

Nautilus Releases Study of American Nuclear Weapons Delivery Organizations in South Korea

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"Weapons Support Detachment - Korea Nuclear Operations Standard Operation Procedures," September 22nd, 1987.

This SOP manual was released to the Nautilus Institute under the US Freedom of Information Act.

"Tactical Nuclear Weapons Responsibility: Ordnance Versus Field Artillery,"

Lieutenant Colonel Joseph A. Fields, March 8th, 1990, USAWC Military Studies Program Paper.

This Study Project was taken from a USAWC Military Studies Program Paper and released to the Nautilus Institute under the US Freedom of Information Act.

Read the full WSD-Korea SOP [here](#).

Read the full study project report [here](#).

Until February of 1992, American nuclear weapons were based in South Korea. This document describes in detail the standard operating procedures of Weapons Support Detachment-Korea, the primary US military unit responsible for managing and delivering these weapons against North Korea. Some commentators argue that North Korea is seeking nuclear weapons today due to the effect of the allied occupation of Iraq or to merely bargain away in return for economic assistance. This document describes the detailed logistical and organizational preparation to fire nuclear weapons at North Korea in 1987--about the same time that North Korea geared up its own nuclear program--and suggests that their strategic motivation and threat perceptions might be grounded in real and profound perception of threat, not merely a bargaining strategy.

Although all US nuclear weapons in Korea at that time have been removed, in 1991 the US reasserted its intention to reintroduce nuclear weapons in undefined contingencies even as it declared the pending withdrawal of forward-deployed tactical and theater nuclear weapons. The United States continues to assert possible first use against adversaries engaged in aggression and allied to a nuclear weapons state.

Readers seeking an historical understanding of North Korean nuclear threat perceptions may wish to consult the book Pacific Powderkeg: [<https://nautilus.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/PacificPowderkegbyPeterHayes.pdf>]

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EXTRACTS FROM WSD-Korea SOP

"Prefire operations may be performed in any of the team vehicles, an aircraft, a tent provided by the ROKA or in the case of the 155mm or the new 8", at the howitzer." [page 6]

"The team leader / team chief will supervise ramming the weapon and will insure the proper propellant charge is placed in the powder chamber." [page 6]

"The detachment will be notified as soon as possible after the weapon has been fired ... The NST will ensure all remaining packages and components and repackage as necessary to transport safety and evacuate the firing position." [page 6]

"The Detachment will establish a duress code for all teams. It will also be given to air crew members prior to weapon loading if movement is by air. If the duress code is passed to a member of the team security force, the guard will aim his weapon at the individual(s) with the team member and order him to move away from the other individuals. All personnel will then be ordered to spread eagle on the ground and the team leader will be notified. Under no circumstances will the individuals be allowed to enter the exclusion area. This includes the use of deadly force, if necessary." [page 6]

"The welfare of hostages taken or used will not be a deterrent to using the measures necessary to stop the hostile force. All actions will be used, to include firing on NST members held captive if necessary, to ensure control of the remains with the detachment." [page 9]

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