

Prominent analyst predicts “imminent” US war on North Korea

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25 May 2017

George Friedman, the head of Geopolitical Futures and former chairman of the intelligence and strategic forecasting website Stratfor, has declared, in speeches and articles this week, that a US-led attack on North Korea is “imminent.” Friedman’s assessment is that the sheer scale of the American mobilisation on and near the Korean peninsula is at the point of “crossing a threshold, from threats to military action.”

Stratfor, established by Friedman in 1996, came to prominence with its assessment of the international geopolitical implications of the US invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. Its remit is to provide business elites with rigorous and sober analyses of world developments, in order to assist them in planning their longer-term investments and strategies.

Stratfor analysts, Friedman included, are believed to have close ties with American intelligence agencies and the upper echelons of the military. Their critiques generally ignore mainstream propaganda, such as “fighting terrorism,” and focus instead on the true imperialist motives for US intrigues and interventions—control over strategic territory, oil and resources, and access to markets.

Friedman retired as Stratfor chairman in 2015 and established Geopolitical Futures, which provides similar services to corporations. He made his remarks on North Korea to the “Strategic Investment Conference 2017”—an annual gathering of business figures that took place this year in Florida.

Friedman substantiated his view of the “imminence” of a US attack, by drawing attention to several recent developments.

* With the dispatch of the aircraft carrier Ronald Reagan from its base in Japan, the US Navy now has two aircraft carrier battlegroups operating in the waters adjacent to the Korean Peninsula. Among what

President Donald Trump labelled the US “armada,” are guided-missile destroyers and Ohio-class nuclear submarines, which could launch hundreds of cruise missiles to initiate an attack on the North. Friedman pointed to the prospect that at least two of the aircraft carriers currently based on the US West Coast could also be deployed.

* The US Air Force has deployed a number of its new “fifth generation” F-35 Joint Strike Fighters to South Korea, which are touted as being able to circumvent North Korean air defence systems.

* Some 100 US F-16 strike fighters are conducting daily exercises over South Korea, alongside the South’s own array of hundreds of F-16s, F-15s and older F-5 fighters. Friedman noted that similar daily rehearsals preceded the massive US air onslaught on Iraq in January 1991.

* Friedman also drew attention to a public announcement that “civil defence briefings” will be taking place on May 31 in Guam—where the US Air Force bases a number of B-2, B-1 and B-52 bombers, as well as a squadron of F-22 Stealth Fighters. The purpose of the briefings is to prepare the civilian population’s response, should North Korea prove capable of attacking Guam with long-range missiles.

He bluntly declared: “If we’re not going to war, we are doing a very good imitation of it.”

Echoing other military and strategic analysts, Friedman postulated that any attack would be massive in scale and most likely “undeclared”—that is, there would be no formal declaration of war on North Korea by the US Congress. The North Korean military, he stated, had “a stunning mass” of artillery within range of South Korea’s capital Seoul and the 25 million civilians in its metropolitan area. The objective of the first stage of an undeclared war, he opined, would be to

“neutralise the artillery”—that is, slaughter tens of thousands of North Korean conscript soldiers before they could launch retaliation attacks.

An onslaught of cruise missiles, carpet bombing by B-2s, B-1s and B-52s, and attacks by wave after wave of strike fighters against the North Korean forces massed near the border, would be accompanied by efforts to destroy command-and-control centres. According to the operation plans of the US and South Korean militaries, a key objective of the first hours of a war would be to kill the North’s political leadership, including its figurehead, Kim Jong-un.

Friedman’s remarks are particularly significant in that he dismissed any conception that such a war would be the product of the irrationality of Donald Trump, or simply an attempt to divert attention from the raging political crisis engulfing his administration in Washington. Trump, Friedman made clear, was simply following operational plans for war that were drawn up during the Bush administration and developed further under Obama. An attack on North Korea, he emphasised, had been “American strategy for several decades.”

Friedman did not explore, in his speech, the real target of this “strategy.” It is, in the final analysis, China. North Korea has historically served as a strategic buffer for China against the US and its key regional ally, Japan. The destruction of the current North Korean regime, and the occupation of the North by US-backed South Korean forces, would objectively weaken the Beijing’s position.

Friedman indicated he strongly believes that a war will be launched soon. “We didn’t deploy the number of aircraft, warn the population on Guam, we didn’t deploy carriers, as a gesture,” he said. “We intend to use them, I think.”

Half-jokingly, Friedman concluded that the order to attack was unlikely to be given while the president was away from the United States. Trump is due to return to Washington on May 27.



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