korean-Chinese from Yanbian
- Relatives in North Korea
- Degree from University of Seattle
- Became a U.S. citizen
- Converted to Christianity
- Returned to China to marry
- Lives in Yanji w/ husband and son
- May return to U.S. when son is older



RUSSIA



Top: Tri-border area with China, Russia, North Korea. Below: Russian ships at Rajin-Songbon docks.



REPUBLIC OF KOREA



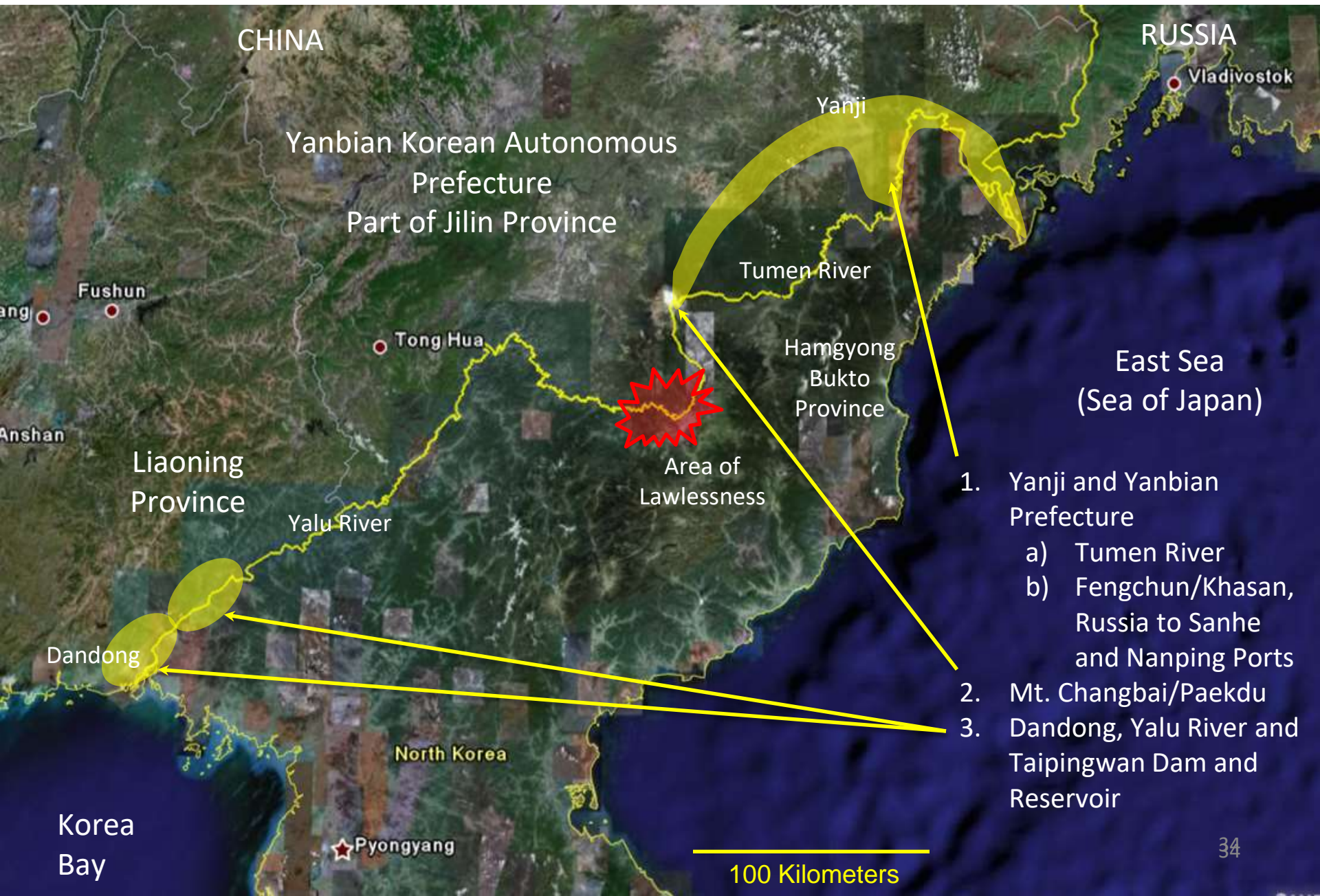
[Jonesblog](#)
Scientist, Photographer

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION



BACKUP

CHINA-NORTH KOREA BORDER AND AREAS WITH WHICH I AM FAMILIAR



LEADERSHIP & DECISION NODES

- 2003: Six-party talks begin
 - Beijing's leadership drives kum ba yah feeling internationally
 - KJU has the initiative, buys time, develops nukes, approaches nuke-capable ICBMs
- Pres Trump assumes office
 - UN sanctions ramped up
 - Vows to drain the swamp (in NE Asia)
 - Trans-global diplomacy
- KJU begins to feel the cash flow bite
 - Seeks advice from the godfather in Beijing
 - Agrees to Singapore Summit
- Beijing breaks sanctions regime
- KJU cheats on Summit agreement

IS IT CONSPIRACY?
OR REALLY LONG-RANGE PLANNING?
OR BOTH?

- Conflict of Interests
 - North Korea
 - China
 - America
 - South Korea
 - Japan
 - Russia
- The Conundrum: A Gordian Knot



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