

Panel: A Nuclear North Korea: Nonproliferation Issues and Beyond (Regency Room)

Date/Time: Tuesday, February 19, 2013 / 14:00-15:15

Talking Points for: Bruce Bennett, Senior Defense Analyst, The RAND Corporation

A NUCLEAR NORTH KOREA: NONPROLIFERATION ISSUES AND BEYOND BY BRUCE BENNETT, THE RAND CORPORATION

The nature of the North Korean nuclear weapon threat depends upon how North Korea uses its weapons. While no published doctrine exists, we can identify several kinds of uses:

- Deterring coercion and military action.
 - “If a war occurs in Korea, it will be waged with nuclear weapons, rather than conventional ones.”
 - “If the United States ignites a nuclear war, the U.S. military bases in Japan would serve as a detonating fuse to turn Japan into a nuclear sea of fire.”
- Providing a “nuclear shadow” that reduces escalation risks from provocations.
 - North Korean nuclear weapons facilitate its provocations; the US nuclear umbrella fails to stop those provocations.
- Demonstrating the empowerment of a failing regime.
 - North Korea is a failing state with a leadership culture requiring the appearance of empowerment. Where else can NK find this appearance?
- Affecting regional perceptions of the Korean military balance.
 - “North Korea’s nuclear bomb reverses the military balance on the Korean Peninsula, tilting it towards the North.” (10/20/2006)
- Stimulating interest in purchase of North Korean nuclear weapon capabilities.
 - “Technology and scientists from Russia, China, North Korea and Pakistan have propelled Iran’s nuclear program much closer to producing a bomb than Iraq ever was.” (August 2003)
 - Iranians apparently present at the February 12, 2013 test.
- “Leveling the playing field” in a conflict.
 - North Korea seeks systems to overcome US/ROK technology advantages.
- Providing a means for exacting revenge in response to regime failure.
 - If NK loses a war, Kim Jong-Il said in 1993, “I will be sure to destroy the Earth! What good is this Earth without North Korea?”

Some in the US say, “If North Korea uses a nuclear weapon against the US, the US will turn NK into a parking lot.” But would a US president really use 100 or so nuclear weapons in

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response, and kill perhaps 10 million innocent NK civilians?

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