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## Feature Report

***“Priority-Based Approach to the North Korean Nuclear Issue—An Enlightened Dose of Self-Centeredness”***. By Taisuke Mibae. Published by Atlantic Council; June 28, 2019

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/reports/priority-based-approach-to-the-north-korean-nuclear-issue-an-enlightened-dose-of-self-centeredness>

From the time Chairman Kim Jong-Un started his “charm offensive” early last year until the fallout of the second summit meeting between Kim and President Donald Trump in Hanoi in February 2019, officials and experts have debated whether North Korea is ready for denuclearization on the terms of the United States and its allies. Rather than focus negotiations on a foundation of unverifiable assumptions about Kim Jong-Un’s “intentions,” the United States and its allies in Northeast Asia (Japan and South Korea) need to start by asking themselves about their own priorities and interests.

The purpose of “Priority-Based Approach to the North Korean Nuclear Issue— An Enlightened Dose of Self-Centeredness,” a comprehensive report by Taisuke Mibae, visiting senior fellow at the Atlantic Council’s Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security, is to present important questions that should be answered for negotiating with North Korea and review elements to be taken into account when deciding the answers. Although it is still unclear if and how US-North Korea denuclearization talks will reset and resume, this report will be a valuable measure for stepping back and viewing the current stalemate.

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# NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Breaking Defense (Washington, D.C.)

## **Trump Threatens NDAA Veto If House Cuts Stand**

By Theresa Hitchens

July 10, 2019

WASHINGTON: The Trump Administration has issued a laundry list of objections to the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) version of the fiscal year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act — including a threat to veto the bill if the HASC-approved \$733 billion top-line for DoD spending passes Congress.

Major objections in the “Statement of Administration Policy” provided to the House Rules Committee obtained by Breaking Defense, include:

The \$103 million cut to the Air Force’s Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD) program. The White House argues that “the Air Force is on track to award a contract for the next phase of the GBSD program in FY 2020. This funding reduction would prevent the Air Force from awarding this contract and delay recapitalization of this leg of the nuclear triad.”

The \$376.4 million cut to the Next-Generation Overhead Persistent Infrared missile warning satellite program. The administration claims the cut would “delay the delivery by over three years and increase the costs by over \$475 million.”

The \$413 million cut to the Missile Defense Agency and the \$42 million re-scoping of the Flight Test Mission-44 (FTM-44) test of the Standard Missile-3. According the statement: “The Administration strongly objects to both actions, and specifically to the “\$150 million reduction to the Improved Homeland Defense Interceptor Program (Redesigned Kill Vehicle). The reduction would be premature pending the result of DOD’s analysis of alternative courses of action for the Redesigned Kill Vehicle effort and could cause even further delays to the delivery of 20 additional Ground-Based Interceptors.” The White House further argues that the HASC shift the FTM-44’s objective from a test against an ICBM to a test against an Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) would violate a provision of the 2018 NDAA, as well as reducing the technical value of the test since the sea-launched missile was tested against a medium-range ballistic missile in 2018.

The \$500 million cut, representing 50 percent of the budget, to the Air Force’s Next Generation Air Dominance effort to design as suite of air superiority capabilities including a replacement for the F-22 fighter. “Full funding for NGAD is essential to maintaining a strong United States industrial base capable of building the world’s most advanced aircraft,” the statement argues. “This 50 percent reduction in funding would result in a three-year slip in advanced aircraft development timelines and the cancellation of critical new production technology programs. Reduced funding would also risk setting the United States behind other nations applying rapidly evolving digital technology to future aircraft programs.”

The barring of funds for a new low-yield nuclear weapon for the Navy’s Trident submarines. The White House “strongly objects to provisions that would reduce funding for the Trident II Modification Program and the W76-2 Modification Program, and block deployment of the system. As a measured response to a real-world escalatory threat, the W76-2 warhead reinforces the credibility of our deterrence posture and represents a key element of the 2018 NPR. ... This would undermine deterrence and increases nuclear risk to the United States and our allies.”

In addition, while the White House welcomes the HASC creation of a Space Corps, it urges the House to reconsider and provide the Pentagon authority to begin transferring Air Force and other service personnel to the Space Corps in 2020. It also asks that HASC change add a senior civilian slot to lead the new armed force. The Senate bill did so, creating an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Space Policy.

The White House also argues against the changes, pushed by HASC Chairman Adam Smith, to the National Security Space Launch Program Phase 2 competition that would benefit SpaceX and Blue Origin in the mega-millions contest with United Launch Alliance and Northrop Grumman. Those provisions would in effect limit the Air Force's planned Phase 2 contract for two providers to 29 launches between 2020 and 2024, and require the Air Force to open the competition again after that. The provision (in the bill's Section 1601) further would provide up to \$500 million to any company that wins a Phase 2 contract, but had not been given a contract under the previous Launch Services Agreement — that is, SpaceX as it is the only company in that position.

“The Administration strongly objects to this provision as it would increase mission risk for the Nation's national security satellites,” the statement says. It expresses concern that the changes might affect the contract's alignment “with the conclusion of the current generation of several satellite architectures.” The White House adds: “Confining Phase 2 to fewer missions would increase per-launch cost while simultaneously introducing risk and costs for some intelligence payloads.”

The House just this week took up the 2020 NDAA, and is working its way through more than 600 amendments — amid partisan bickering and a lack of support from House Republicans. Normally, an administration would issue a response to congressional action after both sides of Capitol Hill formally acted on the legislation. The Senate passed the NDAA on June 27, and met the administration's request for \$750 billion in top-line DoD funds.

<https://breakingdefense.com/2019/07/trump-threatens-ndaa-veto-if-house-cuts-stand/>

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The Sumter Item (Sumter, S.C.)

## **Department of Energy Seeks to Produce Plutonium Pits in S.C.**

By Sammy Fretwell

July 9, 2019

NORTH AUGUSTA, S.C. - As patriotic music played in the background, about 200 people listened to federal employees explain last week why the government wants to produce major nuclear weapons components at the Savannah River Site just down the road from this city on the Georgia border.

The U.S. Department of Energy is seeking to make 50 plutonium pits a year at SRS to put in nuclear weapons because it says existing plutonium supplies are getting stale.

But plenty of people disagree on whether that's a good idea - and the growing dispute came through at a forum Thursday night in Aiken County.

Opponents of the pit production facility said it's a multi-billion-dollar boondoggle that could pollute the South Carolina environment and help escalate a new nuclear arms race at a time of world instability.

SRS boosters said they're not worried. They trust the government. And they said the area needs the 1,000 jobs the plant would produce, as well as the role they said SRS could play in keeping the world safe.

Those backing the plant included retired SRS workers and representatives of the Aiken County legislative delegation, local chambers of commerce and state business alliances.

"This is critical for our nation," said John Wall, a representative of the S.C. Manufacturers' Alliance, one of the state's most powerful industrial groups. He said the project would have a "significant state and regional impact" on the economy without hurting the environment.

"It will create new investment and new jobs for this area and this region," he said.

Others said SRS had long shown that it could safely handle nuclear materials. The 310-square-mile site, developed in the early 1950s, once made components for nuclear weapons but never fabricated plutonium pits, one of the most significant parts of an atomic warhead. Those were mostly developed at the now closed Rocky Flats facility in Colorado.

Today, SRS is largely in a cleanup mode and looking for new missions. It still employs more than 10,000 workers.

Former SRS worker Moses Todd, who said he backs the pit plant, said fears of nuclear contamination are overblown. He never got sick from working at the site and isn't concerned that a new pit plant will hurt the environment or the people who work there.

Thursday's hearing drew plenty of pit plant opponents. Environmentalists from South Carolina and Georgia showed up to explain why they think the pit plant is a terrible idea.

The plant would be built on the site of the failed mixed oxide fuel facility, a project that cost the government \$5 billion before the energy department pulled the plug. Some, including Savannah River Site Watch director Tom Clements, said the pit plant is part of a government effort to cover up the mistakes that doomed the mixed oxide fuel plant.

Preliminary estimates show that converting the plant from a fuel facility to a pit factory could cost about \$5 billion, the same amount the government spent on mixed oxide fuel, critics said.

"I'm not looking forward to this idea of throwing more money down the pit, no pun intended," said Sierra Club member Christopher Hall. "I urge folks to reconsider this very rushed, very ill-thought-out project."

Others said nuclear materials, such as plutonium, are dangerous to workers, despite what Todd said. Plutonium can cause cancer.

Laura Dexter Lance said it's hard to trust that the DOE will protect workers at a new pit production plant. Her father worked at SRS for years, but developed a disease she thinks resulted from his employment. He is now deceased.

When boosters talk about safety at SRS, they are not talking about "the workers of my father's era," she said, comparing SRS workers to "lab rats." She said boosters of the pit plant and SRS are misinformed because they don't know much about the hazards of working around nuclear materials.

Multitudes of former federal nuclear weapons site workers are being compensated by the government after federal authorities admitted that working at places like SRS made employees sick.

The U.S. Department of Energy will use comments from the meeting to help decide what kind of issues to examine in conducting environmental studies on the proposed pit production facility. The government is taking public comments on the environmental study through July 25.

<https://www.theitem.com/stories/department-of-energy-seeks-to-produce-plutonium-pits-in-sc,329898>

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## US COUNTER-WMD

C4ISRNET (Vienna, Va.)

### **White House Fights for More Funding for Missile Warning Satellite System**

By Nathan Strout

July 10, 2019

The Trump administration is fighting a House defense committee for hundreds of millions of additional dollars for a space-based early warning missile system, claiming in a July 9 statement that without the funding the satellite program will be delayed by years and actually cost more in the long run.

The Next Generation Overhead Persistent Infrared system will provide advanced warnings of ballistic missile attacks on the United States, its deployed forces and its allies. The Air Force says OPIR satellites will provide greater missile warning capabilities and be more survivable than the current early warning missile system, the Space Based Infrared System. The Air Force has contracted with Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin to build the satellites.

The Pentagon requested \$1.4 billion for OPIR for fiscal year 2020—\$459 million more than what the Department of Defense anticipated in their budget request for fiscal 2019. On June 12, the House Armed Services Committee voted to authorize \$1 billion for the program in fiscal 2020, about \$376.4 million less than the Pentagon had asked for.

“The Committee appreciates the importance of the OPIR mission to national security, and the urgent need to field a more resilient capability against growing space threats,” reads a committee report on the bill. “However, the Committee is concerned with the rapid budget growth and the Air Force strategy of relying on significant reprogramming requests to keep the program on schedule.”

Now the administration is pushing back. In a statement released July 9, the White House said it “strongly objects to the Committee’s reduction of \$376.4 million for the Next-Gen OPIR program as it would delay delivery by three years and increase overall program costs by over \$475 million.”

The Senate version of the National Defense Authorization Act, which passed June 27, includes the full funding requested by the Pentagon for OPIR. Assuming that the House version of the bill passes as is, the difference between the two bills on OPIR funding will have to be addressed in conference negotiations.

<https://www.c4isrnet.com/battlefield-tech/space/2019/07/10/white-house-fights-for-more-funding-for-missile-warning-satellite-system/>

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Homeland Preparedness News (Washington, D.C.)

## **Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense to Host First Public Meeting in New York City**

By Chris Galford

July 10, 2019

With a focus on biological threats to the United States and a new, public-private effort to counter them, the Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense will host its first public meeting in New York City this week.

Their main topic of discussion will be ‘A Manhattan Project for Biodefense’ — a public-private research and development effort specifically focused on biological dangers, whether nationally-sponsored or terrorist-spread. For the panel, representatives from various organizations will be gathered together to discuss biological threats, biodefense research, necessary resources, and the business risks involved.

“We are at a decided disadvantage when it comes to defending against a biological threat. No matter what the source, the nation, and the world are at catastrophic biological risk from terrorist attacks and infectious diseases. We have a responsibility to act now to prevent the worst from happening in the future,” Joe Lieberman, former U.S. Senator and Panel Co-Chair, said.

While the panel and organization are focused on very real-world events, the event will also feature Max Brooks, author of the best-selling “World War Z,” which examined viral spread and its aftermath through the fictional lens of a zombie plague. Brooks has also recently partnered with the Study Panel to create a new graphic novel called, “GERM WARFARE: A Very Graphic History,” which showcases biological warfare events the world has already suffered, their possibilities in the future and the continued need for public health security.

<https://homelandprepnews.com/stories/34723-blue-ribbon-study-panel-on-biodefense-to-host-first-public-meeting-in-new-york-city/>

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Homeland Preparedness News (Washington, D.C.)

## **NTI Effort Addresses High Consequence Biological Risks**

By Douglas Clark

July 8, 2019

Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) personnel recently joined a series of partners in addressing the increasing risks of a catastrophic biological event.

Citing such factors as rapid technological advances, an increasingly interconnected world with health security challenges, ongoing global insecurity and disorder and a breakdown in global security and scientific norms, the NTI helped spearhead dialogue focused on preparing for high consequence and globally catastrophic biological events of the future.

The sessions yielded observations and recommendations for a variety of topics. Among those discussed, participants found that global financing for pandemic preparedness and response is severely lacking; health and security sector leaders should advocate for the United Nations Secretary General to create a permanent position capable of coordinating preparedness and response activities; and efforts should ensure emergency use and scale-up of pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical interventions are possible during high-consequence biological events.



Additionally, health and security sectors should be urged to work together to understand the evolving risk landscape relating to emerging infectious diseases, new biotechnological progress, and potential bioterrorism threats.

The NTI is advocating security and health leaders demonstrate commitment via methods highlighting the lack of funding and resources dedicated to investigation and attribution of an alleged use of biological weapons while also initiating panel discussions and/or side events at the Global Health Security Agenda ministerial meetings focused on raising awareness about the risks posed by advances in biotechnology.

<https://homelandprepnews.com/stories/34689-nti-effort-addresses-high-consequence-biological-risks/>

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## US ARMS CONTROL

VOA (Washington, D.C.)

### **Trump: US Will 'Substantially' Increase Iran Sanctions**

By Ken Bredemeier

July 10, 2019

WASHINGTON - Story updated July 10, 2019, 3:05 p.m.

President Donald Trump said Wednesday he would soon "substantially" increase economic sanctions against Iran, even as the U.S. accused Tehran of "nuclear extortion" by breaching the 2015 international pact aimed at curtailing its nuclear weapons development.

Iran has acknowledged it is now enriching uranium beyond the limits of the accord Trump withdrew from last year and keeping a bigger stockpile than it was allowed.

President Donald Trump speaks at the White House in Washington, Monday, June 24, 2019. Trump's sudden decision against military strikes may have prevented open conflict with Iran, but it also showed him to be an unpredictable, if unreliable, partner...

President Donald Trump speaks at the White House in Washington, June 24, 2019.

On Twitter, Trump contended that "Iran has long been secretly 'enriching,' in total violation" of what he called "the terrible 150 Billion Dollar deal made by (former U.S. Secretary of State) John Kerry and the Obama Administration" in agreeing to return money the Iranian government was owed at the same time the international nuclear deal was signed four years ago.

"Remember, that deal was to expire in a short number of years. Sanctions will soon be increased, substantially!" Trump declared.

Trump's remarks came as the U.S. told an emergency International Atomic Energy Agency meeting in Vienna, "There is no credible reason for Iran to expand its nuclear program, and there is no way to read this as anything other than a crude and transparent attempt to extort payments from the international community."

Washington called on Iran "to reverse its recent nuclear steps and cease any plans for further advancements in the future."

But the U.S. said it remains open to new negotiations with Tehran without preconditions, and held out "the possibility of a full normalization of relations."

Iran is already reeling from sanctions Trump reimposed on the Islamic Republic when he pulled the U.S. out of the nuclear accord. Tehran has been appealing to the remaining signatories to the deal — Britain, France, Germany, the European Union, Russia and China — to help it overcome the crippling effect of the U.S. move to curb Iran's international financial transactions and global oil trade.

Jackie Wolcott, the U.S. ambassador to international organizations, told the United Nations atomic watchdog agency that Iran's "misbehavior" should "not be rewarded."

Tehran appears to have lost patience with the European countries in seeking relief from the U.S. sanctions.

"Negotiations are never possible under pressure," Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said as he met with French diplomatic adviser Emmanuel Bonne in Tehran.

The five remaining signatories to the deal have called on Iran to adhere to the pact's requirements. Zarif said it was up to the European allies of the U.S. to resolve issues surrounding Trump's withdrawal from the pact.

<https://www.voanews.com/middle-east/trump-us-will-substantially-increase-iran-sanctions>

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NC State (Raleigh, N.C.)

## **Using Building Materials to Monitor for High Enriched Uranium**

By Matt Shipman

July 9, 2019

A new paper details how small samples of ubiquitous building materials, such as tile or brick, can be used to test whether a facility has ever stored high enriched uranium (HEU), which can be used to create nuclear weapons. The technique could serve as a valuable forensic tool for national or international efforts related to nuclear nonproliferation and security.

"We can now use the housing structure itself as part of any nonproliferation monitoring efforts," says Robert Hayes, an associate professor of nuclear engineering at North Carolina State University and author of the paper. "This work details the theory to test building material samples to differentiate between the forms of uranium used in nuclear power and the HEU that's used to develop nuclear weapons."

The technique builds on previous work done by Hayes and his research team.

The method requires testing a relatively small core sample of the relevant building material, about the size of your pinkie finger. The testing is done using hardware somewhat similar to that used to assess radiation exposure of dosimeter badges worn by workers in the nuclear power industry. In a sense, a small piece of any wall effectively becomes a dosimeter badge.

"Our technique allows us to determine how much radiation a material has been exposed to, in addition to the very types of radiation a material has been exposed to," Hayes says. "Because different radionuclides have different radiation fields, these measurements allow us to determine which nuclear materials were stored near whatever building material we're sampling."

While this technique is new, there is already interest in it among the agencies responsible for nuclear monitoring – and Hayes is working to improve the technique further.

“We’re optimistic that this will be a valuable tool in the nonproliferation monitoring toolbox, but we need to address some existing questions,” Hayes says.

“For example, the radiation signature will vary depending on where the nuclear material was stored in relation to whatever sample we’re testing. If our sample was from brick that was right under a uranium storage container, the signature will be different than if the container was located 20 feet away, horizontally. Theoretically, these properties of the signature would be consistent over any gridded array of the same building material. Sampling such an array would then allow us to reconstruct not only what material was stored at a site, but precisely where it was stored. That’s something we’re working on now.”

The paper, “Potential Retrospective Uranium Enrichment Determination Using Solid State Dosimetry Techniques on Ubiquitous Building Materials,” is published in the Journal of Nuclear Materials Management.

The research was done with support from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, under grant NRC-HQ-84-14-G-0059; and from the Consortium for Nonproliferation Enabling Capabilities under grant DE-NA0002576, which is based at NC State and sponsored by the National Nuclear Security Administration.

<https://news.ncsu.edu/2019/07/using-building-materials-to-monitor-for-high-enriched-uranium/>

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## COMMENTARY

Defense One (Washington, D.C.)

### **Russia, China Offer Challenges in the Arctic**

By Adm. James Foggo III

July 10, 2019

As the United States celebrated Independence Day last week, the ballistic missile submarine USS Alaska arrived for a port visit to Faslane, Scotland — home to a Royal Navy submarine base strategically situated near a gateway to the Arctic Ocean. This rare visit by an SSBN upholds our nation’s special relationship with the United Kingdom and our ironclad commitment to NATO and our partners in the North Atlantic. It particularly underscores our Navy’s presence in the Arctic, where warming seas are creating new geostrategic challenges.

We must pay particular attention to the improved capability of Russia to project power into the region, especially in light of Moscow’s aggressive and destabilizing actions in the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean. Russian forces have reoccupied seven former Soviet bases in the Arctic Circle and built two new ones: the Trefoil base in Franz Josef Land and the Northern Clover base on Kotelny Island. Last October, Russia jammed the GPS signals of NATO warships participating in Exercise Trident Juncture off Norway the alliance’s largest since the Cold War.

More recently, Russia has made alarming statements that appear to question the freedom of the seas in the Arctic. In March, the Russian government enacted a policy to require foreign governments to provide 45 days of advance notice for transits of sovereign immunity vessels along the Northern Sea Route, which connects the Kola Peninsula and the Bering Strait. The new law also

requires foreign warships to embark a Russian pilot as well as provide details about the vessel, a clear violation of sovereign immunity. Russian officials have also said they may bar innocent passage through the territorial sea for any reason, and they have threatened to sink any craft that defies Russian mandates while sailing the NSR.

Restrictions such as these are inconsistent with international law. The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Article 45, clearly states that there should be no suspension of innocent passage through straits used for international navigation. Moreover, warships have immunity from state jurisdictions other than their own, though they must comply with all laws and rules of a state's territorial sea — that is, waters within 12 nautical miles of its coast.

If Russia attempts to enforce beyond what the Law of the Sea allows, it could set a dangerous precedent for the entire international community: powerful coastal states may amend the law because they want to and because their weapons allow them to. This would be disastrous for global trade and national sovereignty.

China, too, is seeking greater influence in the Arctic. Though it sits more than 900 miles south of the Arctic Circle, the country has long been interested in the region's resources; in 1925, the Republic of China ratified the Svalbard (Spitsbergen) Treaty. But Beijing signaled a new chapter in its northward push with last year's release of its new Arctic Policy. Identifying itself as a "Near-Arctic State," China is eyeing investment opportunities that range from extracting natural resources to the commercial maritime traffic potential of the "Polar Silk Road." China has also taken steps to strengthen its Arctic ties with Russia. At April's International Arctic Forum in St. Petersburg, representatives agreed to launch a Chinese-Russian Arctic Research Center, notwithstanding Chinese pursuit of numerous other research agreements with universities and research centers of Arctic states.

However, Russia and China remain wary partners, with differing stances on proposed Arctic governance and development. Unlike Russia, for example, Chinese officials have called for the Arctic to be treated as global commons and have advocated for unhindered passage of maritime traffic. Yet this stance is in stark contrast with their behavior in the South China Sea and elsewhere.

As an Arctic nation, the United States welcomes the opportunity to work collaboratively to maintain security and stability in the region, and to provide the possibility of prosperity for all nations. We work with our Arctic allies and partners in numerous forums to address shared regional concerns, including fisheries management, search and rescue, shipping safety, and scientific research. Of particular note is the Arctic Council, established in 1996. In early May, the Council held its Ministerial meeting in Rovaniemi, where Iceland accepted the rotating chairmanship from Finland. But like the ice of the High North, we're starting to see some fissures in Arctic diplomacy. Challenges are posed by the increased involvement of non-Arctic states: China, France, Germany, Japan, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and others. This involvement has thus far been in accordance with customary international law, but it is vital to ensure this continues.

The Council is well-equipped to confront most issues, but its mandate explicitly excludes military security. That's where the U.S. Navy comes in — as an extension of diplomacy and a guarantor of peace and safety. The Navy sent the first submarine, USS Nautilus, to the North Pole in 1957 and has maintained a presence in the region ever since, operating in the air, surface, and undersea domains in maneuvers and exercises like the biannual Ice Exercise (ICEX) and Cold Response. The U.S. 6th Fleet routinely operates in the High North with our allies and partners to ensure the region remains stable and free of conflict. By conducting periodic military training and exercises, we gain much by working with our Nordic partners, who have a wealth of experience in northern-latitude operations and whose forces are highly skilled, technologically advanced, and interoperable with NATO forces.

It is critical for the Navy to remain actively engaged in the Arctic as it becomes more accessible, to protect the American people, our sovereign territory and rights, and the natural resources and interests of the United States and our allies and partners. The Navy will also continue to abide by and uphold customary international law. The Arctic presents a new challenge for freedom of the seas – but one we are prepared to meet. USS Alaska’s visit to the Royal Navy’s base in Clyde is merely the latest of many examples.

Adm. James G. Foggo III is Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa and Commander, NATO Allied Joint Force Command Naples.

<https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2019/07/russia-china-offer-challenges-arctic/158303/>

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38 North (Washington, D.C.)

## **A US Preventative Strike against North Korea: Disturbing Results Reflect Disturbing Realities**

By Catherine Killough

July 10, 2019

Members of Congress and the White House rely on surveys to gauge public sentiment on a wide range of policy options. So, if you only read the headlines covering the latest polling by the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists and YouGov, you may have come away with one disturbing insight: over a third of respondents in a representative sample of 3,000 would “approve” a US preventative strike against North Korea—after the president were to order one—across scenarios that vary by success rate, risk, retaliation and estimated fatalities.

The far more reassuring takeaway, of course, and one that our leaders should remember, is that the majority of respondents would first and foremost “prefer” that the US not launch a preventative war. When presented with a scenario that showed a preventative strike would only have a 50 percent expected chance of success, preference for such action fell to 23 percent. Unfortunately, these distinctions are obscured by such loaded conclusions as “a third of Americans think it would be a great idea to nuke Pyongyang.” Sensational headlines like “Americans are terrifyingly supportive of nuking civilians in North Korea,” misrepresent not only this survey’s findings, but also the wide differences across existing polling on the use of military action against the DPRK.

As the survey authors acknowledge, there are unavoidable limitations to polling, where the subtlest variations in language and context can produce vastly different responses. In the case of North Korea, this is especially true as respondents are highly susceptible to the timing of surveys in a constantly breaking news environment. As one South Korean public opinion survey by the Asan Institute showed, the likability of Kim Jong Un jumped to a record high 4.06 points in June 2018—following the Singapore Summit—when it had been hovering above 1 point since 2013. How might the Bulletin/YouGov results have changed if respondents were polled after the amicable June 30 meeting between President Trump and Kim Jong Un? Or at the height of the incendiary threats that Trump and Kim were trading in 2017?

It is a pretty safe assumption that if US-DPRK negotiations collapse and lead to a period of increased tensions and resumed North Korean testing of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, the media will be full of headlines about how the two countries are on a path toward war. Thus, as key decision makers consider the options for living with a nuclear North Korea, it is of critical importance that surveys of American attitudes on questions of war and peace with the DPRK use techniques that will most accurately convey public opinion. It is equally important to recognize

that, as noted sociologist Herbert Gans has observed, “polls are answers to questions rather than opinions.” Respondents are forced to give the narrowest of answers—for example, between approval and disapproval or preference and non-preference. When questions about North Korea are framed in such binary terms, the results tend to privilege the immediacy of military action and obscure the possibilities of diplomacy. In this context, what the Bulletin/YouGov poll reveals about present realities warrants greater scrutiny.

For starters, the survey gives some indication of how people typically assess threat. For most everyday Americans, threat perceptions are largely shaped by media consumption—and the media bears certain responsibility for misrepresenting the North Korean threat. In one recent example of how this occurs through pure misinformation, NBC’s Andrea Mitchell tweet-reported, “Kim Jong Un has not met the 1st commitment of the Singapore summit a year ago: disclosing inventory of his weapons so there could be a baseline for denuclearization talks,” which was later picked up by presidential candidate Julián Castro. The error is egregious not simply because Kim made no such commitment in Singapore, but because it creates an unrealistic expectation for a major concession that would be “tantamount to surrender,” according to noted nuclear weapons expert Dr. Siegfried Hecker.

Appropriately, the survey is designed around a fictional news article that discloses North Korea has developed a nuclear-capable missile that can reach the entire United States. The scenario parallels real events: In November 2017, the DPRK successfully tested its Hwasong-15 intercontinental ballistic missile, estimated to have a range of more than 8,100 miles on a standard trajectory. Whether it is capable of delivering a nuclear warhead remains uncertain. But at the time, the sense of urgency to deal with what hardliners were interpreting as an imminent threat had reached a new high, particularly as the former US National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster had suggested that a nuclear-capable ICBM would constitute a red line for President Trump and was talking publicly about giving the DPRK a “bloody nose.” Moreover, McMaster and other hawks, in their public calls for such a strike, downplayed the risks of a significant North Korean escalation that would cause massive casualties—a view that many experts reject.

In the survey, the president is reviewing military strike options to deny North Korea that technical capability. (Different sub-groups were presented with either a conventional or nuclear strike option.) Partially mirroring reality, the crisis is premised on a threat assessment that conflates North Korean capability and intent. It presents the illusion of a false choice between attacking first or eventually being attacked. Ignoring North Korea’s possible motives for an attack, which would likely result in the destruction of the DPRK and the end of the Kim regime, the survey article concludes, “The Joint Chiefs did not recommend a course of action, but cautioned that military action against North Korea would likely be less effective in the future as the North continues to increase its nuclear arsenal and modernize its defenses.”

Without information to convey the wide range of existing diplomatic tools or US deterrence capabilities, it is understandable how some respondents may have based their decisions on the assumption that conflict is inevitable. Further, the survey does not consider how the North Korean leader would assess the risks and rewards of a nuclear attack on the United States. As one respondent in favor of a preventive strike explained, “Choice is, with strike 10 percent chance of retaliation, without strike, 100 percent chance of future attack.” But for North Korea, the calculation looks very different: without using nuclear weapons, there is close to a 100 percent chance of survival; with a nuclear attack on the US or its allies, the chance of survival is close to zero.

Respondent attitudes aside, the survey’s basic premise should serve as a stark reminder that the US president could initiate a war with little restraint. That respondents were asked “whether or not they ‘preferred’ to launch the strike and then whether, regardless of their personal preference, they

would ‘approve’ of the US strike if the president ordered it,” exposes this disturbing political reality. It also shows, as the poll results indicate, that support for a strike was much higher among supporters of the president, suggesting that partisanship rather than informed judgments about US national interests skewed the results toward more militaristic views.

But war with North Korea is entirely avoidable—even if it masters the technology to launch a nuclear-capable ICBM anywhere in the United States. The DPRK’s fulfillment of a technological milestone does not justify the cost and risk of full-scale war that a limited US military strike could trigger.

Editor’s note: The author is a fellow at the Ploughshares Fund, which provides financial support to 38 North.

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### **ICBM Replacement Is Necessary and Affordable**

By Admiral James A. “Sandy” Winnefeld, Jr., USN (Retired)

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As the House of Representatives debates the National Defense Authorization Act, few issues will be more important to our nation’s security than providing long-overdue, stable funding to modernize our nuclear deterrent.

The end of the Cold War led us to reduce our focus on this deterrent, which includes a “triad” of intercontinental ballistic missiles, ballistic missile submarines and nuclear-capable bombers. Because we delayed modernizing each of these three vital legs of deterrence, they are all coming due at the same time.

The Ground Based Strategic Deterrent, or GBSD, is programmed to replace the existing Minuteman III program, which constitutes the intercontinental ballistic missile, or ICBM, leg of the triad. The ICBM force is a critical component of the triad. Its ability to respond before an in-progress attack arrives on our soil is a powerful deterrent to any adversary’s attempt to conduct a preemptive strike.

With this deterrent in place, it’s unlikely that rogue powers such as North Korea or larger powers such as China and Russia would initiate a surprise attack. Moreover, each leg of the triad, including ICBMs, serves as a valuable hedge against a failure in the other two legs.

America’s national defense should not be a partisan issue. The Obama administration concluded in its 2010 review of our nuclear posture that the triad should be maintained and modernized, and subsequently kicked off modernization efforts.

Similarly, the Trump administration warned in its 2018 Nuclear Posture Review against eliminating any leg of the triad, cautioning that doing so would “greatly ease adversary attack planning and allow an adversary to concentrate resources and attention on defeating the remaining two legs.”

Yet despite bipartisan support for the triad, calls for deep cuts to our nuclear deterrent, and to the ground-based component in particular, persist. Curiously, this is occurring at a time when Russia is working to modernize its nuclear forces and China is moving to develop its own triad.

We should not yield to the temptation to radically change nuclear deterrence theory in order to find savings within a recapitalization program that, according to the Department of Defense, will demand only 3.7 percent of the entire defense budget at its peak levels in 2029.

Moreover, abandoning the ground-based leg of our triad would cede valuable leverage to Russia at just the time when our current arms control treaty is coming into the window for extension or renegotiation. Counting on the goodwill of Russia to match any preemptive reductions would be foolhardy in the extreme. Arms control advocates (and I count myself as one of them) should be in favor of maintaining a strong negotiating position, which commitment to a GBSD program would provide.

We are at a critical time for the GBSD program as the Air Force is preparing to release a request for proposals to develop and build the nation's next ICBM. In congressional testimony this year, Undersecretary of Defense Ellen Lord correctly stated that "Delay is no longer an option." We need to empower the Air Force to move ahead with this program, which is affordable, urgently needed and foundational to national security.

As frightening as they are, nuclear weapons have kept open conflict between major powers at bay for more than 70 years. As great power competition with Russia and China returns in new and concerning forms, this relatively small investment in protecting our nation's most vital interest – namely, its survival – seems like a bargain.

Admiral Winnefeld retired after serving as the ninth vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

<https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/451982-icbm-replacement-is-necessary-and-affordable>

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## ABOUT THE USAF CSDS

The USAF Counterproliferation Center (CPC) was established in 1998 at the direction of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. Located at Maxwell AFB, this Center capitalizes on the resident expertise of Air University — while extending its reach far beyond — and influences a wide audience of leaders and policy makers. A memorandum of agreement between the Air Staff's Director for Nuclear and Counterproliferation (then AF/XON) and Air War College commandant established the initial personnel and responsibilities of the Center. This included integrating counterproliferation awareness into the curriculum and ongoing research at the Air University; establishing an information repository to promote research on counterproliferation and nonproliferation issues; and directing research on the various topics associated with counterproliferation and nonproliferation.

In 2008, the Secretary of Defense's Task Force on Nuclear Weapons Management recommended "Air Force personnel connected to the nuclear mission be required to take a professional military education (PME) course on national, defense, and Air Force concepts for deterrence and defense." This led to the addition of three teaching positions to the CPC in 2011 to enhance nuclear PME efforts. At the same time, the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center, in coordination with the AF/A10 and Air Force Global Strike Command, established a series of courses at Kirtland AFB to provide professional continuing education (PCE) through the careers of those Air Force personnel working in or supporting the nuclear enterprise. This mission was transferred to the CPC in 2012, broadening its mandate to providing education and research on not just countering WMD but also nuclear operations issues. In April 2016, the nuclear PCE courses were transferred from the Air War College to the U.S. Air Force Institute for Technology.

In February 2014, the Center's name was changed to the Center for Unconventional Weapons Studies (CUWS) to reflect its broad coverage of unconventional weapons issues, both offensive and defensive, across the six joint operating concepts (deterrence operations, cooperative security, major combat operations, irregular warfare, stability operations, and homeland security). The term "unconventional weapons," currently defined as nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, also includes the improvised use of chemical, biological, and radiological hazards. In May 2018, the name changed again to the Center for Strategic Deterrence Studies (CSDS) in recognition of senior Air Force interest in focusing on this vital national security topic.

The Center's military insignia displays the symbols of nuclear, biological, and chemical hazards. The arrows above the hazards represent the four aspects of counterproliferation — counterforce, active defense, passive defense, and consequence management. The Latin inscription "Armis Bella Venenis Geri" stands for "weapons of war involving poisons."

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