



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

EAST ASIAN STUDIES CENTER

**2024 THE INSTITUTE FOR KOREAN  
STUDIES AND MERSHON  
CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL  
SECURITY STUDIES PRESENT:**

**"NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR FIRST USE  
AND ALLIANCE RESPONSE"**

**ROBERT E. KELLY**

**Pusan National University**

North Korea has large incentives to use a tactical nuclear weapon early in another conflict on the Korean peninsula for three reasons: Operationally, Pyongyang will face an intense 'use-it-or-lose-it' dilemma regarding its WMD as soon as a war starts. Strategically, its conventional military is quite inferior to the forces ranged against it. And grand strategically, any serious conflict between the two Koreas will quickly become existential for the North. I suggest two responses to this challenge: First, at the time of attack, the allies should respond with nonnuclear retaliation as long as feasible, in order to prevent further nuclear escalation. This will be difficult given post-strike panic and hysteria. So, second, in preparation, the US should deconcentrate its northeast Asian conventional footprint, to reduce opportunities for North Korea to engage in blackmail of regional American aggregations, and to reduce potential US casualties and consequent massive retaliation pressures.



**Free and open to the public**

**<https://easc.osu.edu/events/iks-lecture-robert-kelly>**

**This event is sponsored by a U.S. Department of Education Title VI grant to  
The Ohio State University East Asian Studies Center**

**22  
JANUARY**

**Monday  
12:00-1:30pm  
Derby Hall 1039**