

North Korea Threatens To Restart Nuclear Program If US Won't Lift Sanctions

Things have been quiet in North Korea since Secretary of State Mike Pompeo enjoyed a harmonious surprise lunch with Kim Jong Un during a visit to Pyongyang last month, where Pompeo and the Hermit Kingdom's 'Dear Leader' tentatively agreed to a second summit between President Trump and Kim to be held "as early as possible." That lunch effectively signaled that denuclearization talks between the two sides had begun again in earnest after North Korea announced that it would dismantle its main nuclear facility and several missile testing sites under international scrutiny - something that Kim tried to spin as a "gesture of good will."

However, talks during the intervening weeks has apparently been less than productive, as the North is once again growing tired of the US's continued insistence that a complete denuclearization will need to take place before the painful economic sanctions facing the North can be lifted.

According to NBC News, **North Korea threatened to restart its nuclear program on Tuesday if the US doesn't lift economic sanctions.** While the North has relapsed into similar bellicose rhetoric since the US-NK detente began early this year, this is perhaps the most aggressive threat in that time.



The reason talks denuclearization talks have effectively stalled, according to the Washington Post, is that the Trump administration has repeatedly insisted that sanctions remain in place until the North completely dismantles its nuclear program...

"A lot of work remains, but I'm confident that we will keep the economic pressure in place until such time as Chairman Kim fulfills the commitment he made to President Trump back in June in Singapore," Pompeo said.

...while Kim has insisted that sanctions be lifted gradually as the North slowly

unravels its program.

In the statement, North Korea stopped just short of threatening to break off talks.

The statement released by the Foreign Ministry Friday evening came amid a sense of unease between Washington and Seoul over the use of sanctions and pressure to get the North to relinquish its nuclear program.

The ministry said North Korea could bring back its “pyongjin” policy of simultaneously advancing its nuclear force and economic development if the United States doesn’t change its stance.

The North came short of threatening to abandon the ongoing nuclear negotiations with the United States.

But it accused Washington of derailing commitments made by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump at their June summit in Singapore to work toward a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula, without describing how and when it would occur.

What’s worse, the threatening statement seemingly came out of nowhere. On Friday, Pompeo said in an interview with Fox News’ Sean Hannity that he had planned to talk with his North Korean counterpart, senior North Korean official Kim Yong Chol, this week.

Though we can think of one reason why this development isn’t all that surprising. Given the interminable back-and-forth between President Trump and President Xi Jinping over the framework for talks between the two leaders at the G-20, which have been confirmed many times only for senior administration officials to deny the reports, or at the very least hedge them, China may once again be growing impatient with the US, which is understandable, given its slowing economy, blossoming corporate debt defaults and the looming threat that the US could slap more tariffs on another \$200 billion-plus of Chinese goods entering the US. **And this wouldn’t be the first time that China may have leaned on the North to up its bellicose rhetoric to try and distract the Trump Administration from the ongoing trade war.**

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