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Terrorism Expert Brian Michael Jenkins Releases “When Armies Divide”

What happens when nuclear-armed states face internal revolt? Jenkins analyzes the consequences.

San Jose, Calif., April 8, 2013 – Syria’s escalating civil war has raised concerns about the security of the country’s arsenal of chemical weapons. The Pentagon reportedly has secret plans to secure Pakistan’s nuclear weapons against terrorists, a jihadist coup, or civil war. It also has conducted war games to explore how it might try to secure North Korea’s nuclear arsenal in case of a coup or collapse of the regime. Against this worrisome backdrop, international counterterrorism authority Brian Michael Jenkins, director of the [Mineta Transportation Institute](#)’s Transportation Safety and Security Center, has released a new eBook, *When Armies Divide*. It is available for download at Amazon.com www.amazon.com/dp/B00BX5SD1O and the Apple iBookstore bit.ly/whenarmiesdivide.

When Armies Divide addresses the security of nuclear weapons during revolts, coups, and civil wars. To identify the dilemmas and decisions governments would face if rebels or disloyal military commanders threatened to seize control of nuclear weapons, Jenkins uses a real-life case as a platform to raise broader questions of current relevance.

A real-life case forms the basis.

In 1961, France was testing nuclear weapons at its Sahara test site in southern Algeria, an unusual situation to begin with, since French forces were at the same time engaged in a bloody war against Algerian nationalist guerrillas seeking independence. The first three nuclear tests went well, but the final preparations for the fourth test coincided with a rebellion by commanders of the French forces in Algeria who were determined to keep Algeria French. They feared that French President de Gaulle, in order to end the costly conflict, was about to betray their cause.

At the outset of the uprising, the leader of the revolt called the general commanding the test site, telling him, “Do not detonate the small bomb. Keep it for us. It may be useful.” While the rebellious generals tried to consolidate their control in Algeria, Paris pushed for the test to be conducted as scheduled. And it was, although with disappointing results, leading some to suggest that the test had been deliberately scuttled to ensure that the rebels could not get their hands on the device.

Mr. Jenkins believes that the possibility of similar circumstances arising today is not so far-fetched, given the history of political upheavals in the Soviet Union, China, Egypt, Syria, Pakistan, and other nations. Although nuclear weapons (or their potential components) did not fall into dangerous hands in any of these cases, they could be at peril in future episodes.

An event today would be different.

In 1961, the French army’s revolt was viewed as an internal matter for France. Few even knew about the potential threat to the nuclear test. A similar event today would be very different. A seizure of power by generals in Pyongyang or a military revolt in Pakistan or some future

nuclear-armed state could create a major international crisis. Pressures to intervene would mount swiftly, but success, Mr. Jenkins concludes, would be a long shot. The consequences of missing nukes could also have profound consequences, including ratcheting up repression.

In a commentary added to the book, Stephen J. Lukasik, a former director of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, notes that nuclear crises like the one described by Mr. Jenkins have been repeated in various contexts many times over. “A tribute to the human spirit, or perhaps simply hubris,” Mr. Lukasik writes, “is the belief that crises are subject to ‘management.’”

A second addition to *When Armies Divide* is the remarkable personal recollections of Constantin Melnik, who, as Coordinator for Intelligence for the prime minister of France from 1959 to 1962, played a key role in the events described in the publication. Mr. Melnik’s candid memoir offers an unvarnished firsthand account of the panic, disarray, suspicion, and chaos that prevailed in Paris during the revolt.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brian Michael Jenkins is an international authority on terrorism and sophisticated crime. He directs the Mineta Transportation Institute’s research on protecting surface transportation against terrorist attacks. He is also a senior advisor to the president of the RAND Corporation and, from 1989-1998, was deputy chairman of Kroll Associates. Before that, he was chairman of RAND’s Political Science Department. He holds a BA in fine arts and a Masters degree in history, both from UCLA. He also studied in Mexico and was a Fulbright Fellow in Guatemala, where he received an additional fellowship from the Organization of American States. A captain in the Army Special Forces, Jenkins is a decorated combat veteran with service in both Latin America and Vietnam. He has authored numerous articles, reports, and books, including *Will Terrorists Go Nuclear?* For more information about the author and his publications, visit brianmichaeljenkins.com

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