

North Korea's Nuclear Inventory

North Korea's nuclear weapons program has existed for [decades](#) in a self-described attempt to protect the regime from security threats posed by adversaries and proxies. Bilateral efforts between the United States and the DPRK under the [Agreed Framework](#) ultimately failed, and in 2003, North Korea officially [withdrew](#) from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty ([NPT](#)). Just three years later, the country successfully tested its [first](#) nuclear weapon. Despite extensive multilateral [sanctions](#) and efforts to persuade the state to continue diplomatic discussions, North Korea continues to build its stockpile of nuclear weapons and delivery systems, test short-, intermediate- and long-range missiles, and produce [fissile material](#).

North Korea's nuclear doctrine has varied from a declared [policy](#) of "no first use," (albeit with some caveats), to codified authorization for an offensive nuclear attack. More recently, the DPRK has [declared](#) itself a nuclear weapons state and [vowed](#) never to abandon its nuclear arsenal, further complicating [diplomatic](#) paths to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

The DPRK relies heavily on its land-based nuclear arsenal and has devoted significant effort to developing missiles and mobile delivery systems to enhance its nuclear capabilities. Recent [analysis](#) indicates that North Korea might now possess smaller [nuclear warheads](#) that could be mounted on medium- to long-range ballistic missiles. However, the operational status of many of these missiles is unknown and/or difficult to [verify](#). North Korea remains in violation of several arms control treaties, test bans and UNSC [resolutions](#).

How Many

It is estimated that North Korea has enough fissile material to build [45 to 55](#) nuclear warheads, with [20 to 30](#) possibly assembled warheads.

Air

There is no public evidence that North Korea has air-based capabilities.

Sea

North Korea [currently](#) claims to be developing a series of Pukguksong class submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBM). So far, successful tests are limited to the [Pukguksong-1 \(KN-11\)](#), and the [Pukguksong-3 \(KN-26\)](#). The deployment status of these missiles remains unknown.

Land

Short-Range Missiles Ballistic Missiles (SRBMs): North Korea has several close and short-range (<1,000 km) operational ballistic missiles, including the [Hwasong-5](#), [Hwasong-6](#), and the KN-02 ([Toksa](#)). New and smaller tactical weapons such as the [KN23](#), [KN24](#), and [KN25](#), have undergone significant testing, with mixed results, since 2019. Some [analysts](#) suggest that while these missiles are likely meant for conventional warfighting, they could eventually be used to carry a nuclear payload.

Medium-Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBMs): North Korea possesses three types of medium-range (800-2,000km) ballistic missiles, the Hwasong-7 ([Nodong-1](#)), [Hwasong-9](#), and the Pukkuksong-2 ([KN-15](#)). According to experts, the KN-15 is dual-capable (able to carry either conventional or nuclear warheads) and poses a significant regional risk if deployed. North Korea has [two](#) intermediate-range ballistic missiles: the [Hwasong-10 \(Musadan\)](#) and the [Hwasong-12 \(KN17\)](#). The Hwasong-10 (Musudan) status remains unknown following

several failed tests in 2016. The Hwasong-12 (KN17) has been tested successfully three times, the latest being in January 2022. The deployment status of these missiles is unknown.

Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs): North Korea's first successful ICMB test flight occurred in [2017](#), when the country launched the [Hwasong-15](#). The Hwasong-17, a newer long-range missile that is believed to be capable of delivering multiple nuclear payloads (MIRV) has [yet to have](#) a verifiably successful launch. Despite extensive development and testing of these weapons, however, there is thus far limited evidence that any of these weapons can survive violent re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere.