FINAL REPORT

Testing Trilateral, U.S.-Japan, and U.S.-ROK Responses to North Korean Provocations

Tabletop Exercise Pacific Trident

February 14-16, 2018 | Tokyo, Japan

Michael McDevitt | Yoichi Kato

SASAKAWA USA

Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit located in Washington, DC involved in U.S.-Japan relations, providing conferences and seminars, think tank analysis, people-to-people exchanges and coordination of high-level dialogue between the two countries through our in-house and collaborative programs.

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Executive Summary

On February 14-16, 2018, Sasakawa USA, in partnership with the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF), held an unclassified tabletop exercise (TTX) with experienced Japanese, South Korean, and American policy, defense, intelligence, and security experts to explore trilateral, U.S.-Japan, and U.S.-Republic of Korea (ROK) responses to unexpected events and deliberate North Korean provocations.

While plans for a summit between the leaders of North Korea and South Korea, possibly to be followed by a historic meeting between President Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un, provide hopeful signs for peaceful resolution of the threat posed by the DPRK, the long history of North Korea's refusal to abandon its nuclear program suggests that future serious DPRK provocations cannot be discounted, particularly if Pyongyang's nuclear and missile capabilities remain unchecked.

Day 1 scenario

Three North Korean fishing boats loaded with refugees and high-level defectors are underway in the Sea of Japan/East Sea, outside of the Korean Theater of Operations (KTO), headed east southeast toward Akita, Japan. North Korean warships and fighter aircraft are dispatched to intercept the boats, and U.S., Japanese and South Korean ships and fighter jets are sent to confront them. In the ensuing standoff, North Korea elects to escalate the confrontation. In response, American fighters shoot down the North Korean planes, and a U.S. submarine sinks the North Korean warships.

Key findings for Day 1 scenario

Trilateral coordination proved critical to a successful response to North Korean provocations: Because the scenario took place in the Sea of Japan/East Sea outside the KTO, and because ships and aircraft from the United States, Japan, and South Korea were within range of the refugee boats, all three countries recognized the need for prompt trilateral coordination. They quickly initiated a trilateral coordination mechanism they named "2+2+2," which included foreign minister- and defense minister-level officials as well as military chairmen from each country. This novel structure proved effective in significantly enhancing trilateral consultation, planning, and coordinated actions, and impeded North Korea from exploiting potential and actual policy differences among the three countries.

Japan's engagement in collective self-defense allowed Japan to play a more effective role: Japanese policy changes regarding its ability to engage in collective self-defense made it possible for the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) to participate as a more equal partner of the United States and South Korea in planning and implementing operations in response to North Korean provocations. Japan also demonstrated the importance of its defensive maritime and air operations for addressing North Korea contingencies.

U.S. command relations worked well: While command arrangements for a major conflict in Korea are well established and practiced relentlessly, as it played out, the scenario showed that North Korea's development of long-range missiles meant that its provocations, below the threshold of major war, could cut across the two existing, separate chains of command of U.S. and ROK forces in South Korea. Responses to North Korean provocations included the use of ballistic missile defense batteries, anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities, and cyber operations. In these three areas, a combination of a supported/supporting relationship with U.S. Pacific Command, the ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command (CFC), U.S. Forces Korea (USFK), U.S. Cyber Command, and U.S. Northern Command, as well as coordination with Japan, were vital for effective military operations.

Differing rules of engagement created tactical disadvantages: The U.S. military was authorized to fire on North Korean forces if they displayed hostile intent; Japanese and ROK forces were authorized to fire only after North Korean forces took hostile action. In the sorts of contingencies addressed in the TTX, North Korean forces would likely have orders to fire on forces from all three countries. The more limited Japanese and Korean rules of engagement (ROE) compared to those of the United States created tactical disadvantages for the three countries in developing a more effective and cohesive response.

Day 2 scenario

The Day 2 scenario reset the TTX; the Day 1 scenario results did not apply. Pyongyang tries to split both the U.S.-ROK and U.S.-Japan alliances through a series of escalating provocations that include mining Busan Harbor, torpedoing ROK and Japanese ships, and then firing modest-sized salvos of conventionally-armed ballistic missiles at U.S. bases in Japan and South Korea, resulting in Japanese and ROK civilian and U.S. military deaths. The scenario culminates with North Korea conducting an atmospheric detonation of a ten-kiloton nuclear weapon over Okinotorishima, an uninhabited Japanese feature in the Philippine Sea, but no casualties result. In the aftermath of the detonation, North Korea makes the following demands:

1. Japan must cease its hostile attitude toward the DPRK and deny U.S. forces permission to operate from bases in Japan or face possible nuclear attack,

2. South Korea must cease its military exercises with the United States or also face possible nuclear attack, and

3. Washington must enter negotiations with North Korea, based on recognition of the DPRK as a nuclear state, to conclude a peace treaty ending the Korean War.

Key findings for Day 2 scenario

Trilateral coordination again proved critical to a successful response to North Korean provocations: Based on the previous success of a U.S.-ROK-Japan senior official coordinating body including civilian and military leaders, TTX participants initiated the 2+2+2 mechanism. It again proved successful in strengthening trilateral consultation, planning, coordination, and deconfliction of actions in response to high-stakes North Korean provocations.

Alliance solidarity was vital: Despite its provocations, Pyongyang was unable to shake the solidarity of the U.S.-ROK and U.S.-Japan alliances, and none of the three teams seriously considered making concessions to North Korean demands even

after Pyongyang detonated a nuclear weapon. The unified response proved critical to effectively countering North Korean provocations.

Conventional North Korean provocations required trilateral cooperation: All three countries engaged in lengthy debates over retaliating against North Korea's missile attacks on U.S. bases in Japan and South Korea. The three countries agreed to reject unilateral actions and instead forge a closely-coordinated response employing heavy conventional missile attacks on North Korea.

Responding to an atmospheric North Korea nuclear detonation over an uninhabited Japanese feature should be proportionate: The three countries rejected a nuclear attack on North Korea as disproportionate in responding to the DPRK nuclear detonation over an uninhabited feature. The U.S. team rejected conducting its own nuclear demonstration—an idea also firmly opposed by both Japan and South Korea.

The United States will destroy North Korea's nuclear and conventional capabilities if it uses a nuclear weapon directly against South Korea or Japan: The three teams agreed that if the DPRK had attacked either South Korean or Japanese territory with a nuclear weapon more directly, the United States would have conducted a retaliatory strike on the DPRK to destroy both its nuclear and conventional capabilities. That consensus reflected U.S. policy, recently reaffirmed in the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review.

Noncombatant evacuation operations may lead to disagreements: Once the three countries agreed to retaliate against North Korea's nuclear detonation, the United States and Japan respectively decided to take necessary steps to protect their citizens by evacuating them from the peninsula. However, the ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command and the ROK Government were concerned that Pyongyang would interpret evacuations as preparation for an all-out attack and, in addition, the ROK government believed noncombatant evacuation operations (NEOs) would alarm its public and create other problems.

Recommendations

Develop and use a high-level trilateral coordination mechanism: Responding to North Korean provocations effectively will require the creation of a standing and familiar trilateral coordination mechanism, composed of senior government officials and military officers who have worked together in the past, that can be convened quickly. In the TTX, participants created a "2+2+2" led by the foreign ministers and including defense ministers, and military chairmen from each country.

- The bilateral Alliance Coordination Mechanism (ACM) of the United States and Japan provides an appropriate model for building such a trilateral consultative body.

Incorporate Japan's new capabilities more fully into plans to deter and defend against North Korean aggression. Develop a trilateral counter-provocation plan, modeled on the current ROK-U.S. bilateral plan, one that takes advantage of Japan's new capabilities in exercising its right to collective self-defense.

- Develop options to employ Japan's significant ASW, anti-aircraft, and anti-missile defense capabilities in the Sea of Japan/East Sea as part of overall plans to deter and defeat North Korean aggression.
- Develop trilateral common operational pictures (COP) so that all three countries make decisions based on the same information.

- Conduct trilateral ASW exercises in the Sea of Japan/East Sea focused on countering North Korean ballistic missile submarines.

Develop a more effective approach to non-combatant evacuation operations in South Korea through trilateral consultations. Keep in mind that North Korea may also attack Japan, so NEOs may be necessary from there as well.

- Incorporate the evacuation of appropriate South Korean citizens–the elderly, children, and ill–into U.S. and Japanese plans.
- Develop a staged evacuation process, short of departure from South Korea, that will increase the safety of foreign citizens.
- Develop Japanese capabilities in using civilian aircraft and ships in the initial stages of a NEO from South Korea to avoid introducing JSDF uniformed personnel into the ROK at an early point in the operation.

Continue to advance flexible and adaptable U.S. command relationships in Northeast Asia and increase trilateral military channels of communication and coordination.

- Establish joint task forces in Northeast Asia for the U.S. military to deal with provocations, and plan for larger joint forces in case of conflict escalation.
- Enhance trilateral communications among U.S., Japanese, and South Korean forces to increase military effectiveness and political unity.
- Encourage Pacific Command to augment trilateral channels of communication and consultation in peacetime, crisis, and conflict.

Conduct further tabletop exercises on possible North Korea contingencies to explore other critical matters.

- There was consensus among all three teams that if the DPRK nuclear attack had been on an inhabited region of either the ROK or Japan, the United States would have conducted a retaliatory strike on the DPRK that would have destroyed its nuclear and conventional capabilities. A future TTX should explore responses to credible North Korean threats or actual uses of nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction.
- The TTX scenarios covered simultaneous attacks against Japan and South Korea. A future TTX should explore an attack on either Japan or South Korea rather than both.
- More than one million Chinese citizens reside in or visit South Korea on any given day, more than triple the combined number of Americans and Japanese. A future TTX should test the role of China in a North Korea contingency.

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Introduction

United States of America

Population: 323 million
Active military: 1.3 million

Republic of Korea

Population: 51 million
Active military: 627,000

Japan

Population: 127 million
Active military: 248,500

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Population: 25.1 million
Active military: 945,000

North Korea's growing arsenal of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons poses a grave regional and global threat. On February 14-16, 2018, Sasakawa USA, in partnership with the Sasakawa Peace Foundation of Japan (SPF), held a tabletop exercise (TTX) with experienced Japanese, South Korean, and American military, security, intelligence, and diplomatic officials to explore trilateral responses to credible North Korean provocations.

The unclassified exercise took place at SPF headquarters in Tokyo. SPF and its staff deserve special thanks for their efforts at ensuring that a TTX of this scale operated smoothly and efficiently. SPF's support and commitment made certain that every aspect of the two-and-a-half day event was professionally and graciously addressed. Without this noteworthy effort by SPF, the TTX would not have been possible.

TTX participants were presented with North Korean crisis scenarios in the Sea of Japan/East Sea and around the Korean peninsula intended to test U.S.-Japan, U.S.-ROK, and trilateral reactions. Participants formulated their responses based upon existing policies and current consultation, coordination, and communications procedures, including those implemented recently by Tokyo and Seoul to expand their contributions to coordinated operations. The exercise clearly demonstrated the importance of trilateral cooperation in effectively addressing a major North Korea contingency. It also identified important issues that should be explored in additional track two TTXs.

The exercise was held during the first week of the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, a period of optimism in South Korea over relations with the North as Pyongyang sent a delegation of athletes, delegates, and cultural envoys to the games. Subsequently, talks between South and North Korea led to the two countries agreeing to a summit meeting in April 2018, possibly followed shortly thereafter by a meeting between President Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un. While these developments provide hopeful signs that tensions on the peninsula will yield to peaceful inter-Korean coexistence, and perhaps even denuclearization of North Korea, the long history of North Korea's refusal to abandon its nuclear program suggests that future serious DPRK provocations cannot be discounted, particularly if Pyongyang's nuclear and missile capabilities remain unchecked.

TTX Objectives

The TTX was developed to meet the following objectives:

- Consider policy, diplomatic, and military responses by the United States, Japan, and South Korea to serious incidents and DPRK provocations involving all three countries.
- Explore consultations, coordination, and communications among the United States, Japan, and the ROK that are necessary for the preparation and execution of effective responses to DPRK provocations against all three.
- Explore new capabilities that Japan can contribute to dealing with DPRK provocations under its new policies that expand its scope of operations.

Background

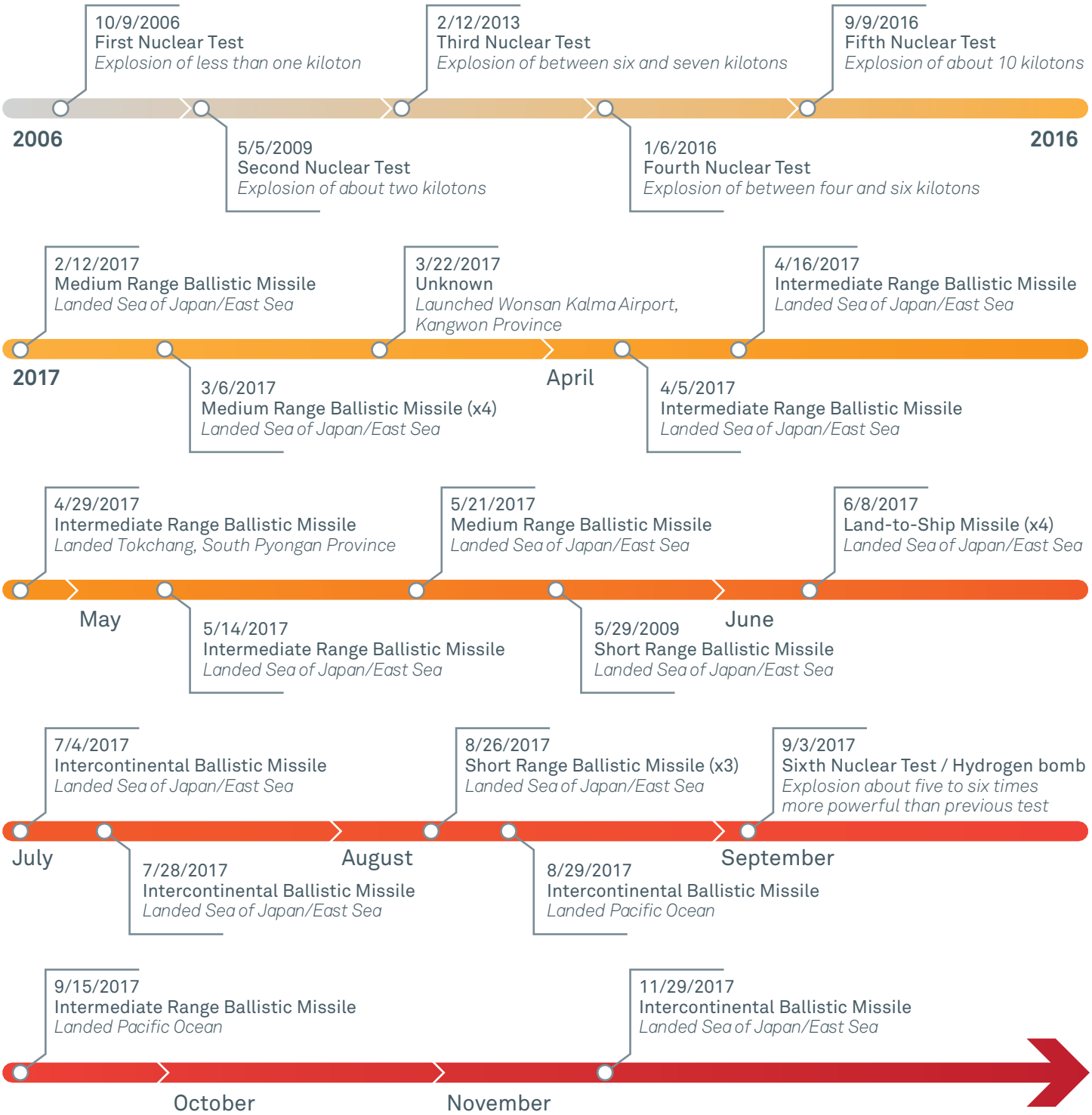
For almost three decades, Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo have sought to halt North Korea's nuclear weapons program. The attempts have failed because Pyongyang views its nuclear weapons and delivery systems as key to the regime's security as they provide deterrence and offer leverage against its enemies. North Korea believes its nuclear weapons and missile capabilities allow it to intimidate and coerce the United States, Japan, and South Korea and shape the path toward Korean reunification. Pyongyang seeks a peace treaty with its adversaries, but one that undermines the U.S.-ROK alliance, leads to the withdrawal of U.S. troops from South Korea, and ends extended U.S. nuclear deterrence in Northeast Asia. And perhaps most important, Pyongyang seems to view its nuclear weapons as an irreversible reality that guarantees the survival of its regime.

What Pyongyang sees as essential, however, Washington considers an intolerable threat. North Korean denuclearization remains the goal of the United States, as well as South Korea, Japan, and most of the rest of the world. As the guarantor of South Korean and Japanese security, the United States has limited options for dealing with North Korea's nuclear threat: 1) negotiating an agreement for verifiable and irreversible denuclearization, 2) launching a pre-emptive strike or a preventive military action aimed at destroying North Korea's capabilities, but with likely horrific consequences, or 3) attempting to live with and manage the threat through deterrence and containment.

Thus far, America and its partners have focused primarily on trying to convince Kim Jong Un that nuclear weapons will not assure his regime's survival (indeed, his pursuit of nuclear weapons and delivery systems hampers North Korea's economic growth and may lead to internal instability) and using globally-coordinated, diplomatic, informational, military, and economic measures to push him to begin negotiations on denuclearization.

The United States has faced similar dilemmas in the past in dealing with other authoritarian adversaries possessing or developing nuclear weapons–the Soviet Union and China in the last century, and Libya and Iran in this one. While the United States has chosen non-kinetic options in each of these cases, in the 1960s, Washington seriously considered a strike against China's nuclear facilities.

North Korean Nuclear Tests and 2017 Missile Launches



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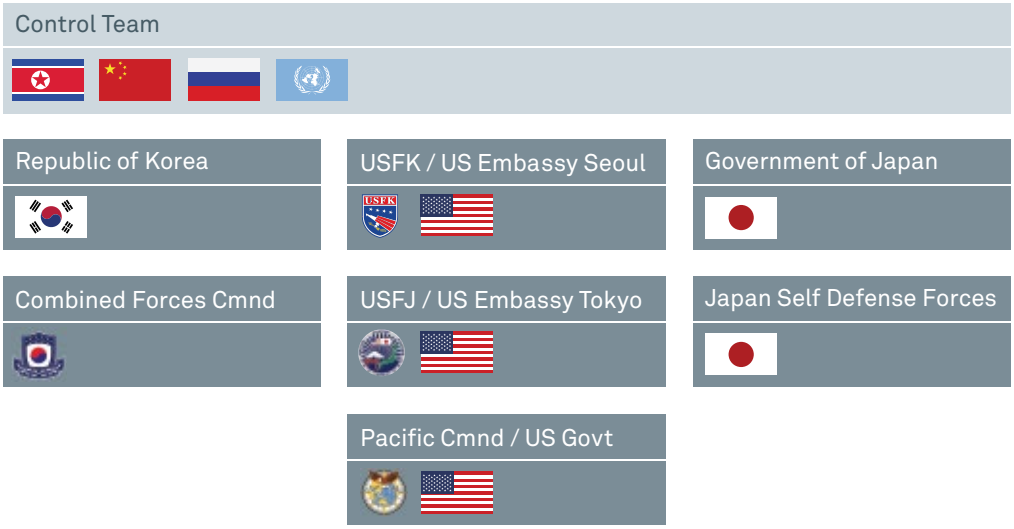
North Korea's advances in missile systems have further sharpened the nuclear threat the country poses. From its days as an ally of both the Soviet Union and China, North Korea has received entire missile systems and missile technology from both. In more recent years, Pyongyang has developed its own missile programs, largely with its own scientists, engineers, and industrial capacity, but also by taking advantage of thriving international black and gray markets in missile technology and components. Before Kim Jong Un took power, North Korea's missile program developed gradually. Since Kim's accession, however, the program has accelerated, with tests of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) possibly capable of reaching the continental United States. Equally worrisome, Pyongyang appears to be making progress in developing credible solid-fuel missiles, which permit more flexibility in concealment and rapid launch capability.

The bottom line is North Korea's missiles now pose a threat not just to South Korea, but also to Japan, Guam, and Hawaii–and soon, likely to the continental United States as well. As a result, the scope and impact of North Korean provocations now extend well beyond the DPRK's traditional target of South Korea.

The Tabletop Exercise Summary



TTX participants included former government officials, military officers, and respected experts from the United States, Japan, and the Republic of Korea. To replicate the dynamics of alliance and command relationships in Northeast Asia, they were organized into seven teams: a USFK/U.S. Embassy Seoul team; an ROK team; a Combined Forces Command team; a U.S. Forces Japan/U.S. Embassy Tokyo team; a Government of Japan team; a Japan Self-Defense Forces team; and a Pacific Command/U.S. Government team. A control team ran the exercise, adjudicating outcomes and determining the actions of North Korea, China, Russia, the United Nations, and other actors. The teams were presented with a series of developments that they were required to respond to through the formulation and execution of diplomatic, informational, military, and economic measures.

The TTX took place in a single large space that had removable dividers physically separating teams during game play. To the extent possible, unrealistic conversations between teams were proscribed. Instead, communications took place via a TTX email system or through face-to-face meetings, the latter serving as simulated video teleconferences for teams representing organizations separated geographically in the real world. The design allowed for an approximation of the kind of frictions inherent in official communications among the three countries during times of crisis. For plenary discussions of scenario results, the dividers were removed.

Officials from the UN Command and Combined Forces Command and USF-Korea at the Korean-American Association, SEOUL, Korea. Photo Credit: USFK | Staff Sgt. David Chapman

The exercise lasted two-and-a-half days. Each full day consisted of a single scenario or "run" with an initial situation or "first turn," followed by subsequent developments in a "second turn" based on the teams' reactions to the initial situation.

Both TTX scenarios started on May 1, 2018. Players were informed that in the period after the Olympics, tensions on the Korean peninsula had returned, and no obvious pathway existed for resolution of North Korea's nuclear weapons and long-range missile programs. Circumstances in the East and South China Seas, and in Japan-China and U.S.-China relations were stable, but key U.S. national security assessments forecast growing geopolitical competition with China.

Overview of the Exercise: **Day One**

1

Three North Korean fishing boats loaded with refugees and defectors are underway in the Sea of Japan/East Sea headed east southeast toward Akita, Japan. Some of the defectors may be North Korean elites. A Korean-American citizen from an obscure NGO is on board one of the boats and has a satellite telephone. He calls CNN, pleads for help, and the story quickly becomes headline news around the globe. A U.S. Navy (USN) P-8 surveillance plane on a routine Sea of Japan/East Sea patrol spots the refugee boats. Their location is outside the boundaries of the Korean Theater of Operations (KTO) and inside Japan's exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

2

Two North Korean frigates are dispatched to overtake the boats and return the defectors to North Korea. One of the defector boats has engine trouble and slows, making it likely that the frigates will catch up. A Japanese fishing boat arrives and agrees to embark the passengers from the inoperable boat on board and take them to Japan. Republic of Korea Navy destroyers and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) ships are dispatched with orders to protect the passengers.

3

At the instigation of the U.S. national security advisor, the three governments agree to an ad-hoc "2+2+2" meeting via video teleconference of foreign minister- and defense minister-level officials, as well as the military chairmen from each country. The success of the meeting in exchanging views and coordinating decisions impresses all TTX participants and quickly evolves into the primary trilateral policy coordination mechanism for the rest of the TTX in both scenarios.

4

Word is received that North Korea has scrambled four MiG fighter aircraft, and they are headed toward the scene. The ROK Air Force (ROKAF) scrambles two F-15s. Since the USN P-8 is unarmed and vulnerable, the U.S. Fifth Air Force, based in Japan, dispatches F-16s and F-22s to protect it. The United States, the Republic of Korea, and Japan all independently decide to protect the defector boats, and Tokyo plans to embark the defectors on a Japan Coast Guard (JCG) cutter proceeding to the scene.

5

In the air, the P-8, the Fifth Air Force F-22s, ROKAF F-15s, and two Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF) fighters launched to cover the Japanese fishing boat and JCG cutter and intercept the North Korean MiGs are all converging on roughly the same spot. Rules of Engagement (ROE) questions immediately arise. The U.S. fighters are allowed to engage if they detect hostile intent. The JASDF fighters have a more restrictive ROE: they can act in self-defense, but only when attacked. The ROKAF is operating under the Armistice ROE, which permits engagement only after they encounter hostile acts.

6

The MiGs recognize they are outnumbered and overmatched, so they stand off. The North Korean frigates attempt to force their way through the protective screen of Japanese and ROK ships, but both Japanese and ROK navy ships fire warning shots, so the DPRK vessels also stand off. Meanwhile, the defectors prepare to move from their fishing boats to the JCG cutter.

7

Given the scale of U.S., Japanese, and ROK airpower and warships brought to the area, the confrontation seems to have been resolved. (Although unknown to the North Koreans, a U.S. Navy nuclear-powered submarine is also in the vicinity). However, acting on orders from Pyongyang, North Korea elects to escalate, and the MiGs swoop in for a strafing run–causing Japanese civilian and defector casualties–before heading back to North Korea. The DPRK frigates fire torpedoes at the South Korean and Japanese surface ships protecting the refugee boats, then turn for home. In addition, North Korea launches several anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs) at the South Korean and Japanese ships. One of the torpedoes hits a Japanese vessel and one of the missiles hits a Korean ship. At the same time, in the Yellow/West Sea, North Korea seizes several Japanese fishing boats and arrests their crews for alleged illegal fishing.

8

After the North Korean attacks, South Korean forces now have orders to engage the MiGs, but the U.S. Airforce (USAF) fighters overtake them quickly and shoot down all four. The Japanese have been authorized to engage the DPRK frigates after the attack on the JMSDF ships, but are not in position to execute. The ROK also authorizes its forces to attack the DPRK frigates. The USN submarine, however, is in position, launches torpedoes, and sinks both North Korean vessels.

Conclusion

The scenario ends with the DPRK deploying submarines from east coast ports, while Japanese fishermen remain in North Korean hands, and Kim Jung Un vows revenge.

Overview of the Exercise: **Day Two**

The Day 2 scenario resets to May 1, 2018.
Players are instructed that the events of the previous scenario do not apply to Day 2.

1

Pyongyang decides to try to divide and weaken both the U.S.-ROK and U.S.-Japan alliances. It orders its submarines to attack ROK and JMSDF surface combatants. North Korea is prepared to escalate if necessary, but wants to avoid general war on the peninsula. It takes no steps to indicate heightened readiness along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) that U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) or the ROK military could interpret as preparation for a large-scale attack on South Korea.

2

The Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group is in the Port of Busan and Chinhae, Korea. A Japanese Coast Guard cutter with a JMSDF destroyer escort is investigating a suspicious ship detected off the west coast of Honshu. The cutter is hit by what it judges to be a torpedo. At almost the same time, an ROK Navy frigate operating off Chinhae reports that it too was struck by a torpedo.

3

Any doubt regarding the source of the attacks is removed when Pyongyang announces that two of its submarines were attacked first and responded in self-defense. The DPRK demands that Japan cease its hostile attitude, South Korea cease U.S.-ROK exercises, and the United States withdraw its forces from Korea and Japan. It warns that dire consequences will follow, including the possible use of nuclear weapons, if its demands are not met.

4

A commercial tanker en route to Busan is hit by an explosion, and a mine is suspected as the cause. Subsequently, other mines are detected near Busan. USN forces in Busan and Chinhae delay sorties until submarine and mine threats are cleared. The ROK Navy (ROKN) sends ASW and mine clearance forces to clear approaches to Busan and Chinhae. The torpedoed JCG cutter crew saves the ship, but twenty are dead. The ROKN crew also saves its frigate, but there are many dead and missing. ROKN efforts to clear mines are successful and the Reagan Strike Group departs from Korean ports. The United States commits to stand by its allies in the face of the unprovoked attacks. In response to the strike against its Coast Guard cutter, Tokyo vows close cooperation with South Korea and the United States.

5

TV news airs video of Kim Jong Un studying an apparent targeting map with red circles around Washington, New York, and Tokyo—an obvious attempt to imply nuclear attacks to deter U.S. involvement and terrify the Japanese public. PACOM orders all USN forces in Japan and Guam that can get underway to do so. U.S. forces in Japan are placed on full alert. Japan's Joint Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) Task force is activated. The intelligence services of all three countries report that North Korean submarines have left their homeports.

6

An ad-hoc trilateral 2+2+2 coordination group of senior civilian and military leaders meets to coordinate, deconflict, and discuss options. The U.S., ROK, and Japan decide that they will not retaliate with strikes against North Korea for the torpedo attacks. Instead, they order their anti-submarine forces to search for North Korean submarines and attack them when found.

7

In South Korea, U.S. and ROK forces are careful not to provoke a North Korean attack. They quietly increase readiness, including missile defense units, but make no movements toward the DMZ and do not officially raise defense readiness conditions (DEFCON).

8

As time elapses, Kim Jong Un disappears, North Korea closes its border, and it expels foreign diplomats. Since its political demands are not met, and there has been no retaliation against North Korea for torpedoing two ships and laying mines around Busan, North Korea decides to take additional provocative action and launches a salvo of four conventionally-tipped ballistic missiles at U.S. bases in Japan and another four against a U.S. base in South Korea. Some of the missiles are shot down, but others land on or near U.S. bases in both Korea and Japan, resulting in U.S. military and host country civilian casualties. The attacks lead to widespread panic in both South Korea and Japan.

9

The United States and Japan decide to issue warnings urging their nationals to leave South Korea. The warnings lead to serious disagreements as the ROK government does not want its public alarmed, but the United States and Japan seek to protect their citizens. China urges all sides to remain calm. The ROK, United States, and Japan request a United Nations Security Council emergency session. In South Korea, the Combined Forces Command is activated, and it raises the alert level to DEFCON 3.

10

The three countries engage in a lengthy debate over retaliation, including whether any retaliation would be too dangerous in the face of the DPRK's nuclear threats. Ultimately, the countries decide on a coordinated approach. The United States conducts a limited Tomahawk strike against suspected North Korean missile launch sites and long-range SA-5 surface-to-air missile (SAM) batteries while the ROK conducts a limited missile attack on three North Korean launch sites. Since Japan does not have the capability to launch counterstrikes against the DPRK, it provides visible support for U.S. actions by sailing its ships in harm's way to protect the U.S. Navy vessels launching the Tomahawks. The three countries vow to continue close cooperation and take no unilateral action. South Korea relents on American and Japanese requests to start non-combatant evacuation operations (NEOs). However, Seoul is not willing to allow JSDF ships or planes in Korea to support the operation.

11

The DPRK issues a Notice to Mariners for an 80-nautical mile radius around Okinotorishima, a Japanese uninhabited feature in the Philippine Sea within Japan's exclusive economic zone. Shortly thereafter, a nuclear airburst estimated at ten kilotons takes place over Okinotorishima. No Japanese are killed, and the wind blows the radioactive plume toward empty ocean.

12

Pyongyang acknowledges the test and again issues demands that Tokyo cease its hostile attitude toward the DPRK and oust U.S. forces from bases in Japan or face a possible nuclear attack; that the ROK end military exercises with the United States or be subject to nuclear attack; and that Washington enter into negotiations over a peace treaty to end the Korean War and acknowledge North Korea as a nuclear state.

Conclusion

The world is stunned by North Korea's nuclear test. What will Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul do? Will Beijing or Moscow conclude that "enough is enough" regarding the Kim regime? At this point, TTX play ended and the rest of the exercise was devoted to discussing the final turn of events and reviewing the results of scenarios.

Detailed TTX insights: Policy level

Trilateral coordination was successful

- Because the first scenario took place in the Sea of Japan/East Sea, but east of the Korean Theater of Operations (KTO), and because ships and aircraft from all three countries were within range of the refugee boats, Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington recognized the need for prompt trilateral coordination. North Korean provocations are not limited by established U.S. command boundaries, and those involving Japan are likely to include North Korean operations on, under, or over the Sea of Japan/East Sea.
- The U.S. TTX team organized a 2+2+2 meeting that included foreign minister- and defense minister-level officials as well as the military chairmen from all three countries. The foreign ministers of the three countries took the lead in these meetings, while military and defense representatives offered military options. The meeting fostered effective trilateral consultation, planning, and coordinated action. The DPRK was not able to exploit policy differences among the three.
- South Korea and Japan consulted directly without the United States acting as a go-between in discussions of policy and military options. The United States consulted with Tokyo and Seoul as partners rather than simply informing or persuading them to accept U.S. unilateral decisions. The representatives of all three countries came to the 2+2+2 meetings with policy preferences and concepts, but all wanted to hear from the other countries before making choices. Final decisions made at these meetings were driven by a strong desire for unified policies and actions against North Korea.
- The 2+2+2 might be the sort of mechanism for discussing rules of engagement so that all three nations understand how their forces (especially fighter jets, which require split-second decisions) are authorized to act during a Korea crisis. On the first day of the TTX, the U.S. forces were authorized to react to hostile intent whereas the Japanese and ROK forces were authorized to use force only in response to hostile actions–and so had to wait to be fired upon before responding.
- During the TTX, trilateral cooperation rapidly combined military and policy decisions into coordinated responses. Aside from the time difference, the reliability of state-of-the-art classified video teleconferencing equipment makes it feasible to have real-world trilateral consultation almost as conveniently as meetings on the TTX game floor.

Japan's new defense policies proved important

- American and South Korean TTX participants learned how new Japanese policies and capabilities made it possible for Japan to participate as a more equal partner in dealing with North Korean provocations. The SDF demonstrated it could plan, implement, and execute policy decisions incorporating its ability to exercise its right to collective self-defense. Tokyo now has the political space and military capabilities to use its defense forces to increase trilateral effectiveness and deterrence.
- The TTX illustrated the importance of Japanese defensive maritime and air operations in the eastern Sea of Japan/East Sea. Japan's support for U.S. and South Korea responses to North Korean provocations, and its willingness to provide more robust United Nations Command (UNC) rear area support made it a more equal partner in conflict scenarios. During the game, the JSDF was willing to take the lead in firing on fleeing North Korean frigates that had attacked a JMSDF warship. A U.S. submarine, however, made the attack because it was in a better tactical position.
- In the past, the ROK government has opposed Japanese forces acting in collective self-defense in the Korean Theater of Operations (KTO). In the TTX, the Korean team was not as concerned about this geographic distinction (except for the NEO described below). In the second day of game play, North Korea flushed its submarines out of its ports after the attacks on the ROK frigate and the Japanese Coast Guard ship. All three countries initiated ASW operations to detect and attack the DPRK submarines wherever they could find them in the Sea of Japan/East Sea. Although the game did not get into tactical-level details, the teams were willing to coordinate their efforts based on task and capability rather than geography. The JMSDF has world class ASW capabilities and can make an essential contribution to countering North Korean submarines in crisis or conflict. JASDF airpower can also make important contributions to air superiority over the Sea of Japan/East Sea.
- Bilateral (ROK-Japan) and trilateral (ROK-Japan-U.S.) ASW cooperation in the Sea of Japan/East Sea is of growing importance because North Korea is developing ballistic missile submarines. Pyongyang intends to field one or more diesel propelled submarines carrying one or two solid fuel KN-11 series ballistic missiles with a range of 650 nautical miles. With a homeport in Sinpo on the DPRK east coast, the Sea of Japan/East Sea will be the most likely operations area for the submarines. A KN-11 missile launched from the sea will approach Japan or the ROK from a different azimuth, making it difficult for existing BMD systems to successfully engage.

Non-combatant evacuation operations in case of a crisis on the Korean peninsula may present problems

- Planning and exercising NEOs from South Korea have posed tough problem for U.S. and ROK security officials for many years. There are two basic issues: 1) the large number of American and third country nationals living or traveling in South Korea, and 2) the concern that evacuating civilians from South Korea could signal to Pyongyang that U.S. and ROK forces are preparing to launch an attack. North Korea's current ballistic missile inventory allows it to reach deep into South Korea, greatly compounding NEO problems. Evacuating Japanese civilians from the ROK in the midst of conflict presents additional difficulties that have only recently begun to be addressed by the three countries. This is an important issue because Japan will have a major role to play in any NEOs, including providing temporary safe havens for evacuated civilians.
- The U.S. and Japanese governments have a responsibility to protect their citizens. Recent Congressional testimony by the current Pacific Command commander described the scope of the NEO problem. At any given time, some 200,000 Americans, 60,000 Japanese, and one million Chinese are living in or visiting South Korea. China will thus have a strong incentive to coordinate the evacuation of their citizens with the United States, Japan, and other countries with nationals in South Korea. As one former U.S. official noted at the TTX, given the enormity of the task, "no ambassador is going to sit around and wait for the artillery to start."
- During the TTX, the ROK team grew increasingly concerned as the Japanese and U.S. teams encouraged voluntary departures and then ordered evacuations even before the Combined Forces Command was activated. The reality is that circumstances have changed long-standing non-combatant evacuation assumptions, not least of which is that Japan, which has long been assumed to be a safe destination, could now also be a target.
- During the TTX, Japan wanted to use JASDF assets in a non-combatant evacuation operation, but the ROK refused to permit entry into South Korean territory. Japan has considerable numbers of large commercial aircraft and ferries, but experience has shown that Japan faces political problems sending civilian transportation into potential war zones. The Government of Japan needs to consider how best to utilize its civilian transportation assets. At the same time, the ROK needs to demonstrate more flexibility in planning for a crisis. In a real emergency, large numbers of ships and aircraft, both civilian and military, will be needed. One possible way forward is for Tokyo and Seoul to begin discussions on Japan providing a safe haven in an emergency for vulnerable ROK civilians, such as the elderly, young, and ill. Such a conversation might provide South Korea with greater incentives to consider more robust civilian evacuation planning.
- While China and Russia will likely be involved in their own NEOs in a crisis on the peninsula, the two countries may offer the most expeditious route out of Korea for Americans, Japanese, and other foreign nationals. The TTX did not play out the implications of needing to evacuate thousands of Russians and one million Chinese from South Korea if war on the peninsula is imminent.

When conflict is likely, U.S. and allied command relationships will directly involve both Japan and South Korea

- For decades, U.S. command relationships in Northeast Asia during war have included two separate chains of command. In case of conflict on the Korean peninsula, the ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command is in command, reporting both to the U.S. Secretary of Defense through the U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the ROK Minister of National Defense through the ROK Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Pacific Command is a supporting command. In case of aggression against Japan, Pacific Command orders U.S. forces fulfilling the American treaty guarantee to defend Japan while operating with the JSDF.
- North Korea's development of long-range missiles along with North Korean provocations below the threshold of major war can cut across these two separate chains of command, which is what occurred in the TTX. Moreover, North Korean military provocations blur the boundaries between peacetime and conflict. Although the Commander, Combined Forces Command, may not command U.S. and ROK forces during provocations short of war, he is responsible for advising both the U.S. and ROK national command authorities, preparing plans in case of escalation, and keeping the Commander of Pacific Command informed. At the same time, he coordinates closely with the ROK Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on developing counter-provocation plans and ROK (and U.S.) retaliatory actions in response to North Korean provocations. Meanwhile, the Commander of Pacific Command has the responsibility for planning and executing U.S. responses to North Korean provocations and for coordinating with Japanese military leaders on combined responses and operations.
- These dynamic reporting relationships require continual consultation and flexibility among the Commander, CFC; the Commander, Pacific Command; and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, as well as the subordinate commands of the Seventh Fleet, Fifth and Seventh Air Forces, and the U.S. Army Japan. The Pacific Command service component commanders of the Pacific Fleet, Pacific Air Force, and U.S. Army Pacific must also be informed and consulted due to their key responsibilities in supporting forward forces. This level of coordination is not unique in the complex American defense structure, but it faces severe time and space pressures in the case of North Korean provocations and potential conflict.
- Consultation was continuous and rapid during the TTX. The Commander, CFC, and the Commander, Pacific Command, consulted with each other closely, developed plans to respond to North Korean provocations, and presented them to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The CJCS approved it, gained political authorization from the national command authority, and then presented the plan to the ROK and Japanese representatives at the 2+2+2 meeting.

Senior military officers from the United States, Japan, and South Korea gather for a trilateral meeting at U.S. Pacific Command HQ in Hawaii. Photo Credit: U.S. Department of Defense | Petty Officer 2nd Class Dominique Pineiro

- Although the TTX scenarios did not escalate to general war, they highlighted three areas in which a conflict on the Korean Peninsula may extend beyond the assigned geographic area of Commander, CFC: ballistic missile defense, anti-submarine operations in the Sea of Japan/East Sea, and cyber operations. In these three areas, a combination of a supported/supporting relationship with the U.S. Pacific Command, U.S. Strategic Command, U.S. Northern Command and U.S. Cyber Command, as well as coordination with Japan will be necessary for effective military operations. These linkages are well understood within the U.S. Department of Defense but need continual exercising and updating to remain effective.
- There is tension in the role of the U.S. Seventh Fleet Commander, who assumes the position of the CFC Navy Component Commander in a Korean conflict. At issue during the TTX, and probably in the real world, is how the Commander covers the maritime responsibilities of the Seventh Fleet in the rest of his area of responsibility, which stretches into the Indian Ocean, when the Commander and most of his forward forces move to the Korea campaign. The Pacific Command needs a forward maritime commander and forces in case of trouble near Taiwan or the South China Sea.
- Finally, in any Korean provocation or general war scenario, Japanese military forces do not have formally-established relationships with either American or ROK forces beyond the legacy United Nations Command ties, which are rarely invoked or exercised. The players in the TTX established ad hoc links, but such relationships need to be formalized and exercised. In addition, Japanese command concepts have not caught up with the collective self-defense parameters now operative. An additional consideration pointed out by the Japanese team in the TTX is that during a Korean provocation scenario, the Japanese Self-Defense Forces will still have responsibilities for Chinese military activity in the East China Sea and Russian military activity to the north.

Respond to North Korea's atmospheric nuclear demonstration proportionately

- The TTX did not require the three countries to reach consensus on a coordinated response to the DPRK's nuclear demonstration. Instead, they were asked to discuss potential responses from their national points of view, and then to participate in a plenary discussion of key issues. Nonetheless, they all agreed on many important positions that would have an impact on an ultimate response.
- There was clear and unequivocal unanimity in rejecting North Korea's demands that Japan cease its hostile attitude and deny U.S. forces permission to operate from bases in Japan; that the ROK cease military exercises with the United States; and that Washington begin negotiations leading to a peace treaty ending the Korean War and acknowledge the DPRK as a nuclear state. In short, the alliances remained firm and did not bow to nuclear intimidation.
- The American TTX participants were well aware that the DPRK atmospheric demonstration represented an extremely grave provocation and a direct test of the credibility of America's extended deterrence guarantees. They considered U.S. public opinion (as reflected in Control team injects into the game), which did not support a war in Korea, particularly one that could involve nuclear weapons, when no U.S. civilian blood had been shed. The U.S. team was also aware that whatever response it chose, Pyongyang would have the next move. Hence, time was needed to think through the answer to the question almost certain to be asked by the President: "and then what?"
- The United States considered several coercive responses to the detonation, but a decision on a final course of action was not reached, nor was it required by the TTX. Importantly, the U.S. and other TTX teams understood that none of the courses of action considered were mutually exclusive.
- A large-scale air and missile attack aimed at destroying as much of North Korea's ballistic missile and nuclear capability as possible was considered. The reality is that this approach would almost certainly require a multi-day campaign since a single pulse would not be sufficient. The ROK team was skeptical that any conventional attack from the air would be decisive as it would still leave North Korea with perhaps as much of 25 percent of its capability. However, there was some support within the ROK team for this course of action, and a ROK participant opined that Pyongyang is the center of gravity for North Korea, and if it was not struck, Kim Jung Un might not retaliate. The Japanese team did not reach a firm position on this option. However, it had supported conventional strikes against Korea earlier in the TTX in retaliation for non-nuclear missile attacks on Japan.

USS Carl Vinson alongside U.S. and Republic of Korea vessels transit the western Pacific Ocean. The U.S. Navy has patrolled the Indo-Asia-Pacific routinely for more than 70 years promoting regional peace and security. Photo Credit: U.S. Navy | MCS2 Sean M. Castellano

- None of the three country teams in the TTX favored the launch of an all-out conventional war to end the Kim regime in response to a nuclear demonstration without casualties. They judged the risks as too high since Pyongyang would likely view the response as aimed at ending the regime, and so would use both its conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction against South Korea and Japan as well as U.S. forces in the two countries.
- The teams considered a comprehensive, U.S.-organized air and maritime blockade. The ROK team supported such an operation. The Japanese team, however, was not sure that it could participate in a blockade even with its new ability to engage in collective self-defense.
- All three teams recognized that an effective blockade required Chinese and Russian participation. The TTX did not proceed to the point where this proposition was tested, but such an operation would be worth exploring in subsequent TTXs. A total cyber blockade aimed at isolating North Korea from the Internet and all other cyber-related economic activity was also suggested. The United States, Japan, and South Korea all rejected two nuclear options considered in response to the North Korean detonation. The U.S. team quickly rejected the idea of conducting its own nuclear demonstration, and Japan and the ROK agreed. North Korea had no reason to doubt the credibility of the U.S. nuclear arsenal. Although testing a nuclear weapon might cow Kim Jung Un, it might also shift global opprobrium from Pyongyang to Washington while lending credibility to North Korea's arguments for maintaining nuclear weapons to deter the United States.

- TTX participants also unanimously rejected a massive nuclear strike against North Korea as clearly disproportionate for a nuclear demonstration that took no lives. Moreover, the nuclear fallout from a U.S. nuclear strike could endanger South Korea and Japan, as well as China. In fact, both Japan and the ROK firmly opposed any sort of U.S. nuclear response to the DPRK atmospheric nuclear test.
- There was a consensus among all three teams, however, that if the DPRK used nuclear weapons on an inhabited region of either the ROK or Japan, the United States should conduct a retaliatory strike against North Korea to destroy its nuclear and conventional capabilities. The consensus reflects official U.S. policy, most recently affirmed in the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review:

> *"Our deterrence strategy for North Korea makes clear that any North Korean nuclear attack against the United States or its allies and partners is unacceptable and will result in the end of that regime. There is no scenario in which the Kim regime could employ nuclear weapons and survive."*
>
> *Nuclear Posture Review, 2018: Page 33*

- The Japanese and South Korean teams both stated that a North Korean nuclear weapon demonstration would intensify existing ongoing unofficial discussions regarding, in the case of Japan, the viability of its three non-nuclear principles, and in the case of the ROK, the wisdom of relying wholly on U.S. extended deterrence. The Japanese team supported remaining non-nuclear as the best course since Japan would lose the most in a nuclear exchange. One member of the ROK team observed, "If Japan gets nuclear weapons, we would get them the next day."
- The ROK team indicated it would support the return of tactical nuclear weapons to South Korea. It is worth noting that on November 16, 2017, the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center publicly announced that it finished initial testing of the upgraded B61-12 nuclear bomb that dual-capable F-15s and F-35As could deliver. The Obama-era nuclear posture review made explicit provisions for such capabilities.[1]

1 2009 Nuclear Posture Review, page 27: "The Air Force will retain a dual-capable fighter (the capability to deliver both conventional and nuclear weapons) as it replaces F-16s with the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter... the United States will also conduct a full scope B-61 (nuclear bomb) Life Extension Program to ensure its functionality with the F-35 and to include making surety – safety, security, and use control – enhancements to maintain confidence in the B-61. These decisions ensure that the United States will retain the capability to forward-deploy non-strategic nuclear weapons in support of its Alliance commitments."

Will North Korea's propensity for provocations and coercion increase with its possession of nuclear weapons?

- An important discussion took place within the U.S. team as a number of its members expressed concern that Pyongyang might be emboldened by a belief that possessing deliverable nuclear weapons conferred impunity from retaliation for coercive actions. As the TTX played out, that was not the case. The United States and South Korea retaliated against North Korea over the conventional ballistic missile attack, which led to the DPRK nuclear demonstration. Pyongyang was careful, however, to signal that it was not preparing an attack across the DMZ.
- Many outrageous DPRK provocations took place in the decades before North Korea had a nuclear weapon. Sometimes South Korea and the United States ignored them as was the case when North Korea sank the Cheonan, an ROK Navy ship, in 2010, killing 46 seamen. On other occasions, such as the 1972 axe murder of two American Army officers in the DMZ, they responded with a show of force. According to participants in these decisions, there has always been concern among ROK and U.S. leaders about the possibility of escalation to all-out war. The inconvenient fact is that Seoul is within range of North Korean heavy artillery. North Korea's development of nuclear weapons has not altered that geographical reality.
- North Korea's ability to strike Japan with nuclear weapons now, and potentially the United States in the future, might change Pyongyang's risk calculus. North Korea's leadership might calculate that it can conduct provocations against Japan or forward-deployed U.S. forces with impunity and gain political advantage or substantive concessions. In the TTX, however, none of the three teams considered concessions to the DPRK in response to its provocations. Indeed, all three teams supported responding to North Korea's missile attacks on U.S. bases in the ROK and Japan with heavy non-nuclear air and missile attacks against DPRK missile systems.

Hwasong-15
Intercontinental Ballistic Missile

Other Insights

Seek de-escalation and an end to hosilities

All the attacks made by North Korea in the TTX were legally-defined acts of war that would have justified the United States and the ROK, supported by Japan, in declaring a state of hostilities. These included torpedoes launched against Japanese and ROK Navy and Coast Guard vessels, missile attacks on U.S. bases in Japan and South Korea that caused casualties among both American and host nation citizens, and, finally, a nuclear attack on a Japanese feature, albeit an uninhabited one. In all these cases, the players representing the three countries chose not to initiate general hostilities, and instead attempted to fashion policies and actions to end the provocations and de-escalate the crisis. They were careful to signal to North Korea that they did not intend to initiate a general war. North Korea, for its part, made it clear that its military preparations were not aimed at a full-scale ground attack across the DMZ. With both sides confident that the risk of general war was low, the crisis played out at the level of provocation and counter-provocation. In the real world, it is not clear if both sides would be as confident of the low risk of general war. There is a chance that general defense preparations by one side or the other could be interpreted as preparation for an attack, leading to pressure for preemption, and possibly the start of an unintended war.

Differing rules of engagement create tactical disadvantages

During the refugee scenario, ships and aircraft from the United States, Japan, and the Republic of Korea defending the fishing boats all confronted North Korean warships and fighter aircraft. The American forces were authorized to fire on North Korean forces displaying hostile intent, whereas the Japanese and ROK forces were authorized to fire only after the North Korean forces took hostile action. In the scenario–as would likely be the case in reality–North Korean forces had orders to fire on the forces of all three countries, and the more restrictive Japanese and ROK ROEs put their forces at a tactical disadvantage.

Common operational picture needed

Large-scale maps and general force locations were adequate for minister-level game players to reach decisions on policies and select courses of action. However, at the tactical level, aircraft and ships of all three countries need an accurate and rapidly-updated common operational picture to confront air and maritime threats from the DPRK. Over the years, Japan, the United States, and the ROK have developed air and maritime pictures for combined operations using Link 16 and other systems. It is not clear if trilateral tactical common operational pictures could be established quickly and effectively enough to meet the requirements in the TTX scenarios.

Trilateral and bilateral consultations worked well, with two exceptions

Japanese leaders have long been concerned that the two-track nature of American command relationships in the Western Pacific could result in Japan being denied information on developments and U.S.-ROK plans and actions in response to North Korean provocations or conflict. During the TTX, however, the Japan team was deeply involved in trilateral consultations and felt it was fully informed of DPRK actions and U.S.-ROK plans. Indeed, throughout the TTX, the Japanese and ROK teams coordinated well. The two exceptions involved JASDF aircraft participating in a Korea NEO, and a request that a JSDF liaison officer be assigned to the CFC. In the latter case, TTX discussions suggested that work-arounds previously agreed to by Seoul and Tokyo might be possible.

The centrality of the Sea of Japan/East Sea increases the chance of incidents

The centrality of the Sea of Japan/East Sea in these scenarios was a reminder that the submarines of six countries (United States, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Russia, and potentially China) could be operating at the same time in this body of water. Surface ships and maritime patrol aircraft from four of these navies were in the area for the TTX. When tensions are high, the chance of incidents arising from sonar tracking or periscope sightings is also high.

Recommendations

Develop and use a high-level 2+2+2 trilateral coordination mechanism with either in-person or video conference meetings.

- Currently there are many bilateral and trilateral meetings among the United States, South Korea, and Japan. However, responding to North Korean provocations requires a standing and familiar trilateral mechanism that can be convened quickly including officials and officers who have worked together in the past. Currently, South Korea sometimes declines to participate in trilateral meetings based on political considerations of the moment.
- The Alliance Coordination Mechanism (ACM) of the United States and Japan offers a model for building a trilateral consultation process. The ACM generally operates by secure video teleconference with a variety of participants, depending on the nature and scale of the issues under discussion. It is often used by staff of the National Security Councils from both countries as well as officials from the Department of Defense/Ministry of Defense and Department of State/ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A similar mechanism should be developed for trilateral coordination and used both for day-to-day activities and in crises.

Incorporate Japan's capabilities more fully into deterring and defending against North Korean provocations and aggression.

- Develop a trilateral counter-provocation plan, modeled on the current ROK-U.S. plan, to respond to North Korean provocations against both Japan and the ROK.
- Develop options to employ Japan's significant anti-submarine, anti-aircraft, and anti-missile defense capabilities in the Sea of Japan/East Sea into overall plans to deter and defeat North Korean aggression.
- Construct a trilateral common operational picture (COP) to support decision-making and operations at both the strategic and tactical levels by the United States, the ROK, and Japan.
- Conduct trilateral ASW exercises in the Sea of Japan/East Sea, including scenarios to counter North Korean ballistic missile submarines.
- Develop "unidentified submarine contact" procedures for Japan, South Korea, and the United States in the Sea of Japan/East Sea to avoid accidents. The navies of all three countries have procedures for communications between their own surface vessels and submarines that could be adapted for this purpose.

Through trilateral consultations, develop a more effective approach to non-combatant evacuation operations in the event of high-level provocations and conflict on the Korean Peninsula.

- Develop a staged evacuation process, short of departure from South Korea, that will increase the safety of foreign citizens, beginning by relocating them south of the Han River, followed by moving them further south as tensions escalate. Coordinate these steps with ROK civil defense measures so they are not unilateral and do not give the appearance of abandoning the ROK.
- Incorporate the evacuation of South Korean citizens such as the elderly, children, and those with illnesses into Japanese and U.S. evacuation plans.
- Publicize NEO drills so that they become better known and accepted by the ROK public.
- Develop Japan's capability to use civilian air and ship crews in the initial stages of a NEO to avoid introducing JSDF uniformed personnel into the ROK.

Philippines residents displaced by Typhoon Haiyan fill the cargo hold of a C-17 Globemaster aircraft (November 2013). Photo Credit: U.S. Department of Defense | MC1 Peter D. Blair

Continue to evolve flexible U.S. command relationships in Northeast Asia as well as trilateral military channels of communication and coordination.

- In other regions, relationships based on strict geographical assignments of forces are evolving into relationships that are more flexible and adaptive. This principle has application to Northeast Asia given its multiple potential military contingencies and larger-scale conflicts.
- Joint task forces should be established to command American forces dealing with provocations. At the same time, larger joint forces should be planned in case of escalation to wider conflict.
- Whatever the command relationships, it is essential for information to flow freely during both planning and operational stages among the different service commands in both South Korea and Japan, as well as Pacific Command and its service components.
- Trilateral communications among the United States, the ROK, and Japan are essential both to military effectiveness and political unity. Pacific Command must continue to develop and exercise trilateral channels of communication and consultation in peacetime, provocation, crisis, and conflict.
- Any changes to the nationality of the Commander, Combined Forces Command, should take into consideration the importance of trilateral cooperation and communication in the event of provocation or conflict.

Planners from the U.S. military and Japan Self-Defense Forces engage in missile defense planning during a wargame exercise at Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam, Hawaii. Photo Credit: U.S. Department of Defense | Staff Sgt. Nathan Allen

Consider the following issues for development through future TTXs

Responses to North Korean use of nuclear weapons

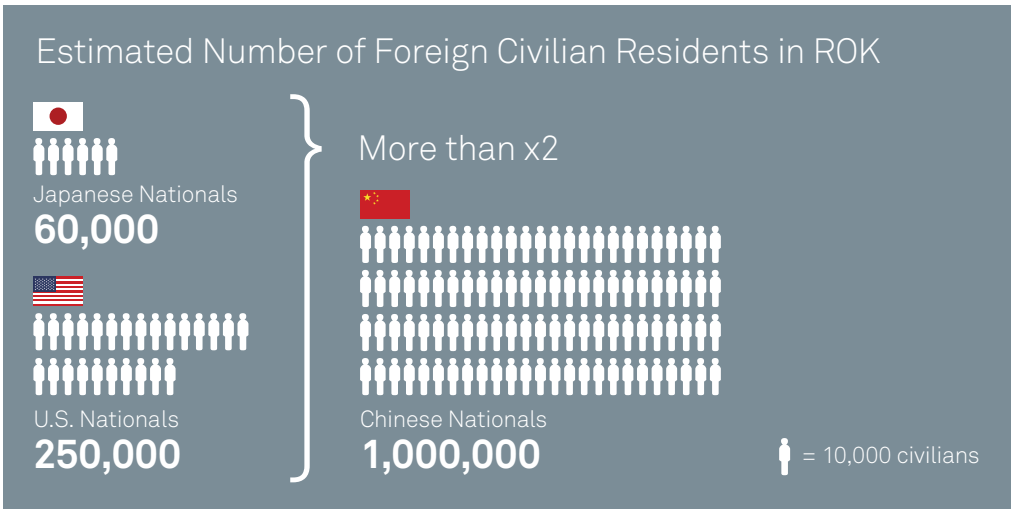
- The participants in the TTX reached consensus that North Korea's use of a nuclear weapon on populated ROK or Japanese territory must be met with an American retaliatory attack on North Korea that destroys its nuclear and conventional capabilities. However, how should threats and uses of nuclear weapons and other WMDs such as chemical and biological weapons be met?

Responses to aggression against either Japan or the ROK, but not both

- The scenarios in the TTX involved simultaneous provocations against both the ROK and Japan. Would there be a different reaction by the ROK if a serious provocation were conducted against Japan only or vice versa?
- The current counter-provocation plan developed by the ROK includes support by the United States. Would deterrence of provocations be enhanced if Japan were consulted and potentially involved?

Chinese civilians in the ROK

- There are an estimated one million Chinese citizens living in or visiting the ROK at any given time, more than three times the number of Americans and Japanese in South Korea.
- Could this vulnerability be leveraged during DPRK provocations to increase pressure on North Korea to refrain from escalating its actions?
- Could China provide a closer and safer haven than Japan for evacuation of foreign citizens?



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