

Nuclear Threats 1970-2010

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Updated through March 31, 2010.

Date	Threat-maker–Target	Speaker/Action	Cause of heightened tensions/crisis	Quote/Description
March 26, 2010	DPRK-US/South Korea	A spokesman for the General Staff of the Korean People's Army	Annual military exercises between the U.S. and South Korea	The Korean Central News Agency quotes a military spokesman as saying “Those who seek to bring down the system in the DPRK, whether they play a main role or a passive role, will fall victim to the unprecedented nuclear strikes of the invincible army.” ¹
December 26, 2008	Pakistan-India	Troop deployments near border and alert level increase	Terrorist attacks against Mumbai, November 26-29, 2008	Pakistan shifts troops from its western border to its eastern border with India. Pakistani intelligence officials say that Pakistani troops along the Indian border are on the highest state of alert. ²
December 22, 2008	India-Pakistan	Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee	Terrorist attacks against Mumbai, November 26-29, 2008	“We will take all measures necessary as we deem fit to deal with the situation.” ³
December 14, 2008	Pakistan-India	Alert level increase	Terrorist attacks against Mumbai, November 26-29, 2008	After claiming that Indian Air Force jets had strayed into Pakistani airspace, Pakistan places its Air Force on alert. A Pakistani Air Force spokesman says the alert’s purpose is to prepare to “thwart any aggression” from India. ⁴
December 4, 2008	Pakistan-India	Dr. Samar Mubarakmand	Terrorist attacks against Mumbai, November 26-29, 2008	Mubarakmand, the scientist in charge of Pakistan’s nuclear testing and solid-fuel ballistic missile development, states in an

				interview shortly after the terrorist attacks on Mumbai that Pakistan could launch its nuclear missiles with ten minutes' notice if Pakistan were attacked by India. ⁵
August 15, 2008	Russia-Poland	Gen. Anatoly Nogovitsyn	Prospective deployment of U.S. ballistic missile defenses in Eastern Europe	"By hosting these, Poland is making itself a target. This is 100 per cent certain. It becomes a target for attack. Such targets are destroyed as a first priority." ⁶
June 4, 2007	Russia-Europe	President Vladimir Putin	Prospective deployment of U.S. ballistic missile defenses in Eastern Europe	"It is obvious that if part of the strategic nuclear potential of the United States is located in Europe, and according to our military experts will be threatening us, we will have to respond." "What kind of steps are we going to take in response? Of course, we are going to get new targets in Europe." ⁷
May 1, 2007	US-DPRK	US-Japan Security Consultative Committee Joint Statement	North Korea's announced nuclear test on October 9, 2006	"The North Korean provocations, including missile launches in July and a nuclear test in October 2006, serve as stark reminders of the importance of transforming the U.S.-Japan Alliance to ensure its continued effectiveness in the ever-changing security environment. ... U.S. extended deterrence underpins the defense of Japan and regional security. The U.S. reaffirmed that the full range of U.S. military capabilities -both nuclear and non-nuclear strike

				forces and defensive capabilities-form the core of extended deterrence and support U.S. commitments to the defense of Japan.” ⁸
October 20, 2006	US-DPRK	US-ROK Security Consultative Meeting Joint Communiqué	North Korea’s announced nuclear test on October 9, 2006	“Secretary Rumsfeld offered assurances of firm U.S. commitment and immediate support to the ROK, including continuation of the extended deterrence offered by the U.S. nuclear umbrella, consistent with the Mutual Defense Treaty.” ⁹
October 18, 2006	US-DPRK	Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice	North Korea’s announced nuclear test on October 9, 2006	“I reaffirm the president's statement of October 9th that the United States has the will and the capability to meet the full range. And I underscore "full range" of its deterrent and security commitments to Japan.” ¹⁰
January 19, 2006	France-Iran	President Jacques Chirac	Iran’s announcement on January 10, 2006 that it would resume enrichment activities at its Natanz plant	“The leaders of states who would...consider using in one way or another weapons of mass destruction, must understand that they would lay themselves open to a firm and adapted response on our part.” “This response could be a conventional one. It could also be of a different kind.” The speech also condemned “the temptation by certain countries to obtain nuclear capabilities in contravention of treaties” and stated that “Against a regional power, our choice would not be between inaction or annihilation. The flexibility

				and reactivity of our strategic forces would enable us to exercise our response directly against its centres of power and its capacity to act.” ¹¹
January 26, 2003	US-Iraq	White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card	Iraq’s resistance to full cooperation with IAEA inspectors and presumed possession of weapons of mass destruction	Saddam Hussein “should anticipate that the United States will use whatever means necessary to protect us and the world from a holocaust,” Card said. When asked if that included nuclear weapons, Card responded, “I’m not going to put anything on the table or off the table.” ¹²
August 2002	Israel-Iraq	Advisor to the Prime Minister Amb. Dore Gold	Iraq’s resistance to full cooperation with IAEA inspectors and presumed possession of weapons of mass destruction	“Israel is not only capable of enduring a strike from Iraq, but also striking back in a due way.” “We have everything necessary for that, as well as full freedom of action to protect the population of this country in case Iraq still dares launch a war against the international community.” ¹³
May 28, 2002	Pakistan-India	Aircraft deployments near international border	Terrorist attack on Indian troops and their families in Kashmir	Pakistan deploys Mirage and A5 attack aircraft near the international border. Both variants are capable of delivering nuclear weapons. ¹⁴
May 26, 2002	India-Pakistan	Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee	Terrorist attack on Indian troops and their families in Kashmir	Vajpayee, in a speech to Indian troops, calls for the army to prepare for a “decisive fight.” ¹⁵
May 25-28, 2002	Pakistan-India	Ballistic missile flight tests	Terrorist attack on Indian troops and their families in Kashmir	Pakistan carries out a series of flight tests involving nuclear-capable ballistic missiles, including the Ghauri, Ghaznavi, and Hatf-2. ¹⁶

May 21, 2002	India-Pakistan; Pakistan-India	Troop deployments near international border and ballistic missile flight test	Terrorist attack on Indian troops and their families in Kashmir	India deploys elements of its Army and Navy closer to Pakistan. Pakistan flight tests a nuclear-capable Shaheen ballistic missile. ¹⁷
May 16, 2002	Pakistan-India	Alert level increase	Terrorist attack on Indian troops and their families in Kashmir	Pakistan increases the alert level of its armed forces. ¹⁸
April 6, 2002	Pakistan-India	President Pervez Musharraf	Terrorist attack on India's Parliament	In an interview with Germany's <i>Der Spiegel</i> magazine, Musharraf says that "as a last resort the atom bomb is also possible." ¹⁹
March 23, 2002	Pakistan-India	President Pervez Musharraf	Terrorist attack on India's Parliament	In a speech on Pakistan's National Day, Musharraf promises that if India challenges Pakistan, it will be taught an "unforgettable lesson." ²⁰
March 20, 2002	UK-Iraq	Secretary of State for Defence Geoff Hoon	Iraq's resistance to full cooperation with IAEA inspectors and presumed possession of weapons of mass destruction	States of concern "can be absolutely confident that in the right conditions we would be willing to use our nuclear weapons." ²¹
March 13, 2002	US-Iraq	President George W. Bush	Iraq's resistance to full cooperation with IAEA inspectors and presumed possession of weapons of mass destruction	"Again, all options are on the table. But one thing I will not allow is a nation such as Iraq to threaten our very future by developing weapons of mass destruction." ²²

January 25, 2002	India-Pakistan	Ballistic missile flight test	Terrorist attack on India's Parliament	India successfully tests a nuclear-capable Agni-II ballistic missile. ²³
December 30, 2001	India-Pakistan	Defence Minister George Fernandes	Terrorist attack on India's Parliament	"We could take a strike, survive and then hit back. Pakistan would be finished." ²⁴
December 29, 2001	India-Pakistan	Military exercise	Terrorist attack on India's Parliament	A major Indian newspaper reports that the Indian military is planning a massive military exercise to test its readiness to defend against a military attack. It notifies Pakistan of this impending exercise, as required by a bilateral agreement signed in 1991. ²⁵
December 27, 2001	Pakistan-India	Alert level increase	Terrorist attack on India's Parliament	Pakistan takes a number of steps to improve its ability to defend against a possible Indian attack, including increasing the alert level of its armed forces. ²⁶
December 24, 2001	India-Pakistan	Nuclear missile deployments	Terrorist attack on India's Parliament	India reportedly moves its Prithvi missiles within range of Islamabad. ²⁷
December 20, 2001	Pakistan-India	Nuclear missile deployments	Terrorist attack on India's Parliament	Pakistan reportedly moves its Hatf-1 and Hatf-2 ballistic missiles closer to the international border (and, by extension, Indian cities). ²⁸
December 18, 2001	India-Pakistan; Pakistan-India	Troop deployments near international border and alert level increases	Terrorist attack on India's Parliament	India moves hundreds of thousands of troops to its border with Pakistan under the aegis of Operation Parakram. The alert levels of both the Indian and Pakistani armed forces are increased. ²⁹
December 17, 2001	India-Pakistan	Home Minister L.K. Advani	Terrorist attack on India's Parliament	"Anyone who challenges our security will have to face the consequences." ³⁰
June-July 1999	Pakistan-India	Activation of nuclear weapons	Kargil conflict	U.S. intelligence services receive information

				indicating that Pakistan has activated its nuclear weapons, preparing them for use in some unspecified way. ³¹
May 31, 1999	Pakistan-India	Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmad	Kargil conflict	“We will not hesitate to use any weapon in our arsenal to defend our territorial integrity.” ³²
May 28, 1999	Pakistan-India	Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif	Kargil conflict	Pakistanis “are confident for the first time in their history that in the eventuality of an armed attack they will be able to meet it on equal terms.” (On the one-year anniversary of Pakistan’s nuclear tests). ³³
May 27, 1999	Pakistan-India	Military spokesman Brig. Rashid Quereshi	Kargil conflict	“The Pakistan armed forces reserve the right to retaliate by whatever means are considered appropriate.” ³⁴
April 10, 1999	Russia-US/Germany	President Boris Yeltsin	NATO bombing of Serbia	“I told NATO, the Americans, the Germans: Don’t push us towards military action. Otherwise, there will be a European war for sure and possibly world war.” ³⁵
May 28, 1998	Pakistan-India	Foreign Ministry meeting with Indian High Commissioner	Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapon tests	“Any such attack [on Pakistan’s nuclear installations] would warrant a swift and massive retaliation with unforeseen consequences.” ³⁶
February 17, 1998	UK-Iraq	Foreign Secretary Robin Cook	Iraq’s resistance to full cooperation with IAEA inspectors and presumed possession of weapons of mass	Saddam Hussein “should be in no doubt that if he were to [use chemical weapons] there would be a proportionate response.” ³⁷

			destruction	
February 4, 1998	US-Iraq	Nuclear bomber deployments	Iraq's resistance to full cooperation with IAEA inspectors and presumed possession of weapons of mass destruction	The US begins deploying a number of nuclear-capable aircraft, including 6 B-52s, 1 B-1, and 6 F-117s, to bases within range of Iraq. ³⁸
January 28, 1998	US-Iraq	Pentagon spokesman Kevin Bacon	Iraq's resistance to full cooperation with IAEA inspectors and presumed possession of weapons of mass destruction	Bacon states that with regard to the use of nuclear weapons in a possible US strike on Iraqi nuclear facilities, "I don't think we've ruled anything in or out in this regard." ³⁹
November 14, 1997	US/UK-Iraq	US/UK aircraft carriers	Iraq's resistance to full cooperation with IAEA inspectors and presumed possession of weapons of mass destruction	The US and UK announce that the U.S.S. Independence and H.M.S. Invincible, accompanied by other ships, will be deployed to the Persian Gulf. ⁴⁰ A number of land-based nuclear-capable bombers are also deployed to the region in this time period. ⁴¹
March 10-11, 1996	US-China	US aircraft carrier Independence	First-ever direct Presidential election in Taiwan	The US moves the carrier Independence to a position approximately 230 miles southeast of Taiwan in response to heightened China-Taiwan tensions. A sailor tells the Los Angeles Times that US fighter aircraft based on the Independence can reach the Taiwan Strait in 30 minutes. ⁴²

March 7-13, 1996	China-Taiwan	Nuclear missile tests	First-ever direct Presidential election in Taiwan	China test launches four nuclear-capable missiles which land in the ocean just north of Taiwan. ⁴³
January 1996	China-US	An unnamed Chinese government official	First-ever direct Presidential election in Taiwan	A Chinese official tells former Assistant Secretary of Defense Charles Freeman that China can act militarily against Taiwan without fear of U.S. intervention because U.S. leaders “care more about Los Angeles than they do about Taiwan.” This is conveyed by Freeman to U.S. National Security Advisor Anthony Lake. Freeman’s impression is that “some in Beijing may be prepared to engage in nuclear blackmail against the U.S. to insure that Americans do no [sic] obstruct” China’s efforts “to defend the principles of Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan and Chinese national unity.” ⁴⁴
December 21, 1995	China-Taiwan	Nuclear missile tests	First-ever direct Presidential election in Taiwan	China test launches three nuclear-capable missiles, which pass over Taiwan before landing in the ocean east of the island. ⁴⁵
December 19, 1995	US-China	US aircraft carrier Nimitz	Chinese nuclear missile tests in the vicinity of Taiwan	The U.S.S. Nimitz and its escort ships pass through the Taiwan Strait, the first such transit since the normalization of US-China relations in 1979. The passage wasn’t publicly acknowledged until January 26, 1996. ⁴⁶
August 15-25, 1995	China-Taiwan	Nuclear missile tests	Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui’s	In the context of broader military exercises, China test launches a number of

			visit to the U.S. and pro-independence stance	nuclear-capable missiles into the East China Sea. ⁴⁷
July 21-28, 1995	China-Taiwan	Nuclear missile tests	Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui's visit to the U.S. and pro-independence stance	In the context of broader military exercises, China test launches six nuclear-capable missiles in an area of the East China Sea close to Taiwan. ⁴⁸
March 25-June 13, 1995	US-DPRK	Private message to DPRK government	Implementation of 1994 Agreed Framework, and specifically regarding the provision to the DPRK of light water nuclear reactors	In 1997, Gen. Eugene Habiger, while testifying before Congress, was asked what role nuclear weapons had had in preventing the use of WMDs by rogue states. He stated that "...it plays a very large role. Not only was that message passed in 1990 by the President [to Iraq], that same message was passed to the North Koreans back in 1995, when the North Koreans were not coming off their reactor approach..." ⁴⁹ This threat was likely passed after March 25, when North Korea announced that it would resume nuclear activities if a contract for the provision of light water reactors (under the terms of the recently-signed Agreed Framework) was not concluded by April 21. The threat was likely passed before June 13, when the US and DPRK issued a joint statement which temporarily resolved the dispute. ⁵⁰
October 7, 1994	US-Iraq	US aircraft carrier George	The deployment of	President Bill Clinton orders the U.S.S. George

		Washington	40,000-50,000 Iraqi troops along the Kuwaiti border	Washington to move to the Persian Gulf. ⁵¹
July 22, 1993	US-DPRK	President Bill Clinton	DPRK's resistance to IAEA inspections and NPT membership	If North Korea developed and used nuclear weapons, "we would quickly and overwhelmingly retaliate. It would mean the end of their country as they know it." ⁵²
January 9, 1991	US-Iraq	President George H.W. Bush	Iraqi invasion of Kuwait	President Bush wrote a letter to Iraqi President Saddam Hussain (read by Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz at his meeting with Secretary of State James Baker) that included the following passage: "Let me state, too, that the United States will not tolerate the use of chemical or biological weapons or the destruction of Kuwait's oil fields and installations. ... The American people would demand the strongest possible response. You and your country will pay a terrible price if you order unconscionable acts of this sort." ⁵³
April 15, 1990	India-Pakistan	BJP President L. K. Advani	1990 India-Pakistan crisis	If Pakistan attacks India it will "cease to exist." ⁵⁴
April 14, 1990	Pakistan-India; India-Pakistan	Unnamed senior military officer; alert level increases	1990 India-Pakistan crisis	A Pakistani parliamentary committee of is informed that Pakistan's armed forces are in a "high state of preparedness and vigilance." Indian air force bases close to the international border are put on a higher alert level. ⁵⁵
April 10, 1990	India-Pakistan	Prime Minister V. P. Singh	1990 India-Pakistan crisis	"I warn them [that] those who talk about a thousand

				years of war should examine whether they will last a thousand hours of war.” ⁵⁶
December 1988-January 1989	US-Libya	US aircraft carrier John F. Kennedy	Libya’s construction of three chemical weapons plants and support for terrorists implicated in the destruction of Pan Am Flight 103	The U.S.S. John F. Kennedy conducts exercises in the Mediterranean Sea with French, Tunisian, and Moroccan forces. The deployment culminates in the destruction of two Libyan fighter aircraft by U.S. carrier-based F-14 fighters. ⁵⁷
June 1988	China-Vietnam	Exercises simulating tactical nuclear attack	A crisis over ownership of the Spratly Islands which led to a battle between Chinese and Vietnamese naval vessels	Chinese forces conduct an exercise in the Spratly Islands which simulates a tactical nuclear attack. ⁵⁸
November 2-11, 1983	USSR-US	Alert level increases	1983 NATO Able Archer exercise	During the NATO Able Archer-83 exercise, the Soviet Union fears a nuclear first strike. Its response includes raising alert levels at air bases host to nuclear-capable units in East Germany and Poland. ⁵⁹
March 18-26, 1983	US-Libya	US aircraft carriers Enterprise and Nimitz	Libya’s interventions in Chad and Sudan and threats against Egypt.	The U.S.S. Nimitz and U.S.S. Enterprise are deployed to an area of the Mediterranean Sea just north of Libya. Libyan leader Col. Qadhafi threatens to turn the Gulf of Syrte into a “red sea of blood” if U.S. vessels enter it. ⁶⁰
January 25, 1981	France-Libya	Alert level increases	Chad’s Civil War, in which France and	In December 1980, France had described the situation in Chad as being of “grave

			Libya support the two major opposing factions. The crisis escalates in January 1981 when Libya and its Chadian client announced plans to merge Libya and Chad.	concern.” A month later France places its Mediterranean Fleet on alert. ⁶¹
November 18-21, 1979	US-Iran	US aircraft carriers Midway and Kitty Hawk	Iranian hostage crisis	The aircraft carriers U.S.S. Midway and U.S.S. Kitty Hawk both arrive in the northern Arabian Sea, within striking distance of Iran. ⁶²
Late February 1979	US-USSR	US aircraft carrier Constellation	Sino-Vietnamese War	The USS Constellation carries out operations in the South China Sea, warning the Soviets not to intervene in the Sino-Vietnamese war. ⁶³
February 18, 1979	USSR-China	Government Statement via TASS news agency	Sino-Vietnamese War	The Chinese government should halt its attack on Vietnam “before it is too late.” The Soviet Defense Minister describes this several days later as a “serious warning.” ⁶⁴
Early 1979	USSR-China	Forward deployments of nuclear capable aircraft and missiles	Sino-Soviet Border Conflict	The Soviet Union begins deploying SS-20 ballistic missiles and Backfire bombers close to the Soviet-Chinese border. ⁶⁵
July 1977	UK-Guatemala	Forward deployment of strike aircraft and aircraft carrier Achilles	Guatemalan assertions of sovereignty over and deployment of troops near the border with British Honduras	During a crisis with Guatemala over British Honduras (Belize), the U.K. deploys the H.M.S. Achilles, its associated air wings, and an additional six Royal Air Force Harrier jets near the border with Guatemala. ⁶⁶

August 17-September 16, 1976	US-DPRK	Deployments of strike aircraft and the US aircraft carrier Midway	The “Poplar Tree incident” in the Demilitarized Zone that divides North and South Korea in which two U.S. military officers are killed	The U.S. deploys a number of forces to South Korea, including nuclear-capable F-4s, F-111s, and B-52s, as well as the U.S.S. Midway. U.S. forces in Korea are brought to DEFCON 3, an alert status half way between peacetime and war. ⁶⁷
October 25, 1973	US-USSR	Deployments of nuclear capable bombers	October (Yom Kippur) War	60 B-52 strategic bombers are moved from their base in Guam to the continental US, where they join other Strategic Air Command forces on alert status. ⁶⁸
October 24, 1973	US-USSR	Alert level increase; Letter from President Richard Nixon	October (Yom Kippur) War	In response to a letter from the Soviet leader Brezhnev threatening to unilaterally intervene in the October (Yom Kippur) War, U.S. forces worldwide, including nuclear ones, are placed on DEFCON 3. ⁶⁹ In a letter addressed to General Secretary Brezhnev, Nixon states that “we must view your suggestion of unilateral action as a matter of the gravest concern, involving incalculable consequences.” ⁷⁰
October 22-25, 1973	USSR-US	Nuclear weapon deployment	October (Yom Kippur) War	A Soviet freighter travels from the Bosphorus Strait to Alexandria, Egypt. Its cargo emits neutrons, indicating that it is carrying nuclear weapons. ⁷¹
October 7-14, 1973	Israel-Egypt/Syria	Nuclear missile deployments and alert level increases	October (Yom Kippur) War	After the beginning of a surprise two-pronged assault by Egypt and Syria, Israel deploys Jericho missiles with nuclear

				warheads and places them on high alert. ⁷²
December 13, 1971	US-India/Russia	US aircraft carrier Enterprise	1971 India-Pakistan War	The U.S.S. Enterprise, supported by elements of the Seventh Fleet, moves into the Indian Ocean. ⁷³ Nixon later describes the action as “a display of old-fashioned gunboat diplomacy aimed at India and Russia” designed to “give emphasis to warnings not to attack West Pakistan.” ⁷⁴
September 17, 1970	US-Iraq/Syria	US Sixth Fleet	September 1970 Jordanian crisis	The bulk of the US Sixth Fleet, including two aircraft carriers, moves into the eastern Mediterranean Sea. President Richard Nixon says, in a private telephone conversation, that if Iraq or Syria intervenes on behalf of the Palestinian fedayeen, “my strong feeling at this time is that we should use American air and knock the bejesus out of them.” ⁷⁵
April-July, 1970	USSR-Israel	Forward deployment of strike aircraft	“War of Attrition” between Israel and Egypt, 1967-1970	Soviet Mig-21 aircraft are deployed near the Suez Canal during a series of clashes between Israeli and Egyptian forces. Some Mig-21 variants are capable of delivering nuclear weapons. ⁷⁶

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- ¹⁶ Ibid.
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- ¹⁹ Ibid.
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