

# Coronavirus outbreak: nearly 200 North Korea soldiers 'die from outbreak government refuses to acknowledge'

Tuesday 10 March 2020, by [Business Insider](#) (Date first published: 10 March 2020).

- **Pyongyang's official stance remains that the North is free of the virus, with the cloistered nation stubbornly resisting calls for greater transparency**
- **But South Korean media outlets report that hundreds have died in the secretive state, with many thousands more in quarantine**

Hundreds of North Korean soldiers have reportedly died from the coronavirus - and thousands of others are being quarantined. But the secretive nation's leaders are sticking to the official narrative that the global epidemic has not reached them.

According to Daily NK, a South Korean news organisation, the Covid-19 virus killed 180 North Korean soldiers in January and February and has sent another 3,700 into quarantine. And according to South Korea's government-backed Yonhap News Agency, almost 10,000 people have been quarantined over coronavirus fears, but nearly 4,000 have been released since they did not present symptoms.

But the North Korean government line has not changed. The cloistered nation has remained stubbornly resistant to providing transparent information about the reported outbreak in the country.

"The infectious disease did not flow into our country yet," North Korea's government-controlled Rodong Sinmun said on Monday, according to Newsweek.

As of Tuesday, the coronavirus had infected more than 112,000 people globally and led to nearly 4,000 deaths.

The Daily NK attributed its information to a medical corp report from within the North Korean military. Hospitals serving different parts of the army were asked to provide data about the number of soldiers in their care that had died of high fevers triggered by pneumonia, tuberculosis, asthma, and colds as well as those who were in quarantine.

The report itself caused a furor in the military's leadership, according to a Daily NK source, who said that officials have ordered military hospitals to thoroughly sanitise the areas where quarantined soldiers are being housed. Soldiers with compromised immune systems or those who have a history of poor health are also being closely monitored, the source said.

Military unit leaders can also expect to be punished if proper protocol aimed at controlling the spread of the coronavirus is not followed, the Daily NK noted.

“Future evaluations on battle readiness will include a review of how many soldiers have died,” the source said, adding that officers will be “be held responsible for the deaths that have occurred in their units.”

Officials are looking into increasing the soldiers’ supply of food so their bodies are better equipped to resist Covid-19, the Daily NK’s source said, adding, that people “in charge of the military’s logistics operations are stressing that soldiers are supplied at least 800 grams worth of food per day. They also are emphasising that soldiers eat three meals of puréed soybean soup per day, instead of the usual one per day.”

North Korea is threatened by its porous border with China, an absence of medical supplies and a “crumbling” health care system, all of which are needed to combat a global epidemic, experts say. But officials, despite insisting that there have been no coronavirus cases, put 380 foreigners, most of whom are diplomats, in quarantine for over a month, state media reported on February 24.

A warning was issued in Rodong Sinmun, deeming it “absolutely unacceptable” for North Korean citizens to interfere with the government’s steps to halt the coronavirus. That includes those who object to wearing face masks, per Newsweek.

The Covid-19 outbreak poses an “unpredictable” danger so the country’s “work to completely lock down all routes through which the infectious disease can flow in – the border, sea, and air – should be continued with high intensity,” the Rodong Sinmun said.

## **Business Insider**

---

### **P.S.**

- South China Morning Post & Business Insider. Published: 9:21am, 10 Mar, 2020  
<https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/3074377/coronavirus-nearly-200-north-korea-soldiers-die-outbreak>  
<https://www.businessinsider.com/almost-200-north-korean-soldiers-died-coronavirus-2020-3>