

# Leaked report reveals plans for martial law in South Korea

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23 July 2018

During last year's mass protests against former President Park Geun-hye, South Korea's military planned to enforce martial law, according to a report leaked to the public on July 5. The Defense Security Command (DSC), a military intelligence agency, finalized the plans in March last year, shortly before the country's Constitutional Court removed Park from office on corruption charges.

Lawmaker Rhee Cheol-hee of the ruling Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) released the document, entitled "Wartime Martial Law and Joint Action Plan." Supposedly, the document was not reported to Defense Minister Song Yeong-mu until this March 16. Song subsequently kept it hidden from President Moon Jae-in, also of the DPK, until June 28.

On Friday, President Moon's spokesman Kim Eui-gyeom tried to play down the revelation and claim that such plans had since been modified. He told a press conference: "Usually, the military renews its martial law plans every two years. Cheongwadae [the Blue House or presidential office] has confirmed the submitted documents are completely different from the existing plans."

In the event that last year's protests did not subside after Park's trial, the plans called for mobilizing 200 tanks, 550 armoured vehicles, 4,800 soldiers, and 1,400 special warfare command troops. Brigades would seize the presidential offices, the Constitutional Court and the National Assembly, as well as other government offices. The DSC would censor the media to prevent the public from learning what was taking place. The military also intended to arrest opposition lawmakers who took part in the anti-Park protests, while "banning rallies and anti-state activities."

The DSC denounced the millions of protesters who took part in the demonstrations as "North Korea

followers," a common slander long used against opponents of the South Korean regime to justify the brutal suppression of democratic rights.

The Military Human Rights Center for Korea, a civic group allied with the DPK, stated on July 6 that the DSC document "is clearly a coup d'état plan and all involved in this are believed to have committed the crime of conspiracy to commit rebellion."

However, Moon's administration responded in a muted tone. The president ordered an investigation into the DSC on July 10, almost two weeks after he supposedly was made aware of the document. When questioned on the slow response, the presidential office claimed that officials only "gradually" began to understand the significance of the document.

An anonymous presidential official told the media the presidential palace would respond "responsibly" and "needs time to look into the issue in a serious manner."

For a country that endured nearly three decades of military dictatorship, the seriousness of a military threat to seize power is obvious. However, no arrests have been made. Moon waited until July 16 to demand the Defense Ministry hand over documents on the martial law plans.

Defense Minister Song also tried to justify not reporting the document to the president earlier. "I judged that this document needed legal analysis, and thought at the same time that regarding the issue of whether to disclose it, there should be a political consideration," he said.

This is a marked contrast to the Democrats' reaction to the arrest of a group of Unified Progressive Party members, including a lawmaker, in 2013 on trumped-up charges of conspiring to aid North Korea. The Democratic Party backed the arrests and accepted the phoney basis of the charges. Now, confronted with a

genuine state conspiracy, its leaders offer nothing more than mild criticisms.

There are deeper political issues involved in the leaking of this document. Different factions of the South Korean bourgeoisie are struggling to gain the upper hand as the global capitalist crisis continues to deepen.

Rhee declined to state how he came by the report. However, the DPK is now using it to further discredit the conservative main opposition Liberty Korea Party (LKP), which was known as the Saenuri Party when Park was in office.

In particular, the LKP has opposed the Democrat's stance on North Korea, instead pushing a hardline position toward Pyongyang. While both parties agree on turning the North into a platform for exploitation by South Korean big business, they differ over the method of bringing Pyongyang under Seoul's control.

DPK leader Chu Mi-ae recently sought to deflect criticism from Moon over the DSC document, while distancing himself from high-ranking members of Park's administration: "The probe must investigate thoroughly not only former head of the DSC Jo Hancheon but former Defense Minister Han Min-gu, former national security office chief Kim Kwan-jin, former prime minister Hwang Gyo-an who served as acting president, and of course, former president Park Geun-hye."

The government's campaign against former Park administration officials is also meant to redirect growing working class anger away from Moon. Last year's mass demonstrations were not just the result of Park's personal corruption. Hostility toward the ruling capitalist class has built up over years of attacks on working and living conditions carried out by all the major parties.

The bourgeoisie recognizes that as Moon's anti-working class agenda becomes clearer, public anger could be directed at the political establishment as a whole, including the Democrats, the pseudo-left and the trade unions.

The supposedly "militant" Korean Confederation of Trade Unions and pseudo-left organizations claimed last year that Park's removal and the election of a Democrat could somehow complete the "democratization" process left unfinished since the end of the military dictatorship in 1987. Moon's

accommodation to United States imperialism in foreign policy and big business at home demonstrate the fraud of this pro-capitalist conception.

The leaked document makes clear that the danger of martial law or a military dictatorship is not relegated to the past. For all the talk of "democratization," the framework of the police state continues to exist, supported by the entire bourgeoisie.



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