

## UN Command & Korea

### Why in news?

The United Nations Command found that North and South Korea were both guilty of violating armistice agreements.

### What is the story behind?

- This allegation followed a recent incident involving gunfire along the Demilitarised Zone between the two countries.
- The latest shootings incident at the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) occurred on May 3, 2020.
- A multinational special investigations team conducted the investigations into the latest shootings.
- The investigations team concluded that this shooting was in violation of the armistice agreement that brought a halt to the Korean War in 1953.

### What is the UN Command?

- The UN Command, led by the United States, established in 1950.
- It oversees affairs pertaining to the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).
- One of its roles is to ensure the terms of the armistice agreement, 1953, are being agreed upon by both North Korea and South Korea.

### What is the Korean Armistice Agreement?

- The 1953 Korean Armistice Agreement, was a ceasefire though there was no official declaration of the end of the war.
- The conflict has continued, without fighting between the parties.
- The events surrounding the Korean War and the ceasefire cannot fully be explained without a deep dive into the region's history and politics and the Second World War.
- Many do not realise that South Korea, under President Syngman Rhee, did not sign the armistice.
- In the absence of an official peace treaty, the two officially remain at war.
- However, in December 1991, North and South Korea signed a pact.
- In this pact, they agreed to refrain from aggressions, in a step that would lead to better relations and a potential resolution of the situation.
- Since the armistice was enforced, there have been several violations of it

from both North and South Korea, leading to persistent tensions.

- However, despite this, there have also been a softening of relations, particularly between the present leaders of North and South Korea.

### **What was this latest shooting about?**

- According to reports, there were no casualties as a result of the shooting.
- According to the South Korean announcement, North Korean soldiers opened fire at a South Korean guard post at the DMZ on May 3, 2020.
- Therefore, the two countries had been involved in a gunfire exchange.
- South Korea said it had retaliated by firing 10 shots as a warning towards North Korean posts at the border.
- According to the announcement, South Korea had warned North Korea through broadcast messages that the firings were a violation of the 2018 inter-Korean military agreement.
- Inter-Korean military agreement, 2018 had come about following a meeting between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in.
- This agreement's Pyongyang Joint Declaration of September 2018, said there would be reduced military tensions between the two countries.

### **How have the two countries responded?**

- Following the shooting, South Korea had stated that it was trying to investigate the shooting.
- It also said messages had been sent to North Korea to find out more about the causes, but they had not received any responses.
- North Korea did not separately address the issue.
- The shootings from North Korea did not appear to be intentional.
- Prior to this, shootings occurred across the DMZ in December 2017 when a North Korean soldier defected to the other side.
- In November 2017, another North Korean soldier defected only to be shot at, who required medical supervision following his defection to South Korea.

### **What did UN Command find in investigations?**

- A statement released by the UN Command stated that North Korea had been invited to share information regarding this incident.
- the investigation team didn't get any formal response from North Korea.
- The investigation said North Korea had violated the armistice of 1953 by firing four rounds, as had South Korea by firing five rounds in return.
- The report said investigations had been unable to determine whether the shootings that originated from North Korea had been intentional.

- Incidents such as these that involve shootings and other similar disturbances, violate the terms of the armistice agreement.

### **What was South Korea's statement?**

- Following the release of the report of the UN Command, South Korea released a statement implying that it did not agree with the statement.
- It also said that the UN Command ended the investigations without fully looking into North Korea's role in the shootings.
- South Korea also defended its stance of returning fire, saying it had been operating according to protocol.

**Source: The Indian Express**

