

Unprecedented Nuclear Strikes of the Invincible Army: A Realistic Assessment of North Korea's Operational Nuclear Capability

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Abstract

North Korea is capable of operationally using nuclear weapons, but its options for a nuclear strike are severely constrained. The only credible use of the DPRK's nuclear arsenal would be to detonate a bomb within North Korea itself to slow down or to stop an invasion in the context of an all-out war. Despite nuclear threats from the DPRK and a countervailing nuclear threat from the U.S. in the form of extended nuclear deterrence, conventional forces are the key units on the Korean Peninsula and appear likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

Keywords: North Korea, deterrence, nuclear weapons,
South Korea, United States

Introduction

Although North Korea's KCNA news often threatens to launch "unprecedented nuclear strikes," in reality, the North Korean nuclear program has limited offensive capability.¹ Just how limited is a matter of dispute between well-informed observers

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