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Coolheaded Military Analysis is What We Need

By KATO Seiichi

Intimidated by the US President Donald Trump's resolute message that he would not hesitate to resort to preemptive attack against North Korea as he had done in Syria, Song Ilho, North Korean Ambassador in charge of Diplomatic Normalization with Japan, intimidated Japan with a warning that the country would suffer the maximum damage if war breaks out. This is North Korea's psychological warfare to "win without fighting", by stirring up such fears among the "peace-addicted" Japanese that they would make the Japanese government dissuade the US government from attacking North Korea. In fact, every time North Korea was exposed to an existential emergency by way of American military attack, it threatened the South Korean people by saying Seoul would be turned into sea of fire and evaded American military attacks. This tactic has always worked up until now, and North Korea has successfully avoided US military attack while pursuing its own nuclear and missile developments. This time seems to fall into the same tactics again.

However, even if war breaks out, I doubt that Japan should really be the maximum damage and Seoul should turn into sea of fire as suggested by North Korea. We must be cool-headed in military analyses. As we all know, no North Korean fighter jets and war ships are up to date and most of them are rather outdated. Thus, their combat capability is starkly weaker than that of the high-tech armed US forces. North Korean submarines are so slow and noisy that they can hardly come close to the American carrier strike groups. Besides, since North Korea does not have the missile defense system like Japan, they cannot intercept American ballistic missiles. Furthermore, North Korea has no Airborne Early Warning and Control system, which inevitably make the country incapable of defending themselves from ultra-low altitude flight of Tomahawk cruise missiles.

The US Navy can launch about 300 Tomahawk missiles from its two nuclear powered submarines. In addition, it has not yet been confirmed whether North Korea has manufactured nuclear warheads small enough to be loaded on ballistic missiles. Their fixed missile launchers are vulnerable to Tomahawk attacks, which erodes their second-strike capability. Meanwhile, it is assumed that the US forces can destroy North Korea's underground military facilities with "Mother

of All Bombs (MOAB)" as demonstrated in Afghanistan on April 13. Japan and South Korea have defense mechanisms against missile attacks linked with the US' advanced radar systems, which suggests possibilities in which the former two countries can intercept substantial North Korean ballistic missile attacks.

Seen in this way, once the United States resorts to a preemptive attack, all North Korea could do is to focus on its own defense and her counterattack capability against Japan and South Korea is quite limited. Even if North Korea uses a nuclear weapon as the last resort, America will retaliate with several or even some ten times greater nuclear attacks and North Korea will suffer from catastrophic damages. Therefore, Japan does not have to be afraid of North Korean nuclear retaliation. Rather, it would end up simply following the planned tactic by the Kim dictatorship if Japan surrenders to North Korea's usual diplomatic practice of "intimidation".

(This is the English translation of an article written by KATO Seiichi, former attorney-at-law, which originally appeared on the e-forum "Hyakka-Seiho (Hundred Flowers in Full Bloom)" of JFIR on April 27, 2017.)