

U.S. Stealth Bombers in Dry Run Over S.Korea

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Global Research Editor's Note

The B-2 are equipped to launch B61-11 tactical bunker buster bombs with nuclear war heads. Their deployment over Korea is a clear act of provocation. (GR Ed. M. Ch.)

U.S. stealth bombers conducted a mock bombing run over a firing range on the island of Jikdo off Gunsan on Thursday, according to the Combined Forces Command.

The B-2 bombers, the most expensive aircraft in the world at about US\$2 billion apiece, have conducted secret bombing runs over the Korean Peninsula several times, but this is the first time their dry runs have been made public.

U.S. military authorities apparently decided to announce them because they wanted to send a warning message to North Korea in response to recent belligerent rhetoric and dampen mounting calls from South Korea to build its own nuclear weapons.

Two B-2 bombers took off from Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri on Wednesday night and flew 10,500 km for more than 15 hours, being refueled in mid-air. They arrived in the air over the Jikdo firing range around noon Thursday. After dropping drill bombs, they were refueled again and returned to their home base.

The CFC said in a press release U.S. Strategic Command sent the bombers "as part of the ongoing bilateral Foal Eagle training exercise," demonstrating U.S. commitment and "its capability to defend [South Korea] and to provide extended deterrence."



A B-2 bomber flies over South Korea on Thursday.

The B-2 is a new strategic bomber that has been deployed by the U.S. Air Force since 1993. Twenty m long and 52 m wide, it is far bigger than the F-22 stealth fighter jet but has such excellent stealth functions that it appears on the radar screen as if it were of similar size.

It would prove its real worth when striking strategic targets such as the North Korean presidential palace and nuclear and missile bases that are equipped with powerful anti-air defense systems or hidden deep underground.

The B-2 can carry GBU-57 Massive Ordnance Penetrator bunker-buster bombs, each of which weighs 14 tons. The bomb can supposedly penetrate 60 m of earth or 8 m of reinforced concrete. It also can carry 80 225-kg Joint Direct Attack Munition smart bombs.

On a single sortie, it can destroy 80 different targets. It could also carry 16 B61

nuclear bombs.

With production reduced significantly, the price has soared stratospherically. One of the 21 B-2s in service crashed at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam in June 2008.

The B-2 proved its value in combat missions since the first NATO bombing in Yugoslavia in 1999. At the time, six B-2 bombers dropped a total of 656 bombs.

After its first bombing mission in Afghanistan on Oct. 7, 2001, a B-2 bomber once carried out six bombing runs over three days and one flew non-stop for 44 hours and 18 minutes, the longest air combat mission in history.

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