

# LECTURE

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## Does North Korea Have a Missile-Deliverable Nuclear Weapon?

*Mark B. Schneider, PhD*

### Abstract

*According to a recent unclassified Defense Intelligence Agency report, “DIA assesses with moderate confidence the North currently has nuclear weapons capable of delivery by ballistic missiles.” The day the DIA report came out, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel stated that neither Iran nor North Korea is capable of attacking the U.S. with nuclear weapons. Despite the Obama Administration’s denials, however, there is every reason to believe that the DIA assessment is accurate. Indeed, on April 3, Secretary of Defense Hagel himself stated, “They [the North Koreans] have nuclear capacity now, they have missile delivery capacity now.” The fact is that North Korea has the potential to kill millions of people, particularly if there is a weak, ideologically driven response by the Obama Administration to a North Korean WMD attack.*

A recent unclassified Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) report, revealed by Congressman Doug Lamborn (R-CO) on April 11, 2013, stated, “DIA assesses with moderate confidence the North currently has nuclear weapons capable of delivery by ballistic missiles.”<sup>1</sup> This is disturbing news.

The North Korean regime is one of the most fanatic, paranoid, and militaristic dictatorships on the planet. The “supreme leader” is virtually worshipped as a god. The population lives in abject poverty while the regime pursues a “military first” policy. North Korea has nuclear, chemical, and perhaps biological weapons and is developing missiles of all ranges.

### KEY POINTS

- A recent unclassified Defense Intelligence Agency report stated that “DIA assesses with moderate confidence the North currently has nuclear weapons capable of delivery by ballistic missiles.”
- In recent years, the regime has engaged in two major military attacks on South Korea. It has clearly engaged in an escalating pattern of threats and could miscalculate the impact of further military action.
- The Obama Administration’s “nuclear zero” ideology does not impress North Korea and may have precipitated the unprecedented nuclear attack threats from North Korea.
- Although concerns about U.S. willingness to respond promptly and effectively to WMD threats did not start with the Obama Administration, it is clear that the Administration’s talk about nuclear disarmament contributes to these concerns.
- This is very risky. North Korea has the potential to kill millions of people, particularly if there is a weak, ideologically driven response by the Administration to a North Korean WMD attack.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at <http://report.heritage.org/hl1228>

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**The Heritage Foundation**  
214 Massachusetts Avenue, NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
(202) 546-4400 | [heritage.org](http://heritage.org)

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While North Korea has long made occasional nuclear attack threats, the scope, magnitude, and frequency of these threats have vastly increased in 2013. These have included threats of thermonuclear attack on the U.S. and our allies, a verbal declaration of war, and a statement that the 1953 armistice has been terminated and that launch authority has been given to the military.

The Obama Administration immediately tried to walk back the DIA assessment. *Defense News* reported that “Pentagon spokesman George Little said ‘it would be inaccurate to suggest that the North Korean regime has fully tested, developed, or demonstrated the kinds of nuclear capabilities referenced in’ the intelligence report.”<sup>2</sup> The Director of National Intelligence, General (ret.) James R. Clapper, endorsed this statement.<sup>3</sup> *Defense News* also revealed that a “senior House Armed Services Committee aide told them that while the finding was unclassified, the Obama administration wanted to keep it under wraps.”<sup>4</sup>

The DIA assessment is not even really new. As Bruce Klingner of The Heritage Foundation writes, in 2011, DIA Director Lieutenant General Ronald Burgess testified that North Korea “may now have several plutonium-based nuclear warheads that it can deliver by ballistic missiles and aircraft as well as unconventional means.”<sup>5</sup> The assessment is quite credible. What makes the assessment far more significant today is that it must be viewed within the context of an unprecedented barrage of nuclear attack threats and belligerent actions from North Korea with no end in sight.

The day the DIA report came out, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel stated that neither Iran nor North Korea is capable of attacking the U.S. with nuclear weapons. Despite the Obama

Administration’s denials, however, there is every reason to believe that the DIA assessment is accurate. Indeed, on April 3, Secretary of Defense Hagel stated, “They [the North Koreans] have nuclear capacity now, they have missile delivery capacity now.”<sup>6</sup>

Building a nuclear weapon small enough to be carried by the relatively large payloads of North Korea’s ballistic missiles is not a very difficult task because of (1) the vast improvement in computers and in high explosive technology over the last five decades; (2) the public availability of a vast amount of scientific data on both fission and fusion; (3) the U.S. declassification of a great deal of information on nuclear weapons technology; (4) the leak of vastly more classified information on nuclear weapons design; and (5) the proliferation of nuclear weapons designs by China and Dr. A. Q. Khan, the father of the Pakistani nuclear bomb.

### **Downgrading U.S. Military Capabilities**

The Obama Administration’s current position may very well be linked with its plans to radically reduce U.S. military capabilities in both the nuclear and the conventional arenas in the near future, starting with sequestration. From its first days in office, the Administration downgraded the importance of nuclear deterrence and cut missile defense. It is now standing back and allowing a large and rapid reduction in U.S. combat readiness due to sequestration, which is hardly the first and unlikely to be the last Obama Administration cut to defense spending.

The Air Force is now grounding at least 30 percent of its already old inventory of combat aircraft due to funding cuts. According to Secretary of the Air Force Michael B. Donley, “This week, eight fighter and bomber units ceased flying operations, and four additional squadrons will completely stand

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1. Reuters, “Pentagon Says North Korea Can Likely Launch Nuclear Missile,” April 11, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/11/us-korea-north-usa-idUSBRE93A15N20130411>.
  2. Agence France-Presse, “U.S.: ‘Inaccurate’ To Say N. Korea Has Nuclear Missiles,” *Defense News*, April 12, 2013, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130412/DEFREG03/304120010/U-S-8216-Inaccurate-8217-Say-N-Korea-Has-Nuclear-Missiles>.
  3. Press release, “DNI Statement on North Korea’s Nuclear Capability,” Office of the Director of National Intelligence, April 13, 2013, <http://www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/press-releases/191-press-releases-2013/839-dni-statement-on-north-korea-s-nuclear-capability>.
  4. John T. Bennett, “Source: White House Wanted to Keep DIA Finding on N. Korean Nukes Under Wraps,” *Defense News*, April 13, 2013, <http://blogs.defensenews.com/intercepts/2013/04/source-white-house-wanted-to-keep-dia-finding-on-n-korean-nukes-under-wraps>.
  5. Bruce Klingner, “North Korea May Have Nuclear Warheads,” *Heritage Foundation Commentary*, March 15, 2011, <http://www.heritage.org/research/commentary/2011/03/north-korea-may-have-nuclear-warheads>.
  6. “Remarks by Secretary Hagel at the National Defense University, Ft. McNair, Washington, D.C.,” April 3, 2013, <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=5213>.

down when they return from deployment in the next few weeks.”<sup>7</sup> Donley added, “Flying hour reductions will halt training for the rest of the year in many units, and [it] will take up to six months to restore pilot proficiency.”<sup>8</sup>

The Navy also reports “Significant Training, Readiness, and Maintenance impacts” and lower levels of weapons procurement. The Army notes a “Readiness erosion” including “erosion of crew certification in non-deploying units.”<sup>9</sup> Planned aircraft maintenance will not happen, further reducing combat readiness and the time needed to restore it.

Procurement of weapons is being seriously cut on top of repeated cuts during the Obama Administration, the “procurement holiday” of the 1990s, and wear and tear on U.S. military equipment due to more than a decade of constant warfare. In congressional testimony in April 2013, U.S. Strategic Command commander General C. Robert Kehler stated, “As time passes, we will see greater impacts to the nuclear deterrent, global strike, missile warning and missile defense, situational awareness and space and cyberspace, and to our support for warfighters around the globe.”<sup>10</sup>

### Evidence from North Korean Defectors

The argument that there is no current nuclear missile threat to the U.S. from North Korea is based upon the dubious assertion that North Korean nuclear weapons are too heavy to be delivered by the North Korea ICBM that successfully orbited a satellite. This position is frequently taken by opponents of U.S. missile defense and nuclear deterrence both in the U.S. and abroad. For example, China Arms Control and Disarmament Association Research Department Director Teng Jianqun characterized

the situation as follows: “To install a nuclear warhead on a missile, the weight of the nuclear warhead has to be less than 500 kg. North Korea’s technology is still unable to miniaturize its nuclear warheads.”<sup>11</sup>

Yet many of North Korea’s missiles reportedly carry a much larger payload. Moreover, a North Korean defector indicated in 2005 that North Korea had developed a 500-kilogram nuclear weapon.

North Korea was assessed to have nuclear weapons long before the actual (or at least detected) first test of these weapons in 2006. They have apparently made considerable progress in nuclear weapons modernization. Substantial evidence on the North Korean nuclear weapons program has been provided by North Korean defectors who have been interviewed in the South Korean and Japanese press. Little of this has been picked up by the Western media. Their statements appear consistent with the DIA assessment.

The highest ranking North Korean defector (1997), Hwang Jang-yop, said in 2003 that “he personally heard from Kim Jong-il (Kim Chong-il) that the communist country has developed nuclear weapons.”<sup>12</sup> In 2005, a North Korean defector who was a Deputy in the Supreme People’s Council reported that North Korea was building a small nuclear weapon weighing 500 kilograms.<sup>13</sup> A 500-kilogram warhead is probably small enough to be deployed on most or all North Korean missiles, and it is likely to have benefited from North Korea nuclear testing, which began in 2006.

In 2007, North Korean defector Pak To-il said that the first North Korean nuclear bomb was built in 1992, and he estimated the weight of the bomb at over one ton.<sup>14</sup> According to Pak To-il, information for making the bomb was obtained from Russia. He

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7. Tyrone C. Marshall Jr., “Air Force Secretary Discusses \$114.1 Billion Budget Proposal,” American Forces Press Service, April 12, 2013, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=119768>.

8. Ibid.

9. “Department of the Navy FY 2014 President’s Budget,” April 10, 2013, <http://www.defense.gov/news/briefingslide.aspx?briefingslideid=366>.

10. Cheryl Pellin, “Strategic Command: Cuts Erode Capabilities,” American Forces Press Service, March 13, 2013, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=119443>.

11. Song Liwei, “Just What Direction Will North Korea’s Nuclear Testing Take?,” *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao Online*, April 6, 2013, [http://www.http://wnc.dialog.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=wnc.simple\\_search](http://www.http://wnc.dialog.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=wnc.simple_search).

12. Yonhap, “‘Highest’ Defector Claims DPRK, Pakistan Concluded Uranium Enrichment ‘Deal,’” July 4, 2003, <http://www.wnc.dialog.com>.

13. Mark B. Schneider, *The Emerging EMP Threat to the United States* (Fairfax, Va.: National Institute Press, 2007), <http://www.nipp.org/National%20Institute%20Press/Current%20Publications/PDF/EMP%20Paper%20Final%20November07.pdf>.

14. Osamu Eya, “Analysis of Unusual North Korean Behavior—Unexpected Progress Made by North Korea on Miniaturizing Nuclear Weapons,” August 20, 2007, <http://www.wnc.dialog.com>.

also said that by the year 2000, North Korea “had succeeded in miniaturizing the plutonium core from eight to six kilograms. The goal was four kilograms.”<sup>15</sup> He said the designed yield of the North Korean bomb was from four to 15 kilotons.<sup>16</sup>

In 2008, the Japanese press reported, “An engineer who escaped from North Korea” said he “saw a nuclear bomb in January 2001.” According to Japanese journalist Osamu Eya, who made it public, the engineer (an expert in explosives) said the nuclear bomb “was cylindrical and about one meter in both diameter and height.”<sup>17</sup> He reported “there was an electric cord wrapped around the top and bottom parts,” and there “were less than 60 ignition devices.”<sup>18</sup> It included “priming powder as well as plutonium, and there was a neutron launcher in the middle (made of materials) such as beryllium.”<sup>19</sup>

He is clearly describing a spherical implosion nuclear bomb. The dimensions he described are a good match for a warhead for the North Korean Scud and No Dong missiles.

Writing in 2009, former Secretary of the Air Force Thomas Reed and former Director of Intelligence at the Los Alamos National Laboratory Danny Stillman revealed that Chinese nuclear scientists told them that the North Korean nuclear bomb was “a descendant of the [Chinese] CHIC-4 design, provided [by China] to the Pakistanis more than a decade ago and then franchised by Dr. [A. Q.] Khan throughout the proliferation world.”<sup>20</sup> The

bomb tested in 2006 was “probably a plutonium-based derivative of the CHIC-4...”<sup>21</sup> They believe the design yield of the bomb was 12 kilotons but the actual yield when tested in 2006 was only a half kiloton.<sup>22</sup> If the first North Korean bomb was based upon the Chinese CHIC-4 design, an early Chinese missile warhead, it is presumably the larger of the two bombs reported by Pak To-il.

### North Korea’s Nuclear Test Program

North Korea staged its first nuclear test in 2006. It was assessed by the office of the Director of National Intelligence as a sub-kiloton weapon.<sup>23</sup> Japan’s Kyodo News Agency reported that North Korea declared it used two kilograms of plutonium in the 2006 nuclear test.<sup>24</sup> If true, this would partially explain the low yield. If the yield had been lower than expected, as was reported based upon Chinese statements to journalists, presumably North Korea redesigned the weapon to improve its performance. A second test was conducted in 2009. The yield of the second test was assessed by the Director of National Intelligence to be a few kilotons.<sup>25</sup> Notably, for both of these tests, many foreign yield estimates are considerably higher.

In 2012, the journal *Nature* reported, “North Korea may have conducted two covert nuclear weapons tests in 2010, according to a fresh analysis of radioisotope data.”<sup>26</sup> Lars-Erik De Geer, a Swedish Defence Research Agency atmospheric scientist,

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15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. “DPRK Engineer Refugee: ‘I Saw Nuclear Bomb,’” *Sankei Shimbun*, June 27, 2008, <http://www.wnc.dialog.com>.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Thomas C. Reed and Danny B. Stillman, *The Nuclear Express—A Political History of the Bomb and Its Proliferation* (New York: Zenith, 2009), p. 261.

21. Ibid., p. 262.

22. Ibid.

23. Press release, “Statement by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence on the North Korean Nuclear Test,” October 16, 2006, <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/dprk/odni101606.pdf>.

24. NTI, “North Korea Declares 31 Kilograms of Plutonium,” October 24, 2008, <http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/north-korea-declares-31-kilograms-of-plutonium>; KYODO News, “N. Korea Says Used 2 kg of Plutonium in 2006 Nuke Test: Source,” June 28, 2008, <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/2038037/posts>.

25. “Statement by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence on North Korea’s Declared Nuclear Test on May 25, 2009,” June 15, 2009, [http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Press%20Releases/2009%20Press%20Releases/20090615\\_release.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Press%20Releases/2009%20Press%20Releases/20090615_release.pdf).

26. Geoff Brumfiel, “Isotopes Hint at North Korean Nuclear Test,” *Nature*, February 3, 2012, <http://www.nature.com/news/isotopes-hint-at-north-korean-nuclear-test-1.9972>.

concluded that the two tests were “in the range of 50–200 tonnes of TNT equivalent.”<sup>27</sup> He believes that the tests may be related to the boosting of the yields of North Korean nuclear weapons.

Hans Rühle, who from 1982–1988 headed the German Defense Ministry’s planning staff, has said regarding these two reported tests, “Several intelligence services believe that at least one of them was commissioned by Iran.”<sup>28</sup> According to the *Times of Israel*, Rühle also said “a second North Korean test was also carried out that year on Iran’s behalf.”<sup>29</sup>

In 2013, North Korea staged its third announced nuclear test. Its yield has generally been reported at six–seven kilotons, although there are reports of as much as 20 kilotons.<sup>30</sup> Just prior to the test, General Jung Seung-jo, the Chairman of the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that North Korea was likely to test a “boosted fission weapon,”<sup>31</sup> a technique involving the use of thermonuclear material for producing a smaller, more capable nuclear bomb and a key component of modern thermonuclear bombs. There are also reports that the test used highly enriched uranium (HEU).<sup>32</sup> If the yield of the North Korean test was really 20 kilotons, it could potentially have much greater implications for thermonuclear weapons development.

### EMP and Enriched Uranium

Two retired Russian generals told the Congressional Commission on EMP that Russian

scientists were helping North Korea to develop an enhanced electromagnetic pulse (EMP) weapon.<sup>33</sup>

General Kang P’yo-yo’ng of the North Korean Army has actually claimed that North Korea has “miniaturized and reduced-weight warheads.”<sup>34</sup> North Korea also claims to have tested them in its third announced nuclear test.

The generally reported estimate of 10 North Korean nuclear weapons may be low. It reflects estimates of how much plutonium North Korea has. Yet we know that North Korea also has an HEU program.

- In 2008, former Under Secretary of State and Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton characterized the North Korean HEU program at the Six-Party Talks as the “800-pound gorilla” at the negotiating table because of its implications for the outcome of the talks, which only sought (unsuccessfully) to eliminate the North Korean plutonium program.<sup>35</sup>
- In January 2009, then-U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated, “I think the intelligence community now believes that there is an undisclosed either imported or manufactured weapons-grade HEU in North Korea.”<sup>36</sup>
- In February 2009, CBS News reported, “The Dong A Ilbo (East Asia Daily), citing an unnamed senior government official in Seoul, said South

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27. Ibid.

28. “German Expert Suggests Iran Tested Nuclear Bomb in North Korea in 2010,” *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, March 7, 2012, <http://www.accessmylibrary.com/article-1G1-2824-11462/german-expert-suggests-iran.html>.

29. Raphael Ahren, “A German Nuclear Proliferation Expert Claims Pyongyang Performed Two Tests in 2010 on Iran’s Behalf, Contradicting Assertions by the US,” *The Times of Israel*, March 5, 2012, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/report-iran-tested-nuclear-bombs-in-north-korea/>.

30. Robert Farley, “North Korea’s Nuclear Test,” *The Diplomat*, February 13, 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/flashpoints-blog/2013/02/13/north-koreas-nuclear-test/>; “N.Korea Nuclear Test May Cause Volcano Eruption Near Chinese Border—Report,” *Russia Today*, February 8, 2013, <http://rt.com/news/north-korea-nuclear-volcano-757/>.

31. Kim Eun-jung, “Military Commander Hints at ‘Pre-emptive Strike’ on N. Korea,” *Yonhap*, February 6, 2013, <http://www.wnc.dialog.com>.

32. “North Could Use Uranium for Test; Tunnel Site Located,” *Korea JoongAng Daily Online*, February 5, 2013, <http://www.wnc.dialog.com>.

33. Peter Vincent Pry, “North Korea EMP Attack Could Destroy U.S.—Now,” *The Washington Times*, December 19, 2012, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/dec/19/north-korea-emp-attack-could-destroy-us-now/?page=all>.

34. “Speech by ‘Korean People’s Army [KPA] General Comrade Kang P’yo-yo’ng,’ on Behalf of the KPA Officers and Men at a Pyongyang Municipal Army-People Joint Meeting Held at the Kim Il Sung Plaza on 7 March to Support the 5 March KPA Supreme Command Spokesman’s Statement,” *Korean Central Broadcasting Station*, March 8, 2013, <http://www.wnc.dialog.com>.

35. Patrick Goodenough, “Denials of Uranium Program Could Jeopardize North Korea Nuclear Talks,” *CBS News*, July 7, 2008, <http://cnsnews.com/node/15291>.

36. “ROK Daily: N.Korea Believed to ‘Possess Weapons-Grade HEU,’” *Chosun.com*, January 16, 2009, <http://www.wnc.dialog.com>.

Korea and the U.S. were aware of the existence of an underground facility to produce highly enriched Uranium [in North Korea].”<sup>37</sup>

North Korea reportedly obtained HEU from Pakistan in a 1996 deal. Indeed, in 2008, the South Korean newspaper *Chosun Ilbo* said there was discovery of “fresh traces of highly enriched uranium (HEU)...among 18,000 pages of North Korean documents” which were provided as a result of a deal reached in the Six-Party Talks.<sup>38</sup>

In November 2010, Siegfried Hecker, a former Director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, and a group of scientists were allowed to visit the North Korean enrichment facility. Hecker stated, “we saw a modern, clean centrifuge plant of more than a thousand centrifuges, all neatly aligned and plumbed below us.”<sup>39</sup> In December 2009, Pakistani nuclear scientist A. Q. Khan said that North Korea, with Pakistani help, was enriching uranium with 3,000 or more centrifuges as early as 2002.<sup>40</sup> In November 2011, North Korea said that it had 2,000 uranium enrichment centrifuges.<sup>41</sup>

### Toxic Chemical Agents

Nuclear weapons are not the only type of WMD<sup>42</sup> North Korea has. In 2005, North Korea was estimated to have 2,500–5,000 tons of toxic chemical agents.<sup>43</sup> The U.S. has no in-kind deterrent to chemical weapons. The Obama Administration states that North Korea may still have biological weapons.

The Obama Administration dramatically reduced the U.S. deterrence of chemical attack in the 2010

*Nuclear Posture Review Report*, which fundamentally changed policy with regard to nuclear deterrence of chemical attack. It stated:

With the advent of U.S. conventional military preeminence and continued improvements in U.S. missile defenses and capabilities to counter and mitigate the effects of CBW, the role of U.S. nuclear weapons in deterring non-nuclear attacks—conventional, biological, or chemical—has declined significantly. The United States will continue to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in deterring non-nuclear attacks.<sup>44</sup>

According to the report, retaliation against chemical attack would be a “devastating conventional military response.”<sup>45</sup> This is almost laughable in view of the enormous lethality differences between chemical and conventional weapons and the reductions that have been made in U.S. conventional forces in numerous Obama Administration cuts in military spending and sequestration.

### De-emphasizing U.S. Nuclear Deterrence

The de-emphasis on nuclear deterrence in the Obama Administration is blatant. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel’s first statement to the Congress on the FY 2014 budget did not mention nuclear weapons or deterrence. The statement of General Martin E. Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had a single sentence on nuclear deterrence. The Administration even cancelled the launch of the Minuteman ICBM that was scheduled during the period of North Korean provocations.

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37. CBS News, “North Korean Uranium Enrichment Issue Re-Emerges as Clinton Visits Seoul,” February 9, 2009, <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/north-korean-uranium-enrichment-issue-re-emerges-clinton-visits-seoul>.

38. “U.S. Troubled by Info about N.Korea’s Uranium Program,” *The Chosun Ilbo*, June 23, 2008, [http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2008/06/23/2008062361012.html](http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2008/06/23/2008062361012.html).

39. Associated Press, “Scientist: North Korea Secretly Built New Nuclear Facility,” November 21, 2010, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2010/11/21/times-n-korea-secretly-builds-new-nuclear-facility>.

40. Bruce W. Bennett, “Uncertainties in the North Korean Nuclear Threat,” The Rand Corporation, 2010, p. 16, [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/documented\\_briefings/2010/RAND\\_DB589.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/documented_briefings/2010/RAND_DB589.pdf).

41. James R. Clapper, “Statement for the Record on the Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence,” February 16, 2011, p. 6, <http://intelligence.senate.gov/110216/dni.pdf>.

42. Weapons of mass destruction.

43. NTI, “North Korea Chemical,” February 2013, <http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/north-korea/chemical>.

44. U.S. Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review Report*, April 2010, p. viii, <http://www.defense.gov/npr/docs/2010%20nuclear%20posture%20review%20report.pdf>.

45. *Ibid.*

Even before sequestration, the U.S. missile defense programs had taken numerous hits in the Obama Administration's repeated large cuts in planned military spending.

- In the initial round of cuts decided on in 2009, a number of key systems (the mini-kill vehicle and the Kinetic Energy Interceptor) were killed.
- The defense cuts announced in January 2012 "mothballed" the large X-band radar that supported the strategic defense of the U.S. against North Korean attack and announced a considerable reduction in planned production of theater missile defense systems. As the Defense Department stated, "We reduced spending and accepted some risk in deployable regional missile defense and will increase reliance on allies and partners in the future."<sup>46</sup>
- Ground-based interceptor procurement has been reduced to one missile in FY 2014. This directly impacts what we have available to counter North Korean nuclear threats.
- The proposed FY 2014 budget kills the program to develop space-based missile defense sensors.

The Obama Administration's "nuclear zero" ideology does not impress North Korea. Indeed, it may have precipitated the unprecedented nuclear attack threats from North Korea. As U.K. Prime Minister

David Cameron has recently observed, "trying to save money by just relying on the United States to act on our behalf allows potential adversaries to gamble that one day the US might not put itself at risk in order to deter an attack on the UK."<sup>47</sup>

To be fair, concerns about U.S. willingness to respond promptly and effectively to WMD threats did not start with the Obama Administration, but it is clear that the Administration's talk about nuclear disarmament contributes to these concerns. This is very risky. As Mark Halperin has pointed out, North Korea has the potential to kill millions of people. This is particularly the case if there is a weak, ideologically driven response by the Obama Administration to a North Korean WMD attack.

### **An Escalating Pattern of Threats**

Will North Korea implement its nuclear threats? Despite confident predictions to the contrary, no one really knows. In recent years, the regime has engaged in two major military attacks on South Korea. It has clearly engaged in an escalating pattern of threats and may miscalculate the impact of further military action.

As Russian journalist Alexander Golts has pointed out, Kim Jun Un is a type of dictator who exhibits "total indifference to the fate of their own country and people.... If, God forbid, something were to happen, Chernobyl might seem a child's fairy tale."<sup>48</sup>

—*Mark B. Schneider, PhD is a Senior Analyst with the National Institute for Public Policy and former senior official in the U.S. Department of Defense.*

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46. U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense Budget Priorities and Choices*, January 2012, p. 10, [http://www.defense.gov/news/Defense\\_Budget\\_Priorities.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/news/Defense_Budget_Priorities.pdf).

47. David Cameron, "David Cameron: We Need a Nuclear Deterrent More Than Ever," *The Telegraph*, April 3, 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron/9969596/David-Cameron-We-need-a-nuclear-deterrent-more-than-ever.html>.

48. Aleksandr Golts, "Week's Results. Waiting for End of World," *Yezhednevny Zhurnal*, April 12, 2013, <http://www.wnc.dialog.com>.