

North Korea: 'Nuclear War Is Unavoidable'

The news that the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency now believes North Korea may be able to miniaturize its nuclear warheads and fit them on ballistic missiles means the crisis on the Korean Peninsula involves not just one but two dangerous scenarios.

First, that Kim Jong-un—the Pyongyang man-child dictator—will trigger a nuclear war in East Asia, either purposefully or accidentally. The previous Korean war cost more than 1.2 million lives. The next one could cost many multiples of that. Seoul alone is a city of some 12 million people.

Second, that Benjamin Netanyahu—the Israeli prime minister—will feel compelled to launch a massive pre-emptive strike against Iran's nuclear facilities sooner rather than later. Why? Because the rapid advancement of North Korea in building nuclear warheads capable of fitting on ballistic missiles means Iran is not far from accomplishing the same if North Korea is selling their research to the mullahs in Tehran.

This could accelerate the Israeli calculus for taking decisive action, since neither the Obama administration nor other world powers appear to be taking decisive steps of their own to neutralize the Iranian nuclear threat.

This is what I call "linkage."

While on the surface North Korea is creating a crisis unique to the Pacific theater, the sober truth is that the crisis actually has direct and immediate implications for the Middle East. Israeli leaders are monitoring North Korean developments very closely. They are watching equally closely how the White

House handles the Korean situation.

At this point, Netanyahu and his advisors are likely drawing the following conclusions:

1. Pyongyang either has or nearly has not just an operational nuclear warhead, but one that can be fitted on a ballistic missile;
2. Because Iran and North Korea work so closely together, it must be assumed that Iran is even closer to having deliverable nuclear missiles than previously believed;
3. The U.S. intends to take no decisive action to stop Pyongyang from becoming a nuclear-weapons power;
4. The U.S. is not going to take decisive action to stop Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons power;
5. In the cases of both North Korea and Iran, the Obama administration talks tough, but carries a little stick, merely intending to contain and deter these two countries from using nuclear weapons rather than prevent them from building them;
6. Israel is on its own and may need to move hard and fast to keep Iran from crossing the red line, after which Israel won't have an effective military option.

"The results of a classified Defense Intelligence Agency report indicate that 'North Korea now has nuclear weapons capable of delivery by ballistic missiles,'" **reports the *Christian Science Monitor***. "That was the bombshell out of a House Armed Services Committee hearing Thursday. It came when Rep. Doug Lamborn (R) of Colorado began quoting from what he said was an unclassified version of the DIA report, which has not yet been made public."

"A new assessment by the Pentagon's intelligence arm has concluded for the first time, with 'moderate confidence,' that North Korea has learned how to make a nuclear weapon small enough to be delivered by a ballistic missile," **reports the *New York Times***. "The assessment by the Defense Intelligence

Agency, which has been distributed to senior administration officials and members of Congress, cautions that the weapon's 'reliability will be low,' apparently a reference to the North's difficulty in developing accurate missiles or, perhaps, to the huge technical challenges of designing a warhead that can survive the rigors of flight and detonate on a specific target.

"The assessment's existence was disclosed Thursday by Lamborn three hours into a budget hearing of the House Armed Services Committee with Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Martin E. Dempsey. General Dempsey declined to comment on the assessment because of classification issues.

"But late Thursday, the director of national intelligence, James R. Clapper Jr., released a statement saying that the assessment did not represent a consensus of the nation's intelligence community and that 'North Korea has not yet demonstrated the full range of capabilities necessary for a nuclear armed missile.'"

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