

## Countries at War? Coca-Cola Sold in North Korea, with a Distinctive Can and DPRK Logo

By [Media Freedom Foundation](#)

Global Research, April 02, 2013

[Media Freedom Foundation](#)

*A YouTube video that surfaced in August 2012 seemed to show patrons of a restaurant in Pyongyang, North Korea, drinking Coca-Cola in October 2011. This sparked controversy because a US trade embargo has banned the sale of Coca-Cola in North Korea since 1950 – but ongoing sales there seem to be an open secret outside the United States.*

The pizza restaurant where the video was filmed is owned by Cortial, a joint venture between North Korea and Italy. Customers allegedly were told the soft drink was “Italian Coke,” but a screenshot from the video clearly shows Coca-Cola’s distinctive can and logo.

North Korea is one of only two countries where the sale of Coca-Cola is unauthorized, the other being Cuba (since 1962). Coca-Cola representatives have denied consent to sell their product in North Korea: “Any products sold in the market have been purchased by unauthorized third parties and imported into the country from other markets where they were sold.”

✖ According to Lee Suk-Yong, a North Korean defector, China has been shipping Coca-Cola across the Korean border since 2002. He also claims that Coke is available in special shops in Pyongyang but is very expensive and accessible only to the elite and foreigners. If these sales are common knowledge among defectors, why has Coca-Cola not taken steps to end them?

Corporate media coverage of this controversy has been limited. Most news outlets that have reported it have been Korean or otherwise based outside the United States. Yahoo! Finance ran a piece on the story on Aug 31, 2012 but has not reported on it since. This story is particularly interesting considering that around the same time the video controversy began, Coca-Cola’s income began to slip thanks to sagging overseas expansion.

Sources:

“Coca-Cola available but expensive in N. Korea, defectors say.” Agence France-Presse via *Inquirer Lifestyle*. Sept. 1, 2012.  
<http://lifestyle.inquirer.net/64206/coca-cola-available-but-expensive-in-n-korea-defectors-say>

“Coca-Cola on sale on North Korea’s black market.” News.com.au. Sept. 2, 2012.  
<http://www.news.com.au/world-news/coca-cola-on-sale-on-north-koreas-black-market/story-fndir2ev-1226463177234>

“Coca-Cola profit slips as costs rise.” News.com.au. Aug. 2, 2012.

<http://www.news.com.au/business/breaking-news/coca-cola-profit-slips-as-costs-rise/story-e6frfkur-1226428577349>

Hebblethwaite, Cordelia. "Who, What, Why: In which countries is Coca-Cola not sold?" *BBC News Magazine*. Sept. 11, 2012. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-19550067>

Nichols, Chris. "Coke (Unofficially) Crosses into North Korea." Yahoo! Finance. Aug. 31, 2012. <http://finance.yahoo.com/blogs/the-exchange/coke-unofficially-crosses-dmz-north-korea-163719971.html>

Ryall, Julian. "Coca-Cola denies 'cracking' North Korea." *The Telegraph*. Aug. 31, 2012. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/northkorea/9511235/Coca-Cola-denies-cracking-North-Korea.html>

Young, Angelo. "Coca-Cola Denies Report It Distributes in North Korea." *International Business Times*. Aug. 31, 2012. <http://www.ibtimes.com/coca-cola-denies-report-it-distributes-north-korea-760529>

Student Researcher: Cedric Crawley, Frostburg State University

Faculty Evaluator: Andy Duncan, Frostburg State University

The original source of this article is [Media Freedom Foundation](#)  
Copyright © [Media Freedom Foundation](#), [Media Freedom Foundation](#), 2013

---

**[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)**

**[Become a Member of Global Research](#)**

Articles by: [Media Freedom Foundation](#)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)  
[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.  
For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)