

It's no game: Xbox-sensor guards Korean border

February 6 2014



North Korean-born Kang Myeong-wook (R) bows with his granddaughter towards the N.Korean border at the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) at Imjingak, Paju, S.Korea's Gyeonggi Province, on January 31, 2014

Microsoft's movement-recognition Kinect software has morphed from virtual shooter gaming to the real-life challenge of guarding the world's last Cold War border.

The sensor allowing hands-free play on the Xbox is the basis for a

[security device](#) now deployed along the demilitarised zone (DMZ) that separates North and South Korea, after being adapted by a South Korean programmer.

Four kilometres (2.5 miles) wide and 248 kilometres (155 miles) long, the DMZ is a depopulated no-man's land of heavily fortified fences that bristles with the landmines and listening posts of two nations that technically remain at war.

As a military buffer zone, it remains an area of profound Cold War hostility, but its man-made isolation has also created an accidental wildlife park recognised as one of the best-preserved habitats on Earth.

The Kinect-based software developed by Ko Jae-Kwan, founder-president of Saewan Co., has been taken up by the military because of its ability to differentiate between human and animal movement.

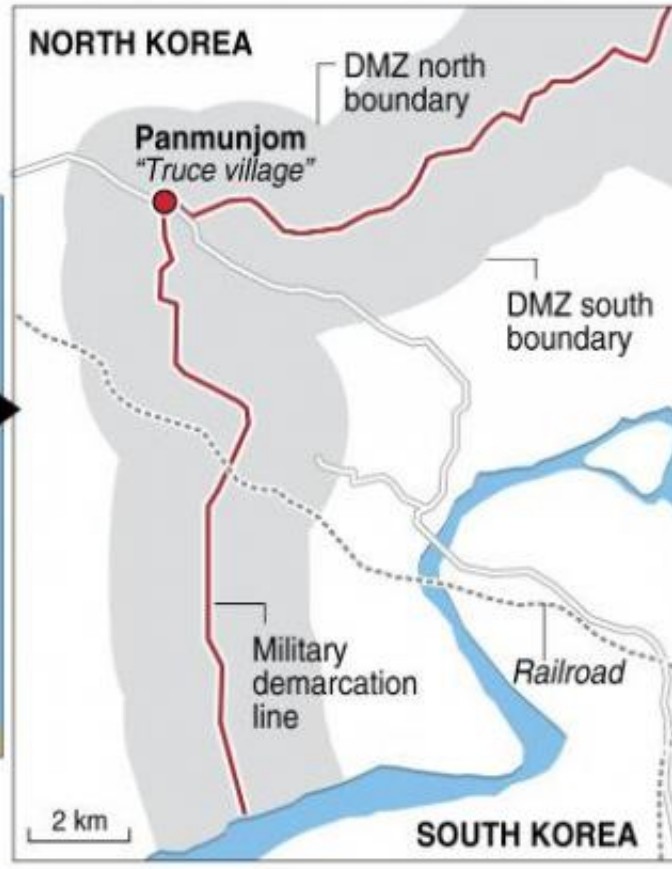
Ko, 39, told AFP on Thursday that his device could detect the sound, movement and direction of anybody attempting to cross the DMZ and immediately alert South Korean border guards.

Demilitarized zone

Established as a buffer between North and South Korea after the 1950-53 war



Sources: AFP/Global Security/
UN/SKorean govt

Demilitarized zone that separates North and South Korea

"Existing sensors, which had been in place along the border, were highly efficient but could not tell the difference between humans and animals, sending wrong signals frequently," Ko said.

The new sensors have been in place along certain sections of the DMZ since August last year, he added.

"Such devices are established as part of our project to strengthen surveillance with scientific equipment, but we cannot provide details for

security reasons," a defence ministry official said on condition of anonymity.

Despite all the security measures in place along the DMZ, there have been highly publicised incidents of undetected crossings.

Five South Korean generals and nine mid-level officers were removed from their posts or disciplined in 2012 after a defecting North Korean soldier simply walked undetected across the border and knocked on the door of a guard post.

The security lapse was all the more embarrassing as it came at a time of surging military tensions when the South Korean army was supposedly on high alert.

Ko said he planned to update the existing Kinect-based sensors to a version capable of detecting heart rates and reading body temperature, features that Microsoft added to the Xbox One version of the console released last year.

"For its price, the device is very accurate and effective in covering vulnerable areas," he said.

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