

US Braces for Possible Nuclear War With North Korea

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The United States is bracing for a possible nuclear war with North Korea, as well as the regime's possible sudden collapse, according to a Washington-based think tank.

In the analysis of an upcoming Defense Department review, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) said a government team is examining various scenarios, including "regime collapse in North Korea."

The report, dated Aug. 27, also suggested that Washington may consider plans to deal with a potential confrontation with the North that involves a nuclear strike.

It offered a preview of the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review, the first to be released under the administration of President Barack Obama. The paper, in general, sets guidelines on U.S. defense policy.

The possibility of regime collapse in North Korea has been a topic of discussion since rumors surfaced regarding North Korean leader Kim Jong-il's worsening health after suffering a stroke.

Speculation subsequently has grown that Kim is grooming his third and youngest son, Jong-un, 26, to succeed him.

Adm. Timothy Keating, commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, said in July that the U.S. has come up with scenarios to cope with any contingency in North Korea in the event of the elder Kim's death, according to a report.

"We are prepared to execute a wide range of options in concert with allies in South Korea and in discussions with the Department of State," he said.

"I don't think it is axiomatic that the departure of Kim Jong-il means a national security crisis. We'd hope it wouldn't. But we are going to be prepared if it does mean that," he said.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in February also touched on the sensitive issue of North Korea's leadership change.

China has reportedly shunned proposals to discuss the possibility of a regime change or collapse in the North, apparently to avoid provoking its ally.

The CSIS draft analysis also cited other contingencies for which the U.S. is preparing. They include a "loss of control over nuclear weapons in Pakistan" and a clash between China and

Taiwan.

It added the U.S. faces possible “coordinated attacks on offshore energy production facilities, container ships and underwater communication lines that collectively are designed to upend the domestic and global economies.”

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