



# Here's America's Plan for Nuking its Enemies, Including North Korea

When America says "all the options are on the table" when responding to the reclusive Communist country, Operations Plan 8010 is the literal nuclear one.

BY JOSEPH TREVITHICK APRIL 7, 2017

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The United States had terse and cryptic words for North Korea's reclusive communist regime after it tested yet another ballistic missile on April 4, 2017. [Unnamed White House officials](#) said the "clock has now run out" for authorities in Pyongyang and reiterated a previous threat that "all options are on the table."

"The United States has spoken enough about North Korea," Secretary of State Rex Tillerson wrote in an unusual [three sentence statement](#).

The curt remarks were the latest in a string of increasingly tough rhetoric between American and North Korean officials [beginning in March 2017](#), including a Pyongyang spokesman's threat of "[a preemptive nuclear attack](#)" if the United States resorted to unilateral military action. But how might the United States actually respond to these provocations and potential doomsday scenarios? Well, we've found some answers inside the U.S. Strategic Command's (STRATCOM) Operations Plan (OPLAN) 8010. While it doesn't explicit allow for an American preemptive strike, it *is* the literal nuclear option.

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"With the end of the Cold War the international landscape has changed," the July 2012 version of the document explains in a section called "framing the problem." "The global security landscape is marked by protracted conflict, constant change, enormous complexity, and increased uncertainty."

sovereign states, both the *peer* and *near-peer* and those *regional* adversary states with emerging WMD [weapons of mass destruction] capabilities,” the authors wrote, adding their own emphasis.

~~SECRET~~

UNITED STATES STRATEGIC COMMAND

FOIA review completed on 12 January 2017. Portions of this document no longer meet the classification standards of E.O. 13526, Section 1.4. As such, I am downgrading specific portion-marked paragraphs as "UNCLASSIFIED."

Partial classification downgrade executed by:

DANIEL L. KARBLER  
Major General, U.S. Army  
Chief of Staff  
U.S. Strategic Command



**USSTRATCOM OPLAN 8010-12  
STRATEGIC DETERRENCE AND FORCE EMPLOYMENT  
(U)**

**30 July 2012**

**Derived from: Multiple Sources  
Declassify on: 30 July 2022**

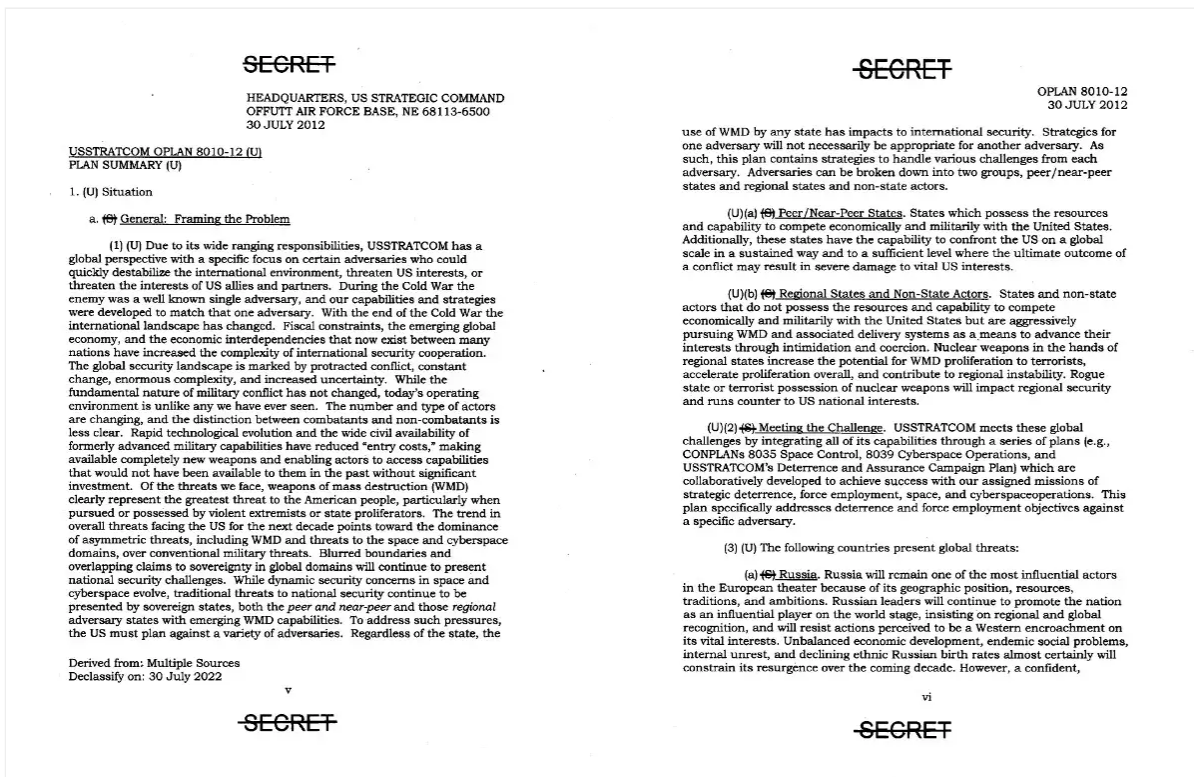
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~~SECRET~~

a previous, February 2008 edition. The 2012 version wouldn't otherwise have been up for its first declassification review until 2022.

There is a section that details "countries that present global threats," but the un-redacted portions of the document do not describe North Korea by name. Unclassified text specifically mentions Russia and China, but to does not suggest either one is an imminent danger to Americans.

"The term 'enemy' is used in the singular form throughout this document for simplicity," the OPLAN says. "However, because of the global view of this plan and the varied nature of the adversary set, multiple enemies are addressed."



Though not necessarily surprising, "normally they don't like to list any names," Hans Kristensen, head of the Federation of American Scientists' Nuclear Information Project, told *The War Zone* in an Email. "It looks like there are now (2012) five adversaries in the plan: Russia, China, North

This would make sense, given that officials in Washington see all of these as potential adversaries who either have nuclear arsenals or are seeking to obtain them. Russia and China both maintain stockpiles with hundreds of warheads, as well as intercontinental ballistic missiles that can reach the United States. The U.S. government believes Iran's nuclear program is focused on weapons development, despite repeated denials from their counterparts in Tehran. And in 2007, Israeli warplanes bombed an apparent covert nuclear reactor in Syria's Deir ez-Zor governorate.



*NORTH KOREAN STATE MEDIA*

Kim Jong-Un makes regular and well documented visits to the country's nuclear sites.

Of course, it's possible that instead of Syria and Iran, the paragraphs could have mentioned nuclear-armed India and Pakistan, who continue to experience significant tensions, linked in no small part to the continuing disagreement over the final status of the Kashmir region. The publicly released portions only refer to actors seeking WMD, too, which could encompass countries or non-state groups seeking to build up large stockpiles of chemical, biological, or radiological weaponry.

available completely new weapons and enabling actors to access capabilities that would not have been available to them in the past without significant investment," STRATCOM's plan says. "Blurred boundaries and overlapping claims to sovereignty in global domains will continue to present national security challenges."

But it seems unlikely North Korea hasn't made the list. Under the helm of its young leader Kim Jong-Un, the country routinely declares its intention to build nuclear weapons—ostensibly as a deterrent to the U.S. military and its allies in South Korea and Japan—describes itself as a nuclear state equal to America, and repeatedly threatens to use these arms in a confrontation with its sworn enemies. Since 2006, it has detonated at least five suspected nuclear devices of varying strengths. The fifth test in September 2016 involved a nuclear warhead small enough to fit on a missile, according to North Korean state-run media.

### North Korea surface-to-surface launch preparation



“We don't really know how big North Korea's nuclear arsenal is, or will be

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James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, wrote at the time for [Foreign Policy](#). “But its not a small number, and certainly not just a handful. And it’s likely to keep growing.”

On top of its nuclear warheads, North Korea has been steadily improving and expanding its [ballistic missiles](#) with an eye toward being able to threaten the United States, or its territories in the Pacific Ocean such as Guam and Hawaii. In the April 2017 instance, U.S. Pacific Command initially said it believed the country had launched an intermediate range ballistic missile (IRBM) called the [KN-15](#). Two months earlier, [Pyongyang’s forces had debuted this weapon](#), known inside the country as Pukkuksong-2, which appeared to be an advanced version of an earlier missile [intended for the North Korean navy’s submarines](#).

Later, [other reports](#) suggested the weapon fired just days ago might actually have been a medium range ballistic missile (MRBM) known as the Hwasong-7, also called the Scud-Extended Range or Scud-D. In March 2017, North Korea fired [four of those weapons](#) toward Japan.



NORTH KOREAN STATE MEDIA

MRBMs generally feature ranges between 1,000 and 3,000 kilometers. IRBM class weapons have ranges between 3,000 to 5,500 kilometers, according to the Pentagon. A missile in this second, longer range category would be able to hit American military facilities in Guam from anywhere in North Korea.

If officials in Pyongyang resort to WMD attacks for any reason, OPLAN 8010 swings from “deter” to “defeat,” stressing in its text the need for American political will to employ “strategic forces if deterrence fails.” As part of a standing mission dubbed Operation Global Citadel, the Pentagon maintains a so-called “Nuclear Triad” of nuclear-armed heavy bombers, land- and sea-based ballistic missiles. [Smaller fighter jets](#) can carry the B61 thermonuclear gravity bomb, if necessary.

The United States is deeply invested in a multi-year effort to both upgrade its nuclear weapons and delivery platforms. At separate events in 2016, the Air Force announced it would call its future stealth bomber [the B-21 Raider](#). Northrop Grumman is planning to build dozens of the flying-wing style stealth aircraft, hopefully delivering the first examples sometime in



U.S. Navy is working toward beginning construction of its new *Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines*. The service expects to buy the first boat, the first-in-class USS *Columbia*, in 2021. A new nuclear bomb and cruise missile are also in the works.

Whatever weapons STRATCOM employs, the goal is clear: "attack the appropriate enemy 'system' to eliminate the enemy's capability to fight and influence key decision makes to cease hostilities."



USAF

| B-52, B-1, and B-2 bombers sit next to each other at Andersen Air Force Base on Guam.

Unsurprisingly, specific details about the actual missions for any of these weapons, current or planned, are still classified. Reliable deterrence is a balancing act between giving potential opponents just enough information to be scared, but not enough to develop safeguards that would make the strikes ineffective.

That means there are still important elements that are free to share. The most important is that the United States does not have a policy of “no first use” when it comes to thermonuclear war. Most of the specific thresholds

~~SECRET~~

OPLAN 8010-12  
30 JULY 2012

(6) ~~(S)~~ The US will [REDACTED] will not be possible.

(7) ~~(S)~~ The US will [REDACTED]

(8) ~~(S)~~ The US will [REDACTED]

(9) (U) **Adversary-Specific Assumptions.** Detailed adversary-specific assumptions [REDACTED]

f. (U) **Legal Considerations.** In accordance with reference (i), legal review is required in the development of strike options and prior to option execution to ensure compliance with the US Constitution, applicable US statutes, international treaty/agreement obligations to which the US is a party, the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC), customary international law, rules of engagement (ROE), and national policies.

(1) ~~(S)~~ ROE will be in accordance with reference (j), [REDACTED] In accordance with (LAW) reference (j), unit commanders always retain the inherent right and obligation to exercise unit self-defense in response to a hostile act or demonstrated hostile intent. However, the obligation to intervene, and the ability of strategic forces to act, may be restrained by specific guidance concerning the unit's mission. If any conflict between this general policy and specific guidance pertaining to performance of this plan is perceived, mission executors should request supplemental guidance from CDRUSSTRATCOM or the appropriate combatant commander. See Appendix 8 (Rules of Engagement (ROE)) to Annex C (Operations) for further details.

(2) (U) The use of any weapon, kinetic or non-kinetic, must comply with the key principles of LOAC: military necessity, avoidance of unnecessary suffering, proportionality, and discrimination or distinction. All of these principles will be taken into account when developing and executing courses of action (COAs). Planners and operators will consult their servicing staff judge advocate to ensure adherence to these principles.

(3) (U) See Appendix 4 (Legal) to Annex E (Personnel) for further details.

xv

~~SECRET~~

STRATCOM

“There is nothing in this [OPLAN] that indicates a constraint on potential nuclear use, except that strikes have to comply with the Law of Armed

that the United States does not target civilians.”

But that leaves open a lot of room for interpretation. While the United States does not deliberately target civilians, it still kills them accidentally in conventional strikes, as have been reported in [Iraq](#), Syria, and [Yemen](#). The presence of innocent bystanders is not necessarily enough to abort a strike.

“The implication is nuclear use only in extreme conditions,” Dr. William Burr, who runs the nuclear history documentation project at the National Security Archive at The George Washington University, told *The War Zone* in an email. “I would say that in such a circumstance, the decision would be left to the president and his advisers. One size would not fit all so to speak.”

Given the immense power of America’s nuclear weapons, one might hope that the danger of causing massive collateral damage would be major factor, but it’s not a given. That’s where the OPLAN’s specific mention of “proportionality” comes into play.

"The use of any weapon, kinetic or non-kinetic, must comply with the key principles of [the Law of Armed Conflict]: military necessity, avoidance of unnecessary suffering, proportionality, and discrimination or distinction," the document explains. "All of these principles will be taken into account when developing and executing courses of action."



USN

The ballistic missile submarine *USS Maryland* fires an unarmed Trident II D5 during a training exercise.

Taken together, these factors “all mean—to the extent they are followed and not watered down by operational considerations—that there is at least an intent to try to limit collateral damage and civilian suffering that presumably is reflected in the strike plans,” Kristensen says. “The requirement in OPLAN 8010-12 for “proportionality” raises the issue of how a nuclear response to a conventional attack could ever be proportional?”

However, in 2010 and again in 2013, U.S. government reviews on how and when to employ nuclear weapons concluded that they were not “sole-purpose,” meaning the President should only be able to authorize their use during an all-out nuclear conflict. From the parts of OPLAN 8010 that are available to us, the United States has and continues to leave open the possibility of using these weapons in response to a conventional or non-nuclear WMD attack on Americans or allies covered by mutual defense treaties, such as South Korea and Japan. If North Korea were to launch a

"The use of WMD by any state has impacts to international security," a declassified portion notes. "Strategies for one adversary will not necessarily be appropriate for another adversary."

In addition, it is possible that STRATCOM's "proportional" strikes could involve conventional rather than nuclear weapons. Though the headquarters has operational control over America's nuclear arsenal, its aircraft in particular could carry conventional payloads. Since 2014, first B-1 and then [B-52 strategic bombers](#) demonstrated this dual ability as they pounded Islamic State terrorists in Iraq and Syria. In January 2017, B-2 stealth bombers flew all the way from the United States to drop smart bombs with high-explosive warheads on one of the group's camps [in Libya](#).

(b)(1) Sec. 1.4(a) USSC [redacted] and is TOP SECRET.  
(b)(1) Sec. 1.4(a) USSC [redacted] is TS/.

9. (U) (b)(1) Sec. 1.4(a) USSC [redacted]

10. (U) The fact that OPLAN 8010 consists of various nuclear attack options is UNCLASSIFIED. The number of nuclear attack options is SECRET. The details of nuclear attack options are TOP SECRET.

11. (S) The term (b)(1) Sec. 1.4(a) USSC [redacted] is FOUO, by itself. That OPLAN 8010 consists of (b)(1) Sec. 1.4(a) USSC [redacted] is SECRET. Specific nuclear option objectives are TOP SECRET.

12. (U) The term "Directed Planning Option" (DPO) is FOUO, by itself. The total number of DPOs is SECRET. The definition/purpose is TOP SECRET.

13. (S) Details associated with (b)(1) Sec. 1.4(a) USSC [redacted] are classified TOP SECRET.

14. (U) Specific nuclear attack option structure, methodology and targets are classified TOP SECRET.

15. (U) The purpose of the Secure Reserve Force (SRF) is SECRET. The exact composition of the SRF which identifies specific numbers is TOP SECRET.

16. (U) Specific nuclear targeting techniques are classified TOP SECRET.

17. (S) That the cessation of an OPLAN 8010 (b)(1) Sec. 1.4(a) USSC [redacted] (b)(1) Sec. 1.4(a) USSC [redacted] is SECRET. Specific termination instructions are classified TOP SECRET.

18. (U) Disseminate only to those agencies whose official reconnaissance force duties specifically require knowledge.

19. (U/FOUO) Locations may be listed as destination on unclassified DD175/1801 as long as no reference is made to the (b)(1) Sec. 1.4(a) USSC [redacted] objectives.

20. (U) TOP SECRET with description.

In this vein, it's important to note that the official title of the 2008 edition of the OPLAN was "Global Deterrence and Strike." STRATCOM changed this to "Strategic Deterrence and Force Employment" four years later. This change in phrasing could have something to do with plans for the employment of conventionally-armed bombs and missiles, or not.

various attack options” can be unclassified, secret, or top secret depending on the details. “The fact that OPLAN 8010 consists of various nuclear attack options is unclassified. The number of nuclear attack options is secret. The details of nuclear attack options are top secret,” an additional note explains. This would seem to imply the plan covers nuclear options only.

During the administration of President George W. Bush, there was another plan that appeared to cover global, strategic conventional strikes, including pre-emptive operations, called [OPLAN 8022](#). A separate nuclear plan, OPLAN 8044, also existed. Pentagon efforts to create a capability called “Prompt Global Strike” created confusion about whether this involved nuclear or conventional arms, or both, and whether it would be dangerously difficult to tell the two apart. A ballistic missile carrying a high-explosive payload wouldn’t necessarily look different from one with a thermonuclear warhead at the tip.

“Eventually, the two missions merged to some extent into OPLAN 8010,” Kristensen noted. “It is a fuller strategic plan that attempts to incorporate more elements of national power to apply pressure and achieve strategic effects on specific adversaries.”



USAF

An unarmed Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile rockets away from a launch site at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California during a test.

Unfortunately, there's no guarantee North Korea will get the desired message. The pariah state has long defined itself by its opposition to intimidation and pressure and as we at [The War Zone have already reported](#), the stern American rhetoric may only validate their opinions and propaganda, pushing them further toward a rash decision.

OPLAN 8010 specifically mentions this and six other risks. Four of the others are almost completely censored. And what do you do when "adversaries misperceive messages?" The plan recommends nuclear commanders "constantly assess culturally appropriate strategic communication strategy, tightly integrated through the interagency process."

Regardless, "we've always had all options on the table," former Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter said on CBS' ["This Week"](#) earlier in April 2017. "I wouldn't take any off."



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Contact the author: [jtrevithickpr@gmail.com](mailto:jtrevithickpr@gmail.com)

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### Jayden Madison

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### Ran Gran

Greetings to every one that is reading this testimony, i am giving testimony of how i become rich and famous today, i was deeply strangled up by poverty and i had no body to help me, and also i search for help from different corners but to no avail... i see people around me getting rich but to me i was so ashamed of my self so i met a man on my way he was very rich and he was a doctor so he told me something, that if i would like to join the illuminati brotherhood, and i think over it though out the day so the next day i looked up and i keep repeating what he said to me, and i make up my mind to join the illuminati, today i am so proud of myself, because i am a great man today, well know in the world, rich, famous so if you are also interested to join the illuminati, you are free to join, if you live in America it is free to join the illuminati brotherhood temple, you have to email: [churchofdevilinitiationcenter@gmail.com](mailto:churchofdevilinitiationcenter@gmail.com) call or text +15088192672 join the illuminati today and enjoy good life with you and your generation.

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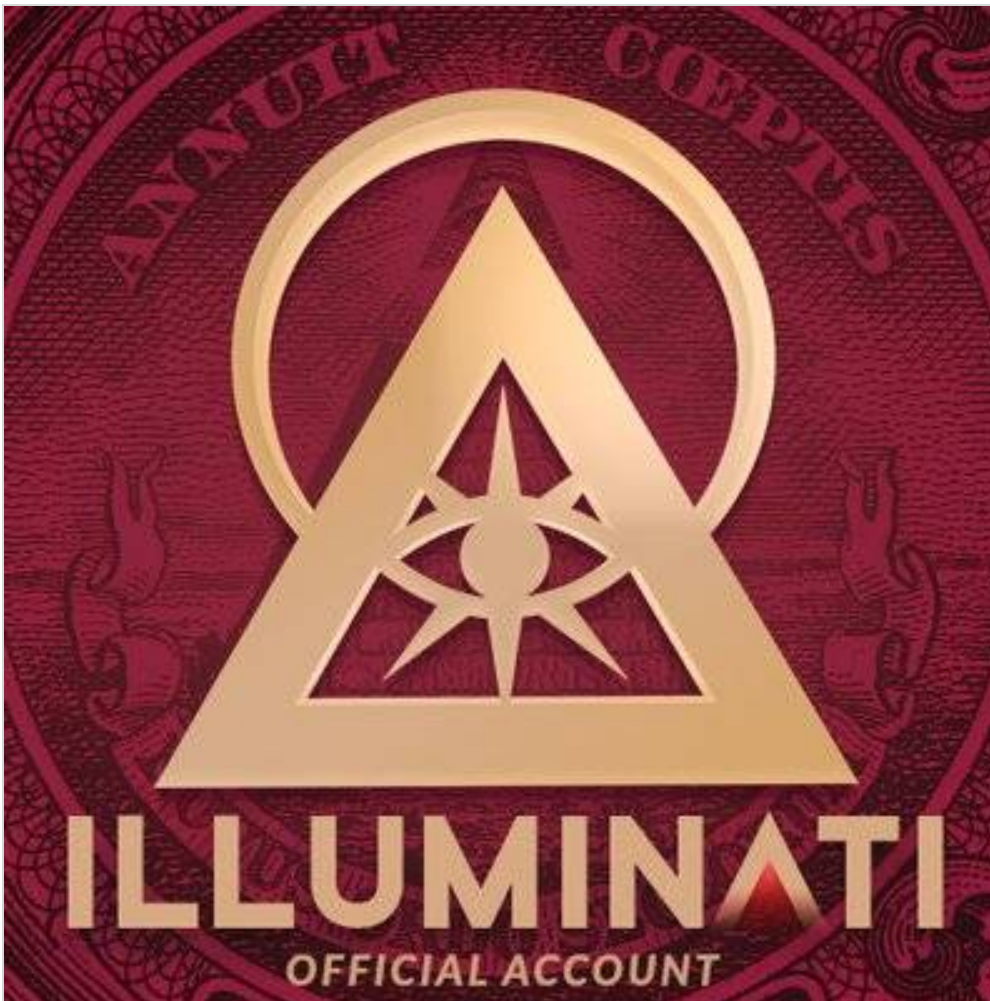
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just need to nuke them today one that will take out the whole country hell drop 5 or 6 of them and hit there mane basses witch each one

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### Lolipopguild

Russia - China - and the US should (and I say this with broad implications) (SHOULD) have been working allies from the beginning. All these smaller countries are threatening the state of peace and are the cause for the majority of escalations throughout the world.

The Russian ; Chinese ; and US governments fundamentally want the same thing - global peace and prosperity. Unfortunately - when you have flakes trying to piggyback on the power and might of these three countries - conflict arises. This is true with Iran; Iraq; Jordan; N. Korea; etc..

All countries should be trying to coattail with the intention of improving their own standing in the geopolitical perspective and rise above the ground pounding that monkeys use to display their own personal aggression - and follow the countries that have the power to lead us all towards a unification of peace.

Who the hell wants war? Those that are not in power.

[See more](#)

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### chris chuba



This is ironic because I have seen a blizzard of articles huffing and puffing that our nuclear arsenal was at a dangerous point of unpreparedness while the Russians have been beefing up theirs with thousands of TACTICAL nuclear weapons on top of their strategic nukes. This author is now saying that we have been investing in tactical WMD attacks with upgraded weapons like the B61 with stealth aircraft. I'm not surprised, I just found the other articles insufferable self-righteous.

We actually have way too many tactical nukes, I can't see any lunatic scenario where we would need to have more than 30 in stock and we have at least 10 times that number.

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### Jinzo 2400

The key to N. Korea has been and always will be China. In a nuclear event, it is the Chinese that would suffer the most with dealing with radioactive fallout and radiation sickness. Peking has to know that any attack by N. Korea on anyone will hurt them as well.

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