

Previous explanatory articles

If nuclear weapons were to be used...to avoid causing unimaginable damage.

Wednesday, August 9, 2023

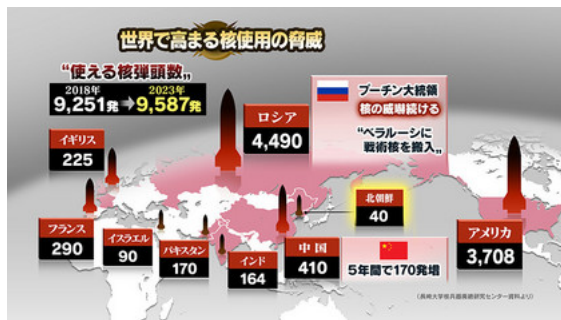
Junya Yabuuchi commentary committee member



August 9th marks 78 years since the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. Last year, Russia continued its invasion of Ukraine, and North Korea's nuclear missile development was accelerating. We will think about the meaning of this year's Atomic Bomb Day while introducing simulations conducted by Nagasaki University and other institutions to show what would happen if nuclear weapons were used.



[The growing threat of nuclear use around the world]



The number of nuclear warheads currently in existence in the world is estimated to be 12,520.

It has been decreasing for nearly 40 years since the mid-1980s, at the end of the Cold War, but the reduction is now turning a corner.

The ``number of usable nuclear warheads" deployed and stored for operational purposes is increasing.

According to the Nagasaki University Nuclear Weapons Abolition Research Center, the number is 9,587.

The number is particularly increasing in Russia. President Putin has made nuclear threats from time to time. He said that last month he delivered relatively short-range tactical nuclear weapons to neighboring Belarus.

In addition, China is estimated to have increased the number of missiles by 170 over the past five years, and North Korea is said to now have as many as 40. Meanwhile, the United States, Britain, and France also maintain their nuclear forces and are said to be modernizing their equipment.

The idea of ``nuclear deterrence," in which possessing nuclear weapons deters

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[Damage simulation in the event of nuclear use in Northeast Asia]
 Under these circumstances, by learning what kind of damage would occur if nuclear weapons were used near Japan, we can make recommendations to reduce the risk of nuclear weapons being used. An international project team including the Nagasaki University Nuclear Weapons Abolition Research Center conducted a detailed simulation, the first of its kind in this region, based on each country's nuclear strategy, international situation, and scientific knowledge such as physics and medicine. .

We have provided damage estimates for five cases, but we would like to introduce one that is of particular concern.



The first is a case in which North Korea uses it to target South Korea, and then the United States counterattacks. If the South Korean military entered the territory, North Korea would use relatively small nuclear weapons to target South Korean coastal areas, and the United States would then use two relatively small nuclear weapons to target North Korean nuclear bases. Masu. It is estimated that 11,000 people have died in South and North Korea over the past few months, and that up to 36,000 people will die from cancer in the long term due to the effects of radiation. Depending on the direction of the wind, radioactive materials could reach Japan, exposing people to amounts of radiation that exceed the annual exposure limit (1 mSv) for the general public.



ships equipped with submarines and bombers in the Sea of Japan, while Russia uses a total of five large nuclear weapons to target US military bases and ships in Japan. It is assumed that this will be used.

In response, the United States plans to attack bases in eastern Russia with three small nuclear weapons.

In just a few months, 290,000 people died in Japan and Russia, more than the number of victims in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and in the long term, up to 85,000 people are expected to die from cancer.



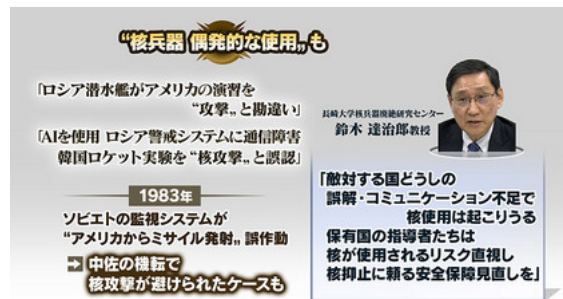
The most serious scenario is a nuclear war between the United States and China over Taiwan.

The assumption is that the Chinese leadership will attack Taiwan's defense facilities to distract the people, and Taiwan will counterattack with support from the United States and escalate the situation.

If China determines that it cannot win with conventional weapons alone, it will abandon its nuclear strategy of "no first use" and attack US military bases in Japan and South Korea with powerful nuclear weapons. The United States counterattacked with small nuclear weapons, targeting nuclear missile bases in China's interior. And China plans to attack bases on the American mainland with intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), and a total of 24 nuclear weapons. The number of victims in Japan, South Korea, China, the United States, and other countries has increased to 2.6 million in just a few months, and it is estimated that up to 830,000 people will die from cancer in the long term. The project team wants people to understand that each person dies, not just numbers.

[Nuclear use may occur accidentally]

The simulation also states that it is possible that nuclear weapons may be used accidentally.



For example, "Russian submarines attack American drills, etc., mistakenly believing they have been attacked," and "Russian warning systems have communication failures, mistaking South Korean rocket tests as nuclear attacks, and U.S. forces stationed in South Korea." "A case of attacking a military base."

not report the missile to his superiors because he believed there were few missiles and there was a possibility of them malfunctioning, so the missile did not result in a nuclear attack. Although a nuclear attack was averted in this case, accidental nuclear use is not impossible.

Professor Tatsujiro Suzuki of the Center for Nuclear Weapons Abolition Research at Nagasaki University and a core member of the project said, ``The use of nuclear weapons can occur due to misunderstandings or lack of communication between opposing countries. If even one weapon is used, it can cause enormous damage. "It is inevitable that nuclear weapons will be used. I want the leaders of nuclear-weapon countries to face the risk of nuclear weapons being used and reconsider their approach to security that relies on nuclear deterrence."

[A bombed area seeking a break from the growing theory of nuclear deterrence]

Nowadays, given the severe security environment, we are hearing a lot of talk about nuclear deterrence, just like during the Cold War.



The Hiroshima Vision, compiled at the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, emphasized the importance of nuclear disarmament toward a world free of nuclear weapons, while also stating that, ``As long as nuclear weapons exist, they should play a role for defensive purposes." "", the idea was based on nuclear deterrence.

The areas affected by the atomic bombing are concerned that the idea of nuclear deterrence is becoming stronger.

The Nagasaki Peace Declaration stated, ``We cannot achieve a world free of nuclear weapons if we rely on nuclear deterrence," and added, ``Now is the time to have the courage to decide to break away from dependence on nuclear deterrence." "I am," he complained.

Nuclear deterrence is based on the premise that the leaders of nuclear-weapon states can make the correct decision not to use nuclear weapons because doing so could lead to a catastrophic situation.

Looking at the current state of the world, to what extent does this premise hold true?

[Reflecting the thoughts of atomic bomb survivors]

The atomic bomb was dropped 78 years ago, and in that year alone, 140,000 people died in Hiroshima and 70,000 people died in Nagasaki. Many A-bomb survivors have passed away since then, and some still suffer from residual disabilities.



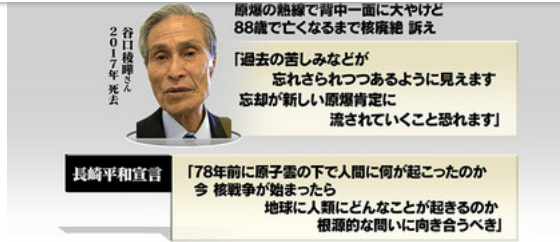
Setsuko Thurlow, a Hiroshima atomic bomb survivor who has campaigned for the abolition of nuclear weapons around the world, lost eight of her relatives, including her older sister and four-year-old nephew, as well as 351 other classmates from the same girls' school. When she was 13 years old, she saw many people being put to death, and she said that she was in such an extreme state that she could no longer cry and lost her emotions. Even now, at the age of 91, Thurlow continues to call for the abolition of nuclear weapons through her aching body, always holding that experience close to her heart. I will continue to say this on behalf of the dead until it comes true. I think it is because I have a strong sense of responsibility that I stand up and continue."

How can we reflect the feelings of these atomic bomb survivors?



This November, the second Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will be held at the United Nations Headqua. ... Japan is not a party to the treaty, and did not participate in the first meeting last year as an observer, citing ``no nuclear-weapon states have joined the treaty, making it difficult to move forward with realistic efforts." However, countries such as Germany, which like Japan is under the US nuclear umbrella, participated in the first meeting as observers, saying, ``We share the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. We would like to continue dialogue and discussion." I expressed my opinion. The Japanese government says it will play a role as a bridge between nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states by holding conferences for discussions between domestic and foreign experts, but from the perspective of the atomic bomb survivors, it appears that this is not being done. Masu, I think it is necessary to consider participation as an observer like in Germany.

[Don't forget, imagine the disaster of the atomic bomb]



The Nagasaki Peace Declaration featured the words of Ryōki Taniguchi, who suffered severe burns all over his back from the atomic bomb's heat rays and continued to advocate for the abolition of nuclear weapons until his death six years ago at the age of 88, while battling pain. Mr. Taniguchi said, "It seems that the suffering of the past is being forgotten. I fear that this forgetting will lead to a new affirmation of the atomic bomb," he said, as if predicting the current situation. That is to say. In addition, the peace declaration goes back to the basics of "What happened to humans under the atomic cloud 78 years ago?" and asks, "If a nuclear war begins now, what will happen to the earth and to humanity?" We must face the fundamental questions," he said.

This year, the average age of atomic bomb survivors who have prayed for the abolition of nuclear weapons has exceeded 85 years old. In order to prevent a repeat of that tragedy, now that the hurdles for using nuclear weapons seem to be lowering, I would like people to think about how to respond to the feelings of elderly atomic bomb survivors and those living in the atomic bombing regions.

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