

The US is stoking the flames of war in Korea



Tensions are currently extremely high on the Korean peninsula and a serious danger exists of a new war breaking out, whether by design or miscalculation.

The imperialist powers, their south Korean stooges and their compliant media are trying to paint the socialist Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) as the source of the war danger, pointing to forceful, but often misquoted or distorted, statements from Pyongyang in an attempt to embellish their case.

Not only do they seek in this way to portray the victim as the aggressor; they would also have people believe that a nuclear issue exists in and around Korea solely due to the DPRK's possession of nuclear weapons.

However, nothing could be further from the truth. Not only are the US imperialists, the south Korean reactionary regime and various of their allies currently engaged in a *massive rehearsal for nuclear war on the Korean peninsula* – in exercises that are due to last through the end of April and into May – but the DPRK has lived under a very real threat of a US nuclear attack for over 60 years.

It is for this reason, and this reason alone, that the DPRK finally decided that it had no alternative but to develop *its own* nuclear weapons for its *self-defence*.

Constant escalations by the US

In the context of the ongoing US-led military exercises, more and more deadly military equipment is being poured into the Korean tinderbox.

In mid-March, nuclear-capable US B-52 bombers *practised bombing raids over Korea*, awaking memories among the people of the DPRK of how every town and city in their country was flattened by US carpet-bombing raids in the genocidal war of 1950-53. Four million Koreans were killed as a result of imperialism's barbaric assault on their country.

This was followed at the end of the month by the dropping of dummy ammunition by B-2 bombers, which flew non-stop from the US and home again. The B-2 is a strategic bomber, featuring low-observable stealth technology that is designed to penetrate dense anti-aircraft defences. It is able to deploy both conventional and nuclear weapons and this was the first time that the US has openly admitted deploying them in Korea.

The nuclear weapons carried by a B-2 are equivalent to 75 times the power of the atomic bombs dropped by the

United States on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. *If just two B-2 bombers dropped their payloads on the DPRK, every large and medium-sized city in the country would be completely obliterated.*

Then, on 31 March, the US deployed F-22 stealth warplanes, normally based in Japan, to south Korea. The F-22 is a super-maneuvrable fighter aircraft that uses stealth technology. Primarily designed as an air superiority fighter, its additional capabilities include ground attack, electronic warfare and signals intelligence roles.

Although the DPRK faces hostile military exercises several times a year, all this represents a qualitative escalation of the threats posed to the country – and consequently to the danger of war.

With exercises set to continue for more than a month, the US is openly stating its intention to heighten its military threat. A defence department official was quoted by Associated Press as stating: "The United States will continue to demonstrate unique advanced capabilities as these exercises continue." He declined to be more specific, citing "operational security concerns".

However, on 1 April, the US navy announced that it had sent the *USS Fitzgerald*, a hi-tech destroyer equipped with the Aegis anti-missile system, to waters just off Korea. It is being joined by the destroyer *USS McCain*, whilst the *USS Decatur* is reportedly en route from the Philippines.

Speaking of his observations of the exercises, and confirming their deadly intent, US deputy defence secretary Ashton Carter described his visit to Command Post Tango, the underground bunker in south Korea that houses the US-south Korean joint war command: "It was as if it could have been real ... [the exercises were] going through the options in a way that instils a lot of confidence."

South Korean threats

Also last month, the US and south Korea agreed a so-called 'counter-provocation plan', whose exact terms remain secret, but which sets out a scale of possible attacks on the DPRK and fully commits the USA to participate in any south Korean provocation or act of aggression. South Korean newspaper *Chosun Ilbo* tells us that, according to the plan:

"The south Korean military will handle the initial response, while the US Seventh Fleet, including the aircraft carrier George Washington, will be mobilised, along with Japa-

nese F-22 deployment of US Marines to handle joint missions.”

Emboldened by such pledges of US and Japanese support, new south Korean president Park Geun-hye, the daughter of the former military dictator and wartime collaborator with the Japanese occupiers Park Chung-hee, promptly gave the south Korean military the green light to attack the DPRK at any time. She told a defence ministry policy briefing:

“If the north attempts any provocation against our people and country, you must respond strongly at the first contact with them, without political consideration. As top commander of the military, I trust your judgement in the face of north Korea’s unexpected surprise provocation.”

According to south Korea’s Yonhap news agency, Park has authorised an “*active deterrence*” strategy, which will allow its military to launch a “*pre-emptive strike*” against the north.

South Korea is also boosting missile defences, which, in reality, are designed to facilitate a first strike capability.

Defence ministry plans announced on 1 April include accelerating the set-up of a missile system called ‘Kill Chain’, that is aimed at pre-emptively detecting, targeting and destroying missile and other military installations in the north as well as their command structure.

The ministry also said it plans to develop a separate missile-defence system to intercept incoming missiles “at the earliest possible time”. South Korea is already covered by US missile defences, which can launch anti-ballistic missiles from strategic points, such as US bases in Japan or warships near the peninsula.

A little earlier, on 15 March, defence secretary Chuck Hagel announced that the US would spend \$1bn to install 14 more missile interceptors in Alaska, on top of the 30 already in place in Alaska and California. Hagel claimed this move to be in response to north Korea’s “irresponsible and reckless provocations”.

In fact, this move was already decided months ago and is less aimed at the DPRK, than at China. By denying China the ability to effectively retaliate, the country would effectively be at the mercy of a US nuclear first strike. (See ‘US imperialism steps up war plans against China’, *Lalkar*, September 2012, for full details on how this US plan was already in the works before the current crisis.)

History of US nuclear threats

The September 2006 edition of the US academic publication *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* documented four occasions when the US had threatened the DPRK with nuclear war: twice during the Korean war, first under Truman in 1950 and then under Eisenhower in 1953; in

1976, as a result of an incident in the demilitarised zone that keeps the two parts of Korea divided; and in 1994, when the Clinton administration took issue with the DPRK’s plans to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. (See ‘Historical and political context of the nuclear issue on Korean peninsula’, *Lalkar*, January 2007.)

Starting from at least 2002, the Pentagon, in its periodic defence reviews, explicitly included the DPRK in a list of countries, a number of them non-nuclear, identified as candidates for a US nuclear first strike.

In April 2012, the Obama administration announced a ‘Nuclear Posture Review’, claiming to narrow the range of US nuclear first-strike targets, but Iran and the DPRK were specifically excluded. (See ‘US retains first-strike nuclear threat’, *Proletarian*, June 2010)

In contrast, a law passed by the DPRK’s Supreme People’s Assembly, the country’s parliament, on 1 April this year has made clear that “*The nuclear weapons of the DPRK can be used only by a final order of the Supreme Commander of the Korean People’s Army to repel invasion or attack from a hostile nuclear weapons state and make retaliatory strikes.*”

“*The DPRK shall neither use nukes against the non-nuclear states nor threaten them with those weapons unless they join a hostile nuclear weapons state in its invasion and attack on the DPRK.*”

Both Russia and China have appealed for calm on the Korean peninsula, with Moscow’s foreign minister Sergey Lavrov complaining that “unilateral action is being taken around north Korea that is increasing military activity” and warning that “we may simply let the situation slip out of our control and it will slide into a spiral of a vicious circle”.

A war against Korea is not something British workers can afford to ignore. It is a war against all of us.

Not only would it be aimed at destroying one of our invaluable, pioneering socialist societies – a base for world revolution and an example to oppressed people everywhere of what can be achieved without capitalist exploitation – but it is bound also to escalate into a bloodbath that could suck in the whole world, as neighbouring China and Russia are targeted next.

Faced with this exceptionally serious escalation of military threats by the most powerful warmongering imperialist state in the world, the DPRK and the Korean people have every right to defend themselves by any means necessary. The anti-imperialist and peace-loving people of the world must give them their full and resolute support.

Hands off Korea!

Yankees go home!

3 April 2013