North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-un, moved to ease his country’s isolation by offering to send a delegation to the Winter Olympics in South Korea next month, even as he claimed to have accomplished the ability to launch a nuclear missile at the mainland United States. Mixing the nuclear threat with an overture for easing tensions on the divided Korean Peninsula, Kim proposed immediate dialogue with South Korea to discuss the North’s participation in the Olympics. If such talks were held, they would mark the first time the two Koreas have had an official dialogue since the South’s new president, Moon Jae-in, took office in May. Moon has doggedly championed dialogue with the North, even as President Trump has threatened military action to stop the North’s nuclear weapons program. “I am willing to send a delegation and take necessary measures, and I believe that the authorities of the North and South can urgently meet to discuss the matter,” Kim said in his annual New Year’s Day speech, broadcast on North Korea’s state-run television. “We sincerely hope that the South will successfully host the Olympics.” “Above all, we must ease the acute military tensions between the North and the South,” Kim said. “The North and the South should no longer do anything that would aggravate the situation, and must exert efforts to ease military tensions and create a peaceful environment.” But Kim also reiterated that his country had mastered a state nuclear deterrent force, which he said would prevent the Trump administration from starting a war on the Korean Peninsula. “It’s not a mere threat but a reality that I have a nuclear button on the desk in my office,” he said. “All of the mainland United States is within the range of our nuclear strike.” But it has yet to demonstrate that its nuclear warhead could survive the re-entry into the Earth’s atmosphere and hit such long-range targets. He said his government would accelerate the production of nuclear warheads and rockets to launch them. Government and private analysts in South Korea have recently said that despite its claim to have achieved its nuclear ambitions, the North is likely to conduct more weapons tests to improve its nuclear and long-range ballistic missile capabilities. At the same time, they said North Korea will also seek opportunities to engage in dialogue with South Korea and the United States, hoping to use its nuclear threats as leverage to gain concessions, like easing sanctions. (Choe Sang-hun, “North Korean Leader Offers a Hand to South While Chiding the U.S.,” New York Times, January 1, 2018)

KCNA: “Respected Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un made the New Year Address for 2018. The full text of the New Year Address reads: …The year 2017 was a year of heroic struggle and great victory, a year when we set up an indestructible milestone in the history of building a powerful
socialist country with the spirit of self-reliance and self-development as the dynamic force. Last year the moves of the United States and its vassal forces to isolate and stifle our country went to extremes, and our revolution faced the harshest-ever challenges. …An outstanding success our Party, state and people won last year was the accomplishment of the great, historic cause of perfecting the national nuclear forces. On this platform one year ago I officially made public on behalf of the Party and government that we had entered the final stage of preparation for the test launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile. In the past one year we conducted several rounds of its test launch, aimed at implementing the program, safely and transparently, thus proving before the eyes of the world its definite success. By also conducting tests of various means of nuclear delivery and super-intense thermonuclear weapon, we attained our general orientation and strategic goal with success, and our Republic has at last come to possess a powerful and reliable war deterrent, which no force and nothing can reverse. Our country's nuclear forces are capable of thwarting and countering any nuclear threats from the United States, and they constitute a powerful deterrent that prevents it from starting an adventurous war. In no way would the United States dare to ignite a war against me and our country. The whole of its mainland is within the range of our nuclear strike and the nuclear button is on my office desk all the time; the United States needs to be clearly aware that this is not merely a threat but a reality. We have realized the wish of the great leaders who devoted their lives to building the strongest national defense capability for reliably safeguarding our country's sovereignty, and we have created a mighty sword for defending peace, as desired by all our people who had to tighten their belts for long years. This great victory eloquently proves the validity and vitality of the Party's line of simultaneously conducting economic construction and building up our nuclear forces and its idea of prioritizing science, and it is a great historic achievement that has opened up bright prospects for the building of a prosperous country and inspired our service personnel and people with confidence in sure victory. I offer my noble respects to the heroic Korean people who, despite the difficult living conditions caused by life-threatening sanctions and blockade, have firmly trusted, absolutely supported and dynamically implemented our Party's line of simultaneously promoting the two fronts. …The nuclear weapons research sector and the rocket industry should mass-produce nuclear warheads and ballistic missiles, the power and reliability of which have already been proved to the full, to give a spur to the efforts for deploying them for action. And we should always be ready for immediate nuclear counterattack to cope with the enemy's maneuvers for a nuclear war. …Last year, too, our people made strenuous efforts to defend the peace of the country and hasten national reunification in keeping with the aspirations and demands of the nation. However, owing to the vicious sanctions and pressure by the United States and its vassal forces and their desperate maneuvers to ignite a war, all aimed at checking the reinforcement of the self-defensive nuclear deterrent by our Republic, the situation on the Korean peninsula became aggravated as never before, and greater difficulties and obstacles were put on the road of the country's reunification. Even though the conservative "regime" in south Korea, which had resorted to fascist rule and confrontation with fellow countrymen, collapsed and the ruling circles were replaced by another thanks to the massive resistance by the enraged people of all walks of life, nothing has been changed in the relations between the north and the south. On the contrary, the south Korean authorities, siding with the United States in its hostile policy towards the DPRK against the aspirations of all the fellow countrymen for national reunification, drove the situation to a tight corner, further aggravated the mistrust and confrontation between the north and the south, and brought the bilateral relations to a fix that can be hardly resolved. We can never escape the holocaust of a nuclear war forced by the outside forces, let alone achieve national reunification, unless we put an end to this abnormal situation. The prevailing situation demands that now the north and the south improve the relations between themselves and take decisive measures for achieving a breakthrough for independent reunification without being obsessed by bygone days. No one can present an honorable appearance in front of the nation if he or she ignores the urgent demands of the times. This year is significant both for the north and the south as in the north the people will greet the 70th founding anniversary of their Republic as a great, auspicious event and in the south the Winter Olympic Games will take place. In order to not only celebrate these great national events in a splendid manner but also demonstrate the dignity and spirit of the nation at home and abroad, we should improve the frozen inter-Korean relations and glorify this meaningful year as an eventful one noteworthy in the history of the
nation. First of all, we should work together to ease the acute military tension between the north and the south and create a peaceful environment on the Korean peninsula. As long as this unstable situation, which is neither wartime nor peacetime, persists, the north and the south cannot ensure the success of the scheduled events, nor can they sit face to face to have a sincere discussion over the issue of improving bilateral relations, nor will they advance straight ahead towards the goal of national reunification. The north and the south should desist from doing anything that might aggravate the situation, and they should make concerted efforts to defuse military tension and create a peaceful environment. The south Korean authorities should respond positively to our sincere efforts for a detente, instead of inducing the exacerbation of the situation by joining the United States in its reckless moves for a north-targeted nuclear war that threatens the destiny of the entire nation as well as peace and stability on this land. They should discontinue all the nuclear war drills they stage with outside forces, as these drills will engulf this land in flames and lead to bloodshed on our sacred territory. They should also refrain from any acts of bringing in nuclear armaments and aggressive forces from the United States. Even though the United States is wielding the nuclear stick and going wild for another war, it will not dare to invade us because we currently have a powerful nuclear deterrent. And when the north and the south are determined, they can surely prevent the outbreak of war and ease tension on the Korean peninsula. A climate favorable for national reconciliation and reunification should be established. The improvement of inter-Korean relations is a pressing matter of concern not only to the authorities but to all other Koreans, and it is a crucial task to be carried out through a concerted effort by the entire nation. The north and the south should promote bilateral contact, travel, cooperation and exchange on a broad scale to remove mutual mistrust and fulfill their responsibility and role as the motive force of national reunification.

As for the Winter Olympic Games to be held soon in South Korea, it will serve as a good occasion for demonstrating our nation's prestige and we earnestly wish the Olympic Games a success. From this point of view we are willing to dispatch our delegation and adopt other necessary measures; with regard to this matter, the authorities of the north and the south may meet together soon. Since we are compatriots of the same blood as south Koreans, it is natural for us to share their pleasure over the auspicious event and help them. We will, in the future, too, resolve all issues by the efforts of our nation itself under the unfurled banner of national independence and frustrate the schemes by anti-reunification forces within and without on the strength of national unity, thereby opening up a new history of national reunification. Availing myself of this opportunity, I extend warm New Year greetings once again to all Korean compatriots at home and abroad, and I sincerely wish that in this significant year everything would go well both in the north and in the south. Comrades, The international situation we witnessed last
year was clear proof that our Party and our state were absolutely correct in their strategic judgement and decision that when we are confronting the imperialist forces of aggression who are attempting to wreck global peace and security and make mankind suffer a nuclear holocaust, our only recourse is the power of justice. As a responsible, peace-loving nuclear power, our country will neither have recourse to nuclear weapons unless hostile forces of aggression violate its sovereignty and interests nor threaten any other country or region by means of nuclear weapons. However, it will resolutely respond to acts of wrecking peace and security on the Korean peninsula. …” (KCNA, “Kim Jong Un Makes New Year Address,” January 1, 2018)

South Korea responded to an overture from the North and proposed holding high-level talks between the countries on their border next week. Kim Jong-un, had suggested yesterday that the countries open dialogue on easing military tensions and on the possibility of the North’s participating in the Winter Olympics in the South, even as he noted that he now had a “nuclear button” on his desk. President Trump responded somewhat cautiously early today on Twitter to the idea of inter-Korean talks, saying, “Perhaps that is good news, perhaps not — we will see!” But in a Twitter message posted tonight, Trump, referring to Kim, said: “Will someone from his depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works!” The Trump administration earlier had sent a series of mixed messages that strongly suggested it was still trying to figure out the meaning of Kim’s overture and the South’s response. This morning, the White House insisted that it had not changed its view of the efficacy of negotiations or its demands on North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons. “Our policy on North Korea hasn’t changed at all,” said Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House press secretary. “The United States is committed and will still continue to put maximum pressure on North Korea to change and make sure that it denuclearizes the peninsula. Our goals are the same and we share that with South Korea, but our policy and our process has not changed.” Speaking at the United Nations, the United States Ambassador, Nikki R. Haley, appeared to dismiss the potential for bilateral negotiations between North and South Korea. “We won’t take any of the talks seriously if they don’t do something to ban all nuclear weapons in North Korea,” she said. “We consider this to be a very reckless regime, we don’t think we need a Band-Aid; we don’t think we need to smile and take a picture. We think we need to have them stop nuclear weapons and they need to stop it now.” Heather Nauert, the State Department spokeswoman, said the Trump administration was still assessing whether the United States supported direct talks between South Korea and North Korea that excluded the United States. “Right now, if the two countries decide that they want to have talks, that would certainly be their choice,” she said. Nauert added that if Kim’s goal in proposing direct talks with the South was to divide the United States and South Korea, such a strategy would not succeed. “That will not happen,” she said. Cho Myoung-gyon, the South’s point man on the North, proposed that the Korean governments hold their meeting December 9 in Panmunjom. “We hope the two sides sit down for frank talks,” Cho, the unification minister, said at a news conference. If the North responds positively, it will set in motion the first official dialogue between the Koreas in two years. But analysts cautioned that a sudden move to improve ties between the Koreas could strain relations between Seoul and Washington. Cho said the South was closely consulting with Washington on its dealings with the North. Cho urged the North to restore the hotline so that both sides could discuss the agenda for the high-level talks. The governments held their last high-level dialogue in December 2015. North Korea’s offer to send a delegation to the Winter Olympics, which are to begin in February in the South Korean town of Pyeongchang, represented a breakthrough for Moon, a dogged champion of dialogue and reconciliation with the North. Moon has repeatedly urged North Korea to join the Pyeongchang Olympics, hoping it would ease the military tensions over the North’s nuclear and missile programs. “I appreciate and welcome the North’s positive response to our proposal that the Pyeongchang Olympics should be used as a turning point in improving South-North relations and promoting peace,” Moon said early today, instructing his cabinet to move swiftly to open dialogue with North Korea. In 2000, the year the countries held their first summit meeting, their delegations marched together at the opening ceremony of the Sydney Olympics. They again marched together at the 2004 Athens Olympics, using the single name “Korea” and carrying a “Korea is one” flag. But they competed separately in 2000 and 2004. North Korea also sent squads to cheer for its athletes in international events in
South Korea in 2002, 2003 and 2005. But such scenes came to an end after the conservatives took power in the South in 2008 and instituted tougher measures against the North’s nuclear weapons development. Moon has suggested that South Korea and the United States could postpone their joint military drills until after the Olympics. In an analysis of Kim’s speech, the Unification Ministry said Kim was seeking an “exit” from harsh sanctions by cultivating ties with South Korea. (Choe Sang-hun, “South Korea Proposes Talks with the North after an Overture by Kim,” New York Times, January 3, 2018, p. A-4)

Woodward: “Lingering after receiving his President’s Daily Brief on December 2, President Trump said, ‘[Kim Jong Un] is a bully.’ He told [Presidential Secretary Rob] Porter, ‘He’s a tough guy. The way to deal with these people is being tough. And I’m going to intimidate him and I’m going to outfox him.’ That evening, Trump sent a taunting mine-is-bigger-than-yours tweet that shook the White House and diplomatic community, ‘North Korean leader just stated that the Nuclear Button is on his desk at all times’, Trump wrote on Twitter at 7:49 p.m. ‘Will someone from his depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works.’” (Bob Woodward, Fear: Trump in the White House (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2018), p. 300)

North Korea reopened a border hotline with South Korea, restoring a channel of direct dialogue and signaling a possible thaw in relations between the two Koreas after years of hair-trigger tensions. “We will connect with the South with a sincere and diligent attitude,” Ri Son-kwon, a senior North Korean official, said in a statement on state-run television, announcing the hotline’s reopening. “We once again express our sincere hope that the Pyeongchang Olympics will be successful.” Ri’s television appearance was the North’s response to Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon’s news conference. Ri is chairman of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland that handles relations with the South. (Choe Sang-hun, “North Korea Reopens Hotline with the South,” New York Times, January 3, 2018)

Trump administration officials said that they were not opposed to the idea of talks, provided that they be limited to the Olympics and that the South Koreans not make any concessions to the North that they, and the United States, would later regret. The White House plans to stay in close touch with South Korean officials to coordinate the messages going out and to review any offers coming in. Above all, the officials said, the Trump administration will resist efforts by the North to drive a wedge between the United States and its ally. White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders defended the president’s Twitter message late yesterday, “I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works!” People, Ms. Sanders said on Wednesday, should question Kim’s mental fitness, not Trump’s. “Our policy with North Korea has not changed,” Ms. Sanders added. “We’re fully committed to continuing to apply maximum pressure and working with all of our partners in the region, including South Korea, who we have a better relationship with now than ever before.” But that relationship will be tested by the opening to the North, according to officials and outside analysts. On September 13 after North Korea tested a nuclear bomb, Trump said on Twitter, “South Korea is finding, as I have told them, that their talk of appeasement with North Korea will not work, they only understand one thing!” Diplomats said it was important that South Korea appear to be in lock step with the United States. That would be easier to do, they said, if the talks remain focused on relatively narrow issues, like security at the Winter Olympics. “It is fine for the South Koreans to take the lead, but if they don’t have the U.S. behind them, they won’t get far with North Korea,” said Daniel R. Russel, a former assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs in the Obama administration. “And if the South Koreans are viewed as running off the leash, it will exacerbate tensions within the alliance.” “Calling his nuclear arsenal too small is not the best way to persuade him to constrain that arsenal,” Russel noted, referring to Kim. Referring to South Korea, Russel asked, “Who is going to bear the brunt of this taunt?” (Mark Landler, “U.S. Stands by As Two Koreas Open Dialogue,” New York Times, January 4, 2018, p. A-1)
CPRC Chairman: “Upon authorization of Kim Jong Un, Supreme Leader of the Workers’ Party of Korea and the State and the army, the chairman of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country (CPRC) of the DPRK made public the following stand of the DPRK on January 3 in response to the south Korean Chongwadae's official stand toward our proposed dispatch of our delegation to the Pyeongchang Olympic Games and remarks made by President Mun Jae In at the state council meeting: Comrade Kim Jong Un, chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, upon receiving a report that the south Korean Chongwadae officially supported and welcomed his stand toward the participation in the Pyeongchang Olympic Games and the issue of the improvement of the north-south relations he clarified at the 2018 New Year Address and that at the first state council meeting on Jan. 2 President Mun Jae In personally expressed active support and instructed the relevant fields to take substantial measures, gave an affirmative and high estimation of it and expressed his welcome to such response. He instructed the United Front Department of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea and the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country, the National Sports Guidance Committee and relevant units of the DPRK government to promptly take substantial measures with the south Korean authorities out of sincere stand and honest attitude, as the dispatch of our side's delegation to the Pyeongchang Olympiad and the talks between the north-south authorities for it which he proposed at the New Year Address are the first meaningful and good step for improved north-south relations under the present situation. He also instructed to open the Panmunjom liaison channel between the north and the south from 15:00 on Jan. 3 so that the issues related to the opening of talks including the dispatch of the delegation to Pyeongchang Olympic Games would be timely communicated to the south side. Whether the issue of improved north-south relations that has been put high on the agenda is settled to comply with the expectation and desire of the whole nation or not entirely depends on how the north and south authorities handle this issue in a responsible manner, he stressed. We will try to keep close communications with the south Korean side and deal with the practical matters related to the dispatch of our delegation from sincere stand and honest attitude, true to the intention of our supreme leadership. We once again sincerely hope that the Pyeongchang Olympic Games would successfully open.” (KCNA, “CPRC Chairman Clarifies Stand of DPRK upon Authorization of Kim Jong Un,” January 3, 2018)

Woodward: “Within the White House, but not publicly, Trump proposed sending a tweet saying he was ordering all military dependents – thousands of family members of 28,500 troops – out of South Korea. The act of removing the dependents would almost certainly be seen as a signal that the United States was seriously preparing for war. On December 4, [National Security Adviser H.R.] McMaster had received a warning at the White House. Ri Su Yong, the vice chairman of the Politburo, had told intermediaries ‘that the North would take the evacuation of U.S. civilians as a sign of imminent attack.’ ‘...The tweet did not go out. But Trump would drop the matter, and raised the issue of withdrawing U.S. military dependents with Senator [Lindsey] Graham [R-SC]. On December 3, before Trump’s] and Kim’s war of words, and after a North Korean ICBM test, Trump Graham had advocated removing military families from South Korea. ‘It’s crazy to send spouses and children to South Korea,’ he said on CBS’s Face the Nation. He suggested making South Korea an unaccompanied tour for service members and said, ‘I think it’s now time to start moving American dependents out of South Korea.’ Now a month later, when Trump called, Graham seemed to have had a change of heart. ‘You need to think long and hard before you make that decision,’ Graham said. ‘Because when you make that decision, it is hard to go back. The day you do that is the day you rock the South Korean stock market and the Japanese economy. That is a big frigging deal.’ ‘You think I should wait?’ Trump asked. ‘Mr. President,’ Graham said, ‘I don’t think you should ever start the process unless you’re ready to go to war.’” (Woodward, Fear, pp. 301-02)

Carlin and Wit: “The potential reopening of North-South dialogue is an important development prompting many pundits to speculate as to whether Kim Jong Un is serious or whether it is merely a tactic. Certainly, the North Koreans recognize the potential for driving a “wedge” between Washington and Seoul by launching such an initiative. But this isn’t just a tactic—a close
examination of Pyongyang’s January 3 announcement on opening the inter-Korean communication channel makes it clear that this is the “gold standard” when it comes to North Korean initiatives. ... [T]here are nine reasons why this is clearly a serious North Korean proposal. First, the statement is not merely from a “spokesman” of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country (CPRC)—a front organization dealing inter-Korean issues—but delivered by the CPRC chairman in person. The level of the messenger imparts added weight to the message. Second, the announcement is identified as the “stand of the DPRK” being delivered very specifically “upon authorization” of Kim Jong Un. There is to be no misunderstanding of the pedigree of what follows. The North Korean leader has officially and publicly authorized the statement. Third, the announcement identifies South Korean President Moon Jae-in by name and proper title. That is not only a sign of respect but is meant as a signal that Pyongyang is willing to deal with him. Fourth, the statement very specifically acknowledges in positive terms Moon’s instructions at a state council meeting for “relevant [South Korean] sectors to establish working level measures.” The North could have put the South’s response in less personal terms, but by attributing it directly to Moon it further cements the image of Pyongyang’s willingness to deal with him. Fifth, the announcement portrays Kim Jong Un as personally responding to Moon by giving an “affirmative and high estimation” and expressing “welcome” to the stand of “President Moon Jae In.” Sixth, it reports Kim’s personal instructions to the most important North Korean entity dealing with inter-Korean affairs, the United Front Department, as well as to “relevant DPRK government units” to “promptly” take “substantial measures with the South Korean authorities out of sincere stand and honest attitude.” Seventh, it portrays Kim’s proposal to dispatch a delegation to the Olympics and the talks between N-S authorities for realizing this dispatch as the “first meaningful and good step for improved relations under the present situation.” That suggests there could be more to come. Eighth, implicitly, the announcement sets up a positive, nearly personal relationship between the highest authorities of the two Koreas.”

(Robert Carlin and Joel S. Wit, “Nine Reasons Why Kim Jong Un’s South Korea Initiative Is More Than Just a Tactic,” 38North, January 3, 2018)

South Korea and the U.S. agreed to push back joint military drills that coincide with the Pyeongchang Olympic Winter Games, the two nations’ presidential offices said. The agreement came in the late-night telephone conversation between President Moon Jae-in and US President Donald Trump, which lasted about 30 minutes from 10 p.m. Pyeongchang Olympic Winter Games, and Paralympic Winter Games run from February 9 to March 18. If held on schedule, South Korea-US joint military drills of Foal Eagle and Key Resolve would have been held during the games. During the conversation, Moon also stressed the importance of inter-Korean talks, Cheong Wa Dae said. “[Seoul] will work closely with the U.S. in the process of inter-Korean talks, and we (South Korea) firmly believe that inter-Korean talks are helpful to establishing an atmosphere of dialogue between the US and North Korea,” Moon was quoted as saying by Cheong Wa Dae. Cheong Wa Dae also said that Trump expressed full support for Moon’s policies, and confirmed the plans to send a high-level delegation to the Pyeongchang games. While Seoul focused on Trump’s promise of sending a high-level delegation and postponing of the drills, the statement from the White House also highlights the need to pressure North Korea. “The two leaders agreed to continue the campaign of maximum pressure and not repeat mistakes of the past,” a statement from the White House reads. Trump has been critical of past US leaders’ North Korean policies, citing the advancements in the North’s missile and nuclear weapons programs.

(Choi He-suk, “Seoul, U.S. Agree to Push back Military Drills for Pyeongchang Olympics,” Korea Herald, January 4, 2018) During a January 4 phone call in which South Korean leader Moon Jae-in briefed President Trump on plans for talks with North Korea, Moon got Trump to agree to postpone joint military drills until after the Olympics, to avoid antagonizing North Korea, and Trump asked Moon to publicly give him the credit for creating the environment for the talks, according to people familiar with the conversation. (In these conversations, Trump calls his counterpart “Jae-in” — an unimaginable informality in Korean business etiquette. Moon calls Trump “Mr. President.”) Later that night, Trump tweeted that the talks wouldn’t be happening “if I wasn’t firm, strong and willing to commit our total ‘might’ against the North.” At a news conference six days later, Moon agreed Trump deserved “huge credit” for the talks. (Anna Fifield,

The security situation facing Japan is the most perilous since World War Two because of North Korea's "unacceptable" provocations, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said and he vowed to bolster defenses to protect the Japanese people. "It is not an exaggeration to say that the security environment surrounding Japan is at its severest since World War Two. I will protect the people's lives and peaceful living in any situation," Abe told a New Year news conference. Abe said Japan would take new steps to strengthen its defense posture but he did not go to specifics. "It is absolutely unacceptable that North Korea is trampling the strong desire of Japan and the rest of the international community for peaceful resolutions and continuing with its provocative behavior," Abe said. Abe has said he wants to amend Japan's pacifist constitution with the aim of loosening constraints on the military, although the public is divided over changes to the charter imposed after Japan's World War Two defeat. "I would like this to be a year in which public debate over a constitutional revision will be deepened further," he said. (Kiyoshi Takenaka, “Japan Faces Greatest Danger since World War Due to North Korea: PM,” Reuters, January 4, 2018)

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South and North Korea agreed to hold high-level talks next week to discuss Pyongyang's potential participation in the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics and ways to improve ties. North Korea notified South Korea that it has accepted Seoul's recent offer to hold talks January 9 at the truce village of Panmunjom, according to the Ministry of Unification. (Kim Soo-yeon, “Koreas Agree to Hold High-Level Talks Next Week,” Yonhap, January 5, 2018)

Tillerson: "Q: Let's start with North Korea. There was big news last night about the North and South arranging talks for next week, North Korea now coming to the table. Is that an opening maybe for talks with the U.S. or nuclear talks? TILLERSON: Well, I think it's too early to tell. We need to wait and see what the outcome of their talks are. The President had a - President Trump had a good call with President Moon yesterday morning, which I participated in, and their intent is to talk about the Olympics - obviously, a very important upcoming event for South Korea - and the potential participation of North Korea in those Olympics. So our understanding is that's the content of the meeting. So I think it's a little early to draw any conclusions. Q: But it could be a positive sign maybe that North Korea wants to engage a little bit. TILLERSON: Well, we'll see. We'll see. Perhaps. I know some are speculating that this may be their first effort to open a channel. But as you know, we've had channels open to North Korea for some time, and so they do know how to reach us when - if and when they're ready to engage with us as well. Q: Well, maybe you'll be next. TILLERSON: We'll see. Q: If you could explain a little bit about what the U.S. policy is on North Korea, because I think Americans are a little bit confused. Do the North Koreans have to give up their nuclear program before committing to talks? TILLERSON: Our policy is the complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization …of the Korean Peninsula. That is a policy that is commonly held by everyone in the region as well. …The Chinese have that as a stated policy. Russia has it as a stated policy. So regionally, all of the countries in the neighboring area, as well as the international community, are well aligned on the policy. How we achieve the ultimate endpoint, the final fully - full denuclearization, the verification of that, and the irreversibility of it, clearly that's going to take some time. So how we begin the talks is yet to be determined, but we clearly need a signal from North Korea that they understand these talks must lead to that conclusion. The pathway of how you get there, that is the nature of the negotiation. There'll be some give and take to achieve those objectives. So that's - that objective has never changed. Q: Because as you said, it's unrealistic for them to kind of sit down and say, "We're ready to do it," but it sounds like they'd have to show some willingness, but then the mechanics of that are able to be worked out. TILLERSON: We have to have the shared view that that is the reason we're talking, that's the purpose of these talks, and it is through those talks that North Korea actually can chart the way for themselves of a more secure future, a more prosperous future for their people as well. So there are very positive outcomes to these talks for North Korea, as there will be positive outcomes for the security of the entire region. That is the nature of the negotiations. Q: Do you think - a lot has been made about the President's tweet on
the nuclear button, but now North Korea is talking with South Korea. Do you think that tough rhetoric has worked here? TILLERSON: I think the rhetoric that North Korea understands is while it is our objective - and the President has been very clear - to achieve a denuclearization through diplomatic efforts, those diplomatic efforts are backed by a strong military option if necessary. That is not the first choice, and the President has been clear that's not his first choice. But it is important that North Korea, as well as other regional players, understand how high the stakes are in an effort to ensure our diplomatic efforts are fully supported. And I think to date, the diplomatic efforts have been supported very well in the international community. If you look at the three UN Security Council resolutions on sanctions, the participation in those sanctions and a number of countries going well beyond the Security Council resolutions and imposing unilateral actions on their own, both economic as well as diplomatic, I think it is a recognition that the President has demonstrated to the world how high the stakes are. That's why we must achieve a diplomatic outcome. But the North Koreans have to understand that, and they have to understand that the penalties to them will continue and will only grow more severe in terms of sanctions actions and other actions until they do get on a pathway to achieve that objective that the entire world hopes to achieve. Q: So it sounds like this kind of good cap, bad cop, if you will - hold out the prospect of talks but if talks don't work, military action - that might be the formula that you and the President will continue. TILLERSON: I'm going to let you characterize it that way. I'm not going to necessarily show all of our cards. … Q: If - we're surprised that we're having this conversation, because if you read the papers, you should be gone by now. What is with these rumors about you leaving? How long are you planning to stay, or are you planning to stick around for a while? TILLERSON: I had a - we had a very productive 2017. And the 11 months I was here was an extraordinarily challenging period, because when the President came into office we had so many policies that the President ran on in his campaign and made clear to the American people he intends to pivot those policies in a different direction. It takes a lot of effort to do that in that first year so that your partners, your allies, and your adversaries understand you've moved. We had a very successful, in my view, year of 2017 pivoting our policies and helping our partners understand those policies. We're now into the implementation and execution against those policies. I think we're going to have a very productive 2018. Again, the State Department gets stronger every day understanding what we're trying to do, and I look forward to having a very, very successful 2018. Q: For the whole year? TILLERSON: I intend to be here for the whole year. … Q: Has the President given you any indication that you won't be around for a while? TILLERSON: None. Q: None so - whatsoever? TILLERSON: None whatsoever.” (DoS, Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson, Remarks: Interview with Elise Labott of CNN, January 5, 2017)

"I would love to see them take it beyond the Olympics," Trump said at a news conference at the Camp David presidential retreat. "And at the appropriate time, we'll get involved. " "[Kim] knows I'm not messing around... not even a little, not even one percent. He understands that," Trump told reporters. "(But) if something can happen and something can come out of those talks, that would be a great thing for all of humanity. That would be a great thing for the world." (AFP, “Trump Hopes Korea Talks ‘Go Beyond the Olympics,’” January 6, 2017) President Donald Trump said Saturday he is open to talking with the North Korean leader and hopes some progress results from upcoming talks between the Koreas. "Sure, I always believe in talking," Trump said. "Absolutely I would do that; I wouldn't have a problem with that at all." But he was quick to add that any talks would come with conditions, which he did not specify. The president also said that he had spoken with South Korean leader Moon Jae-in, who "thanks me very much for my tough stance." "You have to have a certain attitude and you have to be prepared to do certain things and I'm totally prepared to do that," Trump said, contending his tough words have helped persuade the North to sit down with the South. (Associated Press, “Trump Says He’d Be Open to Talking to North Korean Leader,” January 6, 2018)

Trump: “Q Mr. President, the meetings now between South Korea and North Korea — the discussions — THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. Hope it works out. Q I was going ask, are you comfortable that this will remain just about the Olympics? Are you — THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think so. I spoke with the President, as you know — with President Moon of South Korea. He
At the start of Donald Trump’s presidency, American intelligence agencies told the new administration that while North Korea had built the bomb, there was still ample time — upward of four years — to slow or stop its development of a missile capable of hitting an American city with a nuclear warhead. Kim Jong-un, faced a range of troubles, they assured the new administration, giving Trump time to explore negotiations or pursue countermeasures. One official who participated in the early policy reviews said estimates suggested Kim would be unable to strike the continental United States until 2020, perhaps even 2022. At a speed that caught American intelligence officials off guard, Kim rolled out new missile technology — based on a decades-old Soviet engine design, apparently developed in a parallel program — and in quick succession demonstrated ranges that could reach Guam, then the West Coast, then Washington. And on the first Sunday in September, he detonated a sixth nuclear bomb. After early hesitation among analysts, a consensus has now emerged that it was the North’s first successful test of a hydrogen weapon, with explosive force some 15 times greater than the atom bomb that leveled Hiroshima. The C.I.A. and other American intelligence services had predicted this moment would come, eventually. For decades, they accurately projected the broad trajectory of North Korea’s nuclear program. Yet their inability to foresee the North’s rapid strides over the past several months now ranks among America’s most significant intelligence failures, current and former officials said in recent interviews. That disconnect — they saw it coming, but got the timing wrong — helps explain the confusion, mixed signals and alarm that have defined how Trump’s untested national security team has responded to the nuclear crisis. In an interview, Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, national security adviser, acknowledged that Kim’s race to the finish line — a bid to establish the
North as a nuclear power before any negotiations begin or sanctions take a more punising toll — “has been quicker and the timeline is a lot more compressed than most people believed.” As a result, he argued, “we have to do everything we are doing with a greater degree of urgency, and we have to accelerate our own efforts to resolve the issue short of conflict.” Senior intelligence officials said they began investing more heavily in acquiring information on North Korea’s weapons program in 2012, reaping benefits over the past two years. But they acknowledged they made two key assumptions that proved wrong. They assumed that North Korea would need about as much time to solve the rocket science as other nations did during the Cold War, underestimating its access to both advanced computer modeling and foreign expertise. They also misjudged Kim, who took control of the dynastic regime in late 2011 and made the weapons program more of a priority than his father or grandfather did. Obama warned Trump during the transition a year ago that North Korea would pose the most urgent national security threat. Some former officials in the Obama administration concede that the intelligence community’s flawed assessment of the North’s progress meant there was less pressure to bolster missile defenses, more vigorously enforce sanctions or consider stepped-up covert action. It is not clear that even with more advanced warning the Obama or Trump administrations would have been able to slow Kim’s progress. And the shakiness of intelligence on North Korea — even on fundamental questions like how many nuclear weapons Kim possesses — casts a shadow over Trump’s options going forward. He has repeatedly raised the prospect of war with North Korea. He has also ordered up a range of new military plans, from a limited “punch in the nose” to signal American resolve to a large-scale attack aimed at destroying the country’s nuclear and missile facilities — all of which, his aides worry, could trigger a devastating wider conflict. Yet many in the Pentagon see the failure to anticipate the North’s recent breakthroughs as an ominous reminder of how much could go wrong. A successful pre-emptive strike, for example, might require precise knowledge of the locations of manufacturing facilities, nuclear plants and storage areas, and confidence that cyber strikes and electronic strikes would cripple Kim’s ability to retaliate. The past year, one senior administration official said, had been a “humbling lesson” in the limits of electronic, satellite and human intelligence operations against a sealed-off society with few computer networks, a high degree of paranoia about American covert action, and a determined young leader. Trump, however, was not disturbed by the absence of warning, McMaster said. “He doesn’t have the expectation of perfect intelligence about anything. He is very comfortable with ambiguity. He understands human nature and understands he will never have perfect intelligence about capabilities and intentions.” The North’s rapid progress raises a number of awkward questions: Did the American sabotage effort, for example, prompt Kim to scrap an ailing missile program for a new generation of more capable rocket engines? Or was that his plan all along? And does the new program have similar vulnerabilities the United States can exploit? During a talk last fall, Gen. John E. Hyten, who heads the United States Strategic Command, which controls the American nuclear arsenal, acknowledged he had no idea when North Korea would pass its final technological hurdle: proving its warheads can survive fiery re-entry into the atmosphere to hit targets in the United States. “Will they get there in 2017, 2018, 2019?” he asked rhetorically. “I see a lot of the detailed intel. I can honestly tell you, I don’t know the answer.” Ever since the United States began tracking North Korea’s efforts to obtain a nuclear weapon, a pattern has repeated itself: American intelligence agencies excelled at forecasting the direction and overall timeline of the program, yet repeatedly missed critical turns. Recently declassified documents show the C.I.A. recognized the North’s ambitions in the early 1980s, when spy satellites first spotted evidence that it was building a reactor to produce plutonium, a main fuel for nuclear arms. A division of the agency immersed itself in studying the North’s factories and reactors, trying to gauge how fast the backward state could build advanced rocket engines, specialty fuels and nuclear warheads. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, waves of its impoverished missile scientists began to head for North Korea. While Russian security forces intercepted some, others made it out or assisted the North from afar. In retrospect, former American intelligence officials say they almost certainly missed significant transfers of technology. “These are designs you can put on a thumb drive,” said a senior official who has tracked North Korea for years and spoke on condition of anonymity because of the topic’s sensitivity. The missiles launched in recent months bear numerous signs of Soviet provenance. But analysts and intelligence officials say the specific dates, places and means of transfer remain murky. Ostensibly, North Korea suspended its nuclear
weapons program in 1994. That deal appeared to hold for six years but, in fact, the North began cheating on the agreement within a few years. The intelligence community eventually spotted shipments from Russia and Pakistan containing parts for centrifuges used to enrich uranium. Confronted with the evidence, North Korea acknowledged the program, prompting the Bush administration to suspend the agreement. But the North pressed ahead, and today analysts believe it uses uranium for many of its new warheads. From as early as 2000, the National Intelligence Council was remarkably prescient about North Korea’s overall direction, predicting in an unclassified report that it would “most likely” have a nuclear missile that could hit American cities by 2015. Late in 2016, North Korea ditched a failing missile technology for a new type that in 2017 racked up major successes, potentially putting its nuclear warheads in range of American cities. Four years later, when the United States was mired in the first year of the Iraq war, the council refined its prediction, saying a “crisis over North Korea is likely to come to a head sometime over the next 15 years,” that is, no later than 2019. None of this was ignored. President George W. Bush began a program to interdict ships delivering material for the North’s weapons program, and he accelerated secret efforts to cripple the program by sabotaging its supply chain with bad parts. But the C.I.A.’s main focus was on counterterrorism, and satellite coverage over North Korea was often diverted to keep troops safe in the Middle East. The United States was surprised in 2006, when it received a heads-up about the North’s first underground nuclear test — from China, only about an hour before the explosion. It was surprised again the next year when the head of the Mossad, Israel’s intelligence service, arrived at the White House with photographs showing a nuclear reactor under construction in Syria that matched the North’s Yongbyon reactor.

One picture, eventually released by the C.I.A., showed the chief of North Korea’s nuclear-fuel production at the Syrian site. Though the plant was less than 100 miles from the Iraqi border, the United States had missed it. In 2010, North Korea invited Siegfried S. Hecker, the former director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, to visit and showed him a complete uranium-enrichment plant it had built inside an old building at Yongbyon. The Koreans had installed the facility, at a site under regular satellite surveillance, without being detected. Intelligence officials said there were good reasons for this spotty record. Foreign governments almost never succeed in recruiting North Korean scientists as sources because they are rarely allowed to go abroad. The North also appears to have figured out the patterns of some American spy satellites. And while documents released by Edward J. Snowden showed the National Security Agency had penetrated North Korea, it is unclear whether its cyber snooping gleaned anything useful in a nation with minimal computer networking. But in 2008, two years after its first nuclear test, Condoleezza Rice, then secretary of state, warned allies that the North was on the verge of another leap: A Soviet rocket engine representing “a substantial advance” had aided its development of longer-range missiles, according to a secret memo disclosed in 2010 by WikiLeaks. Inside the Pentagon, the alarms grew louder. In early 2011, while visiting Beijing, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates told reporters North Korea was within five years of being able to fire a long-range missile. Pyongyang, he added, “is becoming a direct threat to the United States.” Then, rather suddenly, the urgency seemed to recede. When Kim came to power, many in the intelligence community doubted he would survive: And over the next four years, during Obama’s second term, North Korea’s missile program experienced repeated public failures, prompting more than a few jokes on late-night television in the United States. The worst humiliation came in April 2012, two days after Kim’s formal elevation to the highest level of state power, on the 100th anniversary of his grandfather’s birthday. He marked the occasion with a satellite launch intended to demonstrate technology used in an intercontinental ballistic missile, and even invited foreign journalists. But the rocket shattered soon after launch and fell into the Yellow Sea. By late 2013, the intelligence community had largely changed its view of Kim. He was eliminating his rivals, sometimes ordering public executions with antiaircraft guns that shredded their bodies. And he seemed far more serious about the nuclear and missile program. His father and grandfather tested weapons to make a political point. Kim, however, turned the program into North Korea’s version of the Manhattan Project, the race to develop the atomic bomb in the United States. He made the development of a nuclear arsenal one of the state’s top priorities, on equal footing with economic development. Only with a nuclear deterrent, he argued, would the nation be secure enough to focus on growth. It now appears that Kim had several missile programs underway simultaneously, and sped efforts to make parts and missile fuel indigenously, so that the United States and its allies could not cut off his
supplies. President Obama, increasingly concerned, ordered multiple reviews, including the one in early 2014 in which he authorized an intensification of covert cyber strikes and electronic strikes on the North’s missile program. The pace of missile tests accelerated, reaching a peak of more than two dozen in 2016. But at least 10 launches failed that year, including seven of an intermediate-range missile known as the Musudan. Former senior officials in the Obama administration say it remains unclear whether the sabotage effort contributed to the failed tests; there are many alternative explanations. But this much is clear: In October 2016, Kim ordered a halt to the Musudan tests, and the missile program rapidly shifted in a different direction, focusing on a new generation of more reliable and potent engines. In May, North Korea successfully tested the new design in an intermediate-range missile capable of hitting the American territory of Guam. Then, on July 4, it stunned the world with its first successful test of an ICBM — and repeated the success a few weeks later. In November, it tested a greatly improved ICBM, known as the Hwasong-15, that could fly about 8,100 miles, far enough to threaten all of the United States. The latest missiles appeared to have been based on old Soviet designs. In interviews, intelligence officials said “freelancers” from the former Soviet Union — “a handful” by the estimate of one official — are almost certainly working with North Korea. The Russian government, they added, does not appear to be providing support. Between the missile tests, in September, North Korea also detonated its most powerful underground nuclear blast yet. The North claimed it was a hydrogen bomb, and after initial skepticism, many experts now say it probably was. Richard L. Garwin, a main designer of the world’s first hydrogen bomb, called the North’s hydrogen claim quite plausible given the “enormous advances” in computer modeling and “the dedication of the small group of nuclear technologists in North Korea.” Several officials who served under Obama said that was a real surprise; they had been told that moment was still years away. Entering 2018, there are several disputes inside the intelligence world about the North’s capabilities. Most intelligence agencies say the North has an arsenal of about 20 or 30 nuclear weapons, for example, but the Pentagon’s Defense Intelligence Agency puts the number above 50. It is more than an academic argument. If Trump attempted to destroy the arsenal, or if the North Korean government collapsed, the challenge would be to neutralize the weapons without any launch taking place or any warhead falling into the wrong hands. The more there are, the more difficult that task becomes. The intelligence agencies are also intently focused on not missing the next big milestone: the moment North Korea learns how to design and build a warhead that can survive the heat and stresses of re-entry into the atmosphere, continue to plunge downward and succeed in destroying its target. When the United States built its nuclear arsenal in the 1950s and ’60s, that “was the hardest part for us,” said General Hyten of the United States Strategic Command. But the C.I.A. director, Mike Pompeo, told an audience in October that predicting when North Korea crosses this final threshold is less relevant now because “you’re now talking about months.” And Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, who has urged diplomacy over military action, said the November ICBM test flight indicated the North already has the ability to hit “everywhere in the world, basically.” Having underestimated the North, though, Washington now faces some risk of overstating its capabilities and intentions, some experts hold. Hecker, the former director at Los Alamos, recently argued that North Korea needs “at least two more years and several more missile and nuclear tests” to perfect a weapon that can threaten American cities. There is still time “to start a dialogue,” he said, “in an effort to reduce current tensions and head off misunderstandings that could lead to war.” (David E. Sanger, “U.S. Miscalculated the Nuclear Progress of North Korea by Years,” New York Times, January 7, 2018, p. A-1)

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Woodward: “Early in 2018, the CIA concluded that North Korea did not have the capability to accurately deliver a missile into the United States mainland with a nuclear weapon on top. According to the intelligence and the information on the testing of North Korean rockets, they did not have the reentry of missiles perfected. But they were marching toward that goal.” (Woodward, Fear, p. 308)

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North Korea accepted Seoul’s proposal to hold military talks to reduce tensions and agreed to send a delegation to next month’s Winter Olympics in the South, according to a joint press statement issued after their high-level talks. During the meeting, South Korea’s chief delegate Cho Myoung-
gyon raised the need to resume talks on North Korea's denuclearization. Ri Son-gwon, the North's chief delegate, is said to have made "strong" complaints about South Korean media reports that today's talks would deal with the North's nukes. North Korea offered to send high-ranking officials, cheerleaders, performing artists, taekwondo demonstration teams and journalists in addition to athletes. The South promised to provide them with necessary conveniences. The two sides came short of agreeing to march together under a unified Korean flag at the opening and closing ceremonies, but Seoul said that the two Koreas "got closer" on the issue of joint parades and cultural events. They will hold working-level talks to further discuss details of the North's participation, such as its delegation's travel route, accommodation and security issues, should be discussed at follow-up meetings. If the land route across the heavily guarded border is chosen, there will have to be consultation between the military authorities of the two Koreas. North Korea re-opened a military hotline with the South, a move aimed at facilitating discussions on this issue.

Pyongyang did not elaborate on who would lead the "high-level" delegation, but experts here think the team may include political heavyweights such as Choe Ryong-hae, the de facto No. 2 official in the North. Choe is blacklist by South Korea's unilateral sanctions over North Korea's nuclear and missile provocations. Seoul's punitive actions do not cover travel bans, but it could prove controversial if North Korean officials on the blacklist come to the South. Apparently mindful of such criticism, Seoul's foreign ministry said that the government may consider temporarily easing sanctions against the North, if needed, to enable North Korean officials to visit the South next month. But South Korea's proposal to arrange reunions of families separated by the 1950-53 Korean War in February was not included in the press statement. The failure to agree on holding reunions for divided families indicates how far apart the two sides stand on the issue. Seoul is placing priority in resolving the problem of separated families, as more aging Koreans have passed away without being able to meet with their kin on the opposite side of the tense border. About 55 percent of an estimated 131,260 South Koreans on the waiting list for reunion have already died. Data showed that 62 percent of South Koreans hoping for reunions are aged over 80. The last reunion event was held in October 2015. Pyongyang has suggested conditions that could politicize the issue. In exchange for the reunions, it is demanding Seoul return 12 female North Korean workers who worked at a restaurant in China and defected to South Korea en masse in 2016. The South rejects the North's claim, saying that they defected of their own free will. North Korea accepted Seoul's January 5 dialogue offer after the South and the United States agreed to postpone their military drills until after the Olympics. It also reopened a long-disconnected border hotline.

"This meeting takes on significance in terms of restoring and developing inter-Korean ties. The two sides shared the need to upgrade our ties based on mutual respect," Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon, the South's chief delegate, told pool reporters at the truce village. "South-North ties took their first step. As they have been strained for a long time, there are a lot tasks to do," he added. (Joint Press Corps-Yonhap, “N.K. Agrees to Hold Military Talks, Send Olympic Delegation to South,” January 9, 2018) "The North said that they will send a high-level delegation, including Olympic committee representatives, athletes, a cheering squad, an art performance group, spectators, Taekwondo demonstrators and press,” Chun Hae-sung, vice minister of unification, told reporters at the Panmunjom truce village on the border between the two Koreas. The talks took place in the "Peace House," a building on the southern side, which resulted in the unusual sight of a northern delegation stepping over the concrete curb that marks the border. "I hope that the two Koreas can hold talks with a sincere and genuine attitude," Ri Son Kwon, the North’s chief representative, said at the start of the talks, according to South Korean pool reports from inside the room. "Just as water continues to flow below thick frozen ice, people’s strong desires for these talks and improved inter-Korean relations cannot be stopped or frozen," he said. (Yoonjung Seo and Anna Fifield, “North Korea Agree to Send Athletes to Winter Olympics, South Says,” Washington Post, January 9, 2018)
will serve as an opportunity to raise the Korean people’s status. In relation to this, the North decided to send a high-level delegation, Olympic Committee delegation, athletes, cheering squad, cultural performance troupe, taekwondo demonstration group, observation delegation and press corps to the Pyeongchang Games. The two sides agreed to hold working-level talks regarding matters concerning the North sending an advance party to assess the sites, and the North’s participation in Winter Games, and to negotiate the schedule by exchanging written statements. 2. The South and North agreed to collaborate in facilitating reconciliation and unity by easing military tensions, and to establish a peaceful environment. The South and North agreed on the need to ease military tensions and hold military talks to resolve the issue. The South and North agreed to facilitate contact, exchange and cooperation in diverse fields to establish reconciliation and unity of the people. 3. The South and the North respect the inter-Korean declarations and have decided to resolve the issues raised in inter-Korean relations through dialogue and negotiations, as parties directly involved in the matters surrounding the Korean Peninsula. For these reasons, both parties decided to hold meetings in respective areas with a high-level South-North meeting to improve inter-Korean ties.” (Choi He-suk, “Joint Press Statement of High-Level Inter-Korean Talks,” Korea Herald, January 9, 2018)

South Korea announced it will not seek to renegotiate the 2015 landmark deal with Japan on the “comfort women” issue but at the same time indirectly urged Japan to extend a fresh “voluntary, heart-felt apology” for the victims forced to work at Japanese military brothels before and during World War II. The announcement immediately drew strong protests from Tokyo. Under the 2015 deal, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has already expressed “his most sincere apologies and remorse” to all the former comfort women and Japan provided ¥1 billion to South Korean fund for victims, although Tokyo has denied any legal responsibility for compensation. Today Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha said Seoul plans to create its own fund worth ¥1 billion for former comfort women. Seoul will also discuss what to do with the ¥1 billion provided by the Japanese government, Kang said. “It cannot be denied that the 2015 deal was an official agreement reached between the governments of each country, and our government will not demand renegotiation,” Kang said, according to the Yonhap news agency. “We still expect Japan to accept the truth in accordance with universally accepted standards and keep making efforts to recover their dignity and heal the wounds in their minds,” she said. What victims want is a fresh “voluntary and heart-felt apology,” Kang was also quoted as saying. Later, Foreign Minister Kono Taro told reporters: “It’s totally unacceptable that South Korea demands Japan carry out more measures, even though the 2015 Japan-South Korea agreement confirmed a final and irreversible resolution.” Kono also said that South Korea must stick with the 2015 agreement to further promote the bilateral ties among the two nations, as Tokyo and Seoul are key partners in coping with the North Korean threat. Kono added that Japan will ask the South Korean government to clarify why it is setting aside its own fund and to give details of today’s talks between Seoul and Pyongyang was inaugurated last May. Prior to Seoul’s announcement on the comfort women accord, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide reassured Tokyo’s stance that it has “no intention of changing the deal even by a millimeter,” forestalling any possible calls from the South Korean government for renegotiation or any additional requests. Noting the deal was hammered out after negotiation between foreign ministers and then confirmed by top leaders of the two nations as “final and irreversible,” Suga said Tokyo remains adamant that the deal should be “implemented steadily” and urged Seoul to act accordingly “as soon as possible.” After taking office, President Moon Jae-in ordered a task force re-examine the process that led to the agreement, saying the majority of the South Korean public did not approve of it. In December, the task force under Kang said in a report that the previous government of Park Geun-hye failed to sufficiently consult former comfort women before agreeing to the deal. Moon also criticized the deal as seriously flawed. Kimura Kan, a political science professor and Korean affairs expert at Kobe University, said Seoul’s latest decision appears to have been worked out “desperately” as the South Korean government tried unsuccessfully to impose any clear-cut requests on Japan. “In a nutshell, they couldn’t really do anything,” Kan said, adding that Seoul, despite initial reports, ended up not announcing the unilateral return of the ¥1 billion yen provided by Tokyo under the 2015 deal. Kang’s comment that Japan should “voluntarily” accept the facts of what happened in accordance with “universally accepted standards” essentially means Seoul failed to demand an outright apology from Tokyo, the
professor said. Seoul’s softer-than-expected rhetoric, Kan said, underlines its desire to minimize the danger of its ties with the United States being compromised as it deals with its fragile diplomacy with Washington and Pyongyang. Amid soaring tensions on the Korean Peninsula, “Seoul’s biggest priority is to maintain a good relationship with the U.S.,” Kan said. “Seoul knows Abe and Trump are on good terms, and that Abe may even have the biggest influence over Trump among world leaders. So it makes sense they didn’t want to antagonize Abe,” Kan said, adding that taking the high road will also help Seoul maintain its international reputation. Despite its decision not to seek a renegotiation, Seoul’s latest announcement will still be taken as running counter to the “final and irreversible” nature of the 2015 pact, further intensifying a sense of “Korea fatigue” in the Japanese government and potentially doing harm to bilateral relations in the long run, the professor said. “‘Give me a break’ is probably the sentiment of the Japanese government,” Kan said, adding that today’s development could have a negative impact on Abe’s decision over whether to attend the Winter Olympics in the South Korean city of Pyeongchang. (Kikuchi Daisuke and Osaki Tomohiro, “South Korea Will Not Seek Renegotiation of ‘Comfort Women’ Deal with Japan,” Japan Times, January 9, 2018)

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President Donald Trump told his South Korean counterpart Moon Jae-in he is open to talking with North Korea, the South’s presidential office said after the two leaders spoke by telephone. “Both heads of state forecast the current inter-Korean talks could naturally lead to talks between the United States and North Korea for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula after the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics and agreed to negotiate closely on the progression of inter-Korean talks,” the statement said. “President Trump said the United States is open to talks should North Korea want them, as long as the circumstances and timing are right.” The South Korean statement also quoted Trump as saying that an article in the Wall Street Journal saying that he was contemplating a military strike against North Korea was “completely wrong.” “He went on to say that there will be no military action as long as talks between the two Koreas are ongoing,” it said. Trump also said he would send Vice President Mike Pence to head the U.S. delegation to the Pyeongchang games to be held in South Korea next month. (Reuters, “Trump Says Open to Talks with North Korea: Seoul Statement,” January 10, 2018)

Trump: “I just spoke to President Moon. He's very thankful for what we've done. They're having talks with North Korea. We'll see how that happens. He felt that the original -- that the initial talk was extremely good. Had a lot of good comment. Rex was on the phone, and Nikki has been totally briefed. But we had a very, very good conversation, and we'll see where it goes. He's very thankful for what we've done. It was so reported today that we were the ones -- without our attitude, that would have never happened. Who knows where it leads. Hopefully, it will lead to success for the world -- not just for our country, but for the world. And we'll be seeing over the next number of weeks and months what happens.” (White House, Office of the Spokesman, Remarks by President Donald J. Trump on His Call with President Moon Jae-in of the Republic of Korea,” January 10, 2018)

White House Statement: “President Donald J. Trump spoke today with President Moon Jae-in of the Republic of Korea. President Moon briefed President Trump on the outcomes of the discussions between North and South Korea on January 9 and thanked President Trump for his influential leadership in making the talks possible. The two leaders underscored the importance of continuing the maximum pressure campaign against North Korea. President Trump expressed his openness to holding talks between the United States and North Korea at the appropriate time, under the right circumstances. President Trump told President Moon that Vice President Mike Pence would lead the U.S. Presidential Delegation to the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics.” (White House, Office of the Spokesman, Readout of President Donald J. Trump’s Call with President Moon Jae-in of the Republic of Korea,” January 10, 2018)

President Moon Jae-in said that South Korea will approach the North Korean nuclear issue with both engagement and pressure, and that cooperation with the US has been critical in inter-Korean relations. “The purpose of sanctions and pressure is to bring North Korea to dialogue, (but) it
cannot be said that dialogue is the only solution,” Moon said at the New Year’s press conference held at the Blue House. While Seoul will engage the North and endeavor to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue, international sanctions will continue should Pyongyang carry out another provocation or show lack of sincerity, he added. “(South Korea) also cannot avoid using both means. (The government) is open to all dialogue, including summit talks if it is deemed beneficial to inter-Korean relations, but talks for the sake of talks cannot be the goal.” Saying that South Korea and the US have a common understanding on security issues, and both face North Korean missile and nuclear threats, Moon highlighted the importance of the Seoul-Washington alliance and cooperation. “South Korea and the US have been working together closely in responding to the North Korean nuclear issue,” Moon said, adding that yesterday’s inter-Korean talks may have been the result of US-led international pressure. The South Korean president went on to stress that Seoul and Washington fully agree on resolving the issue through peaceful means. He also stressed that the allies have no differences regarding Pyongyang’s nuclear and missile provocations. In addition, Moon thanked President Donald Trump for playing a “very big” role in bringing about inter-Korean talks. Regarding measures taken by previous South Korean administrations, he said that they cannot be rescinded unilaterally by Seoul, but he believes that the “two-track” approach will create a cycle of positive feedback. “Improving relations with the North cannot be separated from resolving the North Korean nuclear issue,” Moon said. He added that improvements in inter-Korean relations will help to resolve the nuclear problem and that inter-Korean relations will be improved by progress in resolving the nuclear issue. “What we can do for the time being is induce the North to engage in denuclearization talks, through dialogue aimed at improving inter-Korean relations. If such outcome is achieved, (the) Kaesong complex and Kumgangsan tour issues will be considered within that framework.” A joint South-North statement released after inter-Korean talks Tuesday stated that the two Koreas will resolve related matters by themselves. However, Moon said that he would increase cooperation with the countries concerned. “I will do my best to make this year a new start for peace on the Korean Peninsula. In the process, I will cooperate more closely with related countries, including our ally, the US, China and Japan, and the rest of the international community,” Moon said. “I stress once again; the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is a process toward peace and a goal at the same time. The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, which was declared by the two Koreas, is our fundamental position that can never be compromised.” (Choi He-suk, “‘Dialogue and Pressure’ in Dealing with NK: Moon,” Korea Herald, January 10, 2018)

Vorontsov: “In mid-November 2017, I spent several days in Pyongyang talking to DPRK foreign ministry officials about the prospects of war between North Korea and the United States. These were sobering discussions. All of my interlocutors made it clear that while North Korea does not want war, it will not hide from it either. These officials feared that the US was already trying to shape the battlefield for a military operation against the North, and that South Koreans do not seem to have grasped the reality that the Trump administration is set on a course for preventive war. However, Pyongyang is extremely serious about this scenario and is not bluffing when it says that “only one question remains: when will war break out?” In this respect, our counterparts emphasized that “our soldiers have long been sleeping without removing their boots.” During my visit, I heard nothing to suggest that North Korea is prepared, at this time, to be the first to accept the Russian and Chinese proposal for a freeze on its missile and nuclear tests in return for American agreement to freeze its joint military exercises with South Korea. The North Koreans insisted their sovereignty be respected and rejected any preconditions. Although my North Korean interlocutors acknowledged that the Korean Peninsula was sliding toward war, they reaffirmed the country’s commitment to achieving nuclear parity with the United States. Moreover, according to experts from the DPRK Foreign Ministry’s Institute for Disarmament and Peace, the United States is not just expanding the scale of regular and irregular military exercises along North Korea’s perimeter, but also introducing fundamentally new elements designed to achieve specific operational goals in the event of a large-scale conflict between North Korea and the United States. Indeed, North Koreans see the US-ROK exercises as anything but routine; to the contrary, there was a sense among them that the Pentagon has launched the contact reconnaissance phase of a military operation it is planning to undertake on the peninsula. They noted that the geographical features of the Korean Peninsula provide no opportunity for the gradual, methodical buildup of
troops to create a superior strike force—as was the case before the US attacked Iraq—and that North Korea would immediately notice such actions and naturally regard them as a *casus belli*. In their eyes, the Pentagon is rehearsing elements of a coordinated military operation one step at a time. The three aircraft carrier strike groups that are operating in Korea’s East Sea, as well as many other operations, were not just a show of force. The same is true, they argued, about the latest US-South Korean air exercise *Vigilant Ace*, which involved 230 aircraft and a large number of varied types of stealth aircraft. The deployment for the first time of so many stealth airplanes looks especially ominous from the North Korean perspective against the backdrop of recent US-ROK exercises practicing decapitation strikes against Kim Jong Un in a first strike using ground, naval, air and special operations forces. These, and many other new elements that have appeared in drills over the past several months, have elicited growing concern that different elements of a combined arms operation against North Korea are being methodically rehearsed and that “zero hour,” as they put it, is not too far away. In my conversations in Pyongyang, senior North Korean Foreign Ministry officials did not conceal their surprise that Seoul failed to see the huge gap in threat perceptions between American and South Korean societies. The North Koreans see growing signs, reflecting President Donald Trump’s “America First” principle that the United States is prepared to accept the terrible loss of lives that would result from a large-scale military conflict with North Korea. In contrast, South Korean public opinion continues to believe that President Trump would never start a war in Korea—and that the tension, crisis-like atmosphere, and belligerent rhetoric are all posturing. North Korean diplomats expressed surprise that a substantial part of the South Korean elite have missed many indications, reflected in polling data, that a majority of Americans now believe that the US cannot allow North Korea to acquire a missile capable of delivering a nuclear weapon to the US mainland and that Pyongyang would order such a strike as soon as it had this capability. North Korean diplomats stressed that this is a misperception. As one opined, “it would be suicidal to attack the USA first and especially with nuclear weapons. We understand that it would be the last day of our country.” These officials were truly baffled that a majority of the South Korean population does not seem to have grasped the reality that the Trump administration, despite the risks, is inching ever closer to a preventive strike on North Korea. Pyongyang, they maintained, is under no such illusions. North Korean experts reiterated that they are striving to reach some kind “nuclear parity” with the US, but not in order to use it in an unprovoked first strike against the American mainland. When we expressed doubt regarding the North Korean ability to achieve this parity, their rather uncertain explanations led us to believe they, more accurately, have some kind of “specific asymmetrical” nuclear parity in mind. Finally they told us: “We are diplomats, not military guys. Only our leader knows the issue in full.” They expressed bewilderment over why the political establishment in the US is unwilling to ask itself a very simple question: even if North Korea does develop the capability to target the continental US with nuclear weapons, why would it launch such weapons if it would result in the destruction of North Korea? These weapons are being developed to preserve the survival of North Korea. In short, sooner rather than later, it would benefit both sides to establish a US-DPRK dialogue that would allow Pyongyang to clarify its real intentions and reach consensus with the US on a plan to resolve the nuclear issue. As is well-known, the new year has started off with some important positive changes to the North-South Korean relationship, but the analysis of these significant and encouraging events on the Inter-Korean agenda is subject of a separate article. How they will affect the overall US-DPRK relationship is yet to be seen.” (Alexander Vorontsov, “Is the US Preparing for Preventive War? Views from North Korea,” *38North*, January 10, 2017)

The U.S. Air Force has sent three B-2 nuclear-capable stealth bombers to Andersen Air Force Base on the island territory of Guam amid cooling tensions with North Korea. Around 200 airmen from Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri were recently deployed to Andersen in support of the U.S. Pacific Command’s Bomber Assurance and Deterrence mission. “During this short-term deployment, the B-2s will conduct local and regional training sorties and will integrate capabilities with key regional partners, ensuring bomber crews maintain a high state of readiness and crew proficiency,” the U.S. Pacific Air Forces said on its website. The U.S. Strategic Command regularly rotates bombers through the Indo-Pacific region to conduct Pacific Command-led air operations, “providing leaders with deterrent options to maintain regional stability,” the Pacific Air Forces said. It was unclear how long the powerful stealth bombers would be deployed to
Guam, a strategically important base amid Pyongyang’s tests of increasingly powerful missiles and nuclear bombs. (Jesse Johnson, “U.S. Deploys Three Powerful B-2 Stealth Bombers to Guam amid Cooling Tensions on Korean Peninsula,” Japan Times, January 11, 2018)

“I probably have a very good relationship with Kim Jong-un,” President Trump told The Wall Street Journal in an interview little more than a week after boasting that he has a bigger nuclear button than Kim Jong-un, the North Korean leader. “I have relationships with people. I think you people are surprised.” Trump declined to say whether he had directly spoken with his North Korean counterpart. “I’m not saying I have or haven’t,” he said. Trump said that his shifting commentary about the North Korean leader was part of a broader strategy. “You’ll see that a lot with me,” Trump said, referring to the difference between his friendly tone toward Kim and his previous tweets calling him a “maniac” and a “short and fat” person. “And then all of the sudden somebody’s my best friend. I could give you 20 examples. You could give me 30. I’m a very flexible person.” Trump said he expected that North Korea’s effort to talk with South Korea is an attempt to drive a wedge between the South Koreans and the United States. He said that probably was their motivation, and he suggested that he should know. “The difference is I’m president, other people aren’t,” Trump said. “And I know more about wedges than any human being that’s lived.” (Michael D. Shear, “Trump Boasts of a ‘Very Good Relationship’ with North Korean Leader,” New York Times, January 11, 2018)

Trump: “You always have to have flexibility. As an example, we’ve been much tougher on China, but not nearly as tough as I would be, but they are helping us a lot with North Korea. And you see in North Korea what’s happening with North Korea all of a sudden. China’s been helping us a lot, so you can veer a little bit differently, but for the most part everything I’ve said I’ve done. ... WSJ: And you mentioned the link between China and North Korea. We talked about that a little bit the last time we were in here. Trump: Right. WSJ: Is that—does that link still exist for you? Do you feel like China’s been helpful enough... (CROSSTALK) Trump: Not helpful enough, but they’ve been very helpful. Let’s put it this way, they’ve done more for me than they ever have for any American president. They still haven’t done enough. But they’ve done more for me than they have, by far, for any—I have a very good relationship with President Xi. I like him. He likes me. We have a great chemistry together. He’s—China has done far more for us than they ever have for any American president. With that being said, it’s not enough. They have to do more. ... For instance, at the very beginning, you know Obama felt—President Obama felt it was his biggest problem is North Korea. He said that openly. He said that to me, but he said that openly. It is a big problem, and they should not have left me with that problem. That should have been a problem that was solved by Obama, or Bush, or Clinton or anybody, because the longer it went, the worse, the more difficult the problem got. This should not have been a problem left on my desk, but it is, and I get things solved. And one way or the other, that problem is going to be solved. China has been helping us, and I appreciate the help, but they can do much more. WSJ: Are you worried, Mr. President, that sending—delaying military exercises on the peninsula for the Olympics sends the wrong message to the North? Trump: Say it again? WSJ: Are you concerned that delaying military exercises on the Korean Peninsula for the Olympics sends the wrong message to the North Koreans, that you’re in some way bending to them? Trump: You’re the first one that’s asked that question. No, I don’t think anybody thinks that I’m bending. I think that people that, if anything, I’m being too tough. No, I think it’s inappropriate to have the Olympics, have millions of people going to the Olympics hopefully, have North Korea going to the Olympics, and we’re having exercises on the beach. No, I think that that doesn’t—I think it sends a good message to North Korea, not a bad message. I think it would be totally inappropriate to do that during the Olympics. WSJ: You think North Korea is trying to drive a wedge between the two countries, between you and President Moon? Trump: I’ll let you know in—within the next 12 months, OK, Mike? WSJ: Sure. Trump: I will let you know. But if I were them I would try. But the difference is I’m president; other people aren’t. And I know more about wedges than any human being that’s ever lived, but I’ll let you know. But I’ll tell you, you know, when you talk about driving a wedge, we also have a thing called trade. And South Korea—brilliantly makes—we have a trade deficit with South Korea of $31 billion a year. That’s a pretty strong bargaining
Ignatius: “Sometimes diplomacy is the art of going in two directions at once, and the Trump administration seems to have chosen that sweet spot of ambiguity, for now, in managing its continuing confrontation with North Korea. President Trump has paused his “Little Rocket Man” rhetoric and his boasts about the size of his own nuclear button. He’s insisting this week that talk of a U.S. military strike (which he had encouraged) is “completely wrong” and is calling for discussions with North Korea “under the right circumstances.” A fragile detente seems to have begun. North Korea hasn’t tested weapons in more than a month and is talking to South Korea. North Korean athletes and spectators will attend the Pyeongchang Olympics next month. The United States has postponed joint military exercises with South Korea until after the last gold medal is awarded. Call it speed-skater diplomacy, if you like, but the table for negotiations has at least been set. Trump administration diplomacy is like the oft-quoted description of New England weather: If you don’t like it, wait awhile. But at least through late February, we’re likely to experience a thaw on the Korean Peninsula, and it’s interesting to explore what it means. ...The problem with this Olympic peace parade is that nothing has really been resolved. Once the games have ended, all the same problems will continue to exist. If the United States resumes military exercises, North Korea may go back to testing missiles and bombs. “We have avoided escalation of tension,” said one U.S. official, but in several months, “we’re back to square one.” Ideally, the next step would be direct talks between the United States and North Korea. A senior State Department official told me he hopes face-to-face meetings will start before the Olympics end; the United States will characterize the goal as eventual denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Pyongyang may offer a different formula, but Washington probably won’t care so long as the other side shows up. There’s no sign yet that it will, however. The State Department official explained that the conversation with Pyongyang can “start at the edges,” with each country describing how it sees the future, and then “work toward the center,” meaning denuclearization. “The Olympics themselves might be the perimeter” from which talks start, says the official. Trump argues that his nuclear brinkmanship over the past year has worked. ...Who has blinked here? It’s hard to argue that it’s Kim. The mutual stand-down for the Olympics looks very much like the “freeze for freeze” approach that Russia and China were recommending last year, although U.S. officials resist the characterization. For all Trump’s bluster and self-congratulation, the past month’s diplomacy really has been a Korean show, with Kim and Moon both showing considerable finesse. Kim gave his New Year’s Day speech with the confidence of a member of the nuclear club, but he was also deferential toward Seoul. Moon responded avidly, but he also kept faith with Washington by stressing that diplomacy must eventually encompass denuclearization. ...Tillerson will meet in Canada next week with diplomats from countries that sent troops to fight the Korean conflict nearly 70 years ago. The gathering is meant to signal global solidarity and resolve. But it will also highlight the failure of the U.S.-led coalition, so far, to stop North Korea from becoming a de facto nuclear power. A pause for the Olympics, and then, alas, the crisis resumes.” (David Ignatius, “The Korean Crisis Will Resume – after the Olympics,” Washington Post, January 12, 2018)

Hook: “The Vancouver Foreign Ministers’ Meeting on Security and Stability in the Korean Peninsula will be held in Vancouver on January 16th. The United States and Canada are convening the meeting to demonstrate international commitment to diplomatic solutions to the
escalating threat posed by DPRK’s nuclear and ballistic missile programs. The ministerial – the goal of the ministerial is to provide a practical mechanism – mechanisms to exert continued pressure on the Kim regime while demonstrating that diplomatic options remain open and viable. The invitation list is largely based on countries that are UN Command sending states, which are the countries that sent combat support and/or humanitarian aid to support the Republic of Korea during the Korean War. There is growing evidence that our maximum pressure campaign is being felt in North Korea. They are feeling the strain. And we believe that this pressure campaign remains the best avenue to force change in Kim Jong-un’s behavior and to get him to the negotiating table for meaningful discussions. Among the issues we will be discussing is how the international community can thwart North Korean efforts to evade UN sanctions through smuggling. … One of the things that we’re looking at – we hope that the UN can list some of these vessels for port entry bans, and we think that that will demonstrate seriousness of purpose if we can start having more of these vessels listed so that we can then – they can be banned from entering other ports.” (DoS Briefing, Director of Policy Planning Brian Hook, January 11, 2018)

Choe Ryong-hae, 68, vice chairman of the central committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK), appears to have become the director of the organization and guidance department that oversees the party’s operation and surveillance, according to data provided by the Ministry of Unification. A chief of the organization and guidance department is in charge of overseeing personnel policy at the WPK. The ministry said that Jong Kyong-thaek is leading North Korea's spy agency, the Ministry of State Security. He replaced Kim Won-hong, who is said to have been punished after a party inspection. Shin Ryong-man has become the head of Office 39, known as the WPK's special unit managing Kim Jong-un's secret funds. The ministry said that North Korea's state agency in charge of inter-Korean affairs is placed under the North's cabinet. In June 2016, North Korea upgraded the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country to a state apparatus from an offshoot of the WPK. The agency's head is Ri Son-gwon, who led North Korea's five-member delegation to South and North Korea's high-level talks held two days ago. (Yonhap, “N. Korean Official Choe Ryong-hae Apparently Leading Ruling Party’s Key Department,” January 11, 2018)

Pubian, Bermudez, Liu: “Recent commercial satellite imagery of North Korea’s Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Site indicates that the North Portal, where the last five nuclear tests were conducted, remains dormant and that tunnel excavation has been stepped up at the West Portal. Throughout December 2017, mining carts and personnel were consistently present around the West Portal and there was significant expansion of the spoil pile. On December 28, there were also a large number of personnel (~100 to 200) observed in seven different formations whose purpose is unknown in the Southern Support Area. These activities underscore North Korea’s continued efforts to maintain the Punggye-ri site’s potential for future nuclear testing.” (Frank V. Pabian, Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. and Jack Liu, “Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Site: Significant Tunneling Underway at West Portal,” 38North, January 11, 2018)

Website Uriminzokkiri said South Korea should “permanently halt” its annual military drills with the US, which South Korean President Moon Jae-in and his US counterpart Donald Trump agreed to temporarily postpone until after the Winter Olympics. “Inter-Korean talks and war drill can never be incompatible,” Uriminzokkiri said in its commentary. “It’s nothing but an attempt to bring disaster and misfortune to our people.” Rodong Sinmun has demanded South Korea stop its efforts to have US strategic assets deployed on the peninsula, such as strategic bombers and nuclear aircraft carriers. “If the South Korean authorities really want detente and peace, they should first stop all the efforts to bringing in US nuclear equipment and conducts exercise for nuclear warfare with foreign forces,” the newspaper said in a commentary. (Yeo Jun-suk, “North Korea’s State Media Demands ‘Complete Cessation’ of Allied Military Drills,” Korea Herald, January 12, 2018)

The U.S. Air Force is going ahead with two long-planned flight tests of intercontinental ballistic missiles next month despite efforts to damp tensions over North Korea’s nuclear ambitions and
encourage fragile talks with South Korea. “There are two launches currently scheduled for February that have been scheduled for three to five years” to test the reliability and accuracy of the Minuteman III missiles, according to Captain Anastasia Schmidt, a spokeswoman for the Air Force Global Strike Command, which manages ICBMs and long-range bombers. Schmidt said the potential range of dates for tests “are typically not released this far in advance.” (Anthony Capaccio, “U.S. Sticks to ICBM Test-Flight despite North Korean Tensions,” Bloomberg News, January 12, 2018)

For 38 harrowing minutes, residents and tourists in Hawaii were left to believe that missiles were streaming across the sky toward the Pacific island chain after an erroneous alert this morning by the state’s emergency management agency. “Ballistic missile threat inbound to Hawaii,” warned an 8:07 a.m. message transmitted across the state’s cellphone networks. “Seek immediate shelter. This is not a drill.” Only after an inexplicable delay by the state agency — during which residents scrambled to seek shelter and contact relatives — was a subsequent message sent describing the missile warning as a “false alarm.” The frightening mistake, which Gov. David Ige (D) later attributed to a state employee’s errant push of a button, prompted outrage and calls for an investigation into how such an error could occur and take so long to correct. The episode underscored the already heightened level of anxiety at the western edge of the United States amid mounting tensions with North Korea over its nuclear arsenal and the menacing social media exchanges between President Trump and its leader, Kim Jong Un. The false alert prompted U.S. military officials to scan systems that monitor missile launches; they determined almost instantly that there was no threat. But officials described confusion over whether or how the military should correct a state-issued alert. At the North American Aerospace Defense Command, which tracks the skies for threats to the United States, U.S. troops manning the watch floor confirmed within minutes that there were no missiles bearing down on Hawaii. That information was quickly relayed to state officials, said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Joe Nawrocki, a spokesman for the command. But Hawaii struggled to issue a comprehensive correction. The Hawaii Emergency Management Agency transmitted its first “no missile threat” message within 12 minutes of the mistaken alert, but that revision went out only on the agency’s Twitter account. It wasn’t until 8:45 a.m. that the agency was able to issue a stand-down message across the same cellphone and cable television networks that had spread the initial, erroneous warning. By that time, officials from Hawaii including Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (D) had taken it upon themselves to distribute stand-down messages on social media. “What happened today is totally inexcusable,” Sen. Brian Schatz (D) said in a posting on his Twitter account. “The whole state was terrified. There needs to be tough and quick accountability and a fixed process.” Deputy White House press secretary Lindsay Walters said Trump had been briefed on the false missile warning in Hawaii. She added that it was “purely a state exercise.” Officials in Hawaii did not characterize the errant alarm as part of any drill or exercise. (Amy B. Wang, Dan Lamothe, and Greg Miller, “Missile Scare Alarms Hawaii,” Washington Post, January 14, 2018, p. A-1)

Maritime Self-Defense Force vessels have been patrolling international waters off the Korean Peninsula since late last year to thwart attempts by North Korea to evade international sanctions, government sources said. Their primary task is to foil efforts by North Korea to acquire refined petroleum products from foreign cargo carriers in the Yellow Sea as well as the Sea of Japan. The mission is purely aimed at “warning and monitoring” activities in waters surrounding North Korea, the sources added. The MSDF vessels are not authorized to forcibly inspect suspect ships. It is the first involvement by MSDF vessels in efforts to bolster the effectiveness of U.N. sanctions. China is strongly opposed to MSDF vessels operating in the Yellow Sea that rings its eastern coastline, but the Japanese government decided the patrols were necessary to ensure that the embargo remains watertight. The MSDF monitors the movement of foreign ships and share that information with the United States, the sources said. In the Sea of Japan, the SDF and the U.S. military patrol together, each in an assigned area. (Doi Takateru, “MSDF Patrolling Yellow Sea to Stop Smuggling to North Korea,” Asahi Shimbun, January 13, 2018)
KCNA: “Working-level talks between the north and the south of Korea for the dispatch of the north side’s art troupe were held at the Thongil House in Panmunjom on Monday. Present there were members of the north side’s delegation led by Kwon Hyok Bong, department director of the Ministry of Culture, and members of the south side’s delegation with Ri U Song, section head of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, as its chief delegate. At the talks both sides had a sincere discussion on the practical matters related to the performances by the north side’s art troupe to be dispatched to the south side’s area with the 23rd Winter Olympics as an occasion and adopted a joint press release. According to the release, the north side will dispatch its art troupe comprised of more than 140 members to the south side and give its performances in Kangrung and Seoul. Various technical matters for performances will be smoothly settled through consultation with the south side. Reflected in the joint press release is the content that the north side will send a field survey delegation as early as possible and the south side will ensure the safety and convenience of the north side’s art troupe to the maximum, and other working matters will be discussed in the way of exchanging documents through Panmunjom liaison channel.” (KCNA, “Inter-Korean Working-Level Talks Held,” January 15, 2018)

A meeting of states that backed South Korea in the Korean war will look at ways to better implement sanctions to push North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons, officials said, even as the North and South explore detente ahead of next month’s Winter Olympics. Foreign ministers and senior officials from 20 nations will hold a full-day meeting in Vancouver tomorrow, hosted by the United States and Canada, looking to increase diplomatic and financial pressure on North Korea to give up development of nuclear missiles capable of hitting the United States, a program that has raised fears of a new war. Canadian and U.S. officials say the meeting will discuss ways to ensure implementation of wide-ranging U.N. sanctions, including steps agreed last month to further limit Pyongyang’s access to refined petroleum products, crude oil and industrial goods. Brian Hook, the State Department’s director of policy planning, said last week that participants, including Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, would probe how to boost maritime security around North Korea and options to interdict ships carrying prohibited goods in violation of sanctions. China and Russia, which backed the North in the war but have since agreed to U.N. sanctions on Pyongyang, will not be attending. China has reacted angrily to the Vancouver meeting as an example of “Cold War” thinking. China’s state media said Chinese President Xi Jinping, in a phone call with U.S. President Donald Trump, stressed that a hard-earned alleviation of tensions must continue. “Maintaining international unity on the issue is extremely important,” Xi said. China was ready to work with the United States to resolve the issue in an appropriate way, state broadcaster CCTV quoted the Chinese leader as saying. China’s special envoy for North Korea Kong Xuanyou, speaking in an interview with Phoenix Television on Monday, urged the United States to seize the opportunity to seek direct talks with North Korea. China’s state-run Global Times newspaper said the Vancouver meeting reflected Washington’s desire to “highlight its dominant role in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue and cripple the clout of China and Russia.” “But the meeting will likely accomplish little,” it said in an editorial. U.S. officials say hawks in the Trump administration remain pessimistic that the North-South contacts will lead anywhere. Even so, debate within the U.S. administration over whether to give more active consideration to military options, such as a pre-emptive strike on a North Korean nuclear or missile site, has lost momentum ahead of the Olympics, the officials said. Scott Snyder, director of the U.S.-Korea policy program at Washington’s Council on Foreign Relations, said that if Pyongyang felt tougher sanctions constituted a blockade, it might interpret them as an act of war. British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, who will be in Vancouver, said the international community had to stand united. “Sanctions are biting but we need to maintain diplomatic pressure on Kim Jong Un’s regime,” he said in a statement. (David Ljunggren and David Brunnstrom, “Vancouver Meeting Focuses on Sanctions as Koreas Explore Détente,” Reuters, January 15, 2018)

Mattis: “I will be there simply to give the military situation and then I will depart, leaving the conference in the hands of our secretary of state and the foreign ministers. I just want to emphasis this, because this shows that this effort right now is firmly in the diplomatic realm. That is where
we are working it. That is then President Trump's direction. … And the whole point is this in the diplomatic realm as far as how we're trying to address the issue. Certainly our diplomats are -- are backed up by our military options. … They're trying to further align the coordination coming in now and intensify the international campaign of economic pressure on DPRK. It is a global problem requiring a global solution. And, the -- our efforts -- our international efforts appear to be having some effect. You're aware that for the first time now in many, many months over years we are now having negotiations, even if they're starting with the -- with the Olympics. They're still some reason to see the diplomatic initiatives are starting to go in the right direction. It's too early to make a statement about that -- an all-encompassing statement about that. But the fact is there are negotiations going on -- (inaudible). ... Q: Secretary Mattis, what would you hope would come out of this meeting in Vancouver -- (inaudible)? SEC. MATTIS: It's a good question. What's the outcome, you know. First of all, it's expanding the number of nations that are sitting down now and looking at how we reinforce the diplomatic overtures and the diplomatic initiatives. So a lot of this is just -- (inaudible) -- one another, answering questions, and making certain that we replace uncertainty with certainty, so they know -- everybody knows where we're going as we go forward. As you're aware, we've got the ROK, Republic of Korea, forces -- (inaudible) -- less than 30,000 of U.S. forces there. They're under the U.N. rubric of years ago that is a compliance demand of international -- (inaudible). And part of this -- (inaudible) -- as everyone knows, how do we fit into this, if the diplomatic option does not work, then obviously the whole point is to reinforce the diplomatic option to show that there are military options should there be a DPRK attack. (inaudible) Q: What's -- what's the uncertainty, sir -- what's the uncertainty about -- you say we're replacing uncertainty with certainty. What is the uncertainty about? MATTIS: Well, the certainty with uncertainty will show them that there are military options. But -- (inaudible) -- within the framework of strengthening the diplomats' hands. That is what we want to have come out of this, let the diplomats know that they are backed up by the force of arms. And part of this -- (inaudible) -- as everyone knows, how do we fit into this, if the diplomatic option does not work, then obviously the whole point is to reinforce the diplomatic option to show that there are military options should there be a DPRK attack. … Q: And when you walk out of this meeting, if there is some kind of event or something that could -- this meeting leads to some kind of further discussion or some kind of a -- (inaudible) -- situation, how ready are you to do that -- (inaudible) -- North Koreans or the South Koreans? MATTIS: We're going to continue the dialogue. How ready are we to continue the dialogue? Secretary Tillerson, through the diplomatic channels, has laid out how we could move forward like this. And, again, that's where we can give the hand to the diplomats. I can't give you a thorough answer, but all along this has been guiding towards some kind of freezing of the programs, both ballistic missile tests and nuclear tests, and moving this back into discussions for that verifiable nuclear-free Korean Peninsula. Remember, we have moved our weapons -- our weapons out of there many years ago. So there's only one nation -- when China said they want a nuclear-free peninsula, when Russia, U.K., France, ROK, Republic of Korea, Japan, United States said we want a nuclear-free peninsula, there's only nation that could start that negotiation, and that's DPRK. That's the reason for economic sanctions and the diplomatic isolation you see going on. And the force going that way. We would be ready to do it. Q: (inaudible) -- current talks between the North and the South relieve some of the pressure? MATTIS: The current talks about the Olympics -- (inaudible). I think they're a positive indicator. I don't think they relieve any of the U.N. sanctions. I don't think it's -- we have sufficient data to say what this indicates as far as the way forward by the Kim regime. We don't know where -- (inaudible) -- don't have enough data. But I think it is a positive indicator. We just don't know where or how far it goes. Does it have traction? Will it go a long ways or will it go no further than this? I don't know. ... ). Q: Thank you, Mr. Secretary, real quick back to the North Koreans -- (inaudible) --being interested in talking with the South. Do you feel like Kim is sincere about this or is this -- MATTIS: I don't know, JJ. I can't -- we don't have enough data yet to know what's in his mind. Our problem is not with the North Korean people. Our problem is with Kim and his regime. But that is the regime in power that we must deal with. And I believe it is impossible to say right now, after the years of provocations, if this one indicator is sufficient data point. (Inaudible). Your question really goes to the heart of the issue.” (DoD, Media Availability with Secretary Mattis en Route to Vancouver, Canada, January 16, 2018)
Twenty nations pledged to ensure that U.N. sanctions already in place were fully implemented and the participants said in a joint statement they agreed “to consider and take steps to impose unilateral sanctions and further diplomatic actions that go beyond those required by U.N. Security Council resolutions.” They gave no details. They also vowed to support renewed dialogue between the two Koreas “in hopes that it leads to sustained easing of tensions” and agreed that a diplomatic solution to the crisis was both essential and possible. The United States and Canada co-hosted the day-long meeting in Vancouver of countries that backed South Korea during the 1950-53 Korea War. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said, “It is time to talk, but they have to take the step to say they want to talk.” He warned Pyongyang, “Our approach is, in terms of having North Korea chose the correct step, is to present them with what is the best option – talks are the best option; that when they look at the military situation, that’s not a good outcome for them it could trigger a military response if it did not choose negotiations.” Tillerson brushed off a question about such a “bloody nose” strike, telling a closing news conference: “I’m a not going to comment on issues that have yet to be decided among the National Security Council or the president.” However, he said the threat posed by North Korea was growing. “We all need to be very sober and clear-eyed about the current situation ... We have to recognize that the threat is growing and if North Korea does not chose the pathway of engagement, discussion, negotiation, then they themselves will trigger an option,” Tillerson said. U.S. officials have reported a debate within the Trump administration over whether to give more active consideration to military options, such as a pre-emptive strike on a North Korean nuclear or missile site. U.S. officials say discussion of a military strike option has lost some momentum since North and South Korea held formal talks for the first time in two years this month and Pyongyang said it would send athletes to the Winter Olympics that South Korea will host next month. Japanese Foreign Minister Kono Taro said in Vancouver that the world should not be naive about North Korea’s “charm offensive” in engaging in talks with the South. “It is not the time to ease pressure, or to reward North Korea,” he said. “The fact that North Korea is engaging in dialogue could be interpreted as proof that the sanctions are working.” South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha said she hoped the dialogue would continue well beyond the Olympics, but stressed that existing sanctions must be applied more rigorously. Tillerson said North Korea must not be allowed “to drive a wedge” through allied resolve or solidarity and reiterated Washington’s rejection of a Chinese-Russian proposal for the United States and South Korea to freeze military exercises in return for a freeze in North Korea’s weapons programs. A senior State Department official said U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis briefed the Vancouver participants over dinner on Monday and stressed the U.S. preference for a diplomatic solution, while keeping a military option on the table. “It was a chance to raise people’s confidence that we have thought through this, that we definitely prefer a diplomatic solution,” the official said. (David Brunnstrom and David Ljunggren, “Nations to Consider More Sanctions; U.S. Warns on Military Options,” Reuters, January 16, 2018)

Tillerson: “...The goal of the maximum pressure campaign is and always has been to move North Korea towards credible negotiations on denuclearization. And our diplomatic talks have always been backed up by a strong and resolute military option. Today, however, we had constructive discussions about how to push our diplomatic efforts forward and prepare for the prospects of talks. But productive negotiations require a credible negotiating partner. North Korea has not yet shown themselves to be that credible partner. The United States has always been open to clear messages that North Korea - and we have sent clear messages to North Korea that we are ready for serious negotiations. North Koreans know our channels are open, and they know where to find us. But a sustained cessation of North Korea's threatening behavior is necessary - is a necessary indicator of whether the regime is truly ready to pursue a peaceful, diplomatic resolution to the security threat that it has created. Our nations must remain united on sustaining pressure until North Korea takes concrete steps toward and ultimately reaches denuclearization. ...

MODERATOR: Next question, Barbara Plett Usher, BBC. Q: Mr. Tillerson, you've made quite clear that you want this issue solved through diplomacy backed up by strong resolute options, as you just said. There are many reports of talk in the White House about the option of a limited military strike, a so-called "bloody nose" that would send a message to North Korea rather than start a war. Do you think that's a bad idea? And in a related question, if I may, sir, the question that's in the minds of many Americans especially after the false missile alert at the weekend, do
Americans need to be worried about a possible war with Korea? And sorry, one more: Could you just clarify briefly the confusion over the past week, or the question, I should say, of whether the President has communicated through a direct channel to the North Korean leader? Thank you.

TILLERSON: Well, I'm not going to comment on issues that have yet to be decided among the National Security Council or the President, so I have no comment on the, quote, "bloody nose," as you named it. With respect to whether Americans should be concerned about a war with North Korea, I think it's - we all need to be very sober and clear-eyed about the current situation. As North Korea has continued to make significant advances in both its nuclear weapons, the lethality of those weapons as demonstrated by their last thermonuclear test as well as the continued progress they've made in their intercontinental ballistic missile systems, we have to recognize that that threat is growing. And if North Korea is not - does not choose the pathway of engagement, discussion, negotiation, then they themselves will trigger an option. I think our approach is, in terms of having North Korea choose the correct step, is to present them with that is the best option, that talks are the best option, that when they look at the - a military situation, that's not a good outcome for them. When they look at the economic impact of ever-growing sanctions and the pressure campaign, there is no - there is no end to that. And I think for North Korea and the regime, what we hope they are able to realize is the situation only gets worse. It gets worse with each step they take, it gets worse with time. And that is not working to their objectives of wanting to be secure. They are not more secure. They are becoming less secure. They certainly are not more economically prosperous. They're becoming less prosperous. And we do think that that message is beginning to - I don't want to say resonate with them, but there is a realization with them that the rest of the world is quite resolute in this stand we're taking that we will never accept them as a nuclear power. And so it's time to talk, but they have to take the step that says they want to talk. And your last question was around? Q: Whether or not the President has direct communications with the North -- TILLERSON: Well, again, there's just certain elements of this situation that I'm not going to comment upon. I don't think it's useful to comment because we're at - relative to your prior question, we're at a very tenuous stage in terms of how far North Korea has taken their program and what we can do to convince them to take an alternative path. And so I - when we get into who's talking to who and what was said, if we want that to be made known or made public, we will announce it.” (DoS, Remarks, Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson and Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland at a Press Availability, Vancouver, January 16, 2018)

Japan’s public broadcaster mistakenly sent an alert that warned citizens of a North Korean missile launch and urging them to seek immediate shelter, then minutes later corrected it, days after a similar error in Hawaii. NHK television issued the message on its internet and mobile news sites as well as on Twitter, saying, “North Korea appears to have fired a missile.” It added that a government warning had been issued: “The government: Seek shelter inside buildings and basements.” NHK said the mistake was the result of an error by a staff member who was operating the alert system for online news, but did not elaborate. NHK deleted the tweet and text warning after several minutes, issued a correction and apologized several times on air and on other formats. “The flash was a mistake,” NHK said. “We are very sorry.” (Associated Press, “Japan Public TV Sends Mistaken North Korea Missile Alert,” January 16, 2018)

South and North Korea agreed to field a joint women's ice hockey team for the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics and march together under a "unified Korea" flag at the opening ceremony. The North will also send a 230-member cheering squad and a 30-member taekwondo demonstration team to the South, according to a joint statement issued after a working-level meeting at the border village of Panmunjom. The North's delegation will use a western land route, marking the opening of the cross-border road for the first time since February 2016, when a joint industrial complex in the North Korean border city of Kaesong was shut down. The two sides also agreed to hold a joint cultural event at Mount Kumgang on the North Korean east coast before the opening of the February 9-25 Olympics and to conduct joint training of skiers at Masikryong Ski Resort in the North. As for the Paralympics scheduled for March 9-18, the North promised to send a 150-member delegation including athletes and cheerleaders. The outcome is expected to be discussed at the International Olympic Committee's meeting with officials from the Koreas slated for
President Donald Trump complained that Russia was helping North Korea to evade international sanctions, signaling frustration with a country he had hoped to forge friendly relations with after his 2016 election win. “Russia is not helping us at all with North Korea,” Trump said during a 53-minute Oval Office interview with Reuters. He [President Vladimir Putin] can do a lot. But unfortunately we don’t have a relationship - I think it’s too bad, but unfortunately we don’t have much of a relationship with Russia, and in some cases it’s probable that what China takes back, Russia gives. So the net result is not as good as it could be.” He added, “What China is helping us with, Russia is denting. In other words, Russia is making up for some of what China is doing.” “I spoke with President Xi (Jinping) the other day, who I have a great chemistry with, I have a great relationship with. They’re doing a lot ... But they can do more. Ninety-three percent of the trade goes through China.” The president cast doubt on whether talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un would be useful. In the past he has not ruled out direct talks with Kim. “I’d sit down, but I’m not sure that sitting down will solve the problem. They’ve talked for 25 years and they’ve taken advantage of our presidents, of our previous presidents.” He blamed his three immediate predecessors, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama, for failing to resolve the crisis and, a day after his doctor gave him a perfect score on a cognitive test, suggested he had the mental acuity to solve it. “I guess they all realized they’re going to have to leave it to a president that scored the highest on tests,” he joked. He declined to comment when asked whether he had
engaged in any communications at all with Kim, “No, I just don’t want to say as to whether or not we’ve had communication. But, but we will see how that plays out. OK? And hopefully it can be done in a peaceful way but it’s very possible that it can’t.”

Asked whether North Korea could hit the U.S. with a missile, he said, “I don’t think - they’re not there yet, but they’re close. And they get closer every day. And again, this is a problem that should have been handled over the last 25 years before they were this close or before they did have a capability.”

Asked whether he thought the United States needs more missile defense systems, he said, “Yes, yes I do. We’re ordering more missile defense and we’re ordering more missile offense also. We have been very depleted as a nation and I would love to spend money on other things but I’m also a person of great common sense.”

Trump said he welcomed talks between North and South Korea over the Winter Olympics to be held in the South next month and said this could be an initial phase in helping defuse the crisis. Asked whether the United States has been considering a limited, pre-emptive attack to show the North that the United States means business, he said, “Well, again I don’t want to say what options I want to consider. I just don’t think we should be talking about options to the media.”

Asked what his reaction would be to new North Korean missile tests, he said, “I don’t like talking about things like that. We’re playing a very, very hard game of poker and you don’t want to reveal your hand.”

(Steve Holland, Roberta Rampton, and Jeff Mason, “Trump Accuses Russia of Helping North Korea Evade Sanctions; Says U.S. Needs More Missile Defense” and “Key Quotes from Reuters Interview with Trump,” Reuters, January 17, 2018)

North and South Korea reached an agreement for their athletes to march together under one flag at the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics next month, a powerful gesture of reconciliation that further complicates President Trump’s strategy for dealing with the nuclear-armed regime of Kim Jong-un. South Korea, the host of the games, said it hoped a partnership in sports could contribute to a political thaw after years of high tensions on the Korean Peninsula. For the White House, however, the budding détente scrambles its strategy of pressuring the North, with sanctions and threats of military action, to give up its nuclear arsenal. This latest gesture of unity, the most dramatic in a decade, could add to fears in Washington that Pyongyang is making progress on a more far-reaching agenda. White House officials warn that Kim’s ultimate goal is to evict American troops from the Korean Peninsula and to reunify the two Koreas under a single flag.

They have cited that long-held goal to buttress their argument that Kim cannot be deterred peacefully as the Soviet Union was during the Cold War. While a one-time Olympics ceremony is hardly a step toward reunification, the image of athletes marching behind a “unified Korea” flag is a symbolic manifestation of what worries Trump’s aides. And the prospect of crowds from North and South Korea cheering together would be a striking contrast to the threats of war from Trump.

The White House this week welcomed the announcement but played down its significance, noting that it was not the first time that athletes from the two Koreas had competed together. “Let’s hope that the experience gives the North Korean athletes a small taste of freedom and that it rubs off,” said Michael Anton, a spokesman for the National Security Council. “North Korean propaganda is not surprising that North Korea is sending more cheerleaders and musicians than athletes.”

That emphasis on propaganda, other officials said, was in keeping with North Korea’s longer-term goal of reunification. The Olympic agreement could bolster President Moon Jae-in of South Korea, who has been pushing for dialogue with the North.

“This will be a great opportunity to thaw the frozen relations,” he said during a visit to the training camp for South Korean athletes. “If we unify our team with the North’s, it won’t necessarily improve our team’s strength very much,” Moon said. “It will even require extra efforts to build up teamwork with the North Korean players. But if the two Koreas unify their teams and play a great match together, that itself will be long remembered as a historic moment.”

Few expected that the breakthrough in sports diplomacy would lead to a broader relaxation of the decades-old standoff over the North’s nuclear weapon programs. But it provided a welcome reprieve for South Koreans who have grown alarmed and weary over the tensions and relentless talk of war. (Choe Sang-hun and Mark Landler, “Olympic Détente Upends Strategy on North Korea,” New York Times, January 18, 2018, p. A-1)
The U.S. has canceled a plan for a 7,800-ton Virginia-class nuclear-powered submarine to dock at Busan for refueling on today to avoid fresh tensions with North Korea. A government official said Seoul told Washington that the submarine had better not enter the naval operations base. Instead it suggested that the sub should dock in Jinhae, but the U.S. military declined and abandoned the port call entirely. The U.S. Navy has been operating 13 Virginia-class nuclear-powered submarines since 2004. The newest type of the U.S. Navy's attack subs, they are armed with Tomahawk cruise missiles and MK-48 torpedoes. They can also be used in counterterrorism operations because they have smaller submersibles for commando infiltration missions. (Yoon Hyung-jun, “U.S. Nuke Sub Kept out of Busan for Fear of Agitating N. Korea,” Chosun Ilbo, January 18, 2018)

Joseph Yun: “Hani: Will Secretary Tillerson’s plan to visit to Pyongyang still be effective if NK stops so-called provocations during a certain period? It seems that a 60-day period [of North Korea refraining from provocation] is no longer a precondition. Could you confirm that? Yun: I think what you have to understand is that Secretary Tillerson has always stated that we are open to credible dialogue. And what form that credible dialogue takes, we don’t know. We really believe that it is up to the North Korean side to suggest how a dialogue could be credible. So fundamentally, I believe that now the North Korean side has to respond. Hani: Is the “60 days condition” still in effect? Yun: There has never been a “60 day condition.” What has been a condition is that North Korea should say we are stopping testing because we want a dialogue. So it doesn’t matter whether it’s sixty days or ninety days or whatever. They need to say that they want to have a dialogue, and for that reason they are stopping testing nuclear and missile devices. Hani: If North Korea announces that it will stop nuclear and missile testing, could Secretary Tillerson meet with the North Koreans? Yun: Well, it’s something that we have to think about seriously, but that would be a good first step. Hani: Is the “New York channel” still working well? Is this being used to notify North Korea of US intentions? Yun: We correspond regularly via the New York channel. The New York channel is a message center. So, I’m sure what we tell the channel gets to Pyongyang. So this is working fine. I’m not prepared to go into what we’ve discussed. Hani: There are concerns the tensions might re-escalate if there is no tangible solution to the nuclear issue after the Pyeongchang Olympics conclude. Do you have any plan to keep the momentum that has resulted from recent inter-Korean dialogue and North Korea’s participation in the Olympics? Yun: We have stated clearly that we are open to serious dialogue, and so it would be nice if North Korea responded meaningfully to our offer, which is a standing offer out there. So like you, I hope something can be worked out so they come to the table for serious and credible dialogue. Hani: There is an argument that in order to keep the current momentum, the US-ROK joint exercises need to be scaled down or modified. Is that something the US is prepared to consider? Yun: Again, we’re not going to reveal what we’re going to do and what we will not do. So it is tough to answer those questions. But I think everyone has made it clear that freeze-for-freeze is not acceptable for the US. Hani: Would the US accept South Korea sending a special envoy to North Korea in order to make a breakthrough regarding the nuclear issue? Yun: Why wouldn’t the US accept it if there is a breakthrough and North Korea decided that all of a sudden, “You know what? You’re right. The special envoy from South Korea is right; we’re going to get rid of our nuclear weapons.” That’d be great. That would be fantastic. But is that going to happen? I don’t think so. I think it’ll be tough. Hani: Secretary James Mattis indicated while en route to Vancouver that the current focus is freezing the North Korean nuclear and ballistic missile tests. This seems to be an implication that the first goal of US side is to freeze the testing. Is that a fair inference? Yun: I think everyone realizes that this will be a long process. and everyone also acknowledges that step one could be freezing nuclear missile test. But it has to be step by step, and I think everyone knows the steps clearly. You start from a freeze, then you stop development, and then you send in inspectors, and you begin what we call disabling and then dismantling and finally denuclearization. I think everyone understands these steps, and also acknowledges that the very first step is a freeze, yes. Hani: Is that realistic? Yun: Yes. Hani: It’s realistic to think that North Korea will give up its nuclear program through a diplomatic approach? Yun: Of course, I believe that. I think it’s going to take a lot of effort and time. I do believe that they will eventually denuclearize as many countries have done, including Ukraine, South Africa, and so on. (Yi Yong-
At a National Security Council meeting, Trump disregarded the significance of the massive U.S. military presence on the Korean Peninsula, including a special intelligence operation that allows the United States to detect a North Korean missile launch in seven seconds vs. 15 minutes from Alaska, according to Woodward. Trump questioned why the government was spending resources in the region at all. “We’re doing this in order to prevent World War III,” Defense Secretary Jim Mattis told him. After Trump left the meeting, Woodward recounts, “Mattis was particularly exasperated and alarmed, telling close associates that the president acted like — and had the understanding of — ‘a fifth- or sixth-grader.’” (Philip Rucker and Robert Costa, “On the Edge in Trump’s West Wing,” Washington Post, September 5, 2018, p.A-1)

Woodward: “In several secure phone conversations with President Moon Jae-in of South Korea, Trump had intensified his criticism of the KORUS trade agreement between the two countries. He would not let go of the $18 billion trade deficit and the $3.5 billion expense of stationing 28,500 U.S. troops. The refrain was jeopardizing relations with Moon, whom he disliked. ...Trump told Moon he wanted to send a 180-day termination letter and destroy the trade relationship. You guys are ripping us off. He wanted the trade and security issues separated. I’m doing giving you guys free money! Moon replied that trade and security were intertwined. We want to work with you, the South Korean president said. He was conciliatory. ...We want to come to an understanding. Trump was amped up. You’ve got to pay for the THAAD anti-ballistic missile system. Why do we need to have any of our anti-ballistic missile system there? He belittled the KORUS trade agreement, South Korea and its new president. Kelly, McMaster, Tillerson, and Mattis joked darkly that it was inexplicable that the president was voicing more ire at South Korea than our adversaries – China, Russia, Iran, Syria, and North Korea. The senior White House staff and national security team were appalled. They didn’t know what the president might say or do. This was an important relationship, especially at that moment. They had to shut this down. There was a consensus that something needed to be done before Moon decided he’d had enough. McMaster set up a National Security Council meeting in the Situation Room for January 19, 2018. The meeting was billed as a discussion of issue related to South Korea among the president and his principals – Tillerson, Mattis, Kelly, McMaster, Dunford, Cohn. Trump got right to the point. ‘What do we get by maintaining a massive military presence in the Korean Peninsula?’ he asked, returning to his obsession with the money and the troops. ...Mattis and General Dunford once more explained that the benefit was immense. We get a stable democracy in a part of the world where we really need it, Mattis said. ...Trump had been informed about the edge the Special Access Program intelligence operations gave the United States in detecting a North Korean missile launch – seven seconds versus 15 minutes from Alaska. There was also an offensive cyberattack capability. It had mixed results sabotaging North Korean missiles before or after launch. Mattis showed signs he was tired of the disparaging of the military and intelligence capability. And of Trump’s unwillingness to comprehend their significance. ‘We’re doing this in order to prevent World War III,’ Mattis said. He was calm but stark. It was a breathtaking statement, a challenge to the president, suggesting he was risking nuclear war. ...One person present said Mattis’s message was clear: Stop fucking around with this. ...Mattis was not finished. ‘We have the ability to defend the homeland with forward deployment’ of the 28,500 troops. He was reluctant to mention the Special Access Programs in such a large meeting. Mattis explained, without the intelligence capability and the troops, the risk of war would vastly increase. The means of defending South Korea and Japan would be decreased. If there was a war without these assets, ‘the only option left is the nuclear option. We can’t achieve the same deterrent effect’ in any other way. ‘And we can’t do it as cost effectively.’ The arrangement with South Korea was one of the great national security bargains of all time. Mattis tried to speak the president’s language of cost/benefit analysis. ‘But we’re losing so much money in trade with South Korea, China and others,’ Trump countered. ‘I’d rather be spending money on our own country.’ The United States was subsidizing others with the trade imbalances. ‘Other countries,’ Trump went on, ‘who’ve agreed to do security things with us only do it because they’re taking so much of our money.’ They were almost stealing from us. ‘Forward-
positioned troops provide the least costly means of achieving our security objectives, and withdrawal would lead our allies to lose all confidence in us.’ [Joint Chiefs of Staff] Chairman Dunford jumped in, seconding all these points with some passion. ‘We’re spending massive amounts for very rich countries who aren’t burden sharing,’ Trump said, hammering his point. ...Tillerson ...turned back to the main issue: the value of forward deployment. ‘It’s the best model. The global system. Joining together in trade and geopolitics leads to good security outcomes.’ Dunford again supported his argument. ‘Our forward-deployed cost in South Korea is roughly $2 billion. South Korea reimburses us for nearly $800 million of that. We don’t seek reimbursement for the cost of our troops’ such as their pay. The chairman also said that other countries were paying the U.S. an annual subsidy for activities we would engage in anyway for our own protection. ‘We’re getting $4 billion a year subsidy in our efforts to protect the homeland,’ Dunford said. ‘I think we could be so rich,’ Trump said, if we weren’t so stupid. We’re being played [as] suckers, especially NATO.’ ...The president left. Among the principals, there was exasperation with these questions. Why are we having to do this constantly? When is he going to learn. They didn’t believe they were having these conversations and had to justify their reasoning. Mattis was particularly exasperated and alarmed, telling close associates that the president acted like – and had the understanding of – ‘a fifth or sixth grader.’” (Woodward, Fear, pp. 304-8)

Gary Cohn, then Trump’s top economic adviser and former president of Goldman Sachs, is described as having swept from the president’s desk in the Oval Office a letter from Trump addressed to South Korean President Moon Jae-in terminating the Korea-U.S. free trade agreement (FTA) last September. In a White House National Security Council meeting on January 19 of this year, Trump asked the point of maintaining a massive U.S. military presence on the Korean Peninsula. Mattis and Dunford briefed Trump on the benefits of the alliance with South Korea, a stable democracy and the 11th largest economy in the world with a GDP of $1.5 trillion, the same as Russia’s. This meeting, arranged by McMaster, came after Trump was described as having badgered South Korean President Moon Jae-in, whom he disliked, in phone conversations threatening to terminate the Korea-U.S. FTA and criticizing the trade deficit and the cost of stationing 28,500 U.S. troops in South Korea. At one point, Mattis told the president, “We’re doing this in order to prevent World War III.” He was said to have explained that without the intelligence capability and the forward deployment of the U.S. troops, the risk of war would vastly increase, and without such assets, the “only option left is the nuclear option.” (Sarah Kim, “‘Fear’ Shows How Close Korea Came to War,” JoongAng Ilbo, September 14, 2018)

Sigal: “Ever since North Korea’s Kim Jong Un accepted South Korea’s invitation to participate in the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, the two countries have been moving at a speed skater’s pace to ease tensions. It’s a moment of real opportunity — but it’s also a fragile one, because any relaxation of tensions in Korea won’t be sustained unless Washington resumes negotiations with Pyongyang. President Trump shows signs he may do just that. “I would love to see them take it beyond the Olympics,” he told reporters at Camp David on Jan. 6. “And at the appropriate time, we’ll get involved.” He reiterated that four days later in a telephone call with South Korean President Moon Jae-in. In the weeks after North Korea’s surprise Olympics move, Washington and Seoul postponed joint military exercises scheduled to begin in February, and the Koreas have restored a military hotline, agreed to march together at the opening ceremony, field a joint women’s hockey team, and allow a large contingent of cheerleaders and a pop orchestra travel south across the Demilitarized Zone that has divided them since the Korean War. Observers were too quick to dismiss Kim’s move as a charm offensive or a ploy to sow division in allied ranks. But some of us who have spent years dealing with North Korea see this opening as the North’s latest attempt to ease tensions — not just with South Korea, but also with the United States. Amid contradictory messages from the Trump administration, a senior State Department official hinted that time may come sooner than many expect. They told the Washington Post’s David Ignatius last week that face-to-face meetings could start before the Olympics end. The conversation with Pyongyang can “start at the edges,” with each country describing how it sees the future, and then “work toward the center,” meaning denuclearization was no longer a precondition but an eventual goal. “The Olympics themselves might be the perimeter” from which talks start,
they said. Demanding that Pyongyang suspend nuclear tests without getting anything in return has only delayed diplomatic give-and-take, enabling it to add to its nuclear capacity and boost its bargaining leverage in the meantime. How long will it take for sanctions to compel North Korea to accept talks on U.S. terms? How many ICBM and nuclear tests will it conduct and how many nuclear weapons and ICBMs will it make in the meantime? Pressure without negotiations has never worked in the past with Pyongyang. There’s no reason to think it will now — and getting China to toughen sanctions won’t help. Understanding Pyongyang’s strategy, as well as Beijing’s place in it, is the starting point for understanding this. Korea’s history with China has been fraught for centuries, and North Korean-Chinese tensions are hardly new. During the Cold War, Kim Il Sung played China off against the Soviet Union to maintain freedom of maneuver. In 1988, anticipating the Soviet Union’s collapse, he reached out to the United States, South Korea and Japan in order to avoid overdependence on China. As China has grown stronger, that need became more compelling. Forcing North Korea’s lifelong foes to become friends has been the Kims’ aim ever since. From Pyongyang’s viewpoint, that aim was the basis of the 1994 Agreed Framework, committing Washington to “move toward full normalization of political and economic relations” - in plain English, end hostility. That aim was also the essence of the September 2005 Six-Party Joint Statement in which Washington and Pyongyang pledged to “respect each other’s sovereignty, exist peacefully together, and take steps to normalize their relations” as well as to “negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.” For Washington, suspension of Pyongyang’s nuclear and missile programs was the point of these agreements, which succeeded for years in shuttering the North’s production of fissile material and stopping test-launches of longer-range missiles. Both agreements collapsed, however, when Washington did little to implement its commitment to improve relations and Pyongyang reneged on denuclearization. Pyongyang’s desire for an end to enmity could yield much more leverage for Washington than more stringent sanctions. By contrast, nothing provokes Pyongyang more than cooperation between Washington and Beijing. Far from becoming more pliable, on four occasions when China and the United States cooperated in the U.N. Security Council to impose tougher sanctions – in 2006, 2009, 2013, and this fall - North Korea responded by conducting nuclear tests in an effort to drive them apart. Is easing tensions with Washington still Kim’s strategy? The only way to find out for sure is to resume negotiations. Reciprocity is needed to get the North Korea to suspend missile and nuclear tests. It doesn’t mean postponing or cancelling joint exercises with South Korea, but their size and operating tempo can be adjusted, especially by suspending deployment of nuclear assets like flights of nuclear-capable B-52 bombers into Korean airspace. Kim Jong Un himself hinted at that more acceptable version of a freeze for a freeze in his New Year’s Day address. South Korea, he said, “should discontinue all the nuclear war drills they stage with outside forces.” North Korea’s party newspaper Rodong Sinmun made that explicit on January 11, “If the South Korean authorities really want detente and peace, they should first stop all the efforts to bringing in U.S. nuclear equipment and conducts exercise for nuclear warfare with foreign forces.” The odds of persuading North Korea to go beyond another temporary suspension to stop generating fissile material and dismantle its nuclear and missile programs are slim unless Washington and Seoul move toward political and economic normalization, undertake a peace process to end the Korean War, and negotiate regional security arrangements. Eliminating its weapons could only be possible after the North is convinced a fundamentally new relationship is firmly in place, which would take years. A policy of “maximum pressure and engagement” can only succeed if nuclear diplomacy is soon resumed and the North’s security needs are satisfied. Amid all the chatter about war-war in the news, the Administration seems to be moving to try jaw-jaw. Let’s hope that works.” (Leon V. Sigal, “North Korea Is Reaching Out. Will Trump Play Ball?” BuzzFeed, January 19, 2018)

1/21/18

A North Korean delegation arrived in Gangnueng, an eastern city, to check the venues for its proposed art performances at next month’s Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. The trip came amid brisk inter-Korean contact on the North’s participation in the Olympic Games to open in three weeks. The seven-member team is led by Hyon Song-wol, head of the North’s Samjiyon Orchestra and director of the Moranbong Band, the country’s well-known all-female musical group, reportedly created at the order of Kim Jong-un. Known as one of the most influential women in the North, she is rumored to be an ex-girlfriend of Kim. Earlier in the day, the North’s delegation
crossed the land border via the Gyeongui Line, becoming the first North Koreans to travel to the South since the shutdown of the Kaesong Industrial Complex in early 2016. Several South Korean officials greeted the North Koreans at the customs, immigration and quarantine (CIQ) office at Dorasan Station, just south of the border. The two Koreas will exchange visits of working-level officials later this week to continue consultations on issues related to the North's participation in the Olympics and the ensuing Paralympics. A dozen South Korean officials are scheduled to make a three-day visit starting January 23 to the Mount Kumgang area and Masikryong Ski Resort in the North's eastern area. The North accepted the South's offer to send the advance team as part of its plan to stage a joint cultural event in the Mount Kumgang region, according to the Ministry of Unification. Their skiers will train together at the ski compound as well. The North also informed the South of a plan to dispatch an eight-member delegation, led by Yun Yong-bok, a deputy director general at its sports ministry, on January 25, it added. Yun traveled to South Korea in 2014 for such an inspection before the North joined the Incheon Asian Games. The North’s team wants to look around Olympic facilities, such as stadiums, lodgings and the press center for three days. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced the North will send 22 athletes to the Pyeongchang Games in three sports -- skating, skiing and ice hockey. The IOC also confirmed that two nations will also march together behind a single flag at the opening ceremony and field a unified women's hockey team in what it described as a "milestone." (Lee Chi-dong, “N. Korea Delegation in S. Korea to Inspect Concert Venues,” Yonhap, January 21, 2018)

CPRK statement: “A breakthrough was made in the improvement of the north-south ties and there is a warm wind for reconciliation thanks to the DPRK's sincere efforts, to be warmly welcomed by the whole Korean nation and the world. But the puppet conservative forces have gone beyond a tolerance limit in their ill intention to chill the atmosphere for the improved north-south ties and ruin the great event of the nation, shocking the public at home and abroad. A hideous provocative act, openly perpetrated in downtown Seoul in broad daylight on Jan 22, clearly proved that the wild act of the group of traitors challenging the trend of the national history toward the improvement of the north-south ties and reunification has reached the extremes. Timed to coincide with the arrival of our field survey delegation for dispatch of an art troupe in Seoul that day, coteries of the "Korean Patriotic Party" flocked to the plaza of Seoul Railways Station where they held a press interview and viciously slandered the DPRK's participation in the Olympics. They went on the rampage, torching a portrait symbolizing the dignity of the DPRK supreme leadership and a DPRK flag, not content with talking hoarse that "Pyeongchang Olympics is about to change into Pyongyang Olympics for promoting the north's social system and making the north's nuclear weapons a fait accompli" and "dispatch of the north's cheering group and joint training at the Masikryong Ski Resort are an attempt to bring to naught the sweets and efforts exerted by inhabitants in Kangwon Province and Pyeongchang". This is a never-to-be-condoned hideous crime as it is an intolerable mockery of the sincerity and efforts being made by the DPRK for the improvement of the north-south relations and a deliberate political provocation to turn the Olympics into a theatre for escalating confrontation between the north and the south. Far from making a deep bow to the fellow countrymen for their sincere efforts for the successful Olympics, the conservative group resorted to all sorts of slandering and committed such shuddering acts in the eyes of the delegation of the DPRK. They are a despicable group of gangsters in human form. The conservative forces who had been pushed into the cesspool of history being severely punished by history for their acts of treachery under the armpit of Lee Myung Bak and Park Geun Hye, are now going on the rampage, making hideous provocations. This is a shame to the nation. It is deplorable that due to a handful of betes noires, our efforts and the desire of all Koreans to make the Olympics a great auspicious event common to the nation are being mocked and dark clouds lay low over the prospect of the Olympics. The puppet conservative forces are human rejects devoid of appearance as human beings, to say nothing of elementary etiquette and manners toward the fellow countrymen, and dregs of history that would do only harm to the nation if they are allowed to go at large. It is quite natural that the south Koreans from all walks of life raise their voices calling for throwing overboard those rubbish so that they would not give off stinking smell any more, being concerned that such acts omen new trouble in the north-south relations. What should not be overlooked is the south Korean authorities’ behavior of conniving at such serious politically-motivated provocation. As we truly hoped for the Olympics becoming a theater for
promoting trust and reconciliation between the north and the south, we repeatedly advised and warned them so as to keep any acts that may incite mistrust and confrontation between the fellow countrymen and get on the nerves of the dialogue partner from being occurred. **Even though they watched the reckless confrontation moves committed by the conservatives, the south Korean authorities have taken a non-committal stand**, reading the faces of those conservatives who are no more than living corpses, while talking about "freedom of expression" and only asking them to "restrain". No wonder, the situation is turning out to be worse, far from being brought under control. This is little short of egging the conservative group on to foster such acts so that they go on the rampage. The criminal acts committed by the conservative forces with no fear of divine punishment have now greatly enraged the people of the DPRK. We will never tolerate hideous acts of the conservative hooligans who insulted the sacred dignity and symbol of the DPRK, and the dishonest behavior of the south Korean authorities who connived at such acts, and we cannot but take a serious consideration of our follow-up measures regarding the Winter Olympics. The **south Korean authorities have to apologize before the nation for the political provocation, severely punish those involved in the crime and take a prompt measure to prevent the recurrence of such acts. If the north-south agreement and schedules for the DPRK's participation in the Olympics are cancelled due to the confrontational act of the conservative riff-raffs keen on spouting vituperation and committing provocative acts against the fellow countrymen, the blame will wholly rest with the conservative group and the south Korean authorities.** We value the north-south ties but have no intention to continue to show good faith and magnanimity even while seeing the confrontational fanatics dare challenge the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK and its sacred symbol. We will closely follow the future attitude of the south Korean authorities concerning the recent hideous crime.” (KCNA, “We Will Never Pardon S. Korean Conservative Forces’ Shuddering Hideous Crime against Dignity of DPRK,” January 23, 2018)

CIA Director Mike Pompeo said that North Korea is moving "ever closer" to putting Americans at risk and that he believes leader Kim Jong Un won't rest until he's able to threaten multiple nuclear attacks against the U.S. at the same time. "North Korea is ever closer to being able to hold America at risk." Pompeo said at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative-leaning think tank in Washington. "I want everyone to understand that we are working diligently to make sure that a year from now I can still tell you that they are several months away from having that capacity." Speaking after one year on the job, Pompeo also said the CIA believes Kim would not only use nuclear weapons to stay in power, but to threaten to reunify the divided Korean Peninsula under his totalitarian regime. The quest for reunification is disputed by some North Korean experts who see Kim's nuclear program as primarily a means of retaining power and don't think he would threaten or forcibly try to take over South Korea. Pompeo said North Korea's nuclear weapons program has developed at a "very rapid clip," but that Kim is hoping for an arsenal of nuclear weapons — "not one, not a showpiece, not something to drive on a parade route." He wants the ability to deliver nuclear weapons from multiple missiles fired simultaneously. "That increases the risk to America," Pompeo said. Despite his warning, Pompeo doesn't think a North Korean attack on the United States is imminent. He said the Trump administration is "laser-focused" on achieving a diplomatic solution to the nuclear standoff. "The American people should know we are working to prepare a series of options to make sure we can deliver a range of things so that the president will have the full sweep of possibilities," he said. "The president is intent on delivering the solution through diplomatic means." He wouldn't address the question of whether there are military options available to the U.S. that don't risk an escalation into nuclear war with North Korea. "There is much effort all across the U.S. government to ensure that Americans don't have to feel at risk," Pompeo said. "We saw what happened in Hawaii. It is an imperative — an American, national imperative — that we as an intelligence agency deliver the information to our senior leaders such that they can resolve this issue in a way that works for the American people.” (Associated Press, “CIA: North Korea Moving ‘Ever Closer’ to Putting U.S. at Risk,” January 23, 2018) The president’s long-term mission is to remove nuclear weapons from the Korean peninsula, Mike Pompeo said. But in the near- to medium-term, he suggested, the administration would consider it a victory to accomplish something far more modest: stopping North Korea’s nuclear-weapons program from progressing, rather than rolling it back. The North is “a handful of
months” away from “being able to hold America at risk” with a long-range, nuclear-tipped missile, he observed, noting that he had made the same estimate several months ago. “We are working diligently to make sure that, a year from now, I can still tell you they are several months away from having that capacity.” Pompeo also added two notable caveats to Trump’s “It won’t happen!” vow. The first was that the president is intent on preventing North Korea from developing an arsenal of long-range nuclear weapons. This is different from a posture that insists on preventing the successful test-firing of a single weapon, which is the one Trump seemed to embrace in his tweet. “The logical next step would be [for North Korean leader Kim Jong Un] to develop an arsenal of weapons. Not one, not a showpiece … but rather the capacity to deliver [nuclear weapons] from multiple firings of these missiles simultaneously. And that increases the risk to America, and that’s the very mission set that President Trump has directed the government to figure out a way to make sure it never occurs.” The second caveat was that the administration is determined to deny North Korea reliable long-range nuclear weapons. “Can they reliably deliver the pain which Kim Jong Un wants to be able to deliver against the United States of America?” Pompeo asked. “It’s one thing to be able to say ‘Yes it’s possible you could if everything went right’—if the missile flew in the right direction and we got lucky, we could do it”—as opposed to certainty.” “This is the core of deterrence theory: You have to be certain that what you aim to deliver will actually be successful. At the very least you need to make sure your adversary believes that it is certain,” Pompeo continued. “That’s what Kim Jong Un is driving for. He is trying to put in our mind the reality that he can deliver that pain to the United States of America. And our mission is to make the day that he can do that as far off as possible.” Pompeo said that while the CIA assesses Kim Jong Un to be a “rational actor,” the agency is concerned that Kim “may not be getting really good, accurate information” about how serious the United States is about countering North Korea’s nuclear program. “It is not a healthy thing to be a senior leader and bring bad news to Kim Jong Un,” he joked. “Tell someone you’re going to do that and try to get life insurance. So we’re taking the real-world actions that we think will make unmistakable to Kim Jong Un that we are intent on denuclearization. We are counting on the fact that he’ll see it. We’re confident that he will.” And even if Kim is a rational leader who could be deterred from using his nukes, failing to end North Korea’s weapons program could result in a nuclear-arms race in the region, with the North sharing its nuclear technology with other countries or groups, and Kim Jong Un using his newfound clout for “coercive” purposes. “We do believe that Kim Jong Un, given these tool sets, would use them for things besides simply regime protection,” Pompeo explained. “And that is to put pressure on what is his ultimate goal, which is reunification of the peninsula under his authority.” (Uri Friedman, “Trump’s Red Line on North Korea Gets Fuzzier,” The Atlantic January 23, 2018)

The Trump administration unfurled new sanctions targeting North Korea and its weapons program, underscoring the aggressive approach that President Trump has promised to take against the government of Kim Jong-un. The new sanctions, released by the Treasury Department, target North Korean and Chinese trading companies, North Korean ships and North Korea’s ministry of oil. They also hit North Korean representatives in China and Russia who are members of the Workers’ Party of Korea and who have helped North Korea transfer chemicals and equipment used for weapons production. “Treasury continues to systematically target individuals and entities financing the Kim regime and its weapons programs, including officials complicit in North Korean sanctions evasion schemes,” Steven Mnuchin, the Treasury secretary, said in a statement. Mnuchin said that, in accord with United Nations Security Council resolutions, he also is calling on Russia and China to expel anyone working in their countries on behalf of North Korea’s financial networks. This week, Sigal Mandelker, Treasury’s undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, traveled to Asia to hold talks with officials in Beijing, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul about ways to combat North Korea’s illicit financing and money laundering practices. During a stop in Hong Kong on Wednesday, she urged the Chinese to do more to crack down on shell companies that North Koreans set up in other countries and use to evade sanctions. In testimony before Congress last week, Ms. Mandelker noted that North Korea has been using cover representatives and front companies to hide and transfer funds that finance its weapons program. Sanctions experts have suggested that the United States faces limited options targeting North Korea’s illicit financing schemes because of the broad swath of sanctions that already have been
imposed on the isolated Asian nation. The designation on Wednesday of two Chinese trading companies, Beijing Chengxing Trading Co. Ltd. and Dandong Jinxiang Trade Co., Ltd., signals that the Treasury Department is looking more broadly for ways to squeeze North Korea. “The Chinese trading companies that were targeted are the most interesting,” said Mike Casey, a sanctions expert at the law firm Kirkland & Ellis International. “Even though the U.S. hasn’t been able to get a ton of direct economic pressure on North Korea, it certainly hasn’t given up on exerting indirect economic pressure on North Korea.” The sanctions enable the United States to freeze the assets of the people or businesses that are designated and blocks Americans from doing business with them. Today, Japan said that a military plane had spotted a North Korean tanker and a Dominican-registered tanker side by side in the East China Sea on Saturday, apparently transferring cargo. Yasutoshi Nishimura, the deputy chief cabinet secretary, on Thursday called that a sign that fuel sanctions were working, in that the North had been forced to go outside normal methods to obtain fuel. (Alan Rappeport, “U.S. Orders New Batch of Sanctions on Kim,” New York Times, January 25, 2018, p. A-9)

“The US is prepared to engage in dialogue with the North. I think this is the best time for North Korea [to engage in dialogue with the US],” a senior official at South Korea’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said. “US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said that dialogue is possible if [North Korea] refrains from additional provocations to some extent, and President Donald Trump has recently signed on as well. [The US] has never said that kind of thing before,” the official said during a meeting with reporters this afternoon. “The US always used to impose preconditions [for dialogue] that complicated things. But now they’re saying they want to meet for dialogue, which means that it’s better to meet now,” the official added. “When I asked people about it on a visit to the US, they told me that [Tillerson’s remarks] were still valid. When [Tillerson] said we could talk about the weather, he meant we could get together and talk about everything, including what [North Korea’s] concerns are and what form the deliberations should take,” the official explained. “I think that North Korea coming to Pyeongchang to take part [in the Winter Olympics] is a message about relaxing tensions. They’re not likely to commit a provocation while they’re down here. Once things cool down and [tensions] are eased, the mood will be set for dialogue as well.” Along with the importance of North Korea-US dialogue for resolving the North Korean nuclear issue, the official also emphasized that the South Korean government must be ensured a seat at the table when those talks resume. “We are engaging in dialogue with North Korea out of the belief that inter-Korean dialogue should serve as the impetus toward North Korea-US talks and other talks toward denuclearization and resolving the North Korean nuclear issue. It’s clear that South Korean participation must be guaranteed [in future deliberations],” the official said. Americans have also been emphasizing the importance of resolving the North Korean nuclear issue through diplomacy. “The president is intent on delivering this solution [to the North Korean nuclear issue] through diplomatic means. It is the focus. It has been uniformly that for 365 days. It remains so today,” CIA Director Mike Pompeo said during a lecture hosted by the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), a conservative think tank, yesterday. (Noh Ji-won, Kim Ji-eun, and Yi Yong-in, “’Now Is the Best Time’ for U.S.-North Korea Negotiations, Says S.K. Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” Hankyore, January 25, 2018)

1/25/18

North Korea shipped coal to Russia last year which was then delivered to South Korea and Japan in a likely violation of U.N. sanctions, three Western European intelligence sources said. The U.N. Security Council banned North Korean exports of coal last August 5. But the secretive Communist state has at least three times since then shipped coal to the Russian ports of Nakhodka and Kholmsk, where it was unloaded at docks and reloaded onto ships that took it to South Korea or Japan, the sources said. A Western shipping source said separately that some of the cargoes reached Japan and South Korea in October last year. A U.S. security source also confirmed the coal trade via Russia and said it was continuing. “Russia’s port of Nakhodka is becoming a transshipping hub for North Korean coal,” said one of the European security sources, who requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of international diplomacy around North Korea. Russia’s mission to the United Nations informed the Security Council sanctions committee on November 3 that Moscow was complying with the sanctions. “Russia does not buy coal from
North Korea and is not a transit point for coal deliveries to third countries,” Interfax news agency on January 26 quoted an unidentified official at Russia’s embassy to North Korea as saying. Two lawyers who specialize in sanctions law told Reuters it appeared the transactions violated U.N. sanctions. Reuters could not independently verify whether the coal unloaded at the Russian docks was the same coal that was then shipped to South Korea and Japan. Reuters also was unable to ascertain whether the owners of the vessels that sailed from Russia to South Korea and Japan knew the origin of the coal. The U.S. Treasury yesterday put the owner of one of the ships, the UAL Ji Bong 6, under sanctions for delivering North Korean coal to Kholmsk on September 5. It was unclear which companies profited from the coal shipments. Asked about the shipments identified by Reuters, Matthew Oresman, a partner with law firm Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman who advises companies on sanctions, said: “Based on these facts, there appears to be a violation of the U.N. Security Council resolution by the parties involved.” “Also those involved in arranging, financing, and carrying out the shipments could likely face U.S. sanctions,” he said. Asked about the shipments, a U.S. State Department spokesman said: “It’s clear that Russia needs to do more. All U.N. member states, including Russia, are required to implement sanctions resolutions in good faith and we expect them all to do so.” Two separate routes for the coal were identified by the Western security sources. The first used vessels from North Korea via Nakhodka, about 85 km (53 miles) east of the Russian city of Vladivostok. One vessel that used this route was the Palau-flagged Jian Fu which Russian port control documents show delivered 17,415 tonnes of coal after sailing from Nampo in North Korea on August 3 and docking at berth no. 4 run by LLC Port Livadiya in Nakhodka. It left the port on August 18. The vessel had turned off its tracking transmitter from July 24 to August 2, when it was in open seas, according to publicly available ship tracking data. Under maritime conventions, this is acceptable practice at the discretion of the ship’s captain, but means the vessel could not be tracked publicly. Another ship arrived at the same berth -- No. 4 -- on August 16, loaded 20,500 tonnes of coal and headed to the South Korean port of Ulsan in Aug. 24, according to Russian port control documents. Reuters was unable to reach the operator of the Jian Fu, which was listed in shipping directories as the China-based Sunrise Ship Management. The Nakhodka-based transport agent of the Jian Fu did not respond to written and telephone requests for comment. LLC Port Livadiya did not respond to a written request for comment. The second route took coal via Kholmsk on the Russian Pacific island of Sakhalin, north of Japan. At least two North Korean vessels unloaded coal at a dock in Kholmsk port in August and September after arriving from the ports of Wonsan and Taean in North Korea, Russian port control data and ship tracking data showed. The Rung Ra 2 docked in Kholmsk three times between August 1 and September 12, unloading a total of 15,542 tonnes of coal, while the UI Ji Bong 6 unloaded a total of 10,068 tonnes of coal on two separate port calls -- on August 3 and between September 1 and 8, according to the official Russian Information System for State Port Control. The coal did not pass Russian customs because of the UN sanctions taking effect, but was then loaded at the same dock onto Chinese-operated vessels. Those vessels stated their destination in Russian port control documents as North Korea, according to a source in Sakhalin port administration who spoke on condition of anonymity. Reuters has seen the port control documents which state the destination of the coal as North Korea. But the vessels that loaded the North Korean coal sailed instead for the ports of Pohang and Incheon in South Korea, ship tracking data showed. Asked about the shipments, a South Korean foreign ministry official said: “Our government is monitoring any sanctions-evading activities by North Korea. We’re working closely with the international community for the implementation of the sanctions.” The official declined to say whether the ministry was aware of the shipments reported by Reuters. “The Chinese have cracked down on coal exports from North Korea so the smuggling route has developed and Russia is the transit point for coal,” one of the European security sources said. (Guy Faulconbridge, Jonathan Saul, and Polina Nikolskaya, “Despite Sanctions, North Exported Coal to South and Japan via Russia – Intelligence Sources,” Reuters, January 25, 2018)

"The nuclear issue has to be solved through negotiations and diplomatic endeavors. This idea of a military solution is unacceptable," Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha said at a news briefing on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos. "I'm assured that anything the U.S. administration does on this front is done in close consultation with us," Kang said. She declined to comment if Washington had given Seoul clear assurance but added: "This is our fate that is at
stake. Any option that is to be taken on the Korean peninsula cannot be implemented without us going along.” U.S. Vice President Mike Pence, who will represent the United States at the Olympics, said on January 23 he would seek to counter what he described as an effort by North Korea to “hijack” the Games with a propaganda campaign. Seoul has rejected that criticism, saying the Olympics will help defuse tensions over Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programs. "This is an opportunity for engagement and a peaceful engagement around the Olympic Games, and we just need to make the best of it," Kang said in the interview today. But she cautioned that sustained improvement in bilateral ties cannot take place apart from the nuclear issue: "There have to be advances on this front as well." Kang said she was "very disappointed" with the U.S. government’s decision this week to impose steep tariffs on washing machines imported from South Korea, but said that the trade dispute should not affect a "very strong security alliance" between the two countries. "The period of non-engagement with North Korea has been too long," Kang said, hoping that discussions "will create the momentum for dialogue on the North Korean nuclear issue as well." Seoul had proposed a delay in the drills during the Olympics based on the "spirit of the Olympic Games," Kang said, but declined to elaborate on whether the South would resume the drills after the event. "We’re on the same page on all fronts [with the United States]," she said. "So we will see how the next two months will unfold." (Soyoung Kim, “South Korean Minister Says Military Option ‘Unacceptable’ on North Korea Crisis,” Reuters, January 25, 2018)

North Korea’s participation in the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics opens up a window of opportunity to resume long-suspended talks to discuss the country’s denuclearization, former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said Thursday. "There's actually a very tiny window open," Ban said in a press seminar. He added he thought the Pyeongchang Olympics could be "very successful" in opening up denuclearization talks with North Korea. "(The question is) how to expand this window to lead to actual, meaningful talks. I agree [with some diplomats in the U.S. and South Korea] that this is the best time for talks with the North," the former South Korean foreign minister also noted. "Without any talks to follow Pyeongchang, the crisis of last year will be repeated. Talks must be started," he said. "The small window could be wide open depending on how we do." Military talks between the two Koreas could be one of the options for such talks following the Olympics, Ban said, referring to the countries’ recent agreement in principle to hold dialogue between their militaries. "If it does not take place as agreed, another bout of problems or North Korea’s miscalculation or defiant provocations could follow," he stated. (Yonhap, “N. Korea’s Olympic Participation Opens up ‘Tiny’ Window for Denuclearization Talks: Ban Ki-moon,” January 25, 2018)

North Korean hockey players and an advance team of sports officials crossed the border to South Korea early today to prepare for their country’s participation in next month’s Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. Twenty-three North Koreans arrived in the South via the Kaesong route. Among them were a 15-member delegation of 12 women’s ice hockey players with their coach Pak Chol-ho and two support staff, which swiftly left for the national training center in Jincheon, North Chungcheong Province. The athletes will enter practice sessions with their South Korean counterparts to form a unified women’s ice hockey team for the upcoming games. The players met the South Korean team and coach Sarah Murray in Jincheon after arriving at the training center around 12:30 p.m. They were warmly greeted with a six-minute welcoming ceremony, where the South Korean athletes presented the North Korean players bouquets of flowers. The North agreed to send 22 athletes to compete in women’s ice hockey, figure skating, short track speed skating, cross-country skiing and alpine skiing at the February 9-25 Winter Games. The decision, approved by the International Olympics Committee, spawned out of a series of inter-Korean meetings held after North Korean leader Kim Jong-un expressed willingness to dispatch a delegation to the Winter Games. South Korea currently has 23 players on its entry, but Murray must now add at least three players from North Korea to her roster of 22 players -- 20 skaters and two goal tenders. Meanwhile, a South Korean advance team is set to return home from a three-day trip to North Korea. They inspected venues suggested for a joint cultural event and ski training such as Kumkangsan Resort and Masikryong Ski Resort. The North Korean hockey team’s visit comes as South Korean society remains divided over the idea of a unified team. Critics say the South
Korean team could be burdened by North Korean players and their chances of success have become slimmer. According to a survey by Korea Research released today 58.7 percent of the respondents disagreed with the idea of the unified team, citing “unfairness for South Korean national players who lost their spot at the games.” Those who agreed with the move came in at 37.7 percent, saying it could contribute to an improvement in inter-Korean ties. The main opposition Liberty Korea Party criticized the liberal Moon administration as having allowed North Korea to steal the limelight at the upcoming Pyeongchang Olympics by putting too much emphasis on the North’s participation. “We cannot help but ask once again whether this is the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics or the Pyongyang Olympics,” Rep. Kim Sung-tae, the party’s floor leader, said during a party meeting. Today’s visit also comes as the United States reaffirmed its stance of sticking to further pressure in dealing with North Korea, by imposing a fresh round of sanctions against the rogue regime. Today, North Korea sent a rare announcement addressed to “all Koreans at home and abroad,” saying they should make a “breakthrough” for unification without the help of other countries, via its state media. Some US officials have expressed worries the North may be trying to drive a wedge in the South Korea-US alliance by making a rare gesture of friendliness. (Jung Min-kyung & Joint Press Corp, “N.K. Hockey Players Join S. Korean Team for Training,” Korea Herald, January 25, 2018)

President Moon Jae-in’s approval rating has dipped below 60% for the first time since he took office, a recent opinion poll shows. On January 22–24, Real Meter surveyed Moon’s approval rating among 1,509 adult South Korean men and women nationwide (±2.5 percentage point margin of error with a 95% confidence level). The results showed 59.8% of respondents rating Moon’s governance performance as “good,” the polling outfit reported on January 25. The number was down 6.2 percentage points from 66% the week before – indicating a steep slide. It was also down 10.8% from two weeks prior. A January 19 Gallup Korea survey for the third week of January also Moon’s approval rating at 67%, a six-percentage point drop from the week before. (Seong Yeon-cheol and Hong So-jin, “President Moon’s Approval Rating Drops below 60% for First Time since Inauguration,” January 27, 2018)

South Korea and the United States plan to resume their delayed joint military exercises after the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics and Paralympics, the defense ministry said. "The exact date and size of the planned joint exercises cannot be disclosed, but they will be carried out after the close of the Olympics," Choi Hyun-soo, spokeswoman for the Ministry of National Defense, said in a press briefing. Another ministry official added that the joint exercises will be business as usual, indicating that the size of the exercises will be the same as before. Asked whether this year's joint exercises would be the same as previous drills, the spokeswoman responded affirmatively. Another ministry official, however, added that the exact scale has not been determined. (Yonhap, “S. Korea, U.S. to Conduct Exercises ‘Normally’ after Olympics: Seoul,” January 26, 2018)

The last time South Korea hosted an Olympics, in 1988, the North only refused to take part, it blew up a South Korean airliner ten months before the Games. Yet South Koreans at the time expressed hope that the two Koreas, divided by the Cold War, could one day become a single nation again. Now, as the South prepares to host its second Games next month, the Koreas are cooperating in unheard-of ways, including their first joint Olympic team, in women’s ice hockey. But South Koreans, especially younger ones, are far less interested in reconciliation, to say nothing of reunification. Experts and recent surveys describe a profound shift in attitudes in South Korea, where reuniting the peninsula, and the Korean people, was long held as a sacrosanct goal. These days, younger South Koreans in particular are far more likely to see the idea of reintegrating their prosperous capitalist democracy with the impoverished, totalitarian North as unrealistic and undesirable. Young Koreans say they are more concerned about pressing domestic issues — like unemployment, and whether they can live as well as their parents did — than the enormously costly, complex and hypothetical task of reunifying with the North. A survey last year by the government-run Korea Institute for National Unification in Seoul found that far more South Koreans in their 20s now oppose reunification — 71.2 percent — than support it. Across the population, support has dropped to 57.8 percent from 69.3 percent just four years ago. “Especially
North Korea's armed forces have scaled back their annual winter military exercises this year, U.S. officials said, a development they believe reflects growing pressure from international sanctions on the isolated nation's economy and its military preparedness. The North Korean maneuvers, which typically run from December through March, were slow in getting started and are less extensive than usual, according to American officials familiar with intelligence reports and experts outside the government. One possibility is that restrictions on shipments of oil and refined petroleum products to North Korea imposed by the United Nations have led the country, which has one of the world's largest standing armies, to conserve fuel by cutting back on ground and air training exercises. "Where this will have an effect is on ground force readiness," said Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., a military analyst for 38 North. "Military units have to train to maintain their proficiency." The reduction in the North Korean winter exercises comes amid other signs of strain on the country's military. "We are seeing defections happening in areas where we don't generally see them, for example crossing the DMZ," said Gen. Vincent K. Brooks, the top U.S. commander in South Korea. "We're seeing some increase in executions, mostly against political officers who are in military units, for corruption," the general said. He said the moves "are really about trying to clamp down as much as possible on something that might be deteriorating and keeping it from deteriorating too quickly." Senior South Korean officials and foreign diplomats in Pyongyang say they have yet to see indicators of instability in everyday life inside the country, but point to signs of stress. North Korean laborers are being sent home in large numbers from overseas work...
postings, for example, crimping the country's supply of hard currency and leading to fluctuations in the exchange rate, they say. In addition, propaganda directed at the North Korean public also points to anxiety about the likely impact of sanctions. Kim in his New Year speech this month acknowledged that the economy faced "unprecedented impediments" in 2017. North Korea's armed forces have long had to contend with tight budgets and antiquated hardware. A declassified 2015 report by the U.S. Army on North Korea's military noted that "the amount of time spent on larger exercises pales in comparison to most Western militaries." The exercise cutbacks this year are likely to further diminish the ability of the North Korean military to synchronize large-scale maneuvers involving multiple armor, artillery and aviation units, while slowing the training of new conscripts. (Michael R. Gordon and Jonathan Cheng, “North Korea, Under Sanctions Strain, Dials back Military Exercises,” Wall Street Journal, January 29, 2018)

North Korea has canceled a joint cultural performance with South Korea scheduled for February 4 blaming South Korean media for encouraging “insulting” public sentiment regarding the North, South Korea’s unification ministry said. The North said it had no choice but to call off the performance, which was to be held in the North Korean territory of Mount Kumgang, as South Korean media continued to insult what Pyongyang called “sincere” measures regarding the Winter Olympics Seoul will host next month, the ministry said. (Christine Kim, “North Korea Cancels Joint Performance with South Korea, Blames South Media: Seoul,” January 29, 2018)

The U.S. is stepping up pressure on African states to cut longstanding military and diplomatic ties with North Korea as part of its push to squeeze the funding of Kim Jong Un’s nuclear missile program. U.S. officials want African countries to expel North Korean workers and diplomats, alleging that Pyongyang’s 13 embassies on the continent double up as “profit making centers.” Washington says Pyongyang is using its military co-operation and arms deals with African states to obtain precious foreign currency. It also accuses some of the several thousand North Koreans believed to be living in Africa, including diplomats, of trafficking wildlife parts, such as rhino horn, another relatively easy source of foreign currency. U.S. officials estimate that Pyongyang makes at least $100m through the supply of arms, military training, construction contracts and smuggling. Peter Pham, head of the Atlantic Council’s Africa Center in Washington, said that, although it might seem like “chump change”, it was “a fairly significant sum to the regime given the overall squeeze on its finances.” It was roughly 3-5 per cent of Pyongyang’s total annual foreign exchange earnings, he said. Last September, a UN panel of experts identified 11 African countries — Angola, Benin, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe — as having suspected military ties to Pyongyang. Some African countries, including Sudan, which the US lists as a sponsor of terrorism, have responded to Washington’s demands in an effort to curry favor and extract concessions. Last October, after Khartoum committed itself to downgrading North Korea ties, the US eased some sanctions. Namibia also initiated steps to cut military ties. Eleven African countries identified by UN experts’ panel as having suspected military ties to Pyongyang but other countries, say experts, are either resisting or quietly ignoring US pressure. “There are things that African states can get from North Korea that they’re not going to get from anywhere else,” said Duragh Neville, an expert on Africa-North Korea ties at Chatham House, a UK think-tank. North Koreans were among the few countries able to maintain and upgrade Soviet-era military equipment cheaply, he said. Eritrea, an isolated state in the Horn of Africa, has refused to supply information to the UN on its North Korean links. Other countries, including Mozambique, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, where North Koreans are said to help train Joseph Kabila’s presidential guard, have taken a more ambiguous approach. Some have said they will cooperate but have been slow to provide information, let alone act, according to officials. Even some of supposed US allies, including South Africa, where Pyongyang has an embassy and which the US considers a hub of North Korea’s arms trade, have been slow to respond to Washington’s demands. “South Africa has not given us a clear answer” on its policy, said Robert Scott, the state department’s acting deputy assistant secretary for Africa. Many African states, including Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, have maintained close ties with North Korea since the cold war, when Pyongyang offered material and ideological support to black liberation movements. In
Maputo, Mozambique’s capital, for example, one of the main thoroughfares is named after Kim Il Sung, the founder of North Korea. Construction company Mansudae Overseas Projects Group, which is subject to sanctions by both the US and UN, has erected dozens of monuments and buildings across Africa, including Namibia’s state house and official presidential residence in Windhoek. US officials believe Mansudae continues to employ North Korean laborers throughout the continent. Since September, when President Donald Trump signed Executive Order 13810, the US has been able to threaten any individual or company with a ban on business in the US if they deal with North Korea, ratcheting up the pressure. Grant Harris, an adviser on Africa to Barack Obama as president, said Washington needed to offer economic and security incentives, as well as threats, if governments were to “discard longstanding ties with North Korea.” Trump has alienated some African leaders with his comment on “shithole” countries. Neville of Chatham House said African states had more to gain and less to lose than others from dealing with Pyongyang. “The threat of North Korea is to the US, Japan and South Korea,” he said. “It’s not threatening to bomb Kinshasa or Addis.” (David Pilling, Adrienne Klasa, and Katrina Manson, “US Raises Pressure on Africa to Sever Ties with North Korea,” Financial Times, January 30, 2018, p. 4)

The White House’s original choice for U.S. ambassador to South Korea is no longer expected to be nominated after he privately expressed disagreement in late December with the Trump administration’s North Korea policy, according to people familiar with the matter. Victor D. Cha, an academic who served in the George W. Bush administration, raised his concerns with National Security Council officials over their consideration of a limited strike on the North aimed at sending a message without sparking a wider war — a risky concept known as a “bloody nose” strategy. Cha also objected to the administration’s threats to tear up a bilateral trade deal with Seoul that President Trump has called unfair to American companies. The administration last week imposed new tariffs on imports of washing machines and solar energy panels, a move criticized by the South Korean government. The White House had spent months conducting a security and financial background check on Cha, and U.S. officials formally notified Seoul in December of Trump’s intent to send his nomination to the Senate. South Korean officials quickly signed off on Cha, and U.S. officials formally notified Seoul in

President Trump sketched out an ominous view of America’s international role, emphasizing adversaries over allies, threats over opportunities, and a world to be pacified rather than elevated. But the president saved his longest foreign policy passage, and strongest words, for North Korea, whose “reckless pursuit of nuclear weapons,” he said, “could very soon threaten our homeland.” “We are waging a campaign of maximum pressure to prevent that from happening,” he said. “Past experience has taught us that complacency and concessions only invite aggression and provocation. I will not repeat the mistakes of past administrations that got us into this dangerous position.” Trump did not, as he has before, issue specific threats of a military strike on the North. But he outlined an unrelenting case for what he called the North Korean government’s “depraved character,” echoing a speech he delivered to the South Korean National Assembly in Seoul in November. Hours before the speech, the president’s Korea policy was buffeted by the administration’s decision to abandon a long-delayed plan to nominate a prominent Korea scholar, Victor D. Cha, as its ambassador to Seoul. Cha, 57, had voiced opposition to the administration’s threat to carry out a preventive military strike against North Korea, said two people with knowledge of the decision. He had already undergone an extensive vetting process, and his name had been submitted for approval to the South Korean government — normally an indication that the background check was complete. Officials in Seoul had already signed off on the ambassadorship; Cha is a Republican who identifies as a hawk on North Korea. But friends said he told Pentagon and other administration officials his concerns about ordering a pre-emptive, or preventive, military strike on North Korea before it had the capacity to fire a nuclear-armed missile at the United States. Administration officials, particularly the White House national security adviser, Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, have raised the prospect of such a strike — sometimes called the “bloody nose” strategy — though they emphasize they would prefer to solve the
confrontation with Pyongyang through diplomacy. Cha has also publicly voiced the high cost to both Washington and Seoul of ripping up the Korea Free Trade Agreement, as Trump has threatened to do, unless the South Koreans agree to renegotiate the deal. In his speech, Trump made no mention of the Winter Olympic Games. Nor did he mention a budding détente between North and South Korea, which have agreed to march their teams into the opening ceremony under a single flag and to field a unified women’s ice hockey team. (Mark Landler, “A Foreign Policy Shaped by Adversaries,” New York Times, January 31, 2018, p. A-15)

Trump: “As we strengthen friendships around the world, we are also restoring clarity about our adversaries. ...But no regime has oppressed its own citizens more totally or brutally than the cruel dictatorship in North Korea. North Korea's reckless pursuit of nuclear missiles could very soon threaten our homeland. We are waging a campaign of maximum pressure to prevent that from happening. Past experience has taught us that complacency and concessions only invite aggression and provocation. I will not repeat the mistakes of past administrations that got us into this dangerous position. We need only look at the depraved character of the North Korean regime to understand the nature of the nuclear threat it could pose to America and our allies. Otto Warmbier was a hardworking student at the University of Virginia. On his way to study abroad in Asia, Otto joined a tour to North Korea. At its conclusion, this wonderful young man was arrested and charged with crimes against the state. After a shameful trial, the dictatorship sentenced Otto to 15 years of hard labor, before returning him to America last June -- horribly injured and on the verge of death. He passed away just days after his return. Otto's Parents, Fred and Cindy Warmbier, are with us tonight -- along with Otto's brother and sister, Austin and Greta. You are powerful witnesses to a menace that threatens our world, and your strength inspires us all. Tonight, we pledge to honor Otto's memory with American resolve. Finally, we are joined by one more witness to the ominous nature of this regime. His name is Mr. Ji Seong-ho. In 1996, Seong-ho was a starving boy in North Korea. One day, he tried to steal coal from a railroad car to barter for a few scraps of food. In the process, he passed out on the train tracks, exhausted from hunger. He woke up as a train ran over his limbs. He then endured multiple amputations without anything to dull the pain. His brother and sister gave what little food they had to help him recover and ate dirt themselves -- permanently stunting their own growth. Later, he was tortured by North Korean authorities after returning from a brief visit to China. His tormentors wanted to know if he had met any Christians. He had -- and he resolved to be free. Seong-ho traveled thousands of miles on crutches across China and Southeast Asia to freedom. Most of his family followed. His father was caught trying to escape, and was tortured to death. Today he lives in Seoul, where he rescues other defectors, and broadcasts into North Korea what the regime fears the most -- the truth. Today he has a new leg, but Seong-ho, I understand you still keep those crutches as a reminder of how far you have come. Your great sacrifice is an inspiration to us all. Seong-ho's story is a testament to the yearning of every human soul to live in freedom.” (President Donald J. Trump, State of the Union Address, January 30, 2018)

Cha: “North Korea, if not stopped, will build an arsenal with multiple nuclear missiles meant to threaten the U.S. homeland and blackmail us into abandoning our allies in Asia. North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un will sell these weapons to state and non-state actors, and he will inspire other rogue actors who want to undermine the U.S.-backed postwar order. These are real and unprecedented threats. But the answer is not, as some Trump administration officials have suggested, a preventive military strike. Instead, there is a forceful military option available that can address the threat without escalating into a war that would likely kill tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of Americans. When I was under consideration for a position in this administration, I shared some of these views. Some may argue that U.S. casualties and even a wider war on the Korean Peninsula are risks worth taking, given what is at stake. But a strike (even a large one) would only delay North Korea’s missile-building and nuclear programs, which are buried in deep, unknown places impenetrable to bunker-busting bombs. A strike also would not stem the threat of proliferation but rather exacerbate it, turning what might be a North Korean moneymaking endeavor into a vengeful effort intended to equip other bad actors against us. I empathize with the hope, espoused by some Trump officials, that a military strike would shock Pyongyang into appreciating U.S. strength, after years of inaction, and force the regime to the denuclearization
negotiating table. I also hope that if North Korea did retaliate militarily, the United States could control the escalation ladder to minimize collateral damage and prevent a collapse of financial markets. In either event, the rationale is that a strike that demonstrates U.S. resolve to pursue "all options" is necessary to give the mercurial Kim a "bloody nose." Otherwise he will remain undeterred in his nuclear ambitions. Yet, there is a point at which hope must give in to logic. If we believe that Kim is undetertable without such a strike, how can we also believe that a strike will deter him from responding in kind? And if Kim is unpredictable, impulsive and bordering on irrational, how can we control the escalation ladder, which is premised on an adversary’s rational understanding of signals and deterrence? Some have argued the risks are still worth taking because it’s better that people die "over there" than "over here." On any given day, there are 230,000 Americans in South Korea and 90,000 or so in Japan. Given that an evacuation of so many citizens would be virtually impossible under a rain of North Korean artillery and missiles (potentially laced with biochemical weapons), these Americans would most likely have to hunker down until the war was over. While our population in Japan might be protected by U.S. missile defenses, the U.S. population in South Korea, let alone millions of South Koreans, has no similar active defenses against a barrage of North Korean artillery (aside from counterfire artillery). To be clear: The president would be putting at risk an American population the size of a medium-size U.S. city — Pittsburgh, say, or Cincinnati — on the assumption that a crazy and undeterable dictator will be rationally cowed by a demonstration of U.S. kinetic power. An alternative coercive strategy involves enhanced and sustained U.S., regional and global pressure on Pyongyang to denuclearize. This strategy is likely to deliver the same potential benefits as a limited strike, along with other advantages, without the self-destructive costs. There are four elements to this coercive strategy. First, the Trump administration must continue to strengthen the coalition of U.N. member states it has mustered in its thus far highly successful sanctions campaign. Second, the United States must significantly up-gun its alliances with Japan and South Korea with integrated missile defense, intelligence-sharing and anti-submarine warfare and strike capabilities to convey to North Korea that an attack on one is an attack on all. Third, the United States must build a maritime coalition around North Korea involving rings of South Korean, Japanese and broader U.S. assets to intercept any nuclear missiles or technologies leaving the country. China and Russia should be prepared to face the consequences if they allow North Korean proliferation across their borders. Lastly, the United States must continue to prepare military options. Force will be necessary to deal with North Korea if it attacks first, but not through a preventive strike that could start a nuclear war. In the land of lousy options, no strategy is perfect, but some are better than others. This strategy gets us out of crisis-management mode. It constitutes decisive action, not previously attempted, by President Trump. And it demonstrates resolve to other bad actors that threats to the United States will be countered. Such a strategy would assuredly deplete Pyongyang’s hard currency, deter it from rash action, strengthen our alliances in Asia for the next generation and increase the costs to those who continue to subsidize Pyongyang. A sustained and long-term competitive strategy such as this plays to U.S. strengths, exploits our adversary’s weaknesses and does not risk hundreds of thousands of American lives.” (Victor Cha, “Giving North Korean a “Bloody Nose” Carries a Huge Risk to Americans,” Washington Post, January 30, 2018)

An estimated 60,000 children face potential starvation in North Korea, where international sanctions are exacerbating the situation by slowing aid deliveries, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) said. Under United Nations Security Council resolutions, humanitarian supplies or operations are exempt from sanctions, Omar Abdi, UNICEF deputy executive director, said. "But what happens is that of course the banks, the companies that provide goods or ship goods are very careful. They don’t want to take any risk of later on being associated (with) breaking the sanctions," Abdi told a news briefing. "That is what makes it more difficult for us to bring things. So it takes a little bit longer, especially in getting money into the country. But also in shipping goods to DPRK. There are not many shipping lines that operate in that area," he said, referring to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Sanctions on fuel have been tightened, making it scarcer and more expensive, Abdi added. "We are projecting that at some point during the year 60,000 children will become severely malnourished. This is the malnutrition that potentially can lead to death. It's protein and calorie malnutrition," said Manuel Fontaine, director of UNICEF emergency programs worldwide. "So the trend is worrying, it's not getting any better." In all,
200,000 North Korean children suffer from acute malnutrition, including 60,000 with the most severe form that can be lethal, according to UNICEF. UNICEF had projected 60,000 children would suffer severe acute malnutrition last year, and reached 39,000 of them with therapeutic feeding, spokesman Christophe Boulrierac said. "Diarrhea related to poor sanitation and hygiene and acute malnutrition remains a leading cause of death among young children," it said in today's appeal to donors that gave no toll. UNICEF is seeking $16.5 million this year to provide nutrition, health and water to North Koreans but faces "operational challenges" due to the tense political context and "unintended consequences" of sanctions, it said. It cited "disruptions to banking channels, delays in clearing relief items at entry ports, difficulty securing suppliers and a 160 percent increase in fuel prices". "It's a very close, and tightly monitored intervention which is purely humanitarian in its essence," Fontaine said. (Stephanie Nebhuy, “60,000 North Korean Children May Starve, Sanctions Slow Aid – UNICEF, Reuters, January 30, 2018)

Chinese foreign policy debates are seldom lively, which is just the way the ruling Communist party wants to keep them. Polemics are few, articles and lectures are full of sleep-inducing slogans and official orthodoxy. But a curious exception to this apparently placid consensus has taken place as a debate roils China’s expert community over what to do about North Korea, its increasingly wayward, nuclear-armed neighbor. Over the past several months, policy journals have run articles questioning the official line, while scholars at top universities have been unafraid to publish previously heretical views — in western journals, no less. They have even taken to social media to argue. “There has been a sea change in the debate regarding how China should handle the North Korea crisis,” says Yawei Liu, director of the China Program at the Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia. “A year ago, or two years ago, there was no such debate.” The window of openness seems to exist only for experts. Many users of Wechat, the country’s largest social network, report the Chinese characters for “North Korea” are frequently censored if used in large groups. The mainstream press is similarly muzzled. But academics and even officials have been allowed greater freedom to express themselves. “North Korea is a very unique area; the government does not allow such open debate in many other areas,” says Shen Dingli, a professor of American studies at Fudan University in Shanghai. The debate, he says, demonstrates that China’s policy of seeking to “de-nuclearize” North Korea while shielding the regime from harsher sanctions at the UN has been shown to be wrong since Pyongyang began testing nuclear weapons in 2003. “Since 2003, everyone knows China’s policy towards North Korea has not succeeded,” says Shen. “The reason these views are allowed is a virtual admission that our current policy is dead, so now they seek fresh ideas.” This has produced some memorable public polemics. China’s foreign policy community is still reeling from a social media slugfest last September between Jia Qingguo, dean of the Peking University School of International Studies, and Zhu Zhihua, vice-president of the Zhejiang Association of International Relations. Zhu accused Jia of in effect conspiring with Washington when he advocated “contingency planning” with the U.S. in the event of a war with North Korea. “When war becomes a real possibility, China must be prepared. And, with this in mind, China must be more willing to consider talks with concerned countries on contingency plans,” Jia wrote in an article. Zhu accused Jia of treason in a social media post, saying: “A military attack is the next step.” Jia responded that Zhu was a “career public security officer” who had put words in his mouth. Zhu then replied that Jia’s U.S. education — he has a PhD from Cornell University — had “brainwashed” him. “That debate became very vicious,” says Liu of the Carter Center. A decade earlier this would not have happened. As recently as 2013, Deng Yuwen was suspended as deputy editor of Study Times, the journal of the Central Party School of the Communist party of China, after publishing an article in the Financial Times calling for Beijing to give up on Pyongyang altogether. The only thing that is clear is that no one agrees with the current policy Shen Dingli, a professor of American studies at Fudan University in Shanghai But today the plurality of opinion in the expert community appears to reflect what is happening behind the government’s closed doors, where nationalists, conservatives and liberals are similarly divided. The debate, which the North Korea hawks appear to be winning, has tracked a steady shift in government policy towards supporting tougher sanctions and even, as Jia suggested, contingency planning with the U.S. “I couldn’t imagine two years ago that China could go this far,” says Zhu Feng, director of the Institute of International Studies at Nanjing University, who has argued in the US journal Foreign Affairs for tougher sanctions on North Korea. He says he faced a backlash
from colleagues, but not the government. “I have friends in the foreign ministry who told me they share my views,” he says. On the other side of the ideological fence are those who advocate accepting North Korea into the nuclear club. “We should simply accept reality. We accept India as a nuclear weapons state, we accept Pakistan, so why not North Korea?” says Shen. One Chinese analyst, referring to Mao Zedong’s policy of encouraging freedom of expression in the 1950s, says: “The government has let a hundred flowers bloom” on North Korea. He notes, however, that Mao eventually swung the axe on those who had stuck their necks out too far. How long the current openness will last is hard to say, says Shen. “The only thing that is clear is that no one agrees with the current policy.” (Charles Clover, “China Loosens Reins on N. Korea Polemics,” Financial Times, January 30, 2018, p. 3)

In a letter sent to United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres circulated today, North Korea’s Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho urged Guterres to exert efforts to halt the US’ deployment of military equipment and upcoming military maneuvers. “I express my expectation that you pay a serious attention to the U.S. deployment of nuclear war equipment and its maneuvers to provoke a nuclear war which will undermine the improvement of inter-Korean relations and the easing of tensions,” Ri said. Criticizing the U.S. military pressure as a “primary factor” for worsening ties between the two Koreas, Ri asked the UN Security Council to take up “the issue of welcoming the process of improved inter-Korean relations and discouraging the neighboring countries from disturbing the process.” (Yeo Jun-suk, “NK Chief Diplomat Urges UN Chief to Stop U.S. Military Maneuvers,” Korea Herald, February 2, 2018)

Air Force Gen. Paul J. Selva, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the U.S. military could “get at most of his infrastructure” when asked about Kim’s nuclear missile program, but he declined to specify the percentage of North Korean missiles U.S. forces could destroy. His comments indicate that the United States possesses enough information to target not only North Korea’s missiles but also the support facilities that allow a launch in a potential attack on the United States. “Remember, missile infrastructure is not just the missiles,” Selva said at a roundtable with journalists in Washington. “If you’re the poor sergeant that has to go out and launch the missile, and I blow up your barracks, you’re not available to go do your job.” North Korea has not yet successfully tested all the components necessary to show the world it possesses an ICBM capable of delivering a nuclear warhead to a target in the U.S. mainland, Selva said. Kim’s tests have shown that his missiles can travel far enough to reach the United States and maneuver stably in the right direction, according to Selva. But the North Korean leader has yet to demonstrate a “terminal guidance system” that allows for the specific targeting of the missile and a “reentry vehicle” capable of withstanding the stress and shock that comes with carrying a nuclear warhead back through the Earth’s atmosphere to a target, the general said. Selva did not rule out that North Korea already possesses those technologies but said the country has not demonstrated them. “It is possible, although I think unlikely, that he has found a way to do the test without us knowing,” Selva said. “But I can’t envision what that test would look like, where he would be convinced that he has those components at a reliable- enough level of performance to declare that he’s ready.” Asked about the possibility of pursuing a “freeze for freeze,” Selva said the decision was up to the U.S. officials leading diplomacy with North Korea. “I’m not in charge of the diplomatic effort,” Selva said. But he added that the current situation — in which North Korea has not yet crossed the finish line in its quest — presented “an opening to have that conversation.” Selva declined to rule out the possibility of a preemptive strike on North Korea’s weapons facilities but suggested that preemption is not generally how the U.S. has approached nuclear-armed adversaries. “We don’t do preemption,” Selva said. “Our method of warfare: If they launch one, then game on. But preemption is not something we do as a matter of course.” (Paul Sonne, “U.S. Can Destroy Most of N. Korea’s Nuclear Missile Infrastructure, Top General says,” Washington Post, January 30, 2018)

An American interceptor missile missed its target in a test off the Hawaiian coast, Defense Department officials said, renewing concerns of how the United States will defend itself in the event of a missile attack by North Korea or another adversary. Mark Wright, a spokesman for the
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The White House has grown frustrated in recent weeks by what it considers the Pentagon’s reluctance to provide President Trump with options for a military strike against North Korea, according to officials, the latest sign of a deepening split in the administration over how to confront the nuclear-armed regime of Kim Jong-un. The national security adviser, Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, believes that for Trump’s warnings to North Korea to be credible, the United States must have well-developed military plans, according to those officials. But the Pentagon, they say, is worried that the White House is moving too hastily toward military action on the Korean Peninsula that could escalate catastrophically. Giving the president too many options, the officials said, could increase the odds that he will act. The tensions bubbled to the surface this week with the disclosure that the White House had abandoned plans to nominate a prominent Korea expert, Victor D. Cha, as ambassador to South Korea. Cha suggested that he was sidelined because he warned administration officials against a “preventive” military strike, which, he later wrote, could spiral “into a war that would likely kill tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of Americans.” But the divisions go back months, officials said. When North Korea tested an intercontinental ballistic missile in July that experts concluded was capable of reaching the West Coast of the United States, the National Security Council convened a conference call that included Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis and Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson. After General McMaster left the room, Mattis and Tillerson continued to speak, not realizing that other participants were still on the line. The officials familiar with the matter overheard them complaining about a series of meetings that the National Security Council had set up to consider options for North Korea — signs, Tillerson said, that it was becoming overly aggressive. For now, the frustration at the White House appears to be limited to senior officials rather than Trump himself. But the president has shown impatience with his military leaders on other issues, notably the debate over whether to deploy additional American troops to Afghanistan. As they examine the most effective way of giving credibility to Trump’s threat of “fire and fury,” officials are considering the feasibility of a preventive strike that could include disabling a missile on the launch pad or destroying North Korea’s entire nuclear infrastructure. American officials are also said to be considering covert means of disabling the nuclear and missile programs. While General McMaster also favors a diplomatic solution to the impasse, officials said, he emphasizes to colleagues that past efforts to negotiate with North Korea have forced the United States to make unacceptable concessions. The Pentagon has a different view. Mattis and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., argue forcefully for using diplomacy. They have repeatedly warned, in meetings and on video conference calls, that there are few, if any, military options that would not provoke retaliation from North Korea, according to officials at the Defense Department. Representative of Mattis and Dunford denied that they have slow-walked options to the White House. Even the most limited strike, the so-called bloody nose option, risks what one Defense Department official called an unacceptably high number of casualties. Cha, writing in The Washington Post, said the premise of such a strike — that it would jolt Kim into recognizing that the United States was serious, and draw him back to the bargaining table — was flawed. “If we believe that Kim is undeterable without such a strike, how can we also believe that a strike will deter him from responding in kind?” Cha wrote. “And if Kim is unpredictable, impulsive and bordering on irrational, how can we control the escalation ladder, which is premised on an adversary’s rational understanding of signals and deterrence?” Friends said Cha pressed that case in meetings at the Pentagon, the United States Pacific Command, the State Department and the National Security Council. He passed along articles critical of preventive military action by two colleagues: John J. Hamre, the president of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and Michael J. Green, a senior fellow at the center who worked in the George W. Bush administration, as did Cha. Green warned...
against a preventive strike in testimony on Tuesday before the Senate Armed Services Committee. He said there appeared to be little support for it, even among normally hawkish Republicans like Senators Tom Cotton of Arkansas, Joni Ernst of Iowa and Dan Sullivan of Alaska. Even the White House has struggled to send a consistent message. In the week after Trump issued his threat to rain “fire and fury” on North Korea, Stephen K. Bannon, then his chief strategist, told a progressive journalist, “There’s no military solution. Forget it.” “Until somebody solves the part of the equation that shows me that 10 million people in Seoul don’t die in the first 30 minutes from conventional weapons,” he said, “I don’t know what you’re talking about.” Bannon’s bluntness angered other White House officials and hastened his exit from the White House. But there is evidence that General McMaster shares those concerns. Asked by a reporter in August whether there was any military option that would not put Seoul in North Korea’s cross hairs, he paused briefly, then said, “No.” With as many as 8,000 artillery pieces and rocket launchers positioned along its border with the South, North Korea could rain up to 300,000 rounds on the South in the first hour of a counterattack. While that arsenal is of limited range and could be destroyed in days, North Korea would still have time to cause widespread destruction. In a rare appearance last year on the CBS News program “Face the Nation,” Mattis warned that war with North Korea would be “catastrophic” — “probably the worst kind of fighting in most people’s lifetimes.” That does not mean the military has not begun preparing for that possibility. At multiple Army bases across the country this month, more than 1000 reserve officers are practicing how to set up so-called mobilization centers, which move reservists overseas in a hurry. But as the military gears up, State Department officials say the United States has far from exhausted its nonmilitary options for pressuring Pyongyang. It could, for example, push to expel North Korea from the United Nations or interdict ships that it suspects are violating sanctions against the government. Neither Tillerson nor Mattis has broken with the White House on the issue of a preventive strike. That is because for now, they still view it as a useful tool in deterring North Korea, according to people briefed by the administration. More important, they continue to be confident that, despite their anxieties, cooler heads with eventually prevail. (Mark Landler and Helene Cooper, “Split Grows over Alternatives for Strike against North Korea,” New York Times, February 2, 2018, p. A-1)

Joseph Yun, special envoy on North Korea, said all options remained on the table for solving the nuclear standoff with the reclusive country but that he did not think the military option was close. “Our policy is very much for the peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear crisis. We’ve said over and over again that what we want to see is dialogue,” Yun told reporters in Tokyo. “Having said that, we also have said that all options are on the table and by all options, it has to include military options,” he said. “I don’t believe we are close to it.” Yun welcomed the North-South dialogue and said he hoped it was a sign of things to come, but he said that any talks with Washington would have to be about steps North Korea would take toward denuclearization.” (Nick Macfie, “U.S. Special Envoy on North Korea Says War Is Still an Option, But We’re Not Yet Close to Fighting,” Reuters, February 1, 2018) With questions swirling about Trump’s commitment to diplomacy, Yun said “there should be no confusion that the U.S. is completely committed to peacefully resolving” the crisis. “We’ve said many, many times over and over again diplomacy is very much preferred — way more preferred — than any other option,” Yun said. But he noted that this went beyond merely talking, and also included what he called “peaceful pressure.” Asked if denuclearization was a prerequisite for even starting talks with North Korea, Yun reiterated Washington’s long-held stance. “We should all face the reality, which is that these talks, if there are engagement and talks, have to be about denuclearization, they have to be about steps that North Korea would take toward denuclearization,” he said. “That is the basis for any real engagement with North Korea.” Yun also played down earlier statements that an extended lull in missile tests could lead to dialogue between the two countries. “North Korea stopping nuclear and missile tests would be a great first step,” he said. But “I don’t think it’s so important, sixty days, 90 days, 30 days. Diplomacy is not conducted with smoke signals,” Yun said. North Korea “has to tell us” when they are suspending missile or nuclear tests for the purpose of opening diplomatic channels. “So for them to go through a period of time without telling us, that’s … meaningless,” Yun said. “Communication channels are open, so there’s no problem in telling us their intent. That’s the key,” he added. (Jesse Johnson, “Top U.S. Envoy Says U.S. Not Close to Taking Military Action against North Korea,” Japan Times, February 1, 2018)
Collins and Frantz: “One person who had an inside look at [A.Q.] Khan’s network was Benazir Bhutto. Sitting in her living room in late 2003 during her exile in Dubai, the former two-time Pakistani prime minister (who was assassinated in 2007) recounted to the authors how she learned of Khan’s role in Iran’s nuclear program and how she became an unwitting midwife to his relationship with North Korea. As Bhutto recalled it, she was on an official trip to Tehran in late 1989, her second year as prime minister, when Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani took her aside during a state dinner. He explained that the military leaders of their two countries had agreed to a defense pact that included Pakistan’s help with nuclear weapons technology. Bhutto said she was blindsided. (U.S. intelligence reports from that period concluded that the military had shut her out of its nuclear weapons program.) Bhutto said she summoned General Mirza Aslam Beg, the head of the Pakistani armed forces, to her office when she returned to Islamabad. He denied any knowledge of an agreement or a transfer of nuclear capabilities. Bhutto told us she was certain he was lying but was too weak politically to challenge the military. She took a half measure, ordering that no nuclear scientist be permitted to travel outside Pakistan without her approval, an order confirmed by one of her aides at the time. By the late 1970s, the United States and other governments were aware of Pakistan’s nuclear efforts and Khan’s progress in enriching uranium. Bhutto was right to feel vulnerable—she was ousted as prime minister less than a year later. By then, Khan had traveled to Iran to lay the groundwork for the country’s first uranium enrichment plant at Natanz. While the precise dates are unclear, subsequent investigations by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and others found that Khan’s first contact with Iran occurred in 1987 and that by the late 1980s Khan and his network were supplying nuclear technology to Iran’s fledgling program. Before the end of the decade, Khan had sent Iran over 2,000 components and assemblies for centrifuges to enrich uranium—a flow that continued until the mid-1990s. Khan’s network started with a handful of companies in Switzerland and Germany willing to exploit lax export controls. He also developed strong ties to engineers and other experts in Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Eventually he was producing components in factories in Malaysia and South Africa and maintained a shipping hub in Dubai. During the 1990s, however, Khan’s smuggling operation remained under the radar of the United States, which was focused on the possibility of Russia providing nuclear secrets to Iran. In 1993, Bhutto became prime minister a second time. Within weeks, Khan was on her doorstep. In our interview, Bhutto recalled Khan asking her to make a side trip to North Korea during her state visit to China in 1994. She claimed he said he wanted help with “this nuclear thing.” When Bhutto asked what he meant, Khan said that he wanted North Korean expertise for a missile he was developing to carry a nuclear payload. Bhutto wanted to improve her standing with Pakistan’s military, so she agreed. “I thought the military would be very happy with me and would stop trying to destabilize my government,” she told us. The former prime minister maintained in our interviews that Pakistan paid for the designs for North Korea’s Nodong missile. She said she had ruled out providing nuclear technology to North Korea. Her testimony, however, was contradicted by Khan himself. During the mid-1990s, U.S. intelligence observed Khan making 13 trips to North Korea, often with shipments aboard Pakistani military aircraft. And in his 2004 confession, Khan admitted that he transferred nuclear technology to Iran, Libya, and North Korea, though he later retracted his statement. For North Korea, Khan’s assistance arrived at a critical moment. Like Pakistan, North Korea focused initially on processing plutonium from its two civilian reactors into fissile material for weapons. ... Khan provided North Korea with an alternate path to nuclear weapons. Unlike a reactor, centrifuges are small and can be concealed in underground facilities and tunnels inside mountains (something at which the North Koreans are quite skilled). These centrifuges allowed North Korea to continue developing a secret stockpile of fissile material despite the Agreed Framework and UN sanctions. Although North Korea has conducted multiple nuclear tests in recent years, international monitoring has not determined whether the fissile material comes from plutonium or HEU. But in 2010, the North Koreans surprised the world by inviting Siegfried Hecker, a leading U.S. nuclear expert, to visit a previously unknown installation holding 2,000 centrifuges. The North Koreans claimed the centrifuges were for low-grade enrichment to power a new reactor to produce electricity. But Hecker wrote that the facilities “could be readily converted to produce highly enriched uranium bomb fuel.” (Catherine Collins and Douglas Frantz, “The Long Shadow of A.Q. Khan,” *Foreign Affairs*, January 31, 2018)
Prime Minister Abe Shinzo will ask the United States and South Korea to conduct a planned joint military drill after the Pyeongchang Olympics without scaling it down in order to keep pressure on North Korea to give up its nuclear and missile development, a Japanese government source has said. The matter will be discussed when U.S. Vice President Mike Pence meets with Abe in Tokyo before heading to the opening ceremony of the games, and they are expected to agree on the need to conduct the drill as normal, the source said. Abe has been calling on the international community to maximize pressure on Pyongyang and reject dialogue unless the reclusive state ends provocations and shows actions toward denuclearization. (Kyodo, “Abe to U.S. and South Korea: Don’t Scale down Military Drill,” Japan Times, February 4, 2018) Prime Minister Abe Shinzo will ask South Korean President Moon Jae-in for support in evacuating Japanese citizens if a contingency breaks out on the Korean Peninsula, government sources said. The decision reflects Japan’s concern that escalating tensions could lead to a military clash between Washington and Pyongyang, possibly after the Winter Games conclude in Pyeongchang, the sources said. Abe will pay a two-day visit to South Korea and hold talks with Moon on the sidelines of the opening ceremony in Pyeongchang on February 9. It is unclear how Moon might respond. The two are expected to meet for 45 minutes in a hotel near the venue. Abe plans to explain why he feels an evacuation plan is urgently needed and to propose the start of working-level negotiations possibly involving the United States and other countries, the sources said. The Foreign Ministry estimates roughly 38,000 Japanese were residing in South Korea as of October 2016. “For the safety of the Japanese people, I will firmly request South Korea’s cooperation,” Abe told the Upper House budget committee two days ago. Tokyo has studied emergency plans to send chartered planes to Seoul and other cities and transport Japanese by land to the southern port city of Busan, where ships would take them to the Japanese mainland via the island of Tsushima in Nagasaki Prefecture. Many in the government believe that Self-Defense Force destroyers and aircraft, as well as the U.S. military, would be needed to transport large numbers of Japanese. Tokyo has told Seoul it would like to discuss the possibility of dispatching SDF personnel to South Korea for evacuations. Abe has said other possible topics include trilateral cooperation with the United States to rein in North Korea’s nuclear weapons program and the 2015 agreement with South Korea on the “comfort women” who were forced to work in Japan’s wartime military brothels. (Kyodo, Associated Press, Reuters, “Abe to Ask Moon for Evac Support in Case of Emergency on Korean Peninsula,” Japan Times, February 3, 2018) Progressive South Korean President Moon Jae-in will meet with his conservative Japanese counterpart, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, for talks at the Winter Olympics site on February 9, the day of the Opening Ceremonies. Until last week, it wasn’t even clear that Abe would attend. But the Trump administration intervened to ask him to
go — not least because Vice President Pence will be traveling from Tokyo to Pyeongchang for the Opening Ceremonies. The White House “strongly urged” Abe to attend the ceremonies, a senior Japanese government official told the conservative Sankei Shimbun newspaper. Together, Abe and Pence will be able to send “a strong message to South Korea” not to be too conciliatory toward North Korea and also to abide by their bilateral agreements, the paper reported. This has sparked talk in Tokyo that Abe and Pence are going to Pyeongchang to “gang up” on Moon, who favors closer relations with North Korea as a way to bring Kim Jong Un’s regime in from the cold. Despite his efforts to include North Korea in the Olympics, Moon has publicly said he supports the “maximum pressure” approach espoused by the Trump and Abe administrations. (Anna Fifield, “Wounds Still Fresh between South Korea, Japan,” Washington Post, February 2, 2018, p. A-10)

North Korea is flouting sanctions by exporting coal, iron, steel and other banned commodities, earning nearly $200 million in revenue last year, a UN report said. A UN panel of experts also found evidence of military cooperation by North Korea to develop Syria's chemical weapons programs and to provide Myanmar with ballistic missiles. North Korea "continued to export almost all the commodities prohibited in the resolutions, generating nearly $200 million in revenue between January and September 2017," said the report by the experts seen by AFP. Coal shipments were delivered to China, Malaysia, South Korea, Russia and Vietnam by ships using "a combination of multiple evasion techniques, routes and deceptive tactics," said the report. Syria and Myanmar are continuing cooperation with North Korea's KOMID corporation, the country's main arms exporter, which is on a UN sanctions blacklist, the report said. The panel uncovered more than 40 previously unreported shipments from North Korea between 2012 and 2017 to front companies for Syria's Scientific Studies Research Council, also known as CERS, a key institute for Syria's chemical program. The investigations reveal "substantial new evidence" concerning Pyongyang's military cooperation with Damascus, including at least three visits by North Korean technicians to Syria in 2016. A visit by a North Korean technical delegation in August 2016 involved the “transfer of special resistance valves and thermometers known for use in chemical weapons programs," said the report. A member-state that was not named told the panel that North Korean "technicians continue to operate at chemical weapons and missile facilities at Barzei, Adra and Hama" in Syria, said the report. Syria however told the panel that there were no North Korean technicians in its territory and that the only experts it was hosting from the country were involved in sports. A member-state, which was not named, also notified the panel that Myanmar had received "ballistic missile systems from (North Korea) in addition to a range of conventional weapons, including multiple rocket launchers and surface-to-air missiles". North Korean diplomats, in particular trade representatives, continue to provide logistical support for arms sales and help organize exchanges for military technicians, it said. While sanctions have been significantly broadened, this "expansion of the regime is yet to be matched by the requisite political will" to implement the measures, the experts said. (Carole Landry, “North Korea Flouts Sanctions, Earning $200 Million from Banned Exports: UN,” AFP, February 3, 2018)

NPR Briefing: “DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE SHANAHAN: … The NPR also makes recommendations to keep our deterrent effective for our world today: namely, lowering the yield of some existing submarine-launched ballistic missile warheads and bringing back nuclear sea-based -- launched cruise missiles, a capability our nation had for decades. Neither recommendation requires developing new nuclear warheads. Neither will increase the size of our nuclear stockpile. They break no treaty. They align with our non-proliferation commitments. They strengthen American deterrence. Some will say any additional capability, no matter how measured, increases the chance of using one of these weapons. On the contrary, it is the exact opposite. The NPR states, and I quote, "the United States would only consider the use of nuclear weapons in extreme -- in extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States, its allies and partners." The NPR clarifies long-standing policy that extreme circumstances could include significant nonnuclear strategic attacks. This clarification is stabilizing. It lowers the risk of nuclear use by anyone. The United States does not want to use nuclear weapons. We do want to maintain an effective deterrent to keep Americans and our allies
and partners safe and secure. … UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS
SHANNON: …We know that other unfriendly regimes and enemies of our country put our lives
at risk by pursuing nuclear weapons. North Korea continues its illicit nuclear weapons program
and missile capabilities. Iran retains the technological capability to develop a nuclear weapon
within one year of deciding to do so. The potential threat of non-state actors getting their hands on
a nuclear weapon remains at the front of all of our minds. Nuclear terrorism is still a major threat
in this century, and one we must work to mitigate at every opportunity.

Because of the dangerous world we live in and our unwavering commitment to our allies, the
2018 Nuclear Posture Review focuses on strengthening extended deterrence. The United
States has formal extended deterrence commitments that assure European, Asian and
Pacific allies of our commitment to use nuclear force to protect them, if necessary. Ongoing,
close collaboration with allies and partners is essential to deterring or defeating the common
threats we face. This collaboration includes sustained dialogues and joint military exercises.
But we also realize that every ally and partner faces a different threat environment. We will
continue to work with them to tailor our assurance strategies in ways that are most effective for
their specific situation. But let me be clear: The United States is committed to our allies under
the U.S. nuclear umbrella. Our extended deterrence commitments are unwavering. We have
the ability and will to fulfill them. Potential adversaries should not doubt our resolve. In
addition, as the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review makes clear, the United States will hold accountable
any state or non-state actor that supports terrorist efforts to obtain or employ a nuclear weapon.

Important to this deterrence is maintaining our capabilities so that the United States can
respond decisively across the full spectrum of potential nuclear and non-nuclear scenarios.
But, as this NPR makes clear, the United States will only consider the use of nuclear
weapons in extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States, its allies
and partners. The NPR also states that, and I quote, "the United States will not use or threaten
to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states that are party to the NPT and in
compliance with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations." …Finally, this review also
affirms that the United States will not resume nuclear explosive testing unless we find it
necessary to ensure the stability and effectiveness of our nuclear arsenal. … MODERATOR:
Michael Gordon from the Wall Street Journal. Q: For -- a question for the DOD and DOE reps:
The report is very explicit that you would contemplate the use of nuclear weapons in extreme
circumstances, which could include significant non-nuclear strategic attack. This is stated, and the
section reports made very explicit -- and also that you would contemplate the use of weapons, if
there was a terrorist nuclear attack, against those that enabled it. The way this is being read is that
the U.S. is prepared to use nuclear weapons if there’s a cyberattack that would affect
the population or do great damage to the infrastructure of our allies or of the United States. Is that the
message you intended to send? Because that's how everyone's interpreting it. And could you
please also give us the projected total dollar amount of this modernization for DOD and DOE?
There are a lot of figures in here, but the dollar amount for this modernization isn't included. SEC.
ROOD: With respect to U.S. nuclear declaratory policy of the United States, as articulated in
this Nuclear Posture Review, is constant with that of the past. Again, it is that the United
States would employ nuclear weapons only in extreme circumstances to defend the vital
interests of the United States, allies and partners. Now the part of the declaratory policy that
you are referring to is the circumstances under which the United States would contemplate
the use of nuclear weapons, or what constituted extreme circumstances. And I think in that
area, the context of an attack that does not involve nuclear weapons initially would be very
important to take into account. It's been long-standing U.S. policy to maintain some
ambiguity around the circumstances under which we would consider the use of nuclear
weapons in response to a strategic, non-nuclear attack on the United States, and this NPR is
explicit in saying, it is in our interests, it is part of reinforcing deterrence to maintain some
ambiguity in those circumstances. With respect to cyber or other forms of attack, I think the
context in which an attack occurred against the United States or allies would be very
important. As we sit here today, it's easy to dissect one action being disconnected from that
in other fields, other domains. Whether that be air, sea, on land, or whether you would
contemplate a hypothetical situation involving deployment of other forms of weapons of
mass destruction, which are not nuclear weapons, such as biological weapons. And so I think
what this NPR strives to do is to say, in the context of a non-nuclear attack on the United States or our allies that was strategic in nature, that imposed substantial impacts to our infrastructure, to our people, then we would consider that context in evaluating the appropriate response, perhaps to include nuclear weapons. … Q: Tony Bertuca from Inside Defense. Going to the nuclear sea-launched cruise weapons, could you talk a little bit about the rationale for bringing that program back, how much that will cost, when that's expected to come online and what -- again, the rationale for bringing the program back?

SEC. ROOD: In the security environment that's discussed in the Nuclear Posture Review, one of the things that has been concerning is that, over the last 20 years, we've seen the growth of the role of nuclear weapons in some potential adversaries' doctrine, as well as growth in capabilities and planned growth over that time period. And so what was discussed in terms of the rationale in the NPR is that its overriding purpose -- the overriding purpose of our nuclear arsenal is deterrence and to assure allies and, as I mentioned, to hedge against uncertainty and, if necessary, provide a credible response capability. Within that, we've become concerned that we need a more flexible set of capabilities to -- in order to have tailored deterrence. There's no one-size-fits-all approach to deterrence, as you know, and we're not deterring a single person in a single circumstance. And so, therefore, a more flexible set of capabilities that is survivable, that is credible and can be tailored to the circumstances to maintain deterrence is the rationale behind looking at that capability. Now, as mentioned, there are two supplementary capabilities that the NPR discusses. One, we've already discussed -- the submarine-launched ballistic missile. You're talking about a submarine-launched cruise missile. In that regard, what the NPR talks about is that we will begin a study of the appropriate way to pursue that and the specifics around the program in that area. And so, at this time, I can't quote you a specific time frame and dollar figure, because of the stage of that activity. But it's one of the supplementary capabilities that we think is very important to pursue, both due to the survivability of submarine-launched cruise missiles, the flexibility that that type of platform provides. And again, here, this would involve use of low-yield nuclear weapons. Low-yield nuclear weapons have been in the U.S. arsenal for decades. The difference here would be -- and, as you pointed out, they -- we formerly, in the United States, had the capability to fire cruise missiles from submarines armed with nuclear weapons. This would be to look at that capability again. … Q: Thanks. Patrick Tucker with Defense One. So the question of what constitutes extreme circumstances is, I think, what has some folks hung up, especially in the context of a cyber-physical attack on U.S. infrastructure. The National Academies has published a study on the possible effects of a cyber-physical attack on U.S. infrastructure, and the worst case scenario that they've come up with is a service disruption possibly lasting weeks. So the question is, is that sort of eventuality -- a limited service disruption possibly lasting weeks -- is that the sort of extreme circumstance that might possibly provoke a nuclear response? And, if not, if you're working with a different worst case scenario for a cyber-physical attack on U.S. infrastructure, potentially much greater than that, can you -- can you speak to that a little bit? SEC. ROOD: Sure. You know, starting at the top, the declaratory policy of the United States that we would consider the use of nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances -- the language on that that you will find in this Nuclear Posture Review is identical to what you will have found: that the United States would employ nuclear weapons only in extreme circumstances, to defend the vital interests of the United States, allies and partners. That -- those words that I just spoke are the same as that appeared in the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review released by President Obama's administration. So, in that sense, there is no difference in the declaratory policy. With respect to what constitutes extreme circumstances and the provision of other things, again, I think the context in which that occurs is important, and hypothetical examples of a cyberattack or biological weapons attack -- I think what's very important is there's no automaticity in this policy as to how the United States would respond. We would consider the circumstances under which that occurred. We would consider the context around that and the effects on the United States and our allies before determining what the appropriate response would be, whether that involved nuclear weapons, or purely non-nuclear weapons. And so the difficulty with answering hypothetical questions is it's very hard to know what the circumstances surrounding that would be. For example, in the hypotheticals you cited, would that also involve the employment of biological weapons against the U.S. population or allies? Would it
involve the use of chemical weapons against our people? Would it involve a conventional attack in other parts of the world? The context in which an attack occurred on the United States or allies would be how we would evaluate the appropriate response. But I want to point -- make one additional point that I forgot. I think it's very important, implied in your question, to address one thing. There is no lowering of the nuclear threshold in this Nuclear Posture Review. That threshold remains at an incredibly high level. There has been no diminution to that. And this document is explicit in stating there is nothing in this approach that is -- that will lower the nuclear threshold. Indeed, the capabilities and the type of approach that we're pursuing is intended to raise the nuclear threshold by making the type of punishment that we could employ against an attack on the United States so high that it would not be countenanced by an adversary. MODERATOR: Jeff Schogol Q: Thank you. On that theme, you had mentioned the Russian dogma of "escalate to de-escalate." They seem to feel that they can escape nuclear retaliation if they use low-yield nuclear weapons. I just want to make clear, is it -- is U.S. policy that, if the United States or if one of its allies is attacked by a nuclear weapon, regardless of the yield, there will be a nuclear response? SEC. ROOD: There -- U.S. nuclear doctrine has never involved automaticity in terms of response, and there is no automaticity in this current document. Our declaratory policy would be that we would consider the use of nuclear weapons only in extreme circumstances. … MODERATOR: Ryan Browne from CNN. Q: Thank you. Just two quick ones: First, on North Korea, is the last one was in 2010 -- obviously, North Korea's made a lot of strides in its nuclear program, and you list 11 fielded or in-development nuclear delivery systems for North Korea. What, in this review, is kind of specifically tailored to North Korea, or focused on the North Korean threat? And I know we -- you've mentioned briefing Russia on this. Was China also briefed on this review? SEC. ROOD: With respect to North Korea, the capabilities in the nuclear triad that exist today, as well as the recapitalization that's discussed in the report, and some of these supplementary capabilities -- all of those things, in various circumstances, would have applicability in the type of hypothetical scenarios that we worry about with North Korea. Unfortunately, some of the -- our concerns that we used to have a few years ago have become, quite frankly, not so hypothetical anymore, in terms of the threat that we face. And so I think, whether it's with North Korea and demonstrating that we have a range of options, that we have flexible options, that these are credible and can be employed, when necessary, I think, is very important to reinforcing deterrence. Certainly wouldn't want that regime or others to wrongly conclude that there's a lack of resolve on our part, should they threaten the use of nuclear weapons or use nuclear weapons against the United States. So I think, in this circumstance, having this more flexible set of capabilities that we can tailor to the circumstances, whether it be with North Korea or another, to reinforce that deterrence -- and this is a much more challenging activity than 20 years ago or more -- we've really got to watch out for that. And it's not just with North Korea. Others are similarly concerning to us. SEC. FREIDT: And we did brief China. (CROSSTALK) SEC. ROOD: Yes. Go ahead and take that. SEC. FREIDT: And we did -- we did brief China. Q: Also today, or... SEC. FREIDT: No, and with China, I would say we've long sought to have dialog with China to -- specifically to discuss and enhance our understanding of nuclear weapon issues, to help manage the risk of miscalculation, misperceptions. So, yep, we briefed them this morning. MODERATOR: (inaudible) Q: Yeah, yeah. Thank you very much. On North Korea nuclear issues, recently, in North Korea, Kim Jong-un said that the nuclear button is on his table, toward the United States. What is the United States doing to prevent North Korea's nuclear attack? And what is the U.S.'s final destination of all this? SEC. ROOD: Well, certainly, the Nuclear Posture Review talks about one of its aims, deterring North Korean nuclear attack. And, on that, we're very explicit that, clearly, these capabilities are intended to deter North Korea from a nuclear attack in the United States or our allies. Another element of our deterrent posture with North Korea is the ballistic missile defense system that the United States employs. One of the things that it does is it reduces the likelihood that North Korea would contemplate or use a ballistic missile to attack the United States, knowing that we have a capability to defeat that. And, if North Korea would, in a hypothetical, launch a ballistic missile tipped with a nuclear weapon at the United States, that we intercepted, it's not the sort of thing that we would say, "Well, that's the end of the story. Let's go back to the way things were before." That kind of attack on the United States
or our allies that we defeated is something that we would regard extremely seriously, for obvious reasons. And so ballistic missile defenses that are credible and effective are very important as part of our deterrent equation, both for the United States, as well as for our friends and allies around the world. And that's why you've seen us, over the years, in the United States Defense Department, not only deploy some of these capabilities on the home territory of our allies, where they host them, but also have our forces that are deployed there increasingly have those capabilities. Because the connection between our allies' security in an attack with shorter-range missiles, and that against the United States homeland, are increasingly being driven together. And we have to have an integrated set of capabilities, which is what we're pursuing, and we've requested money from the Congress both last year -- you will see that again in our budget proposal this year to the Congress -- for substantial funds for our ballistic missile defense system. Our nuclear capabilities are also very important in that deterrence equation: how we message, how we talk about the circumstances is also part of our messaging to North Korea. And you'll see some passages in the NPR speak directly to North Korea about our thinking in that regard."

(DoD, News Briefing on the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review by Patrick Shanahan, Deputy Secretary of Defense; Dan Brouillette, United States Deputy Secretary of Energy; Thomas Shannon, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs; John Rood, Under Secretary of Defense For Policy; Anita Freidt, Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Arms Control, Verification, and Compliance, U.S. State Department; Steve Erhart, Acting Under Secretary for Nuclear Security and NNSA Administrator, February 2, 2018)

Woodward: “The pressure campaign was effectively put on hold while the 2018 Winter Olympics were held in South Korea from February 9 to 25. ...General Dunford [Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman] learned that the Air Force had planned some research and design tests of its nuclear-capable ballistic missiles from California into the Pacific Ocean, scheduled right before and after the Olympics. They were the kind of tests that the United States pressuring North Korea to stop. They were provocative. He stepped in and the Air Force held off on the tests.” (Woodward, Fear, p. 308)

DPRK FoMin spokesperson’s “answer to a question put by KCNA on February 4, as regards "State of the Union Address" made by Trump. In the "State of the Union Address", Trump described last year as a year fully recorded with "incredible progress and extraordinary success" - the year during which he pushed the American society and the world into disturbance through his reckless words and deeds as well as aggression moves dumbfounding the world public. This is indeed the height of Trump-style arrogance, arbitrariness and self-conceit. The whole world is deeply concerned, seeing as an omen of new disaster the Address of Trump who asserted "America First" and "unmatched power" based on nuclear weapons while forcing other countries to submit themselves to the U.S. chauvinistic interest. Trump also insisted upon the "maximum pressure" against our country, viciously slandering our most superior people-centered social system. However, it is no less than screams of Trump terrified at the power of the DPRK that has achieved the great historic cause of completing the state nuclear force and rapidly emerged as the strategic state recognized by the world, and it is purely a nasty perversity aimed to disturb the advance of inter-Korean relations. Trump even reveals his sinister intention to do something against us by relying on strength while talking about "American resolve." Our self-reliant defense capability with the nuclear force as its backbone will, however, completely deter Trump and his lackeys from showing off on the Korean peninsula. If Trump does not get rid of his anachronistic and dogmatic way of thinking, it will only bring about the consequence of further endangering security and future of the United States.” (KCNA, “DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Blasts Trump,” February 4, 2018)

North Korean factory workers and restaurant staff have been returning from China in droves since the United Nations ordered member states to send laborers home last year. North Korean “ghost ships” containing dead, or almost-dead, fishermen have been washing up on the shores of Japan after the country’s seafood industry was sanctioned, too. And even Kim Jong Un has admitted that the American-led “maximum pressure” campaign is hurting his country’s economy. The “life-
threatening sanctions and blockade” were causing “difficult living conditions,” the North Korean leader said in a New Year’s address that repeatedly emphasized self-sufficiency. But the campaign to squeeze Kim and his cronies into denuclearization talks could already be having a tangible — and, from the perspective of Washington, undesirable — effect. “The sanctions will set back what has been basically a positive process — the development of markets,” said one regular visitor to Pyongyang. This will make it harder for money to flow within the private economy and as markets contract it will also make it harder for isolated North Koreans to get information from the outside world, said the visitor, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to avoid jeopardizing access to North Korea. The international sanctions imposed at the end of last year in response to North Korea’s intercontinental ballistic missile launches and nuclear test were designed to cut off key revenue earners for the regime. Together, the minerals, garment and seafood industries — all now sanctioned — accounted for about one-third of the country’s $3 billion annual export revenue. The tens of thousands of North Koreans working abroad for the regime, a practice now also banned, had been bringing in an estimated $500 million a year for Kim’s coffers. “This will have a big impact,” said Ro Hui-chang, who was in charge of North Korean construction workers in Russia until he defected in 2014. Even after international financial sanctions were imposed on North Korea, Ro said that he would hand-carry $1 million a month on flights back to Pyongyang.

“Construction work is good because it doesn’t require any investment” on North Korea’s part, he said. “You just send the workers and they’re ready to start building and making money the very next day.” The regime has been unable to feed the populace. As a result, the state has tolerated an increasing amount of market activity, allowing people to trade and earn their own livings to buy the food that the state can no longer provide. This trend has accelerated in the six years that Kim has been in power, with as much as half of the population now relying on markets instead of on the regime for their subsistence. With this increased economic independence have come other freedoms. Markets have become places for selling pirated films smuggled in from the outside world and for trading gossip, both of which help belie the regime propaganda that North Korea is a “paradise on earth.” Money earned through the markets sometimes is used to bribe guards and officials so North Koreans can travel or make more money, including through illicit activities — dealing in crystal meth, for instance, even to police officers, or renting out apartments by the hour during the daytime to young couples. This market economy has been the biggest force for change in modern North Korea. But it could now be under threat. “The sanctions place the massive numbers of ordinary people working in these industries at risk for loss of income,” said Kee Park, a Korean American neurosurgeon who travels to Pyongyang every year to perform surgeries. “The loss of income limits their ability to purchase food in the market to supplement [rations] as well as the economic opportunities.” In state-run industries such as garment manufacturing and fishing, the regime pockets much of the profits, but investors in the country say that people who work in such export-oriented industries were earning more than those in purely domestic businesses. As for those working abroad, while the regime keeps two-thirds of their wages, the laborers earn up to $100 a month, an astronomical sum compared with the single-digit salaries they would earn at home. These earnings have increased the amount of money in the private economy and have helped lessen reliance on the regime. “When industries are harmed by sanctions, there are also wage earners who are harmed because they’re out of work and have to go try to find work elsewhere,” said Andray Abrahamian, a fellow at the Pacific Forum of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, who has visited North Korea dozens of times as a business consultant. “So in that sense, there are consumers that are losing their power to consume.” But Cho Bong-hyun, a North Korea expert in the Industrial Bank of Korea’s Economic Research Institute in Seoul, thinks sanctions could have the opposite effect. By introducing more stress into the economy, they could encourage more adaptation from the regime and more entrepreneurialism from the people. (Anna Fifield, “Sanctions Imperil the Freedom Some N. Koreans Have Tasted,” Washington Post, February 5, 2018, p. A-8)
opening to its northern rival have stirred tensions between Seoul and Washington—despite professed unity in public statements—as the allies work to present a common front in dealing with Pyongyang, according to senior U.S. and South Korean officials. "We're good today, but there are lots of policy tests that we have to manage in the days ahead and then after the Olympics," said one official familiar with the diplomatic process. "It's a challenging road." Differences were on public display last week when President Donald Trump, in his first State of the Union address, reiterated a call for tough sanctions on North Korea, while omitting mention of the inter-Korean talks and their most prominent outcome: Athletes from both Koreas will march under one flag when the Winter Olympics open in South Korea. The two allies drew starkly different conclusions from Kim's January 1 speech, according to people familiar with the matter. At the White House, officials were struck by the bellicose talk from Kim, who ordered the mass production of nuclear warheads and ballistic missiles and called for reunification of the Korean Peninsula, saying he would pursue "the final victory of the revolution." By contrast, in the South Korean presidential Blue House, Moon and his advisers were encouraged by Kim's openness to participating in the Olympics and discounted what they considered formulaic tough talk from the North. Seoul's subsequent outreach to Pyongyang, cutting the U.S. out of the decision-making process, left U.S. officials particularly frustrated because of Moon's repeated demands last year that the U.S. seek his consent before taking any pre-emptive military action against North Korea. Diplomats at the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, which sits across the street from South Korea's ministries of Foreign Affairs and Unification, expressed their displeasure to their South Korean counterparts, according to people familiar with the matter. South Korean officials told the Americans that the immediacy of the coming Winter Olympics left them little choice but to act quickly in response to Kim's speech, those people said. In an effort to chart a path forward, the U.S. and South Korea have taken steps to protect their alliance -- moves that also have been marked by strains. Trump spoke with Moon by phone on January 4, and the two agreed to postpone joint annual military exercises until after the end of the Winter Paralympics on March 18. But U.S. officials were still rankled by the fact that Moon had in December publicly presented the idea of a delay as a South Korean request awaiting U.S. agreement. U.S. officials said they had actually anticipated the request and quickly signaled their willingness to Seoul. As the divide threatened to widen, Moon in a January 10 press conference acknowledged a policy gap with the U.S., and sought to ease the strain by giving Trump credit for creating the opening for the inter-Korean dialogue... Trump thanked Moon for the compliment in a follow-up phone call--the second of two between the leaders in January. Then, in an unannounced mid-January meeting in San Francisco, Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, Trump's national security adviser, emphasized to his South Korean and Japanese counterparts the importance of keeping up pressure on North Korea, according to people familiar with the matter. McMaster said it was necessary to proceed with exercises and maintain unity in the face of Pyongyang's attempts to drive a wedge between the U.S. and its Asian allies, the people said. Seeking to keep relations on track, the U.S. canceled a planned February port visit to South Korea by an attack submarine, the U.S.S. Texas, to assure Seoul that Washington wouldn't upset the atmosphere for inter-Korean detente, these people said. The U.S. also gave South Korea a last-minute sanctions waiver on January 31 to send athletes to a North Korean ski resort for joint training--part of the two Koreas' Olympics agreement. Easing U.S. concerns, Seoul agreed with Washington to proceed with the joint exercises as originally envisioned after the Paralympics. However, the U.S. could ratchet up or down public statements on these exercises, depending on the status of the inter-Korean dialogue and North Korea's actions. Chatter in Washington that some Trump administration officials are considering a limited "bloody nose" strike on North Korea, together with the withdrawal last week of Victor Cha to fill the yearlong vacancy as U.S. ambassador to Seoul, has also led to confusion and frustration inside South Korea's government, according to people familiar with the matter. "This city was once completely destroyed. No Korean is interested in seeing that happen again--period," said an official at South Korea's Blue House. If there is war, the official said, "The cost will have to be borne by us." (Jonathan Cheng and Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. and South Korea Struggle for Unity on Eve of Olympics," Wall Street Journal, February 5, 2018, p. A-1)

A group of Democratic senators is warning President Trump that he lacks the “legal authority” to carry out a preemptive strike on North Korea, amid questions over whether the White House is
considering a risky “bloody nose” attack. In a letter to be sent to Trump on Monday, the 18 senators said they are “deeply concerned about the potential consequences of a preemptive military strike on North Korea and the risks of miscalculation and retaliation.” They emphasized that it is an “enormous gamble” to believe that such an action, even if it were modest in scope, would not provoke an escalation. “Moreover, without congressional authority, a preventative or preemptive U.S. military strike would lack either a constitutional basis or legal authority,” the senators wrote in the letter organized by Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.), a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Congressional aides said the letter was prompted by the circumstances surrounding the sudden derailment of the White House’s original choice for ambassador to South Korea, a post that has remained vacant since Trump took office. “We ask that you provide a clear reasoning and justification for his removal from consideration,” the senators wrote. The others who signed the letter are: Benjamin L. Cardin (Md.), Jack Reed (R.I.), Tim Kaine (Va.), Patty Murray (Wash.), Christopher A. Coons (Del.), Elizabeth Warren (Mass.), Edward J. Markey (Mass.), Brian Schatz (Hawaii), Jeff Merkley (Ore.), Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Jeanne Shaheen (N.H.), Catherine Cortez Matos (Nev.), Kamala D. Harris (Calif.), Mazie Hirono (Hawaii), Sheldon Whitehouse (R.I.), Chris Murphy (Conn.), Chris Van Hollen (Md.). (David Nakamura, “Democratic Senators: Trump Lacks ‘Legal Authority’ for Preemptive ‘Bloody Nose’ Strike on North Korea,” Washington Post, February 5, 2018)

Vice President Pence departs today for a five-day trip to Japan and South Korea, a visit to Asia intended to focus almost entirely on rallying allies to ratchet up their pressure on Kim Jong Un’s repressive regime, as well as directly pressing North Korea to stop its nuclear ambitions. The trip, White House officials said, has two main goals. “The first one is that we are seeing unprecedented cooperation from the international community from the maximum pressure strategy targeting North Korea,” said Jarrod Agen, Pence’s communications director. “The vice president will deliver a message that the maximum pressure strategy is only going to intensify.” The second goal is to ensure that the Olympics don’t turn into an opportunity for North Korea to burnish its image on the world stage. In January, North and South Korea agreed to try to resolve their tensions through dialogue, marking the first negotiations between the two countries since 2015 and frustrating some in the Trump administration as it attempts to take an even more hard-line stance against the regime. “We’re not going to let the North Korea propaganda machine hijack the messaging of the Olympics,” Agen said. “The vice president will remind the world that anything the North Koreans do during the Olympics is a charade to disguise the reality of the oppression inside North Korea.” (Ashley Parker, “Pence Leaves for Asia, Focused on Increasing Pressure on North Korea,” Washington Post, February 5, 2018)

In a message sent last night via a cross-border communication channel, North Korea told South Korea that it would send a high-level delegation from February 9-11, the South’s Unification Ministry said. It said the North’s delegation includes Kim Yong-nam and three other officials but gave no further details. Serving as president of the Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly, Kim has often been described as the North’s nominal head of state because he receives visiting foreign leaders, approves the credentials of ambassadors and represents North Korea on state visits abroad. The presidential office Cheong Wa Dae welcomed Kim’s visit, saying it showed the North’s willingness to improve inter-Korean ties because Kim is the highest-level North Korean official to visit South Korea since the inauguration of Moon Jae-in. “We believe North Korea showed its sincere and earnest efforts to improve inter-Korean ties and make the Pyeongchang Olympics successful,” Cheong Wa Dae spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom said during a press briefing. The spokesperson also left open the possibility that Kim would meet with South Korea’s President Moon, saying the presidential office is preparing for a “communication opportunity” and its staff is discussing the level and agenda of the potential talks. (Yeo Jun-suk, “Kim Yong-nam: Ceremonial Leader of Reclusive Regime,” Korea Herald, February 5, 2018)

North Korea has appointed a senior defense official to lead the military’s powerful General Political Bureau after dismissing its former head following an inspection, the National Intelligence Service (NIS) said in a parliamentary briefing. Kim Jong-gak, a vice chief of the Ministry of the
2/6/18

U.S. launches Trident SLBM off California coast.

Vice President Mike Pence on Monday did not rule out contact with North Korean officials when he attends the Winter Olympics in South Korea this week, saying, “I have not requested a meeting, but we’ll see what happens.” Speaking to reporters in Alaska during a stopover on his way to Japan and South Korea, Pence reiterated the administration’s stance that “all options are on the table” in confronting North Korea about its nuclear weapons and missile programs. He said part of the purpose of his visit was to tell “the truth about North Korea at every stop.” “We’re traveling to the Olympics to make sure that North Korea doesn’t use the powerful symbolism and the backdrop of the Winter Olympics to paper over the truth about their regime,” he said, calling it “a regime that oppresses its own people, a regime that threatens nations around the world, a regime that continues its headlong rush to develop nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.” He added: “President Trump has said he always believes in talking, but I haven’t requested any meeting. But we’ll see what happens.” Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson made strikingly similar remarks yesterday during a visit to Peru. “With respect to the vice president’s trip to the Olympics and whether or not there would be an opportunity for any kind of a meeting with North Korea, I think we’ll just see,” Tillerson said. But Pence’s potentially conciliatory comments came as North Korea used its state news media to issue a series of caustic, personal attacks on Trump and his State of the Union speech last week, in which he assailed the North’s “reckless pursuit of nuclear weapons.” KCNA warned the United States against taking such military action: “Dolt-like Trump should know that his backbone would be broken, to say nothing of ‘bloody nose,’ and the empire of America would go to the hell and the short history of the U.S. would end forever, the moment he destroys even a single blade of grass on this land. _Rodong Sinmun_, said the State of the Union address showed that Trump was “a lunatic.” (Gerry Mullany, “Pence Doesn’t Rule out Meeting North Koreans at Olympics,” _New York Times_, February 6, 2018)

Pence: “Q Mr. Vice President, Elise Labott with CNN. Thank you. Today in Peru, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was asked about whether there might be any talks with the U.S. delegation and the North Korean delegation. And this morning, we were told by the White House, “No.” Secretary Tillerson said, “We’ll see.” He was really noncommittal. I mean, he has favored diplomacy. There has been a relative period of calm from North Korea that this administration has
been looking for. Do you envision any communication with North Korea, even if not yourself on this trip? And if not, how do you see this, kind of — you know, North Korea coming to the Olympics and this relative period of calm moving diplomacy forward? Thank you. PENCE: Well, first and foremost, President Trump asked me to travel to the region for several reasons. Number one, to strengthen the relationship between the United States and our allies in Japan and South Korea. We’ll be meeting in the coming days with Prime Minister Abe, with President Moon, and we’ll be talking about the strength of our alliance. And I look forward to reinforcing the important priority that President Trump and the United States places on the relationship with these two nations. Secondly, we’ll collectively be reiterating our commitment, between the United States, Japan, South Korea, and a broad range of allies and partners around the world to continue to isolate North Korea economically and diplomatically until they abandon their nuclear and ballistic missile ambitions. All options are on the table. But we will reiterate this week — standing beside Prime Minister Abe, standing beside President Moon — the solidarity of all these nations, and nations around the world, to continue to bring maximum pressure on an increasing basis on the rogue regime in North Korea to achieve the global objective of a denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Lastly, I’m traveling to the Olympics with my wife and with our delegation certainly to cheer on American athletes, but also, quite frankly, we’re traveling to the Olympics to make sure that North Korea doesn’t use the powerful symbolism and the backdrop of the Winter Olympics to paper over the truth about their regime. A regime that oppresses its own people. A regime that threatens nations around the world. A regime that continues its headlong rush to develop nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles and use those to threaten its neighbors and even threaten the United States of America. We’ll be telling the truth about North Korea at every stop. We’ll be ensuring that whatever cooperation that’s existing between North and South Korea today on Olympic teams does not cloud the reality of a regime that must continue to be isolated by the world community, and it must be brought to a place where it ends its provocations, it ends its development and possession of nuclear weapons and ballistic missile weapons. With regard to any interaction with the North Korean delegation, I have not requested a meeting, but we’ll see what happens. President Trump has — Q Are you saying that, if an opportunity presented itself, sir, that you might avail yourself to, at least, greet any North Korean official that’s there and — PENCE: Well, let me say, President Trump has said he always believes in talking, but I haven’t requested any meetings. But we’ll see what happens. But my message — whatever the setting, whoever is present — will be the same. And that is that North Korea must once and for all abandon its nuclear weapons program and ballistic missile ambitions. And it must accede to the wishes not only of nations across the region and the United States, but nations across the world, to really abandon those ambitions and enter the family of nations. North Korea can have a better future than the militaristic path and the path of provocation and confrontation that it’s on. Better for its own people, better for the region, and better for peace. ... Q Yeah, (inaudible.) Last time you made this trip to Japan, North Korea launched a ballistic missile. Are you seeing any indications at this time of — or, it seems to be, there may be a cooling off or some sort of rapprochement between the North and the South. Are you seeing any indications of any provocations from the North around the Games? And if not, why not? PENCE: Well, we know that the North is planning a major military parade, I think, the day before the Olympic Games, which sends a very different message than the message of cooperation and friendship that they’re projecting to much of the world. I’ll be visiting with our forces in Japan. I’m here at Elmendorf Air Force Base, and we’re simply going to communicate a message of American strength and a message of American resolve. And not just American resolve, because I’ve traveled throughout the region — in Japan, and in South Korea. We will be expressing the resolve of nations, allies, partners across the region and across the world that the time has come for North Korea to once and for all abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile ambitions, to set aside those programs and embrace a better future. It is an urgent message. It’s a message that I’ll be delivering in every setting that I’m given an opportunity. The world needs to hear, again and again, the truth about what North Korea is today, the oppression of its people, the disregard of human rights, the threats and provocations across the region and across the world that come from its nuclear and ballistic missile ambitions. But the world also needs to hear that, if they will choose a different path, there’s a better future for the people of North Korea and the people of the Korean Peninsula with a nuclear-free future.” (White
Kim Jong-un’s sister Kim Yo-jong will come to South Korea as part a high-level delegation for the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, the Ministry of Unification said Wednesday. Headed by its ceremonial head of state Kim Yong-nam, the 22-member delegation also includes Choe Hwi, chairman of the National Sports Guidance Committee, and Ri Son-gwon, chairman of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country. The move will likely put South Korea in a tricky position, as both Kim and Choe are subject to sanctions imposed on North Korea. Kim, the younger sister of leader Kim and vice director of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Workers’ Party of Korea, is under the US’ unilateral sanctions. Choe Hwi is on the US as well as the UN sanctions list that includes a travel ban. How the North’s high-level delegation will travel to the South is also a matter of concern, as taking a ferry or flight could violate sanctions against the communist state imposed by the UN, the US or South Korea. There are speculations that Pyongyang’s high-level delegation will travel to Seoul by Air Koryo, North Korea’s state-owned carrier, which would be in violation of US sanctions. A sanction was placed against Air Koryo in December for its links to weapons proliferation and foreign currency earnings for the reclusive regime. “For Kim, who is 91 years old, it would be too tough to travel by land. He will probably visit South Korea by air,” former South Korean Unification Minister Jeong Se-hyun said in a radio interview yesterday. Seoul’s Foreign Ministry maintains that it will not stoke any controversy with regards to sanctions, saying it is closely coordinating with the US and the international community on the matter. The sanctions against North Korea were already temporarily lifted in two cases to facilitate Pyongyang’s participation in the Olympics. South Korean athletes flew to the North’s Masikryong Ski Resort for joint ski training on a chartered Asiana Airlines plane after the US agreed to make an exception regarding sanctions. Current US sanctions on North Korea prohibit airplanes from landing on American territories within 180 days of taking off from North Korea. North Korea’s 140-member art troupe took the ferry Mangyongbong-92 to South Korea and is using it as accommodation here, which is in violation of South Korea’s sanctions imposed on May 24, 2010, to punish the North’s sinking of a South Korean warship. The sanctions ban inter-Korean exchanges and North Korean ships from making a port call in the South. (Ock Hyun-ju, “N.K. Leader’s Sister Kim Yo-jong to Come to S. Korea This Week,” Korea Herald, February 7, 2018) North Korea has requested South Korea provide additional fuel for its vessel currently docked in the South, as it serves as accommodation for its art troupe visiting the South, Seoul’s Ministry of Unification said, in a move likely to present the South with complications linked to international sanctions. North Korea’s Mangyongbong-92, serving as both means of transportation and accommodation for the 140-member Samjiyon art troupe has been docked at the South Korean eastern port of Mukho since its arrival yesterday. “The North has asked the South to provide fuel (for the ship). The government is currently reviewing the request,” Baik Tae-hyun, ministry spokesman, told a press briefing. (Jung Min-kyung, “N.K. Asks S. Korea to Provide Fuel for Ship That Transported Art Troupe,” Korea Herald, February 7, 2018)

Vice President Pence said the Trump administration plans to roll out its harshest sanctions yet against North Korea during a news conference in Japan. “I’m announcing that the United States of America will soon unveil the toughest and most aggressive round of economic sanctions on North Korea ever — and we will continue to isolate North Korea until it abandons its nuclear and ballistic missile programs once and for all,” Pence said, speaking alongside Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at his official residence. (Ashley Parker and Anna Fifield, “North Korea to Face Harshest U.S. Sanctions Ever, Pence Vows,” Washington Post, February 7, 2018)

Jo Yong Sam, department director general of the Foreign Ministry of the DPRK, answer to a question put by KCNA “as regards the fact that U.S. authorities say this or that over the issue of contact between the DPRK's delegation participating in the opening ceremony of the 23rd Winter Olympics and the U.S. vice-president: On Tuesday a spokesperson for the U.S. Department of State told a reporter over the possible contact between the DPRK's delegation participating in the opening ceremony of the 23rd Winter Olympics and the U.S. vice-president that the U.S. evidently
A day before the opening ceremony of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, North Korea held a military parade in Pyongyang, with intercontinental ballistic missiles displayed in the presence of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. ICBM-class Hwasong-14 and -15 missiles—which were successfully test-fired last year—were shown alongside Hwasong-12 intermediate-range ballistic missiles and Pukkuksong-2, solid-fuel medium-range ballistic missiles, according to footage of the parade, which the South Korean military said it believed started at 11:30 a.m. Some 13,000 soldiers are thought to have participated in the military event at Kim Il-sung Square in central Pyongyang. Troops marched in formation while Kim Jong-un watched from a balcony alongside his wife Ri Sol-ju, who made a rare appearance at the public event. “Invasive forces cannot infringe upon or harass the republic’s sacred dignity and autonomy even by 0.001 millimeters,” said Kim, describing the parade as an opportunity to show North Korea’s emergence as the “world’s military power.” (Yeo Jun-suk, “ICBM Shown at N.K. Military Parade,” Korea Herald, February 8, 2018)

Elleman: “North Korea’s much anticipated military parade on February 8, the 70th anniversary of the Korean People’s Army, was smaller in scale than previous parades, but offered some insights into the North’s growing WMD program. While no new long-range ballistic missiles were unveiled, there was one new solid-fuel, short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) on parade. The size and external features of the new SRBM suggests that it is based on the Russian Iskander (9K720) ballistic missile, though it also shares many features found on South Korea’s Hyunmoo-2 ballistic missile. Additionally, this new missile does appear to be slightly larger than North Korea’s existing solid-fuel, short-range missile system—the Toksa (SS-21)—so would presumably have a longer range, making it roughly equivalent to the Iskander or Hyunmoo-2 systems. Without further details it is impossible to determine its performance characteristics or origins. It is notable, however, that the missiles seen in the parade have data-cable covers that run alongside the exterior surface and extend well into what is believed to be the warhead section, which makes little sense. The cables are used to transmit instructions from the guidance unit (located at the top of the motor, but below of the warhead section) to the steering mechanisms at the back end of the missile. The cables on an Iskander are much shorter, terminating where one would expect it to, at the guidance unit. The new missiles are carried in pairs atop four-axle trucks, which are unlike those that support the Russian Iskander. Of the long-range ballistic missiles displayed, there were four Hwasong-15 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) carried on their nine-axle transporter-erector-launchers (TELs). The two-stage, liquid-fuel Hwasong-15 has only been flight tested once, but is assessed to be capable of delivering a nuclear weapon to any target within the continental United States. Additional tests are needed to establish the Hwasong-15’s performance, reliability, and accuracy. North Korea has also yet to demonstrate that it can fashion a warhead that can survive the extreme heat and vibrations of re-entry into the atmosphere. It is curious that only four Hwasong-15 TELs were on display. North Korea imported six WS-51200 vehicles from China, transforming each of them into a TEL. To carry the giant Hwasong-15, engineers had to add an extra axle, for a total of nine. Perhaps North Korea’s remaining two WS-51200 platforms have yet to be modified to carry this large missile. Regardless, it appears for now that North Korea has a shortage of TELs, a conclusion that is reinforced by the fact that the three Hwasong-14 missiles were conveyed on tractor-trailers, not TELs. Also on display were six Hwasong-12 intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs), each carried on six-axle TELs, and six solid-fuel Pukkuksong-2 medium-range ballistic missiles. The Hwasong-12 can reach targets as far as Guam and has been
flight tested six times, the first three tests failed and the last two test launches overflew Japan before crashing into the Pacific Ocean. It may already be deployed to military units, though more development and validation testing are needed to quantify its reliability and accuracy, details that may be less important to the Kim regime. The Pukguksong-2 has been test fired just two times. Interestingly, the parade did not include the TELs carrying large launch canisters that were unveiled last year, nor did it feature the KN-08, KN-14, Musudan, Nodong, or any of North Korea’s many Scud-variants. The absence of the Musudan, which failed seven of its first eight launch attempts, suggests that the design has been shelved for now. The missing KN-08 and KN-14, which are presumed to be powered by the same Isyaev 4D10 engine used by Musudan, is not entirely surprising given the technical challenges posed by this more sophisticated Russian engine.” (Michael Elleman, “North Korea’s Military Day Parade: One New Missile Unveiled,” 38North, February 8, 2018)

The North Korean delegation to the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang includes an apparatchik who has been blacklisted by the UN Security Council. Sports official Choe Hwi (64) was blacklisted in June last year for his role in directing propaganda. Choe is the eldest son of former Construction Minister Choe Jae-ha, a close aide to regime founder Kim Il-sung. North Korean officials on the blacklist have had their overseas assets frozen and been banned from traveling to any UN member state. If South Korea welcomes him it will be in direct breach of the sanctions. "The matter is under discussion because we can get an exemption from the UNSC Sanctions Committee," a Foreign Ministry official here said. Kim Yo-jong is on a separate U.S. sanctions list, which the Treasury Department issued last January over the North's human rights abuse. The department says the Workers Party's Propaganda and Agitation Department, where she has worked as a vice director, is restricting information and brainwashing North Korean people. Ri Son-gwon is also not blacklisted, but he is thought to be the right-hand man of Kim Yong-chol, the director of the United Front Department, who masterminded the sinking of the South Korean Navy corvette Cheonan in March 2010. (Ahn Jun-yong, “Blacklisted Apparatchik on N. Korean Olympic Delegation,” Chosun Ilbo, February 8, 2018)

KCNA: “Respected Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un made a congratulatory speech at the military parade for celebrating the 70th founding anniversary of the Korean People's Army (KPA). In his speech he said February 8 when President Kim Il Sung founded the KPA, regular revolutionary armed forces, is a historic day of great significance in building the revolutionary armed forces and accomplishing the revolutionary cause of Juche, like April 25 when the President founded the Korean People's Revolutionary Army (KPRA). The KPA is the revolutionary army which inherited the traditions of the anti-Japanese struggle with the indomitable revolutionary spirit, rich fighting experience and superb tactics of the KPRA, he said. Thanks to the foundation of the Juche-based regular army, the DPRK has proudly emerged the most dignified people's country with its own strong military guarantee from the first days of its birth and it could defeat the imperialist aggression forces boasting of being "the strongest" in the world and achieve the great victory in the Fatherland Liberation War, he added. ...The People's Army should remain intensely loyal to the leadership of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK). It should be the first death-defying corps and the first lifeguards defending the Central Committee of the WPK with arms, entrusting its destiny to the WPK. Under the present situation in which the U.S. and its vassal forces make a fuss around the Korean Peninsula, the People's Army should keep high alert and step up combat preparations. And thus it should restrain the aggressors from violating or making a mockery of the dignity and sovereignty of our inviolable country even 0.001 mm. The People's Army should establish blade-like military discipline and more thoroughly take on the appearance as befits the regular army. It should do things, big and small, for the sake of the people and regard devoting true feelings to them with utmost sincerity as its revolutionary army spirit. Stating that as long as there exists imperialism on the earth and the U.S. pursues hostile policy toward the DPRK, the mission of the People's Army, a powerful treasured sword for the protection of the country and people and peace, can never be changed, he said the final victory is in store for the WPK and the people that take a grip on arms of revolution. He stressed that the DPRK would be powerful and...
prosperous forever as long as there is the KPA boundlessly faithful to the leadership of the WPK.”

Vice President Mike Pence avoided encountering North Korea’s ceremonial leader Kim Young-nam during a reception dinner ahead of the opening ceremony of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, underscoring chilly relations between Washington and Pyongyang. The two neither faced each other nor shook hands. Pence, who arrived at the reception late, left the venue after a five-minute stay, according to pool reports. Unlike Pence, Abe shook hands with the North’s titular head and chatted briefly with him. The details of their conversation were unknown. (Yonhap, “Pence Avoids Encountering Nominal N. Korean Head of State,” February 9, 2018) North Korea must “put denuclearization on the table and take concrete steps with the world community to dismantle, permanently and irreversibly, their nuclear and ballistic missile programs,” Pence said after a meeting with Moon. “Then, and only then, will the world community consider negotiating and making changes in the sanctions regime that’s placed on them today.” Abe Shinzo, prime minister of Japan, asked Moon to hold the exercises soon after the Games end, but Moon told Abe not to meddle in South Korea’s “sovereignty and internal affairs,” South Korean officials said. “Kim Jong-un has no intention of giving up his nuclear weapons,” said Cheon Seong-whun, a former presidential secretary for security strategy and now a visiting research fellow at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul. “With his summit proposal, he seeks to incite friction between Seoul and Washington by widening their policy gap.” Moon cannot rush for a summit meeting given Washington’s deep misgivings and because “South Koreans are not as enthused about another summit meeting with North Korea as they used to,” Cheon added. A senior analyst at the Sejong Institute in South Korea, Cheong Seong-chang, agreed that Kim’s latest overtures were aimed at easing its isolation and the impact of sanctions. But South Korea also needed to ease tensions, especially given Trump’s threat to take a military option, he said. “It will not be wise for President Moon to reject dialogue with the North and do nothing but stick to sanctions for the sake of the alliance with the United States,” Cheong said. “South Korea will suffer the most if miscalculation or hostility drives the North and the United States into an armed clash.” The main political opposition, the conservative Liberty Korea Party, warned that Moon was duped by the North’s “false peace offensives.” Moon’s governing Democratic Party heartily welcomed the prospect of an inter-Korean summit meeting. A party spokeswoman, Kim Hyo-eun, went so far as to call for the reopening of a joint factory park in Kaesong. (Choe Sang-hun, “Invitation to South Korea May Undercut the U.S.,” New York Times, February 11, 2018, p. A-1)

The North rescinded its request that the South refuel the Mangyongbong-92, and the ferry will return home February 10, Seoul’s unification ministry said. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Rescinds Fuel request for Ferry,” February 9, 2018)

2/10/18 Regin: “Despite the mutual chilliness between U.S. and North Korean officials in South Korea last week, behind the scenes real progress was made toward a new diplomatic opening that could result in direct talks without preconditions between Washington and Pyongyang. This window of opportunity was born out of a new understanding reached between the White House and the president of South Korea. Vice President Pence, in an interview aboard Air Force Two on the way home from the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, told me that in his two substantive conversations with South Korean President Moon Jae-in during his trip, the United States and South Korea agreed on terms for further engagement with North Korea — first by the South Koreans and potentially with the United States soon thereafter. The frame for the still-nascent diplomatic path forward is this: The United States and its allies will not stop imposing steep and escalating costs on the Kim Jong Un regime until it takes clear steps toward denuclearization. But the Trump administration is now willing to sit down and talk with the regime while that pressure campaign is ongoing. Pence called it “maximum pressure and engagement at the same time.” That’s an important change from the previous U.S. position, which was to build maximum pressure until Pyongyang made real concessions and only then to engage directly with the regime. “The point is, no pressure comes off until they are actually doing something that the alliance believes represents a meaningful step toward denuclearization,” Pence
said. “So the maximum pressure campaign is going to continue and intensify. But if you want to talk, we’ll talk.” Pence and Moon worked this out during their bilateral meeting [February 8] at the Blue House and their joint viewing of speed skating heats in Pyeongchang on [this] evening. Pence conferred with President Trump every day he was in Asia. Before these meetings, the Trump and Moon administrations were not aligned on whether Seoul’s new engagement with Pyongyang should continue after the Olympics end. That dissonance showed just before their first meeting, when Moon said he wanted Olympic engagement to lead to real negotiations while Pence talked only about the pressure track. But inside the meeting, there was a breakthrough. Pence told Moon the international community must not repeat the mistakes of the past by giving North Korea concessions in exchange for talking. Pence asked Moon for his idea of how this engagement could be different. Moon assured Pence he would tell the North Koreans clearly that they would not get economic or diplomatic benefits for just talking — only for taking concrete steps toward denuclearization. Based on that assurance, Pence felt confident he could endorse post-Olympic engagement with Pyongyang. “I think it is different from the last 20 years,” Pence said. I asked him what exact steps Pyongyang would have to take to get real sanctions relief. “I don’t know,” he said. “That’s why you have to have talks.” The initial move the United States wants is for North Korea to put denuclearization on the table and take steps toward it, though that is not a condition for preliminary talks. That may be a bridge too far for the Kim regime, which is adamant that the international community accept its nuclear status. Pyongyang is also sure to want concessions from Washington, such as a delay in U.S.-South Korean military exercises, a non-starter for the alliance. There are other spoilers that could torpedo the new opening. In Tokyo, Pence announced new sanctions on North Korea that he promised would be the toughest ever, due to be unveiled soon. In response, the Kim regime may resume testing its nuclear and missile programs, as it has done after past Olympic detentes. That would halt the diplomatic progress in its tracks. Moon is working hard to prevent that from happening. He is entertaining a North Korean offer to visit Pyongyang. He is also urging the North Koreans to sit down with the United States at the earliest opportunity. “Moon told me at the skating rink that he told [the North Koreans], ‘You’ve got to talk to the Americans,’ ” Pence said. The idea of “talks about talks” is not new. In fact, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has raised the idea multiple times. Trump himself has said he sees nothing wrong with talking with the North Koreans per se. Moving from that to substantive negotiations would still be extremely difficult. But to make any real progress, talking is the first necessary step. The White House’s endorsement of the concept of initial talks without preconditions is hugely significant. It provides a real fix to the break between Washington and Seoul. It also increases the chances the United States and North Korea will soon begin a process that represents the best hope of preventing a devastating international conflict.” (Josh Rogin, “Pence: We’re Ready to Talk to North Korea,” Washington Post, February 12, 2018, p. A-16) The Trump administration, scrambling to avoid a rift with an ally, has told South Korea it is open to holding preliminary talks with North Korea, according to two senior administration officials and a spokesman for the South Korean president, Moon Jae-in. The decision was a victory for South Korea. “The United States, too, looks positively at South-North Korean dialogue and has expressed its willingness to start dialogue with the North,” Moon said on February 12, according to his spokesman, Kim Eui-kyeom. American officials were more guarded, saying they were open to talks but not a full-fledged negotiation. The United States, they said, would reiterate its demands that North Korea make concessions and did not plan to offer any in return. As of now, there are no plans to cancel or further delay joint military exercises by the United States and South Korea, scheduled for after the Olympic Games. Agreeing to talks before the North Koreans have demonstrated a willingness to dismantle their weapons program would be a subtle but potentially significant shift in Washington’s approach — and a win for Moon. “President Moon and I reflected last night on the need to do something fundamentally different,” Pence told reporters on February 9 after meeting with the South Korean leader. The allies, he said, would demand “at the outset of any new dialogue or negotiations” that North Korea “put denuclearization on the table and take concrete steps with the world community to dismantle, permanently and irreversibly, their nuclear and ballistic missile programs.” “Then, and only then, will the world community consider negotiating and making changes in the sanctions regime that’s placed on them today,” Pence said. (Mark Landler and Choe Sang-Hun, “U.S. Shifts on Holding Discussions with Kim,” New York Times, February 14, 2018, p. A-7)
Vice President Pence departed for a five-day, two-country swing through Asia earlier this month having agreed to a secret meeting with North Korean officials while in South Korea at the 2018 Winter Olympic Games. But on Saturday February 10, less than two hours before Pence and his team were set to meet with Kim Yo Jong, the younger sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, and Kim Yong Nam, the regime’s nominal head of state, the North Koreans pulled out of the scheduled meeting, according to Pence’s office. The North Korean decision to withdraw from the meeting came after Pence had used his trip to denounce their nuclear ambitions and announce the “toughest and most aggressive” sanctions against the regime yet, while also taking steps to further solidify the U.S.-alliance with both Japan and South Korea. It also came as Kim Jong Un, through his sister, invited South Korean President Moon Jae-in to Pyongyang to begin talks “soon” — a development that would likely cause consternation in Washington, where the Trump administration has been leading a campaign to put “maximum pressure” on the Kim regime to give up its nuclear program. Moon said through a spokesman that he would try to make it happen. Pence’s actions and rhetoric in the lead up to the Olympics contrasted with the image of progress being promoted by the South Koreans, who would also have been eager to involve the United States in direct talks with the North. The vice president’s office promoted his trip as an effort to combat what it said was North Korea’s plan to use the Winter Games for propaganda purposes and portrayed the cancellation of the meeting as evidence his mission was a success. “North Korea dangled a meeting in hopes of the Vice President softening his message, which would have ceded the world stage for their propaganda during the Olympics,” said Nick Ayers, the vice president’s chief of staff, while also pointing to the specific events Pence held to highlight human rights abuses by Pyongyang. “North Korea would have strongly preferred the vice president not use the world stage to call attention to those absolute facts or to display our strong alliance with those committed to the maximum pressure campaign. But as we’ve said from day one about the trip: this administration will stand in the way of Kim’s desire to whitewash their murderous regime with nice photo ops at the Olympics.” The vice president’s office said the North Koreans expressed their dissatisfaction with Pence’s announcement of new sanctions as well as his meeting with North Korean defectors when canceling the meeting. The meeting — which Pence had coyly teased en route to Asia, saying “We’ll see what happens” — was two weeks in the making, and started when the Central Intelligence Agency first got word that the North Koreans wanted to meet with Pence when he was on the Korean Peninsula, according to a senior White House official. A second official said the initiative for the meeting came from South Korea, which acted as an intermediary between the two sides to set up the meeting. Though Pence had agreed to the North Korean invitation before he departed for Asia on Monday February 5, no details were set until the vice president arrived in Seoul on Thursday February 8, according to the White House official. The two sides agreed to meet at South Korea’s Blue House early that Saturday afternoon, the official said. No South Korean officials were scheduled to attend, but the Blue House was to serve as a neutral meeting place, which could also accommodate the security demands of both sides. Pence, a representative from the National Security Council, a representative from the intelligence community and Ayers were planning to attend from the U.S. side. The North Korean side was expected to include Kim Yo Jong and Kim Yong Nam, as well as a possible third official. Within the White House, discussions of the possible meeting were kept to a small group of senior administration officials and the plan was finalized the Friday before the vice president left during an Oval Office meeting with President Trump, Pence, national security adviser H.R. McMaster, White House Chief of Staff John F. Kelly and Ayers. CIA Director Mike Pompeo called in by phone, while Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson were also part of the ongoing discussions. The president and vice president were in agreement on the goal of the meeting: Pence would privately meet with the North Koreans not to open any negotiations with Kim’s regime, but to deliver the administration’s tough stance against North Korea face-to-face, two White House officials said. The administration also took it as a sign of the North Korean’s seriousness that Kim sent his younger sister to South Korea, making her the first member of the Kim family to visit the South since the Korean War. “The president’s view was that they need to understand that what our policy is publicly and what we are saying publicly is actually what we mean,” a senior White House official said, explaining Trump’s decision to greenlight the possibility of a Pence meeting with the North Koreans. White House officials said Trump and Pence had viewed the meeting as a continuation of the administration’s
maximum pressure campaign against North Korea, as well as in line with the message Pence had delivered, publicly and privately, all trip. The talks between Pence and the North Koreans, had they happened, were not intended to serve as any sort of de-escalation of the administration’s stance against North Korea, a senior White House official said. Pence used his trip to the region to further underscore the administration’s combative stance. At the Olympic opening ceremony, Pence sat in South Korean President Moon Jae-in’s VIP box along with Moon and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe — with Kim Yo Jong and Kim Yong Nam sitting almost directly behind him. Pence studiously ignored the North Koreans all evening and photos of the uncomfortable tableau prompted public headlines and private speculation about who, exactly, had won the propaganda war. That Friday, before heading to the Olympics, Pence visited the Cheonan Memorial, a tribute to 46 South Korean sailors who were killed in 2010 by a North Korean torpedo, and he met with four North Korean defectors, urging them to share their stories before the assembled media. He also invited Fred Warmbier — father of Otto Warmbier, the American student who died last year after North Korea detained him for 17 months for stealing a propaganda poster, then sent him home in a coma — to attend the Opening Ceremony as his guest. It was all part of Pence’s effort to cast himself as a warrior against North Korea’s propaganda. Pence seemed to make a point of ignoring the North Koreans at the Opening Ceremony, both at a VIP reception and in Moon’s VIP box. The vice president also only stood to cheer for the U.S. athletes when they marched out, staying seated when the North and South entered the Olympic Stadium together under a united Korean flag. The North’s state-run Korean Central News Agency unleashed a torrent of vitriol against the Vice President February 17. “Pence must know that his frantic acts of abusing the sacred Olympics for confrontational ruckus are as foolish and stupid an act as sweeping the sea with a broom,” the agency said in a report. “If Pence wants to avoid experiencing a hot agony of shame on the stage of the Olympics, he had better stop behaving imprudently and clearly learn about how ardent the compatriots of the north and the south of Korea wish to reunify the country … and quietly disappear,” the report continued. Pence’s stony demeanor and ramrod straight posture at the Opening Ceremony earned snarky reviews in the Korean media, with some grousing that he had snubbed the North Koreans and even disrespected the Olympic Games. The vice president’s team saw it differently. Communications Director Jarrod Agen tweeted a laudatory review of Pence’s evening: “VP stands and cheers for U.S. athletes. VP hangs out with U.S. athletes instead of dining with Kim regime. VP does not applaud N. Korea or exchange pleasantries w/ the most oppressive regime on earth.” Another member of Pence’s staff explained the vice president’s public behavior with, “I don’t think you talk geopolitics over speed skating.” In fact, at that very moment, Pence was still planning to talk geopolitics with the North Koreans the next day, reiterating his week-long public message in private with Kim Yo Jong and Kim Yong Nam. On the morning of Saturday February 10, the North Koreans sent word to Pence’s team that the meeting was still on — but they didn’t like his rhetoric, a senior administration said. (Ashley Parker, “N. Koreans, Pence Were to Have Met in S. Korea,” Washington Post, February 21, 2018, p. A-1) At the time, Trump administration officials explained that they would have been open to a meeting with their North Korean counterparts, but only if Pence delivered a tough message and only if it occurred away from TV cameras. What they did not disclose then was that they believed both of those conditions had been met for an encounter already scheduled to occur. “The vice president was ready to take this opportunity to drive home the necessity of North Korea abandoning its illicit ballistic missile and nuclear programs,” State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert said on February 20. (Gardiner Harris and Choe Sang-Hun, “North Korea Backed Out of Meeting with Pence at Olympics, U.S. Says,” New York Times, February 21, 2018, p. A-5)

North Korea’s reclusive leader Kim Jong-un has asked South Korean President Moon Jae-in to visit Pyongyang at the “earliest date” possible for what will be a third inter-Korean summit, Kim’s sister told the South Korean leader Saturday. The invitation was delivered in a meeting between Moon and the North Korean leader’s sister, Yo-jong. Kim Yo-jong was earlier considered part of a high-level North Korean delegation to the Pyeongchang Winter Olympic Games, but Cheong Wa Dae spokesman Kim Eui-kyung said she was here as a special envoy of the North Korean leader. “While delivering a letter from Kim Jong-un, chairman of the State Affairs Commission, which stated willingness to improve South-North Korea relations, special envoy Kim Yo-jong orally
delivered Chairman Kim Jong-un’s invitation (for Moon) to visit the North at a time convenient to him, saying he is willing to meet President Moon Jae-in at the earliest date possible,” the spokeswoman told a press briefing. During the meeting, Kim Yo-jong sought to encourage Moon to visit Pyongyang. "I wish I can see you in Pyongyang at an early date. If you meet Chairman Kim Jong-un and exchange views on many issues, the North-South relationship may quickly improve as if yesterday would seem a far distant past,” she told the South Korean leader, according to a Cheong Wa Dae official. "I hope the president will put a footprint in history that will be long remembered by the future generation by playing a leading role in opening a new era of unification,” she added, according to the official. Moon stressed the need for the communist North to resume dialogue with the United States. "An early resumption of dialogue between the United States and the North is needed also for the development of the South-North Korean relationship,” he said, according to his spokesman. Kim Yo-jong is the only member of the North’s ruling family to have visited the South since the end of the war. (Byun Duk-kun, “N. Korean Leader Proposes Inter-Korean Summit with Moon,” February 10, 2018) “Kim Yo-jong delivered Kim Jong-un’s letter to Moon, and conveyed (Kim Jong-un’s) message that he is open to meeting Moon in the near future,” Cheong Wa Dae spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom said. “(Kim Yo-jong asked Moon) to visit Pyongyang at a time convenient to him. President Moon responded by saying that the two sides should work on establishing the right conditions to realize the meeting.” The Cheong Wa Dae spokesman also said the two sides discussed issues regarding inter-Korean relations under a “friendly atmosphere.” “President Moon said that US-North Korea talks should be held in the near future to improve inter-Korean relations, and asked the North to take a proactive approach to the matter,” Kim Eui-kyeom said. (Choi He-suk, “N.K. Leader Kim Invites Moon to Pyongyang,” Korea Herald, February 10, 2018) Kim Yo-jong, the sister of the North Korean leader, delivered Kim Jong-un’s letter and a verbal invitation to Moon on behalf of her brother during a three-hour meeting at the presidential residence in Seoul on October 10, according to the Blue House. “I am willing to meet with President Moon in the near future,” Kim Yo-jong quoted Kim Jong-un as saying, according to presidential spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom. “I request you visit North Korea at your earliest convenience.” According to the spokesman, Moon replied, “Let’s create the conditions and hold the summit.” Moon was quoted by his spokesman as saying, “For the sake of advancing relations between the two Koreas, it is imperative for the North and the United States to talk soon.” Asked if direct talks between the North and United States are the “conditions” that Moon cited for the summit, the official said the Pyongyang-Washington issue is an important factor to improve inter-Korean ties. “The two axes must spin together to make wheels move,” he said. According to the aide, Moon made no direct mention of the North’s nuclear arms program during the meeting. (Ser Myo-ja, “Kim Jong-un Invites Moon Jae-in to Pyongyang,” JoongAng Ilbo, February 10, 2018) Im Jong-seok, a prominent student democracy activist who is now chief of staff of South Korean President Moon Jae-in. In 1989, then a 22-year-old South Korean student caused an uproar when she sneaked into North Korea and was filmed advocating for unification and meeting then leader Kim Il Sung. The unauthorized visit was orchestrated by Im. Nearly 30 years on, the 51-year-old Im is now playing a pivotal role in an inter-Korean detente fostered by the Winter Games in Pyeongchang, officials and experts say. After North Korean leader Kim Jong Un made a surprise invitation for Moon to visit Pyongyang last week, Im is now being floated as a possible special envoy to North Korea to discuss the proposal. But for critics in the South, Im is at the center of concern that Seoul may prioritize cross-border rapprochement over an air-tight alliance with the United States. South Korea’s intelligence service chief Suh Hoon and Unification Minister Cho Myong-gyon are among the other candidates under consideration, according to officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity. Officials, however, said they are leaning more toward Suh or Cho, given conservative criticism of Im. “I know there are many names being mentioned, but Suh is an expert and would be the best choice,” said Chung Se-hyun, a former unification minister, who regularly advises Moon on inter-Korean affairs. “In inter-Korean relations, it is critical to understand the North’s language, their way of talking and the country’s inner workings.” Suh led a series of talks in the run up to two inter-Korean summits, first in 2000 and then 2007. Suh, as a top spy official, and Moon, then chief of staff to President Roh Moo-hyun, were instrumental in setting up the 2007 meeting. (Hyonhee Shin, “Moon’s Chief of Staff Takes Center Stage in Inter-Korean Détente,” Reuters, February 15, 2018)
KCNA: “The DPRK high-level delegation led by Kim Yong Nam, president of the Presidium of the DPRK Supreme People's Assembly, met with south Korean President Moon Jae In at Chongwadae on Saturday after attending the opening ceremony of the 23rd Winter Olympics. Moon Jae In warmly greeted the DPRK delegation at the main lobby of Chongwadae, exchanging greetings with it, and had photo sessions with Kim Yong Nam and Kim Yo Jong respectively. Then Kim Yong Nam and Kim Yo Jong had a warm talk with Moon Jae In on the first floor of Chongwadae. Moon Jae In said at the talk that the current visit of the delegation of the north side created a spark of improving the inter-Korean relations and ensuring peace on the Korean peninsula and that he extends his heartfelt thanks to Chairman Kim Jong Un for providing today's significant occasion. Kim Yong Nam congratulated Moon Jae In on the successful opening of the Winter Olympics and expressed gratitude to him for sitting together with them while dealing with a great event. At the talk, Kim Yo Jong, first vice department director of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, upon authorization of Kim Jong Un, supreme leader of the Party, state and army of the DPRK, courteously handed over his personal letter to President Moon Jae In and verbally conveyed his intention. President Moon Jae In expressed deep thanks to Chairman Kim Jong Un for taking a special step of making the high-level delegation of the north side participate in the Olympics and sending his personal letter and verbal greetings, and asked for certainly conveying his gratitude to Chairman Kim Jong Un. After delivery of the personal letter, the DPRK delegation had a frank and candid talk with the south side over the issue of improving the north-south relations. President Moon Jae In expressed the will to take one step after another for the common prosperity of the south and the north in close cooperation with each other, saying that the inter-Korean relations should be mended by the parties concerned at any cost as indicated by Chairman Kim Jong Un in his New Year Address. Kim Yong Nam said that even unexpected difficulties and ordeals could be surely overcome and the future of reunification brought earlier when having a firm will and taking courage and determination to usher in a new heyday of inter-Korean relations. The talk proceeded in a sincere and cordial atmosphere. Present there were Choe Hwi, chairman of the National Sports Guidance Committee, Ri Son Gwon, chairman of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country, and Im Jong Sok, presidential chief of staff of Chongwadae, Jong Ui Yong, chief of the State Security Office, Jo Myong Gyun, minister of Unification, and So Hun, director of the National Intelligence Service. On the same day Moon Jae In hosted a luncheon at Chongwadae in honor of the DPRK delegation. Present there were all members of the DPRK delegation and participants of the south side in the talk and leading persons concerned at the National Intelligence Service and the State Security Office. A welcoming address was made at the luncheon which proceeded in a cordial atmosphere. At the end of the luncheon, there was a photo session with all members of the DPRK high-level delegation at Moon Jae In's request. That day Kim Yong Nam and Kim Yo Jong made entries in the visitor's book of Chongwadae.” (KCNA, “DPRK High-Level Delegations Meets S. Korean President,” February 11, 2018)

"South Korea might run off ahead on a course of dialogue," a senior Foreign Ministry official said in the wake of talks in Seoul between South Korean President Moon Jae In and a high-level North Korean delegation sent to attend the opening ceremony of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics the day prior. Defense Minister Onodera Itsunori told reporters in Saga Prefecture, southwestern Japan, that dialogue between the two Koreas must be "based on the premise that North Korea will change its basic nuclear and missile policies." Officials in Tokyo suspect North Korea is trying to chip away at the united front of the United States and its East Asian allies as international sanctions bite the hermit country. The Abe administration is in favor of maintaining the diplomatic and economic pressure campaign regardless of the thaw between the two Koreas over the Olympics, arguing that yielding to dialogue on North Korea's terms would mean effectively accepting it as a nuclear power. "North Korea seems to have no intention of abandoning its nuclear program," a Japanese government official said. "It's clear to see that Kim Jong Un's agenda is to get a dialogue offensive under way," a Japanese government source said. "By sending the sister to South Korea and seeking a visit by the president, North Korea is probably trying to give the impression that it's taking the lead on dialogue," another source close to the government said. According to a diplomatic source, some in the Abe administration "would not oppose the very idea of talks" between Moon and Kim "if they would entail [Moon] pressuring North Korea to
Secretary of State Rex Tillerson left open the door to dialogue with North Korea, saying it will be up to Pyongyang to decide when they are ready. Tillerson was speaking at a press conference with his Egyptian counterpart in Cairo, where he was asked whether he sees the start of a diplomatic process with North Korea. "As to the vice president's comments about potentially having talks and whether it's the start of a diplomatic process, I think it's too early to judge," Tillerson said. "As we've said for some time, it's really up to the North Koreans to decide when they're ready to engage with us in a sincere way, a meaningful way." North Korea knows "what has to be on the table for conversations," he said, apparently referring to a denuclearization commitment. "We've said for some time that it's important that we have -- we're going to need to have some discussions that precede any form of negotiation to determine whether the parties are, in fact, ready to engage in something this meaningful, in order for us to then put together the construct of a negotiation," the top US diplomat said. "So we'll just have to wait and see." (Yonhap, “Tillerson: Up to N. Korea to Choose Talks with U.S.,” February 13, 2018)

KCNA: “Kim Jong Un, chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea, chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the DPRK and supreme commander of the Korean People's Army, Monday met members of the DPRK high-level delegation which visited the south side's area to attend the opening ceremony of the 23rd Winter Olympics. Present at the meeting were the members of the delegation including Kim Yong Nam, president of the Presidium of the DPRK Supreme People's Assembly, Kim Yo Jong, first vice department director of the WPK Central Committee, Choe Hwi, chairman of the National Sports Guidance Committee, Ri Son Gwon, chairman of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country, and suite members. On hand were Vice-Chairman Kim Yong Chol and Vice Department Director Jo Yong Won of the C.C., WPK.

Respected Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un highly appreciated the efforts of the members of the delegation and suite members, shaking their hands one by one and listened to the detailed report by them. Kim Yong Nam made a detailed report on the activities of the delegation including its participation in the opening ceremony of the 23rd Winter Olympics and visit to Chongwadae. Kim Yo Jong, who conducted her activities at the special instruction of the respected Supreme Leader, made a detailed report on her contacts with the south side's high-level figures including President Moon Jae In and the south side's intention and movement of the U.S. side and others which she grasped through her activities. After receiving the delegation's report, Kim Jong Un expressed satisfaction over it. And he said that impressive was the south side which specially prioritized the visit of the members of the DPRK side who took part in the Winter Olympics including the high-level delegation and has made all its sincere efforts for their convenience and activities, and expressed his gratitude for it.

Saying it is important to continue making good results by further livening up the warm climate of reconciliation and dialogue created by the
strong desire and common will of the north and the south with the Winter Olympics as a momentum, he set forth in detail the future orientation of the improvement of the north-south relations and gave important instructions to the relevant field to take practical measures for it. He had a photo session with the members of the delegation.” (KCNA, “Kim Jong Un Meets DPRK High-Level delegation,” February 13, 2018)

Institute for Disarmament and Peace of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK director-general’s statement “over the fact that the United States and Japan, taken aback by stirring atmosphere of improvement and reconciliation in the inter-Korean relations, are running amuck to put whatever obstacles on this development. ...The U.S. and Japan incited confrontation and hostility towards the DPRK at the opening ceremony of the current Winter Olympics where the whole world has extended warm congratulations in delight and joy to the north and the south of Korea for being one. ...The reckless moves of the U.S. and Japan constitute an open challenge to our sincere efforts for improving the inter-Korean relations and creating peaceful climate on the Korean peninsula as well as to the world public aspiring to the regional and global peace and stability. Whenever the north and the south of Korea were engaged in talks to improve their relations, which led to the heightened atmosphere for national reunification, the U.S. and Japan did never fail to create huge obstacles by conducting such deliberate aggressive maneuvers as the large-scale joint military exercises. The above facts demonstrate once again that the U.S. and Japan are the very culprits of destroying peace, aggravating situation and obstructing national reunification on the Korean peninsula. If the U.S. and Japanese reactionaries continue to move in a self-centered manner against our national aspirations for peace and reunification and the international support to it, they will gain only isolation. The U.S. and Japan should bear in mind that their vicious words and actions will only reveal their sinister and crafty intentions and invite international opposition and denunciation, and they would be well advised to stop their imprudent and reckless actions.” (KCNA, “U.S. and Japan Flayed for Hampering Improvement of Inter-Korean Relations,” February 13, 2018)

The U.S. director of national intelligence warned, “Decision time is becoming ever closer in terms of how we respond to this.” North Korea presents “a potentially existential” threat to the United States and is likely to conduct more weapons tests this year, Dan Coats said at the Senate Intelligence Committee’s annual hearing on “Worldwide Threats.” Coats said North Korea’s repeated statements that nuclear weapons were the basis for its survival suggest government leaders there “do not intend to negotiate them away.” “In the wake of accelerated missile testing since 2016, North Korea is likely to press ahead with more tests in 2018, and its Foreign Minister said that Kim (Jong Un) may be considering conducting an atmospheric nuclear test over the Pacific Ocean,” he said. Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein asked whether U.S. intelligence has looked into what it might take to bring North Korea to the negotiating table, but Pompeo declined to discuss the subject during a public hearing. Feinstein said she had participated in a classified briefing recently on North Korea and described it as “difficult and harsh.” (Patricia Zengerle and Doina Chiacu, “U.S. Intelligence Chief Says North Korea ‘Decision Time’ Is Near,” Reuters, February 13, 2018)

2/14/18 Vice President Mike Pence drew the line between talks and negotiations with North Korea, saying President Donald Trump "believes in" the former. In an interview with Axios, Pence said Trump "always believes in talking (with North Korea), but talking is not negotiating." His remark appears to leave open the possibility of a preliminary dialogue between Washington and Pyongyang that would set the tone for any future negotiations over the communist regime's nuclear and ballistic missile programs. Still, Pence said nothing will change until the North abandons its nuclear ambitions, and the U.S. and the international community will "consider any change in posture" only when the regime "completely, verifiably and completely" discards its missile programs. The U.S. has led a "maximum pressure" campaign to increase economic and diplomatic sanctions on North Korea until the regime comes forward to discuss its denuclearization. Pence led the U.S. delegation to the opening ceremony last week, where he was seated directly in front of the North Korean leader's sister, Kim Yo-jong. "I didn't avoid the dictator's sister, but I did ignore her,"
The United States doesn’t have a “bloody nose” strategy for North Korea, senators of both parties and a Trump administration official said, rejecting claims the U.S. wants to strike the North’s nuclear program in a way that avoids an all-out war. The harmonized message could quell...
speculation that President Donald Trump is contemplating limited military action to demonstrate U.S. resolve toward North Korea without provoking a wider conflict. Such a strategy would be widely seen as dangerous given the North’s capability to inflict a devastating retaliation on U.S. ally South Korea. A senior White House official, at a briefing yesterday, told lawmakers no such approach has been adopted. Sens. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., and James Risch, R-Idaho, said at a Senate hearing today. An administration official who was testifying confirmed their accounts. The White House had “made it very clear there is no bloody nose strategy for a strike against North Korea,” Shaheen told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which was considering the nomination of Susan Thornton, Trump’s choice to be the top diplomat for East Asia. “We were told clearly by administration people about as high up as it gets that there is no such thing as a ‘bloody nose’ strategy, that they’ve never talked about, they’ve never considered it, they’ve never used that term, and it’s not something that that people ought to be talking about,” Risch said. (Matthew Pennington, “U.S. Denies Plan for ‘Bloody Nose’ Strike on North Korea,” Associated Press, February 15, 2018) Asked by Democratic Senator Jeanne Shaheen if the Trump administration had no “bloody nose” strategy, Susan Thornton, assistant secretary for East Asia, replied: “That is my understanding, senator, yes.” U.S. officials have told Reuters and other media that Trump and his advisers have discussed the possibility of a limited strike on North Korea that would neither knock out its program nor overthrow leader Kim Jong Un’s government. Two U.S. senators, a Democrat and Republican, who spoke at Thornton’s confirmation hearing for the post of assistant secretary for East Asia, said they and other senators had been told by senior White House officials yesterday that there was no such strategy. Republican Senator James Risch said the lawmakers had been told “by administration people, about as high up as it gets, that there is no such thing as a ‘bloody nose strategy.’” Risch added that the officials said they had never considered it or talked about it. Thornton said Washington was open to talks with Pyongyang but that North Korean denuclearization would be the only issue. “Our preference is to achieve denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through a diplomatic settlement, but we will reach this goal one way or another,” Thornton said. (David Brunnstrom and Patricia Zengerle, “No ‘Bloody Nose’ Strategy for North Korea: U.S. Official, Senators,” Reuters, February 15, 2018)

An official at the White House National Security Council said in an e-mail interview with Dong-A Ilbo that Washington was willing to engage North Korea in order to emphasize its position that the “complete and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is not negotiable.” The official also stressed that Washington would strengthen its “maximum pressure” until the North Korean regime abandons its nuclear program. The response suggests that while Washington will continue the maximum pressure campaign, it would also be possible to hold dialogue with the North to achieve the goal. Asked if there would be any change in Washington’s position on a military option against the North, the official said that both the military and non-military options are on the table, adding that the United States will take all measures necessary to defend itself and its allies and respond to any North Korean provocation. The U.S. Department of State officially admitted the possibility to expand the dialogue phase. U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert told a regular news briefing on February 12 that Pence had said “maximum pressure and engagement can be done at the same time.” She stressed that Pence had said, “The maximum pressure campaign is going to continue and intensify. But if you want to talk, we’ll talk.” (Gi-Jae Han and Jeong-Hun Park, “U.S. Hints at Dialogue with N. Korea for Denuclearization,” Dong-A Ilbo, February 15, 2018)

The powerful intercontinental missile, dubbed Hwasong-15, tested by North Korea late last year is “highly likely” to have been built with foreign blueprints or parts, according to a new technical analysis by U.S. and German experts that describes multiple similarities between Pyongyang’s new missile and ones built by the Soviet Union decades ago. The foreign assistance — the precise nature of which is still unclear — could explain why North Korea apparently was able to skip the months and even years of preliminary testing normally associated with any advanced new missile system, the report says. Intelligence agencies have long believed that North Korea incorporated Soviet designs in many of its missiles, including a submarine-launched ballistic missile successfully tested in 2016. But experts have been mystified over North Korean leader Kim Jong
Un’s rapid gains in long-range missile technology, including back-to-back successful tests of two different ICBMs last year. The new report builds an elaborate, if partly circumstantial, case linking North Korea’s newest missile to Soviet designs dating as far back as the mid-1960s. The evidence includes striking similarities between the Hwasong-15 and a family of Soviet-era missiles, including one that was developed by Russian engineers but abandoned before production began, according to the report prepared for Jane’s Intelligence Review, a British-based journal that focuses on international security threats. A draft of the report was provided to the Washington Post. “It is highly likely that North Korea made use of external knowledge, technology, or hardware, in the development of the Hwasong-15 ICBM,” states the report, authored by Markus Schiller, a Munich-based space technology analyst, and Nick Hansen, an imagery specialist with a 47-year career with U.S. intelligence community. Based on new computer modeling and enhanced images of the North Korean missile, the researchers concluded that the foreign support “was derived from the Soviet-era ballistic missile program,” though it is unclear exactly when or how the transfer took place, the report says. The researchers found, for example, that the North Korean missile’s size and shape echo those of the UR-100, a two-stage solid-fuel missile built by the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s, with a few differences. Its engine shares the same distinctive dual-nozzle configuration as the Soviet-made RD-250 missile engine first built in 1965, and appears to use the same potent fuel mixture — a high-energy liquid propellant that only recently came into use in North Korea. The similarities appear to implicate the former Soviet Union as the original source of the technology, and not China or Iran, as some analysts have speculated, the researchers said. “By any dimension, this looks Soviet to me, not Chinese,” Schiller said in an interview via Skype. While the similarities with the UR-100 are striking, the authors posit that the Hwasong-15 may actually be a clone of a different Soviet-era missile that was never brought into full production. That missile, the R-37, was developed as part of a competition between two rival missile-design bureaus as the Soviet Union searched for an answer to the Minuteman ICBM developed by the United States in the 1960s. The UR-100 won the competition, and the R-37—which was similar in size and shape and apparently used the RD-250 engine—was canceled. Though acknowledging he has no proof, Schiller believes the Hwasong-15 may have been assembled from actual parts of the R-37, or a similar Soviet-era missile that was stolen or sold on the black market. Otherwise, he says, it is difficult to explain how the North Koreans were able to field their new ICBM so quickly, apparently skipping the extensive testing normally associated with a new missile design. U.S. intelligence officials have expressed skepticism about previous claims that North Korea’s newest missiles are foreign imports. A Defense Department statement last August asserted that North Korea “is not reliant on the imports of engines,” but rather possesses the “ability to produce the engines themselves.” U.S. agencies have not ruled out the possibility that missile-engine designs from Russia were passed to North Korea, perhaps by former Soviet scientists who traveled to Pyongyang to work as consultants in the 1990s. Schiller says it is possible that missile secrets were passed to North Korea in the form of blueprints and scientific expertise. But he says he personally believes that missile parts were included in the exchange. “If you look at any other missile program, you usually see hundreds of static engine tests,” Schiller said. “With this one, we didn’t see hundreds. We saw one or two.” Yet, despite the dearth of known tests, the North Koreans were sufficiently confident of their new missile that they arranged for the maiden launch to occur “in a field, in the middle of the night, with what appeared to be a military crew, in approximately four hours,” Schiller writes in the report. Schiller also noted that, since the November 28 launch, no other Hwasong-15s have been observed publicly. The only exceptions were four purported missiles that were hauled through central Pyongyang in a military parade earlier this month. Parade missiles, Schiller said, are “nearly always fake.” (Joby Warrick, “Did Kim Jong Un’s ‘Historic’ Missile Get a Boost from Old Soviet Weapons” Washington Post, February 16, 2018)

With talk of a “bloody nose” strike against North Korea being debated in Washington, public attention has focused on conventional military preparations for a U.S. attack on Pyongyang. Less noticed, but possibly even more telling, is the surge in recent months of intelligence resources. Senior officials have made no secret of the fact that the administration is ramping up its intelligence capabilities to focus on the Korean Peninsula, but six sources familiar with U.S. planning described a nearly unprecedented scramble inside the agencies responsible for spying and
cyber warfare. In fact, the initial strike against the North Korean regime could be digital rather than physical, according to two former intelligence officials with knowledge of the preparations. “The first shot will be cyber,” one of the former officials said. As North Korean leader Kim Jong Un flaunts his nation’s strides in missile development, the U.S. government for the past six months has covertly begun laying the groundwork for possible cyberattacks on North Korea in countries including South Korea and Japan. This process involves installing fiber cables as bridges into the region and setting up remote bases and listening posts, where hackers may attempt to gain access to a North Korean internet that’s largely walled off from external connections. Preparations for a cyberattack reflect a larger issue: America’s spies are pivoting the magnifying glass, funneling much of the weight of billions of dollars in technical infrastructure and trained professionals toward Pyongyang, current and former intelligence officials told Foreign Policy. “The national technical focus is being switched,” one former intelligence official with knowledge of the developments told FP. There are “wholesale” shifts worth billions of dollars redirecting signals intelligence, overhead imagery, geospatial intelligence, and other technical capabilities, toward Pyongyang. Regional analysts are also getting reassigned. “If you’re an Africa analyst, you’re fucked,” the former official said. The preparations, according to those sources, include military intelligence analysts on reserve status being called back into service to focus on North Korea. Military and intelligence contractors have posted a number of job announcements in recent months seeking analysts with Korean-language skills, including positions to identify and recruit human intelligence sources. In November 2017, rumors flew around the halls at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, that the agency would also be surging analysts of all disciplines to work at the brand-new Korea Mission Center, established in May of that year, a symbol of serious potential for military action, one former intelligence official told FP. CIA Director Mike Pompeo has publicly confirmed that he’s funneling workers there. “The Administration has made North Korea a top priority, and the CIA established its Korea Mission Center to harness the full resources, capabilities, and authorities of the Agency to address the threat posed by Kim Jong Un and his regime,” CIA spokesman Jonathan Liu wrote in an email. “We shift resources as appropriate to tackle our most pressing challenges.” The Defense Intelligence Agency had an “oh, shit” moment after the holidays, another source described to FP, when contingency planning to shift resources toward East Asia kicked off in earnest. Some experts working on areas such as counterterrorism and counter-narcotics are suddenly getting new assignments, or fear they soon might, and are being told to shift their gaze to the Korean Peninsula instead, yet another source indicated. The Defense Clandestine Service, an espionage wing of the DIA, has ratcheted up its presence in the region. The government is working on “putting the elite of the elite on the peninsula to collect and respond,” a separate former military intelligence official told FP. Pivoting to high-priority regions to serve the military is the DIA’s calling, said an agency spokesman, James Kudla. “DIA has the unique role of ensuring warfighters, defense planners and national policy makers understand foreign military capabilities and operational environments so they can prevent or decisively win wars,” he wrote in an email to FP. Former intelligence officials told FP, there is concern that the laser focus on North Korea could come at the expense of other hot spots, such as Syria or Iran. “How does that leave us vulnerable?” one military intelligence source asked. The defense budget passed by Congress ultimately doesn’t end up matching the areas where the United States is spending the most, and resources aren’t unlimited. “We have what we have.” The CIA described the concern about limited resources as misplaced. “The CIA is no stranger to tackling multiple priorities and executing its mission aggressively. We are always mindful of our obligation to keep America safe from threats from all over the world,” wrote Liu, the agency spokesman. Joseph DeTrani, the former associate director of national intelligence and mission manager for North Korea, said the intelligence community’s focus on North Korea has ebbed and flowed over the years. “I think we surged slightly a little more in 1999, when we confronted them with the uranium enrichment program,” he said. In 2017, North Korea made rapid progress in developing advanced missiles — testing more than 20, though not all were successful. Kim Jong Un is a showman when it comes to missile testing, according to DeTrani. “[The North Koreans] want us to know they have these missile and nuclear capabilities,” he added. DeTrani, who served as U.S. special envoy at the six-party talks with North Korea between 2003 and 2006, said the Donald Trump administration is making the regime and its nuclear program “very clearly priority No. 1.” The Office of the Director of National Intelligence confirmed the increasing focus on
North Korea but declined to provide specifics. (Earlier this month, the office posted an announcement seeking a Korea director to, in part, “oversee and monitor efforts to assess the state of collection, analysis, intelligence operations, and resource gaps” in the region.) “North Korea has long been a very high priority for the Intelligence Community,” Timothy Barrett, a spokesman for the office, wrote in a statement to FP. “Given this challenge and the high policy focus on this topic, the Intelligence Community has added priority, focus, and resources to our North Korea efforts over the past several years,” he continued. “We continue to make adjustments to our North Korea-focused resources as the situation warrants.” The CIA has been particularly vocal on its Korea focus. In January, Pompeo told an audience at an event hosted by the American Enterprise Institute in Washington that supporting the U.S. “pressure campaign” on North Korea was “the kind of task that the CIA was designed for.” While Pompeo would not go into detail about missions in East Asia, he noted that the CIA was helping support sanctions efforts to create economic pressure and was “working to prepare a series of options” in case diplomacy fails. One of those options, a former intelligence official with knowledge of recent planning told FP, could be targeting North Korea’s heavy use of cryptocurrency. “Now they have a reason to hack Bitcoin,” the former official said. The source predicted that a massive attack on the bitcoin exchanges could be a “shot across the bow.” U.S. Cyber Command, which conducts offensive digital operations, declined to comment on its plans, or any options that may have been presented. “One of U.S. Cyber Command’s key responsibilities is to generate a full-spectrum of integrated military cyberspace options for policymakers and supported commanders,” Masao Doi, a spokesman for the command, wrote in an email to FP. North Korea relies to some extent on cryptocurrency to evade international sanctions, and Pyongyang has also been actively targeting South Korea’s Bitcoin exchanges, according to Priscilla Moriuchi, who until last year led the National Security Agency’s East Asia and Pacific cyber threats office. Moriuchi, who now works for Recorded Future, a private digital intelligence firm, said she was able to identify several specific thefts of thousands of bitcoin and other forms of digital currency. But because not all exchanges report theft and it’s hard to attribute every attack, “it’s difficult to identify how many coins North Korea has at any one time,” she said. Just from the thefts Moriuchi was able to identify, North Korea could have made between $15 million and $200 million, depending on when it cashed the digital coins in for real currency. “It’s evident that North Korea is evading sanctions,” she said. “It could be a substantial source of revenue — we just don’t know when they’re cashing out.” Moriuchi said hacking North Korea’s cryptocurrency reserves or planning some other intelligence operation around them could prove tricky, since it’s difficult to track the individual users and the long trail from mining to stealing to laundering the reserves into cash. But keeping digital currency and operations in mind could be an important middle ground between physical military strikes and harsh rhetoric. The United States needs to “find different levers” to contain North Korea, since sanctions alone aren’t enough to stop Kim Jong Un from continuing missile development. “Cryptocurrencies could give us a different lever,” Moriuchi said. (Jenna McLaughlin, “All Eyes on North Korea,” Foreign Policy, February 15, 2018)

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has reiterated the United States’ willingness to engage North Korea diplomatically, saying he is listening for Pyongyang to tell him if it is ready to talk. “That’s who we will have to work with to achieve this diplomatically,” Tillerson said in an interview with CBS-TV released today. "What we have to determine now is: are we even ready to start? Are they ready to start?" the top American diplomat noted. "If they're not, we'll just keep the pressure campaign underway, and we will increase that pressure." Tillerson said his job as the chief diplomat is to ensure North Koreans know the U.S. keeps its channels open, urging the North to come to the negotiating table. "I am listening for you to tell me if you are ready to talk," he said. Washington is using "large sticks" rather than carrots to convince North Korea to come to the negotiating table, the secretary said as well, pledging that he will continue his efforts to solve the North Korean nuclear problem diplomatically. "I'm gonna use all the time available to me. Our diplomatic efforts will continue until that first bomb drops," he said. "My job is to never have a reason for the first bomb to drop." (Yonhap, “Tillerson Says He Is Listening for N.K. to Tell Him It Is Ready to Talk,” February 19, 2018)
Tillerson interview: “Margaret Brennan: In his New Year's Day speech Kim Jong Un said the entire area of the U.S. mainland is within our nuclear strike range. That's gotta make you nervous. Rex Tillerson: It does make us nervous. It-- it also-- it also stiffens our resolve. That kind of a threat to the American people by a regime like this is not acceptable. And the president's meeting his responsibilities as commander in chief of asking our military, Secretary Mattis at the Defense Department, to ensure we are prepared for anything. Brennan: And those military options are there in case you fail. Tillerson: In case I fail. I say to my Chinese counterpart, "You and I fail these people get to fight. That's not what we want." Brennan: But you are willing to work with and potentially negotiate with Kim Jong Un. Tillerson: Well, that's who we will have to work with to achieve this diplomatically. What we have to determine now is, are we even ready to start? Are they ready to start? And if they're not, we'll just keep the pressure campaign underway and we will increase that pressure. And we are doing that every month. There are new sanctions rolled out. The world wants North Korea to change. Brennan: Well, there's some questions about how badly China wants them to change. You've really needed their help to put economic pressure on Kim Jong Un. What reassurances have you given to China so that they actually follow through? Tillerson: What I think-- we got a common understanding with China that is North Korea represents a serious threat to China as well. And we've been very clear with them that they are going to have an important role to play once we get to the negotiating table. Brennan: So I-- I hear you saying there-- these wouldn't be one on one talks. China would be at the table. Tillerson: Early on they might be one on one discussions for the U.S. first and North Korea to determine is there a reason to begin to put the construct for negotiations in place. Brennan: What is the carrot that you're dangling for North Korea to convince them to talk? Tillerson: We're not using a carrot to convince them to talk. We're using large sticks. And that is what they need to understand. This pressure campaign is putting-- is having its bite on North Korea, its revenue streams. It's having a bite on its military programs. Brennan: But to say full denuclearization, why would they agree to give up something they've already got that they think is an insurance policy? Tillerson: Because it buys them nothing. It buys them more of being the hermit kingdom, isolated, isolated from the world diplomatically, isolated from the world economically. Brennan: Senator Bob Corker, chairman of Senate Foreign Relations Committee said "Every one of us should pray Rex Tillerson and Jim Mattis are successful over the course of the next eight to ten months, diplomatically, or our nation is going to be facing one of the greatest military decisions that we face." Eight to ten months. That's how much time you have to get this done? Tillerson: I'm gonna use all the time available to me our diplomatic efforts will continue until that first bomb drops. My job is to never have a reason for the first bomb to drop And we don't know precisely how much time is left on the clock. Brennan: You seem to have convinced the president that diplomacy is the way to go on this. But it wasn't always so clear. Back in October, you said you were working to get a dialogue going with the North Koreans and the president tweeted, "Rex, stop wasting your time trying to negotiate with little rocket man." Have you asked him not to call him little rocket man? Is that a diplomatic term? Tillerson: The president's going to-- the president's gonna communicate the way he communicates. My job as chief diplomat is to ensure that the North Koreans know we keep our channels open, I'm listening. I'm not sending a lotta messages back 'cause there's nothing to say to them at this point. So I'm listening for you to tell me you're ready to talk. Brennan: How will you know? Tillerson: They will tell me. They will tell me. Brennan: That explicitly? Tillerson: We-- we receive messages from them And I think it will be very explicit as to how we want to have that first conversation. ... (Margaret Brennan, “Rex Tillerson Opens up in Rare Wide-Ranging Interview, CBS “Sixty Minutes,” February 18, 2018)

When the North Korean figure skaters Ryom Tae-ok and Kim Ju-sik took to the ice this week, cheerleaders chanting their names stowed the unified Korean flags they had waved at other events here at the Pyeongchang Olympics and whipped out their national flag. After that unmistakable outburst of patriotic fervor, it was all the more incongruous when the pair began skating to a distinctly Western song: “A Day in the Life” by the Beatles, in a cover by Jeff Beck. “I have no clue how they chose it,” said Bruno Marcotte, a prominent French Canadian coach. He worked with the pair, who placed 13th, for eight weeks last summer in Montreal and said their North Korean coach had selected the song. “I think the fact that everybody was, like, ‘Huh?’ makes it even more special.” The musical choice seemed to belie the assumption that North Koreans,
citizens of the most isolated country on earth, are cut off from knowledge of the outside world by the restrictions imposed by their autocratic leader, Kim Jong-un. With 22 athletes and an entourage of around 500 cheerleaders, arts performers, journalists and security minders here at the Winter Games, the North Koreans have been subjected to endless scrutiny about what they are seeing here, and whether it is, well, blowing their minds. More broadly, analysts and officials wonder if engaging with the outside world could have a political effect back home. The subtext of some of the curiosity is whether the North Koreans, exposed to glimpses of popular culture or the higher standard of living in the South, might be tempted to defect, as athletes from other Communist countries have done at previous Olympic Games. No North Korean athletes have defected during an Olympics, although one defected in 1991 during a world judo championship in Spain. Some analysts theorize that exposure to the outside world could eventually drive change back home. “It might be better to think that an information inflow will slowly alter the preferences of North Koreans by inevitably poking holes in the ideology,” said Robert E. Kelly, a professor of political science at Pusan National University in South Korea. “Over time, this should change the regime and make it easier to deal. That’s the hope anyway.” Some American officials espouse a version of this view. “Our sense is the more North Koreans that come here and can see how successful the South has been, the better,” Marc Knapper, the deputy chief of mission at the United States Embassy in Seoul, said during a news conference before the Games. “Maybe they’ll discover what good things accrue when they decide to rejoin the international community and make the right decisions.” Knapper added. Yet even North Korea watchers who support greater athletic and cultural exchanges say none of it will slow down the country’s nuclear ambitions. “Of course they will proceed with their nuclear program,” said Andrei Lankov, a North Korea expert at Kookmin University in Seoul. “Nothing can be done, short of a military invasion, to reverse it. The best we can hope for is to achieve some kind of freeze.” Critics say countries hosting North Koreans become susceptible to propaganda designed to soften the North’s image. They point to the regime’s charm offensive at the Olympics, including a visit by Kim Yo-jong, Kim Jong-un’s sister. “While North Korea, the target of engagement, remains a menacing nuclear state, the outsiders have become beholden to the enchanting possibility of their efforts bearing fruit one day,” said Lee Sung-yoon, a professor of Korean studies at the Fletcher School at Tufts University. Those who promote more engagement with the North say change will be evolutionary, not revolutionary. “North Koreans, including North Korean officials, will see they are lagging very behind the world,” Lankov said. “Some of them will say, ‘Let’s overthrow the government,’ but many more will say, ‘Let’s change our policy a bit.’” It is not even clear how much the North’s athletes and supporters have seen or heard while at the Games. The dozen female players on the joint ice hockey team sleep in separate dorms and ride a separate bus from their South Korean teammates. The North Korean cheerleaders and journalists are staying in a remote resort in Inje County, at least a 90-minute drive from many of the Olympic venues. The cheerleaders are not even allowed to slip to the bathroom on their own, and minders from the North Korean delegation, as well as South Korean police officers, are constantly monitoring them, the athletes and performers. “Leaving North Korea is even harder than leaving the mafia,” said Sue Mi Terry, Korea chairwoman at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. Would-be defectors “know their entire family, extended relatives, friends will get executed or rounded up and sent to labor camps,” she said. What’s more, she said, the athletes and cheerleaders at the Olympics are “carefully handpicked and vetted North Koreans, children of the elite ruling class” who have decent living standards. “Why risk bringing serious harm to your loved ones when you are living a pretty good life?” Terry said. Analysts say it is also presumptuous to assume any North Korean who goes abroad would immediately want to move. “If you use the analogy of someone coming from the Midwest or a small town and you go to New York for a weekend, and there’s all of a sudden all of this stuff — a lot of people that I know from quieter cities tend to get very overwhelmed,” said Jenny Town, assistant director at the US-Korea Institute at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Defectors say those who have been abroad are likely to receive some kind of ideological “re-education” session upon returning home. Still, some experts say exposure to the outside world may ultimately undermine the regime’s efforts to keep citizens in line. Ideological education “can’t take away people’s thoughts after they experience what it’s like in a democratic society,” said Kang Dong-wan, professor of North Korean culture and politics at Dong-A University in Busan, South Korea. “Wouldn’t the cheerleaders and the
athletes wonder why they are being controlled while other South Koreans in the crowd sitting right next to them are cheering naturally and moving about freely?” Some spectators riveted by the North’s synchronized cheerleaders acknowledged it was likely some actually wanted to go back. “Many South Koreans worked abroad after the Korean War, when things were tough for South Korea,” said Kim Myo-jong, 34, an orthopedic surgeon in the stands for the pairs skating short program. “But instead of staying abroad because it was easier to make money there, they decided to return to help South Korea’s development. Maybe the North Korean elites who have outside exposure might feel the same.” (Mokoto Rich, “Isolated Nation Could Feel Winds of Change,” New York Times, February 18, 2018, p. SP-10)

2/19/18

Pabian, Bermudez, Liu: “Commercial satellite imagery from 2017 through February 11, 2018 indicates steady progress has been made towards the operationalization of the (100 MWth/30 MWe) Experimental Light Water Reactor (ELWR) at North Korea’s Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center. Having been under construction since 2010, the ELWR seems to be nearing operational status based on improvements made over the past year, including new provisions for a more consistent cooling water supply, installation of internal equipment and the connection of the reactor to the local electrical grid. The latest imagery from February 11 shows the ELWR is externally complete, while the two adjacent construction support yards now appear relatively quiet as opposed to mid-2017 when equipment was actively being transferred from the yards into the reactor dome. … The 2017 International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards report noted indications of an increase in activities in the ELWR’s construction yard consistent with the fabrication of certain reactor components. Based on satellite imagery alone, it is difficult to identify what these specific “reactor components” were, however, significant movement of equipment was observed over the past year at the two construction support yards (primary and secondary) presumably in preparation for installation in the reactor. …Although satellite imagery indicated the ELWR’s electrical switchyard was completed by May 2016, footings for the key transmission tower were first noted in March 2017. A 3-phase transmission line was later strung between that newly erected tower and another located to the east across the Kuryong River through a newly tree-cleared path to connect with an existing north-south transmission line that serves the Radiochemical Laboratory and the Uranium Enrichment Plant (UEP).” (Frank V. Pabian, Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., and Jack Liu, “Progress at North Korea’s Experimental Light-Water Reaction at Yongbyon,” 38North, February 19, 2018)

2/20/18

Rodong Sinmun commentary: “The Trump group is spouting rubbish that if the DPRK’s nuclear issue is not settled through diplomatic way, it cannot but take a military option, while clamoring for “possibility of dialogue” with the DPRK. This is an open threat to mount a military attack if the DPRK does not respond to the denuclearization negotiations. It is foolhardy for the U.S. to try to threaten the DPRK with such nonsense and it is nothing but a reckless act ignorant of the faith, will and pluck of Juche Korea. The DPRK is a self-defensive nuclear power no one can dare provoke, and we are not afraid of sanctions and pressure as we are exploring our future under the banner of self-reliance and self-development. We are ready for both dialogue and war. If the U.S. attacks the DPRK, it will not be safe in face of a stern punishment by the Korean army and people. Recently the trump group is advising the Americans to leave last messages if they want to travel Korea. They had better pay heed to our warning, not making such nonsensical rubbish. If the U.S. dare provokes a war, there will never be a man left who would keep last messages and bury the coffins. This is our answer. The U.S. has to stop going ill-mannered, clearly understanding who its rival is.” (KCNA, “Rodong Sinmun Warns U.S. to Understand Its Rival,” February 20, 2018)

North Korea is quietly expanding both the scope and sophistication of its cyber weaponry, laying the groundwork for more devastating attacks, according to a new report published today. It appears that North Korea has also been using previously unknown holes in the Internet to carry out cyberespionage — the kind of activity that could easily metamorphose into full-scale attacks, according to a report from FireEye, a California-based cybersecurity company. “Our concern is that this could be used for a disruptive attack rather than a classic espionage mission, which we
already know that the North Koreans are regularly carrying out,” said John Hultquist, director of intelligence analysis for FireEye. FireEye said it has “high confidence” that a cyberespionage group it has identified as APT37 is responsible for a number of attacks, not just in South Korea but also in Japan, Vietnam and the Middle East. These include “zero-day vulnerability” attacks in which hackers find and exploit flaws in software before the developers have had an opportunity to create patches to fix them. “It’s like your security system is a big wall, but someone knows that there’s a hole somewhere in that wall and can crawl through it,” Hultquist said. “It’s fairly rare.” It’s also a sign of sophistication, as hackers are able to obtain access and defeat mature security programs, he said. The APT37 group appears to have been operating under the radar, exploiting holes in South Korean cybersecurity since 2012 to covertly gather intelligence on issues of concern for the North Korean regime: the government, military, media and human rights groups among them. These targets, combined with the times of day that attacks happen, strongly point to North Korea, FireEye said. Last year, however, APT37 appeared to have targeted a Japanese entity involved in imposing sanctions on North Korea, a Vietnamese company and one in the Middle East. FireEye did not name any of the targets for legal reasons, but its description of the attack on the company in the Middle East perfectly describes Orascom, an Egyptian telecommunications company that had started a cellphone company in North Korea, only to have almost all its profits retained by the regime. In addition to expanding its geographical reach, APT37 also appears to be targeting a wider range of industries, including chemicals, electronics, manufacturing, aerospace, automotive and health-care entities, the report said. While the damage is currently much lower than that caused by the huge cyberattacks blamed on North Korea, it suggests the regime is looking for new ways to launch stealthy attacks when it wants to. The Worldwide Threat Assessment published by the U.S. intelligence community last week forecast that the potential for surprise cyberattacks would increase over the next year. Intelligence agencies expect North Korea to use cyber-operations to gather intelligence or launch attacks on South Korea and the United States. “Pyongyang probably has a number of techniques and tools it can use to achieve a range of offensive effects with little or no warning, including distributed denial of service attacks, data deletion, and deployment of ransomware,” the assessment said. Hultquist said APT37 was just the kind of tool North Korea could use for a surprise attack, partly because it has been operating at a relatively low level. “Lazarus and the other actors that are well known all started as espionage. That’s the classic story again and again,” he said. He added that the Kim regime does not seem to care about consequences. “North Korea has flouted global norms and taboos,” Hultquist said. “They are not necessarily concerned about retribution. They have adopted this criminal MO which flies in the face of just about any kind of international norm.” (Anna Fifield, “North Korea Poised to Launch New Cyberattacks, report Says,” Washington Post, February 20, 2018)

For the past several years, humanitarian groups and nongovernmental organizations have combed commercial satellite imagery in North Korea, looking for evidence of human rights abuses, such as mass graves. Now, some will have access to satellite photos and analysis from an American spy agency. The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, which maps the earth’s surface with data from drones, satellites, and other airborne craft, will provide raw imagery, expert review, and the use of an already developed digital app and publishing platform to several nonprofit organizations and think tanks. These first partnerships will focus on North Korea, Chris Rasmussen, a longtime military intelligence analyst and data expert with NGA, told Foreign Policy in an interview. The NGA maps everything from coastline data to the far reaches of the Arctic; some of that imagery and those maps are already public. But rarely does the U.S. government share imagery of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s isolated regime, let alone an intelligence agency’s analysis of sites there. The decision to work with NGOs to highlight the human rights abuses by the regime in Pyongyang comes at a critical time. The Trump administration has charted a confrontational course with Kim over his nuclear program, and the intelligence community has ramped up its focus on the country. Highlighting Pyongyang’s human rights abuses is also part of the Trump administration’s larger strategy toward North Korea. Rasmussen said he and his coworkers, and their future partners in the public sector, are “motivated by public service to produce original research on high-priority strategic and humanitarian intelligence issues.” Rasmussen declined to mention which specific partners NGA would be working with, saying the agreements have not been formalized yet. Rasmussen recently presented the program, many months in the works, to the
Intelligence Community Transparency Council, which was created after Edward Snowden’s leaks in 2013. While NGA declined to describe specifics about what issues it would be helping outside organizations to study, there are numerous human rights concerns in North Korea. Having NGA’s assistance will give this kind of work a major boost, going beyond traditional contracting partnerships to something public and sharing information without requiring onerous security clearances or secrecy, Rasmussen explained. Without mentioning specific issues NGA will help examine. The intelligence community often publishes declassified historical information, but that can take years. Doing something with current imagery is something new. No government assets, like imagery from government satellites, will be used initially, which means the pictures for now will be limited to the commercial imagery NGA purchases — but even those could be beneficial to outside groups. “I want to see this turn into the CIA World Factbook of high-quality authoritative original research on intelligence. I want to see this turn into the CIA World Factbook of high-quality authoritative original research on intelligence,” Rasmussen said. He called the opportunity to put NGA’s skills on the humanitarian problems of the world and create detailed, original reports about these issues with NGOs and think tanks “incredibly exciting.” Scott Edwards, a senior advisor at Amnesty International, said the group has a blanket prohibition on working with governments, based on the possibility that critics could argue the research is somehow tainted. However, when smaller organizations agree to partner with NGA and publish information on human rights abuses, Amnesty International would applaud them. “Any shining of a light on a human rights abuse is a good thing,” Edwards told FP. “I’d be remiss to critique any other NGOs for innovative ways of getting to findings of fact,” he said. He cautioned, however, that Amnesty would seek to verify that analysis based on its own independent assessment of the imagery. Amnesty would look to purchase the imagery and replicate the analysis ourselves, to make sure the findings of fact can’t be dismissed … as a ploy by the U.S. government,” he said. Scott Stevens, the administrative director of the Transitional Justice Working Group, based in Seoul, found the possibility of partnership with the U.S. government appealing, though fraught with a few potential concerns. “High resolution satellite imagery for specific locations is expensive,” he wrote in an email to FP. “With higher resolution imagery, we could take a closer look at the suspected human rights crime scenes we’ve identified. Better imagery might mean better analysis.” However, Stevens said there’s danger in revealing the location of the sites to anyone outside the organization, even if the intelligence community does keep information very safe and secure. “Revealing which sites we have identified to date would give those opposed to our work a short list of priorities for any clearing operations. I would assume that the NGA’s security protocols are strong, but there is always a risk in transferring information outside of our organization’s security environment.”

The group would have to balance existing privacy agreements it has with defectors whose information they receive, particularly if working with NGA required signing any additional agreements. It would also take a lot of work to incorporate new information into their workflow, Stevens explained. Rasmussen stressed that NGA won’t be writing any of the reports; the organizations NGA partners with will maintain full editorial independence over the issues they cover, he said. This isn’t Rasmussen’s first push to open up the intelligence world. At NGA, Rasmussen pushed for software that would allow intelligence community employees to view unclassified summaries of reports on their smartphones, rather than having to be at their desk in a secured facility. That effort turned into Tearline, a smartphone application for government employees, now available in the Apple app store and the Google Play store. He also headed up the Pathfinder project, which has been focused on acquiring more open-source intelligence from public companies, pushing NGA to do more unclassified analysis. New reports from NGA’s partners on North Korea will be available in multiple locations, including the public Tearline smartphone application and website, where a preview page is already available, and most likely on a new website from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence called the Public’s Daily Brief, a riff on the President’s Daily Brief, the high-level intelligence report the president has received almost every day since 1946. NGA is in a unique position, according to Rasmussen. The CIA and National Security Agency can’t publish intercepted communications or human source reporting. But NGA has access to a massive repository of satellite imagery that isn’t all classified and could serve the public, not just the intelligence community. “The targets aren’t flagged as sensitive,” Rasmussen said. Rasmussen was a part of the process to update the classification policies, an effort he said “paved the pathway” for projects like the partnership to
monitor the North Korean humanitarian issues. This kind of collaboration has never been done before with an intelligence agency… at least that I’m aware of,” Rasmussen said. As for future projects in other areas of the world? Rasmussen is hopeful. “If we get a million downloads, it’s going to make it easier for me to say, let’s expand to other areas,” he said. (Jenna McLaughlin, “U.S. Spies to Partner with Human Rights Groups to Keep an Eye on North Korea,” Foreign Policy, February 21, 2018)

2/22/18

North Korea said that a high-ranking official, who many in the South believe orchestrated a deadly attack in 2010, would lead a delegation to the Winter Olympics closing ceremony in the South, another sign the two Koreas are trying to work out a road map toward improving ties. The North’s delegation will be led by Kim Yong-chol, a vice chairman of the ruling Workers’ Party’s Central Committee. The eight-member delegation will start a three-day trip on February 25 that will include attending the closing ceremony in Pyeongchang, South Korean officials said. Also scheduled to attend Sunday’s closing ceremony is President Trump’s daughter, Ivanka Trump, who will lead the American delegation. United States officials said Ms. Trump had no plans to meet anyone representing the North. Kim Yong-chol, a former head of the North’s main intelligence agency, now leads a Workers’ Party department in charge of relations with South Korea. He was widely believed to have helped engineer the sinking of a South Korean naval ship in 2010, which killed 46 sailors. Kim had been on sanctions lists in both South Korea and the United States for his alleged involvement in the North’s military provocations and nuclear weapons development. South Korea is talking with Washington to clear Kim’s trip to the Olympics, said Noh Kyu-duk, a spokesman for the South Korean foreign ministry. Still, the South Korean government said it would allow Kim to lead the delegation across the border. “We expect the high-level delegation’s participation in the closing ceremony of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics to help advance the process of settling peace on the Korean Peninsula including the improvement of inter-Korean relations and denuclearization,” the Unification Ministry, a South Korean government agency, said in a statement. “Against this backdrop, from this standpoint, we will accept the visit of North Korea’s high-level delegation to the South.” Kim Yong-chol is expected to meet with Moon to discuss the details of a potential summit meeting. Kim Yong-chol is a familiar figure to South Korean negotiators. In 2014, Kim, who is also a military general, led a delegation to discuss ending hostilities after North and South Korean soldiers exchanged fire across the border. In 2010, when two North Korean agents were caught in the South while on a mission to assassinate a high-ranking defector from the North, they said they were dispatched by Kim’s General Bureau of Reconnaissance, the North’s main spy agency, South Korean officials said. The spies told South Korean authorities that Kim personally assigned them to the assassination mission, throwing them a dinner party before they left for the South. (Choe Sang-hun, “Former Spymaster to Lead North Korea’s Olympics Ceremony Delegation,” New York Times, February 22, 2018)

2/23/18

Saying it was imposing its largest package of sanctions against North Korea, the U.S. Treasury sanctioned one person, 27 companies and 28 ships, according to a statement on the U.S. Treasury Department’s website. The actions block assets held by the firms in the United States and prohibit U.S. citizens from dealing with them. The Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control announced the measures, which are designed to disrupt North Korean shipping and trading companies and vessels and to further isolate Pyongyang. Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin said in a statement the sanctions against the ships would help prevent Kim’s government from conducting “evasive maritime activities that facilitate illicit coal and fuel transports and erode its abilities to ship goods through international waters.” The ships are located, registered or flagged in North Korea, China, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Marshall Islands, Tanzania, Panama and Comoros, Treasury said. Those targeted included a Taiwanese passport holder and mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore shipping and energy firms. “We imposed today the heaviest sanctions ever imposed on a country before,” Trump said in an address to a conservative activist group in Washington. “And ... hopefully something positive can happen, we will see.” The United States has led an international campaign to tighten sanctions on North Korea to force it to give up its development of weapons and missiles program. “The president is clearly frustrated and rightly so over the
efforts that have failed in the past and also over the uptick in testing and the advances we’ve seen in the North Korean program,” a senior administration official said at a background briefing for reporters. At another briefing in Washington, Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin stood next to enlarged photos he said showed December 2017 images that revealed ship-to-ship transfers of fuel and other products destined for North Korea in an attempt to evade sanctions. “This is very impactful. We’re going to do everything to stop these ship-to-ship transfers,” Mnuchin said. Washington “also issued an advisory alerting the public to the significant sanctions risks to those continuing to enable shipments of goods to and from North Korea.” The new U.S. sanctions were announced while Trump’s daughter, Ivanka, is visiting South Korea. She had dinner with Moon after a closed-door meeting with the president. At a dinner with Moon at Seoul’s presidential Blue House, she said the purpose was also to “reaffirm our commitment to our maximum pressure campaign to ensure that the Korean Peninsula is denuclearized.” Moon said North Korea’s participation in the Olympics had “led to lowering of tensions on the peninsula and an improvement in inter-Korean relations” and were thanks to President Trump’s “strong support for inter-Korean dialogue.” Moon, cited by his spokesman, Yoon Young-chan, said at a news conference South Korea cannot acknowledge North Korea as a nuclear state and talks with the North on denuclearization and improving inter-Korean relations must go hand in hand. He said close cooperation between the United States and South Korea is important for the talks. Moon made the comments to Ivanka Trump. Her visit to South Korea coincides with that of a sanctioned North Korean official, Kim Yong Chol, blamed for the deadly 2010 sinking of a South Korean navy ship that killed 46 sailors. His delegation will attend the closing ceremony and also meet Moon. The Blue House has said there are no official opportunities for U.S. and North Korean officials to meet. South Korea’s decision yesterday to allow in Kim Yong Chol, currently sanctioned by the United States and South Korea, sparked protest from family members of the dead sailors and opposition parties. (Christine Kim and Steve Holland, “U.S. Imposes More North Korea Sanctions; Targets Ships, Firms,” Reuters, February 22, 2018) “If we can make a deal, it will be a great thing,” Trump said at a news conference with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull of Australia. “And if we can’t, something will have to happen.” “If the sanctions don’t work, we’ll have to go Phase 2,” he said, alluding to the threat of military action. “Phase 2 may be a very rough thing — may be very, very unfortunate for the world.” The timing of the announcement was striking, coming just a few hours after South Korea’s president, Moon Jae-in, played host at a dinner for Trump’s daughter Ivanka, who is leading the American delegation to the closing ceremony of the Games. Mnuchin said Ms. Trump discussed the sanctions with Moon before their dinner. In the past, the United States has gone after ships suspected of transporting missiles and nuclear proliferation material. But stopping vessels suspected of carrying commercial goods, experts said, would be a major step up in the pressure campaign against Pyongyang. “That goes into the realm of an economic blockade,” said Abraham M. Denmark, a former Pentagon official who is now the director of the Asia program at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. “It would be moving beyond proliferation and going after things that sustain North Korea’s economic lifeline.” Such a move, he predicted, will meet resistance from China and Russia. Those countries thwarted an effort in December by the administration to put a proviso into the latest United Nations Security Council resolution on North Korea that would permit countries to hail and board North Korean ships in international waters. A senior administration official said the United States had raised concerns about smuggling with Russia and had previously designated Russian entities with links to North Korea. “Whether they’re Russian ships, whether they’re Chinese ships — we don’t care whose ships they are,” Mnuchin said. “If we have intelligence that people are doing things, we will put sanctions on them.” As Mnuchin spoke in the White House briefing room, large boards behind him showed satellite images of a ship-to-ship transfer in December involving a North Korean and a Panamanian vessel. The identity of the North Korean ship had been masked with a Chinese name and home port. The American military has begun contingency planning to stop and board suspect vessels bound for North Korea. But it is a perilous undertaking. Navy or Marine warships would deploy small boats carrying troops who are trained in what the Pentagon calls visit, board, search and seizure operations. Once aboard, military officials said, the search party would have two options: sweep the ship and turn it back over to its crew or, if ordered by their commanders, seize it. The military, however, has options short of boarding, officials said. It could track suspect vessels, by sea or with P-3 or P-8
surveillance planes, until they make port. The United States or its allies could then call on that nation to inspect the ship’s cargo to determine whether it violated existing United Nations sanctions. Evan S. Medeiros, an Asia director in the National Security Council during the Obama administration, said, “The administration is walking right up to the line of what’s permissible under international law to aggressively increase the pressure on North Korea.”(Mark Landler, “Trump Imposes More Sanctions on Pyongyang,” New York Times, February 24, 2018)

The Trump administration and key Asian allies are preparing to expand interceptions of ships suspected of violating sanctions on North Korea, a plan that could include deploying U.S. Coast Guard forces to stop and search vessels in Asia-Pacific waters, senior U.S. officials said. Washington has been talking to regional partners, including Japan, South Korea, Australia and Singapore, about coordinating a stepped-up crackdown that would go further than ever before in an attempt to squeeze Pyongyang’s use of seagoing trade to feed its nuclear missile program, several officials told Reuters. While suspect ships have been intercepted before, the emerging strategy would expand the scope of such operations but stop short of imposing a naval blockade on North Korea. Pyongyang has warned it would consider a blockade an act of war. The strategy calls for closer tracking and possible seizure of ships suspected of carrying banned weapons components and other prohibited cargo to or from North Korea, according to the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity. Depending on the scale of the campaign, the United States could consider beefing up the naval and air power of its Pacific Command, they said. “There is no doubt we all have to do more, short of direct military action, to show (North Korean leader) Kim Jong Un we mean business,” said a senior administration official. The White House declined official comment. The effort could target vessels on the high seas or in the territorial waters of countries that choose to cooperate. It was unclear, however, to what extent the campaign might extend beyond Asia. The initiative, which is being developed, would be fraught with challenges that could risk triggering North Korean retaliation and dividing the international community. China and Russia, which have blocked U.S. efforts at the United Nations to win approval for use of force in North Korea interdiction operations, are likely to oppose new actions if they see the United States as overstepping. A Chinese official said such steps should only be taken under United Nations auspices. China’s Foreign Ministry, in a statement to Reuters, said they did not know anything about the plan, but that in principle China believes U.N. resolutions on North Korea should be fully and thoroughly implemented. “At the same time, we hope relevant countries act in accordance with Security Council resolutions and international law,” it added, without elaborating. But Washington is expected to start gradually ratcheting up such operations soon even if discussions with allies have not been completed, according to the senior U.S. official. U.S. experts are developing legal arguments for doing more to stop sanctions-busting vessels, citing the last U.N. Security Council resolution which they say opened the door by calling on states to inspect suspect ships on the high seas or in their waters. Washington is also drawing up rules of engagement aimed at avoiding armed confrontation at sea, the officials said. A Japanese ruling party lawmaker briefed by the government said discussions with the United States were focused on the need for stepped up cooperation on surveillance and information-sharing between Washington, Tokyo and Seoul regarding ship-to-ship transfers suspected of violating sanctions, and on the need to notify authorities in ports of origin. The lawmaker as well as a Japanese defense ministry official involved in policy planning said that under current U.N. sanctions, the agreement of the flag state and ship captain was necessary to conduct inspections on the high seas. “I think it is unlikely that the U.N. will strengthen the sanctions so that inspections on high seas are possible without agreement,” the Japanese defense official said. “From the viewpoint of the country in question, that would be an act of war,” he said, referring to North Korea. Some U.S. officials believe the risk could be minimized if Coast Guard cutters, which carry less firepower and technically engage in law-enforcement missions, are used in certain cases rather than warships. The Coast Guard declined to address whether it might deploy ships to the Asia-Pacific region but acknowledged its ties to countries there. “Future ship deployments would depend on U.S. foreign policy objectives and the operational availability of our assets,” said spokesman Lieutenant Commander Dave French. A senior South Korean government official said there had been discussions over “intensified maritime interdictions,” including at a foreign ministers’ meeting in Vancouver last month where U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson pressed counterparts
on the issue. “We are discussing with various countries including the U.S. and South Korea how to fully implement the sanctions, but I have not heard talk of creating a framework or a coalition,” said the Japanese defense ministry official involved in policy planning. Japan’s foreign ministry, in reply to a question from Reuters, repeated Tokyo’s call for “maximum pressure” on Pyongyang. The ministry declined to comment on specific discussions with other countries, but said Japan continued its “close collaboration with the U.S., ROK (South Korea) and the international community including China and Russia to secure the effectiveness of U.N. Security Council Resolutions” to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The Trump administration has also sought greater cooperation from Southeast Asian countries, which may have little military capability to assist but are seen as sources of intelligence on ship movements. U.S. officials said. “The more partners we have, the more resources we have to dedicate to the effort,” said Chris Ford, assistant secretary of state for international security and nonproliferation. He declined to talk about discussions with specific countries. Washington is especially interested in detecting of ship-to-ship transfers at sea of banned goods, something North Korea has increasingly referred to as vessels have faced greater scrutiny of their cargo in Asian ports, the officials said. Reuters reported in December that Russian tankers had supplied fuel to North Korea at sea in a violation of sanctions. Washington also said at the time it had evidence that vessels from several countries, including China, had engaged in shipping oil products and coal. China denied the allegation. U.S. interception of ships close to Chinese waters is something likely to be avoided, in favor of informing Chinese authorities of banned cargo onboard and asking them to do the inspection, one official said. “It’s probably impossible to stop everything, but you can raise the cost to North Korea,” said David Shear, former deputy secretary of defense for Asia under President Barack Obama. (Matt Spetalnick, Phil Stewart, and David Brunnstrom, “U.S. Prepares High-Seas Crackdown on North Korea Sanctions Evaders – Sources,” Reuters, February 23, 2018)

North Korea has “ample intentions” to hold talks with the U.S., Kim Yong-chol, vice chairman of North Korea’s ruling Workers’ Party Central Committee, told President Moon Jae-in, according to Cheong Wa Dae. Moon had held a face-to-face meeting with, in Pyeongchang ahead of the closing ceremony of the Olympics, according to the presidential office. “President Moon pointed out that US-North Korea dialogue must be held at an early date even for an improvement in the South-North Korea relationship and the fundamental resolution of Korean Peninsula issues,” Cheong Wa Dae spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom said of the meeting. “The North Korean delegation too agreed that North Korea-US relations must develop along with the South-North Korea relationship, while noting (the North) has enough intention to hold North Korea-US dialogue,” he added. Speculation mounted over possible interaction between officials from the US and North Korea on the sidelines of the Olympics, as it was revealed that North Korea had included one of its top officials dealing with North Korea-US relations in its delegation for the closing of the Olympics. The eight-member delegation crossed the inter-Korean border today for a three-day visit. Among the delegation is Choe Kang-il, deputy director-general for North American affairs at the North’s Foreign Ministry, the Unification Ministry confirmed. Choe has represented North Korea's position on nuclear weapons, handled the country’s relations with the US and recently met with former US officials at a security-related forum in Switzerland in September last year, according to news reports. Accompanying Trump was Allison Hooker, the National Security Council official in charge of Korean affairs, fueling speculation that some kind of meeting might be in the works behind the scenes. Hooker, a former East Asia and Pacific affairs analyst with the US State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research, accompanied James Clapper, then-director of national intelligence, to North Korea in 2014 to secure the release of two Americans detained by the reclusive regime. North Korea and the US, however, had each dismissed the possibility of any interaction between their officials. Sarah Huckabee Sanders, one of the US delegates and the White House spokesperson, told reporters during a press briefing Saturday in Pyeongchang that the US officials have “no planned meetings or interactions with North Korea.” KCNA quoted the North’s Korea Asia-Pacific Peace Committee as saying, “We will never have face-to-face talks with them even after 100 years or 200 years.” The Trump administration two days ago announced what it called the “heaviest sanctions ever” placed on Pyongyang. In response, Pyongyang blasted Washington for heightening the possibility of “confrontation and war” on the Korean Peninsula. “Like we have said repeatedly, we would consider any restrictions on us as an act of war, and we
DPRK FoMin spokesman’s statement: “Respected Supreme Leader Comrade Kim Jong Un affirmed his will in his New Year Address to make strenuous efforts to improve inter-Korean relations, create a peaceful environment on the Korean peninsula and ensure a successful holding of Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. Thanks to our supreme leadership’s noble love for the nation and strong determination for peace, long-awaited inter-Korean dialogue and cooperation have been realized and the Olympics took place successfully by the inter-Korean collaboration. However, on the eve of closing of the Olympics, United States is running amok to bring another dark cloud of confrontation and war over the Korean peninsula by announcing enormous sanctions against the DPRK. Trump has announced new sanctions, the core of which is to completely block the DPRK's maritime trade with other countries, and he openly threatened us by making wild remarks that if the said sanctions do not work, "very rough phase 2" will be operated. Trump group's attempt itself to threaten us by such sanctions or wild remarks only reveals its ignorance about us. We came to possess nuclear weapons, the treasured sword of justice, in order to defend ourselves from such threats from the United States. As we have stated on numerous occasions, we will consider any type of blockade an act of war against us, and if U.S. has indeed the guts to confront us in "rough" manner, we will not necessarily take the trouble to stop it. If U.S. ignores all of our sincere efforts for improving inter-Korean relations and for preserving peace and stability on the Korean peninsula, as desired by the nation, and doggedly persists instead in provocation against us, we will have a tight grip on U.S. and deal with it with our own way of counteraction, no matter how rough and hysterical the U.S. moves are. If tension on the Korean peninsula escalates into a brink of war due to the U.S. reckless actions, all the catastrophic consequences resulting therefrom will be borne by the United States.” (KCNA, “U.S. Hit for Bringing Clouds of War to Hang over Korean Peninsula,” February 25, 2018)

South Korean conservatives staged an overnight sit-in at a border crossing to try to prevent the North Korean official from entering the country. Kim is widely accused of masterminding two deadly attacks in 2010: a torpedo attack on the Cheonan naval corvette, which killed 46 South Korean sailors, and the shelling of an island, which killed four people. But their efforts were stymied: The delegation crossed Sunday morning using a military road, attending the meeting with Moon and then the Closing Ceremonies. Speculation about secret talks mounted when Choe Kang Il, deputy director of the U.S. affairs division in North Korea’s Foreign Ministry, arrived with the group of traveling North Korean officials. Choe has taken part in talks with former U.S. officials in recent years, including at a security-related forum in Switzerland last September. There, he delivered a strong message: that North Korea’s nuclear weapons were not up for discussion. His attendance surprised analysts, because his role has nothing to do with either sports or inter-Korean relations. Meanwhile, traveling with Trump was Allison Hooker, the Korea director on the National Security Council and a key player in the White House’s policy on North Korea. Her name was not on the White House’s list for the delegation. Some analysts said that a meeting between Hooker and Choe would be a good way to start easing the tensions that have risen over the past year, as North Korea has fired missiles and conducted a nuclear test, and the Trump administration has threatened military action in response. “There is no reason for Allison Hooker to come, nor is there any reason for Choe Kang Il to be here,” said John Delury, a professor of international relations at Yonsei University in Seoul. “They’re both superfluous to the Olympic ceremonies and to inter-Korean relations.” They would, however, be the right officials to meet and have a “preliminary discussion,” Delury said. “They could and they should do this.” White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders, who is traveling in South Korea with Trump and Hooker, said before the Closing Ceremonies that no meetings were scheduled. But afterward, in a statement released by the White House, she said the Trump administration “is committed to achieving the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” She added: “There is a brighter path available for North Korea if it chooses denuclearization. We will see if Pyongyang’s message today, that it is willing to hold talks,
A classified military exercise last week examined how American troops would mobilize and strike if ordered into a potential war on the Korean Peninsula, even as diplomatic overtures between the North and the Trump administration continue. The war planning, known as a “tabletop exercise,” was held over several days in Hawaii. It included Gen. Mark A. Milley, the Army’s chief of staff, and Gen. Tony Thomas, the head of Special Operations Command. They looked at a number of pitfalls that could hamper an American assault on North Korea’s well-entrenched military. Among them was the Pentagon’s limited ability to evacuate injured troops from the Korean Peninsula daily — a problem more acute if the North retaliated with chemical weapons, according to more than a half-dozen military and Defense Department officials familiar with the exercise. Large numbers of surveillance aircraft would have to be moved from the Middle East and Africa to the Pacific to support ground troops. Planners also looked at how American forces stationed in South Korea and Japan would be involved. Commanders who attended the exercise in Hawaii were told that roughly 10,000 Americans could be wounded in combat in the opening days alone. And the number of civilian casualties, the generals were told, would likely be in the thousands or even hundreds of thousands. The potential human costs of a war were so high that, at one point during the exercise, General Milley remarked that “the brutality of this will be beyond the experience of any living soldier,” according to officials who were involved. So, too, would be the sheer logistical enterprise of moving thousands of American soldiers and equipment to the Korean Peninsula. Moreover, senior military officials worry that after 17 years in Afghanistan and Iraq, American troops have become far more used to counterinsurgency fighting than a land war against a state, as an attack on North Korea would likely bring. But Mattis also has ordered top Pentagon leaders to be ready for any possible military action against North Korea. Already, ammunition has been pre-staged in the Pacific region for ground units. And Trump’s words — “Military solutions are now fully in place, locked and loaded, should North Korea act unwisely,” he said in an August post on Twitter — have left senior officers and rank-and-file troops convinced that they need to
accelerate their contingency planning. A White House decision to attack is almost wholly dependent on cooperation from South Korea — not only in committing its troops or other assets to the battle but also accepting the risk of widespread bloodshed on its civilian population if the North fires back. Pentagon officials said they did not want to disrupt any chance for a negotiated resolution. Mattis and other senior military leaders fear that a stray incident could spark a sudden conflict with the North. Of particular concern is the “ladder of escalation” — a chain of actions prompted by the shooting down of a North Korean or American jet, or sinking of a ship of which Mattis and other Pentagon leaders could quickly lose control. Harsh new sanctions that the Trump administration announced last week are a prime example. The economic penalties target 28 ships that are registered in China and seven other countries, and intend to further cut off North Korea’s imports of oil and exports of coal. But by going after the shipments, the United States is edging closer to the imposition of an economic blockade on the North. That, Defense Department officials say, could easily spark an incident that could escalate. Trump recently referred to another type of incident that American officials fear could spark a war. During a speech in Seoul last year, he brought up North Korea’s 1969 downing an American spy plane that had been flying over the Sea of Japan. All 31 Americans aboard were killed in the attack by two North Korean MiGs. At the time, President Richard M. Nixon chose not to retaliate. It is unclear if Trump would follow the same course; in bringing up the episode last year, he warned, “Do not underestimate us, and do not try us.” The Hawaii planning exercise looked at a wide range of military capabilities and missions. They included: ■ How many conventional and Special Operations forces could be deployed, in phases, to target North Korean nuclear sites. ■ Whether the Army’s 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions could be charged with fighting in tunnels. ■ Exhaustive plans to take down North Korea’s integrated air defenses, allowing American manned and unmanned aircraft into the reclusive country. ■ Plans for the morbid but necessary details of personnel recovery plans, such as if pilots are shot down, and the evacuation of the dead and wounded. In a meeting today in “the Tank” — a secured space in the Pentagon where the Joint Chiefs of Staff discuss top-secret issues — General Milley told senior military leaders about the exercise but did not outline details of the war plans, officials said. The Army holds around eight tabletop exercises every year for different countries and scenarios. In April, a larger meeting is being planned between Mattis and the global combatant commanders. It is one of the periodic meetings that Mattis has with the top military brass, but is expected to heavily focus on North Korea. Special Operations forces have been briefed on some details of a plan that is separate but related to a potential strike on North Korea, officials said. However, Special Operations forces have yet to change course from their current operations. Although the planning is continuing apace, a military operation against North Korea has yet to be given a formal name. Special Operations units, however, have already been assigned to specific task forces with names such as Trident and Falcon. (Helene Cooper and Eric Schmitt, “U.S. Advances Military Plans for North Korea,” New York Times, March 1, 2018, p. A-11)

The State Department’s top diplomat in charge of North Korea policy is retiring at the end of the week. Joseph Yun, who is in his early 60s, told CNN: "It was completely my decision to retire at this time." He said Secretary of State Rex Tillerson accepted his resignation "with regret." State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said in a statement Yun, who joined the Foreign Service in 1985, decided to leave for personal reasons. "We are sorry to see him retire, but our diplomatic efforts regarding North Korea will continue based on our maximum pressure campaign to isolate the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) until it agrees to begin credible talks toward a denuclearized Korean peninsula," Nauert said. Yun’s abrupt departure raises questions and adds to uncertainty over US President Donald Trump's North Korea policy as ally South Korea engages in talks with the North for the first time in years. The veteran diplomat had a reputation as a proponent of dialogue when it comes to dealing with North Korea. (Eliana Lee and Joshua Berlinger, “U.S. Top Diplomat Announces Surprise Retirement,” CNN, February 27, 2018)

Japan has softened its stance on talks with North Korea and now plans to take part in informal meetings that do not include substantive negotiations on Pyongyang’s nuclear arms program, government sources have said. The shift puts Japan in line with the United States, which tried to
organize high-level talks with North Korea earlier this month on the sidelines of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in South Korea. The administration of Prime Minister Abe Shinzo has repeatedly said that no meaningful dialogue can be held with the North until it takes concrete steps toward scrapping its nuclear arms program. But the position now is that such a commitment would not be required to hold talks in which the parties merely exchange greetings or repeat their existing positions on issues, the sources said. Japan will continue to refuse to take part in any dialogue that would recognize North Korea as a nuclear power, the sources added. “North Korea will play the nuclear card in its favor (if we enter into those negotiations). The United States won’t engage in that kind of discussion either,” a senior Foreign Ministry official said in Tokyo. The policy shift is the result of coordination between Tokyo and Washington. According to a diplomatic source, the two governments confirmed earlier this month that they will not engage in “dialogue” with North Korea but could accept a “chat.” At that time, the United States was attempting to set up a meeting between Vice President Mike Pence and Kim Yo Jong, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s younger sister, while both were visiting South Korea for the Pyeongchang Games. Pence was reportedly planning to convey Washington’s intention to keep up pressure on the isolated country.

“If the United States and North Korea go into negotiations (on their own), Japan will be left out of the loop and the abduction issue could be abandoned,” a source close to North Korea-Japan relations said. In a hint at the shift, Abe shook hands and briefly exchanged words with North Korea’s nominal head of state, Kim Yong Nam, at a reception dinner ahead of the Winter Olympics opening ceremony earlier this month. “Japan believes it is important to directly communicate our thoughts to North Korea,” Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide, the government’s top spokesman, said today. But according to the Foreign Ministry official, there are “no plans at the present time” for further interactions between Tokyo and Pyongyang. In Washington today, President Donald Trump weighed in on the prospect of talks with the North. “They want to talk. And we want to talk also, only under the right conditions. Otherwise, we’re not talking,” Trump told a meeting of U.S. governors at the White House in Washington. “We’ll see what happens,” Trump said. “That’s my attitude: We’ll see what happens. But something has to be done.” (Kyodo, “Japan Softens Stance on Prospect of ‘Chat’ with North Korea, Sources Say,” Japan Times, February 27, 2018)

North Korea has been shipping supplies to the Syrian government that could be used in the production of chemical weapons, United Nations experts contend. The supplies from North Korea include acid-resistant tiles, valves and thermometers, according to a report by United Nations investigators. North Korean missile technicians have also been spotted working at known chemical weapons and missile facilities inside Syria, according to the report, which was written by a panel of experts who looked at North Korea’s compliance with United Nations sanctions. The report highlights the potential danger posed by any such trade between Syria and North Korea, which could allow Syria to maintain its chemical weapons while also providing North Korea with cash for its nuclear and missile programs. The possible chemical weapons components were part of at least 40 previously unreported shipments by North Korea to Syria between 2012 and 2017 of prohibited ballistic missile parts and materials that could be used for both military and civilian purposes, according to the report, which has not been publicly released but which was reviewed by the New York Times. Though experts who viewed the report said the evidence it cited did not prove definitively that there was current, continuing collaboration between North Korea and Syria on chemical weapons, they said it did provide the most detailed account to date of efforts to circumvent sanctions intended to curtail the military advancement of both countries. William Newcomb, who was chairman of the United Nations panel of experts on North Korea from 2011 to 2014, called the report “an important breakthrough.” Since the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011, there have been suspicions that North Korea was providing equipment and expertise to maintain the chemical weapons program of Syria’s president, Bashar al-Assad. Those suspicions were not assuaged when in 2013 Syria signed onto the Chemical Weapons Convention and claimed to give up its chemical weapons stocks. “We knew stuff was going on,” Newcomb said. “We really wanted to up the game on chemical weapons programs, and we just weren’t able to get what we needed to do so.” The report, which is more than 200 pages long, includes copies of contracts between North Korean and Syrian companies as well as bills of lading indicating the types of materials shipped. Much information was provided by unidentified United Nations
member states. The military-related cooperation, if confirmed, indicates major shortcomings in the international effort to isolate both countries. The shipments would have eluded detection even though both nations are subject to highly restrictive sanctions, and are under the intense scrutiny of American and other spy services. North Korea’s relationship with Syria takes up one section of the report, which also documents the many ways the government of North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-un, has tried to circumvent sanctions. It describes how North Korea uses a complex web of shell companies and sympathetic foreign citizens to gain access to international financing, employs sophisticated cyber operations to steal military secrets and enlists its own diplomats in smuggling operations. It also criticizes Russia and China for failing to do enough to enforce sanctions on items like oil, coal and luxury goods. The sanctions, it says, have yet to be matched “by the requisite political will, international coordination, prioritization and resource allocation necessary to drive effective implementation.” The report gives fresh details of a military relationship between North Korea and Syria that goes back decades. In 2015, Syria honored that assistance by opening a monument and park in Damascus dedicated to North Korea’s founder, Kim Il-sung, grandfather of the current leader. The unveiling ceremony, held as Syria’s civil war raged, featured North Korean and Syrian dignitaries, military officials and a marching band. North Korea has provided training and support for Syria’s chemical weapons program since at least the 1990s, according to a forthcoming book by Bruce Bechtol, a former Korea analyst at the United States Defense Intelligence Agency who is now a professor at Angelo State University in Texas. The book also describes an accident in 2007 in which several Syrian technicians, along with North Korean and Iranian advisers, were killed in the explosion of a warhead filled with sarin gas and the extremely toxic nerve agent VX. The relationship with Syria “has been a boon for the North Korean military-industrial complex,” Bechtol said in an interview. The United Nations report says the cooperation continued during Syria’s civil war, despite international sanctions. Crucial evidence of that was found in January 2017, when two ships carrying acid-resistant tiles, commonly used in the construction of chemical weapons factories, were interdicted at sea en route to Damascus, the report said. Those shipments were among five deliveries agreed to in a contract between a government-owned company in Syria and the Korea Mining Development Trading Corp., a North Korean company involved in arms exports, according to the report. It based those findings at least in part on copies of contracts provided by the shipping company, identified as Cheng Tong Trading Co. Ltd., based in China. The report said the three other shipments had been sent between November 3 and December 12, 2016. The report did not say which country interdicted the two January tile shipments or whether the other three shipments were delivered to Damascus. The contract stipulated that the materials were to be delivered to the Metallic Manufacturing Factory, a company run by the Syrian government that was penalized by the United States Treasury Department last year for its involvement in Syria’s weapons industry. Several months earlier, in August 2016, a delegation of North Korean missile technicians visited Syria, at which point there was a transfer of “special resistance valves and thermometers known for use in chemical weapons,” the report said, without elaborating. An unidentified United Nations member country told the report’s authors that North Korean missile technicians worked at Syrian chemical weapons and missile facilities in Barzeh, Adra and Hama. In 2013, after the Obama administration threatened military action in response to a sarin gas attack on the rebel enclave of Ghouta that some experts estimated killed 1,400 people, Assad agreed to destroy his stockpile and join the Chemical Weapons Convention, which comprises 192 countries that are to have dismantled their chemical weapons programs. But Western officials and nonproliferation experts have long suspected that Assad retains some chemical weapons. So far this year, according to diplomats and witnesses, several chlorine gas attacks have occurred in rebel-held areas in Ghouta, Idlib and Afrin. A separate United Nations panel also said Assad’s forces were responsible for a sarin gas attack on the rebel-held village of Khan Sheikoun last April that killed at least 83 people and sickened roughly 300. Mallory Stewart, a former State Department official who was involved in the Obama administration’s efforts to dismantle Syria’s chemical weapons program, said that there were always concerns that the Assad government had not listed all of its chemical weapons stockpile on its declared inventory of what it gave up. The report, she says, “confirms everything we’ve been saying.” “Certainly what we tried to do in the last administration is dismantle the entire chemical weapons program,” Ms. Stewart said, “which we know they never did.” Establishing the origins of such weapons has been difficult. In November, Russia used its
No phrase is more closely associated with the Trump administration’s North Korea strategy than “bloody nose.” The two words, captured in news articles and cited by people close to the administration, have quickly become shorthand for all manner of preemptive strikes designed to demonstrate American resolve and prevent Pyongyang from developing nuclear weapons that can hit the United States. There’s just one problem: Trump administration officials have insisted repeatedly — in classified briefings to Congress and in public testimony — that they’ve never said it, don’t like it and would never support it. “The phrase has never, ever been uttered by anyone in the White House,” said a senior administration official involved in Asia policy. Sen. James E. Risch (R-Idaho) echoed those sentiments last week at an international security conference in Munich: “There is no bloody nose policy. Nobody knows where it came from.” And yet the White House can’t shake it. The evocative phrase echoes the punchy, macho language President Trump has employed to threaten to “totally destroy” North Korea and taunt its leader Kim Jong Un as “Little Rocket Man” on Twitter. The president has made clear from his first days in office that neutralizing the North Korea threat is his top national security priority. More recently the idea of a “bloody nose strike” has sparked worries in Washington and Seoul that a war may be imminent — even as the North Koreans on February 25 indicated that they were open to talks with the Trump administration. Foreign diplomats and Beltway analysts are comparing notes from meetings with senior Trump officials to figure out how serious the White House is about an attack. On February 23, Trump probably added to their fears. “If the sanctions don’t work, we’ll have to go to phase 2,” the president said ominously at a news conference with Australia’s prime minister. “Phase 2 may be a very rough thing. It may be very, very unfortunate for the world.” In a sign of the White House’s conflicting opinions on North Korea, White House aides privately express frustration that the bloody nose phrase has caught on so widely and so quickly. Such talk “should have petered out,” the administration official said. The White House, he cautioned, does “not want to give the impression of a gathering snowball toward [military] conflict.” Theories abound to explain the phrase’s staying power. Some foreign policy experts insist that the White House denials are simply disingenuous. “They are playing semantics here,” said Thomas Wright, a foreign relations analyst at the Brookings Institution. Even as the Trump administration denies a pinprick strike designed to bloody North Korea’s nose, Wright said, it still seems to view preventive military strikes on the country’s nuclear program — and the catastrophic response from Pyongyang that might ensue — as a legitimate option. Others said that the Trump administration’s strategy, which it describes as “maximum pressure and engagement,” is so murky that it is barely distinguishable from those of previous presidents. “The administration is trying to pretend that it’s different,” said Jeffrey Lewis, an arms control expert at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies. “If you take them at their word...[all] you are left with is this bellicose language stuff.” “Bloody nose” seems to better capture what’s going on in Trump’s head than the actual words of senior administration officials. The phrase is on its way to joining the pantheon of other memorable foreign policy idioms that have set expectations for military action and — for better or worse — come to define presidential policies. Senior Trump administration officials were so bothered by the “bloody nose” phrase earlier this year that they set out to trace its origins. The first usage seems to have been in the headline of a December 20 article in the Daily Telegraph. The idea, according to one former U.S. official cited in the Telegraph article, was to “punch the North Koreans in the nose” to get Kim’s attention. Around the same time foreign policy experts in Washington were growing increasingly alarmed at the prospect of a preventive U.S. strike. In a scathing two-page memo to colleagues, John J. Hamre, a former top Pentagon official and president of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, reported that a senior Trump administration official told him, “We are running out of time on North Korea.” Hamre, who had worked on the North Korea problem during the Clinton administration, insisted that such talk was reckless. “We are talking like frightened little rabbits, afraid of the lone wolf in the forest,” he
The domestically produced H-2A rocket is a workhorse, having had 32 consecutive successful launches, which equates to a
success rate of 97.4 percent. “I can’t disclose the details because this would reveal our capabilities,” Kinomura Kenichi, head of the Cabinet Satellite Intelligence Center, said at a press conference after the launch. The government believes revealing specifics about the satellite’s abilities would have a major impact on national defense. According to materials released by the government, its reconnaissance satellites orbit the Earth at altitudes ranging from several hundred to 1,000 kilometers. Commercial satellites have resolutions of up to several dozen centimeters — enough to recognize the movements of people and vehicles. Intelligence satellites are thought to have at least that level of resolution. The main role of the reconnaissance satellites is to monitor military and other facilities in North Korea, which is continuing with its nuclear and missile development. According to several government sources, satellites have captured signs of impending launches before North Korean ballistic missiles were fired. The signs included missiles being transported, installed on launch platforms and fueled. A figure thought to be Kim Jong Un, chairman of the Workers’ Party of Korea, was even observed traveling to observe a launch. These images are defense secrets and carefully managed by the Cabinet Satellite Intelligence Center. “The more eyes we have, the better our surveillance net is,” a senior government official said about the latest launch. North Korea has recently taken steps to avoid satellite surveillance, such as covering its operations and using movable launch pads. Only being able to take infrequent photographs makes it difficult to track the movements of launch pads. “We can’t call our surveillance system sufficient,” a senior Cabinet Secretariat official said. The latest launch brings the number of Japan’s reconnaissance satellites to seven. Rather than strengthening the surveillance system, the goal is to maintain a four-satellite system that can obtain more than a single image per day. This is because three of the seven satellites have surpassed their five-year limits and will soon cease to operate. The government’s 2015 basic plan for space set a goal of building a 10-satellite system. That target, however, was vague, only saying “by fiscal 2025 or later.” The government’s space-related initial budget is about ¥300 billion per year, of which about ¥60 billion goes toward reconnaissance satellites. This is much less than the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s annual budget of about ¥2 trillion. “It’s difficult to secure enough funding,” a senior Defense Ministry official said. A reconnaissance satellite took images of the January eruption of Mt. Kusatsushirane. The government published the images, modified for reasons such as reducing their resolution, on the Cabinet Secretariat website. The government hopes to win public understanding of the satellite launches by expanding their activities beyond national security. The government has started researching sensor technology, but it is said that an early warning satellite would require at least ¥1 trillion for operations and other costs. Hiroaki Fukue, former commander of the Air Defense Command of the Air Self-Defense Force, said, “Instead of cutting other defense budgets, the priority should be working with the United States.” To fill the holes in its reconnaissance satellite capabilities, the Defense Ministry is working toward using images obtained from commercial satellites and technology that detects radio waves emitted by missiles. “It’s important to have a comprehensive, integrated surveillance system that includes not only satellites, but radio waves, information from allied nations, human intelligence and other sources,” a senior Self-Defense Forces official said. (Tanikawa Kojiro and Ikeda Keita, “Satellite to Keep Tabs on N. Korea,” Yomiuri Shimbun, February 28, 2018)

President Moon Jae-in of South Korea told President Trump that he planned to send a special envoy to North Korea as part of his effort to broker talks between the United States and the North on ending its nuclear weapons program. President Moon’s office said he talked with Trump on the phone today to discuss joint strategies, based upon the discussions Moon and his aides have held with senior North Korean officials who visited the South last month to attend the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympics in Pyeongchang. “The two heads of state agreed to keep the momentum in South-North Korean dialogue and continue efforts to use it to lead to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” Moon’s office said in a statement. “To that end, President Moon notified President Trump that his government will soon send a special envoy to the North to confirm the discussions it has held with the high-level North Korean delegates.” (Choe Sang-hun, “South Korea Says It Will Send Envoy to the North,” New York Times, March 2, 2018, p. A-7)
DPRK FoMin Institute for American Studies Policy Research director’s press statement: “On February 23, the Trump group announced that the United States would enforce sanctions against 56 designations in total - 27 shipping and trading companies, 28 vessels and 1 individual - of the DPRK and other countries combined, under the pretext of prohibiting so-called sanctions evasion practices and illegal means used to facilitate ship-to-ship transfer of coal and fuel, and it ridiculously trumpeted that this would be "the largest sanctions ever imposed on the DPRK." The anti-DPRK sanctions and pressure by the Trump group can be described as "harshest" ever seen in history in light of its vicious and reactionary nature. The frequency of sanctions and the non-exhaustive list of sanctions designations speak themselves. According to the initial estimation, the Trump group, since in office, announced sanctions 12 times through Treasury Department and State Department targeting 65 individuals, 56 entities and 45 vessels of the DPRK, and 32 entities, 12 individuals and 9 vessels of other countries allegedly involved in transactions with the DPRK; 219 designations in total. Compared with previous U.S. administrations, the Obama administration announced 217 sanctions designations on 28 occasions during 8 years in office, and the Bush administration 11 designations on 2 occasions during 8 years in office. The U.S. secretary of Treasury has gone so mad at imposing "sanctions" on our country that he even boasted recently that half of over 450 rounds of sanctions enforced against Pyongyang since 2005 were enacted last year. The vicious nature of sanctions is vividly manifested in an indiscriminate expansion of its scope. On February 18, 2016, the Obama administration cooked up "North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act 2016" and, under the pretext of cutting off flow of revenue for program of nuclear weapons and rockets, sanctioned entities of our Party and power authority and enforced the ban on our normal economic and trading transactions in the areas of, inter alia, earth and stone, transportation, mining, energy and finance, driven by the preposterous fabrications about sort of development and proliferation of WMD, cyber-attack, human rights abuse, drug trafficking, counterfeiting and money laundering. It even sanctioned the entities and individuals of other countries involved in transactions with the DPRK. However, the Trump administration, not satisfied with the above, unveiled "Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act" on August 2, 2017 and thus, openly exposed its heinous intention to expand the scope of sanctions to all legitimate areas of economy and trade, aimed at completely cutting off source of revenue in foreign currency and stifling us economically. These facts clearly exhibit the magnitude and height of the Trump group's desperate attempt to isolate and stifle us economically and to disintegrate our socialist system chosen by our people. The international society has now again eye-witnessed the viciousness and unfairness of sanctions pursued by the Trump group. The unilateral sanctions imposed by the Trump group, pursuant to its domestic law, upon the DPRK and other countries involved in transactions with the former constitute a wanton infringement upon sovereignty and an open violation of the universally recognized international laws which underline that in no case can a sovereign state be an object of jurisdiction of other countries. Referring to the latest "unilateral sanctions" announced by the Trump group, the neighboring countries including China and Russia and even the American press are expressing increased apprehension and denunciation, arguing that the Trump group is again driving the situation on the Korean peninsula to the brink of a nuclear war by resorting to sanctions and pressure, without having clear strategy on the DPRK. Trump is attempting to frighten us by making wild remarks that if the latest sanctions, the core of which is to completely block the DPRK’s maritime transactions with other countries, do not work, "very rough phase 2" will be operated. But such wild remarks of the Trump group would not work on us, and we have prepared our own formula to counter it. It is really miserable to see that the Trump group clings frenziedly to the sanctions and pressure, still harboring an illusion that they would work on us. The U.S. should bear in mind that if America becomes more desperate, it will only make stronger our faith and determination to rise high on the strength of self-development. The U.S. should be well advised to squarely look at the strategic position of our state with their eyes wide-open and contemplate now what will be a strategic and wise choice to better serve the America's interests.” (KCNA, “Statement of Policy Research Director at Institute for American Studies of DPRK Foreign Ministry,” March 1, 2018)
with knowledge of the assessment. Some of the progress has been made during a relative thaw in tensions around the Winter Olympics which ended last weekend in South Korea. The official did point out that the regime is still struggling with the technical challenge of ensuring a warhead can re-enter the earth's atmosphere. This latest assessment is part an effort to continue to calculate what improvements North Korea might have been able to quietly achieve since November, when it last launched an intercontinental ballistic missile. The U.S. believes the North Koreans have been working to improve their rocket engines, mobile missile launchers, and nuclear warhead production. A key unknown is to what extent North Korea may be able to go into large scale production of missile components rather than just the individual test missiles launched so far. (Barbara Starr, “U.S. Official Says North Korea Is Making Progress on Missile Guidance,” CNN, March 2, 2018)

China delayed a U.S. request for a United Nations Security Council committee to blacklist 33 ships, 27 shipping companies, and a Taiwan man for violating international sanctions on North Korea, diplomats said on Friday. The United States submitted the request a week ago, a move it says is “aimed at shutting down North Korea’s illicit maritime smuggling activities to obtain oil and sell coal.” (Michelle Nichols, “At U.N., China Delays U.S. Bid to Blacklist Ships, Companies over North Korea,” Reuters, March 2, 2018)

Washington said the North Korean government had used chemical weapons in violation of international laws in a notice posted on the U.S. government’s Federal Register. The notice was added by the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation, though it did not give further details on how Washington had arrived at the conclusion. “The United States Government has determined that the Government of North Korea has used chemical weapons in violation of international law or lethal chemical weapons against its own nationals,” the notice reads. The notice also included five sanctions which would typically accompany such an announcement, including cutting foreign and financial aid, ending military support and export restrictions on sensitive goods. But the sanctions are likely symbolic as the U.S. has already imposed much stricter measures on North Korea via a succession of Presidential Executive Orders and Department of Treasury designations. (Leo Byrnes, “State Department Says N. Korea Has Used Chemical Weapons,” NKNews, March 2, 2018)

The Trump administration is working on an expanded U.S. missile defense policy that would address certain threats from Russia and China, departing from a previous strategy that focused nearly exclusively on rogue nations such as North Korea and Iran. The new policy will still call for bolstered technology against rogue states, with a particular focus on weapons to intercept North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s missiles. But it will also mention the need to consider missile threats from Russia and China, according to people familiar with the review. The document remains in a draft form and could change before its tentative release late this month. The Pentagon so far sees “anything in the regional context as fair game,” said the official, who like others spoke on the condition of anonymity because the policy hasn’t been finalized. U.S. generals are advocating extensive investments in sensor technology. The first step toward better defenses, they say, would be to know in advance when the faster, more nimble missiles are coming. Above all, the new policy is likely to focus heavily on ways to defend the United States against North Korea that go beyond the silo-based interceptors the U.S. military currently operates. One possibility is what’s known as “left of launch” or “missile defeat”—military parlance for destroying a missile before it takes off. To successfully attack a mobile missile before launch, though, the U.S. military would need sufficient intelligence and sensors to track the target and convey its location, in addition to weapons that could eliminate the missile quickly. The Pentagon will also elaborate on possible ways to intercept North Korean missiles in their “boost phase,” or during their ascent. The primary options include shooting them with interceptors fastened to drones or fighter jets, zapping them with solid-state lasers or striking them from weapons in space. Each option comes with technological challenges the Pentagon has yet to solve. A number of lawmakers have been pressing the Pentagon to deploy ground-based interceptors at a new missile site closer to the East Coast — which theoretically would allow the military to take a second shot at a missile coming
from North Korea and a first shot at a missile from Iran. The military has put three bases in New York, Ohio and Michigan on the shortlist to house the theoretical new site. Congress has asked the Pentagon to select among the three within 60 days of releasing the new policy. (Paul Sonne, “Shift in Missile Defense Policy,” Washington Post, March 3, 2018, p. A-1)

For months, the Trump administration had considered cutting off North Korea’s access to world banking by cracking down on Chinese banks believed to have enabled the regime to conduct international transactions. Some influential members of Congress have urged a move against major Chinese banks, arguing that it would compel the Chinese to escalate their efforts to detect and block financial transactions made by the North Korean regime. The ability of the regime to conduct international banking and access foreign currency is considered essential to the financing of its weapons programs. The danger is that punishing a major Chinese bank could not only anger China but also run the risk of precipitating worldwide financial woes. Some of the Chinese banks are among the world’s largest — bigger than the U.S. banks deemed “too big to fail” — and damaging them with sanctions could have far-reaching effects on the world economy. “They’re in a bind,” said Peter Harrell, a former State Department official who worked on sanctions in the Obama administration and is an adjunct senior fellow at the Center for New American Security. “I have been sympathetic to the strategy the Trump administration has taken over the last year. They have needed to move carefully. There could be economic reverberations. But I think they’re to the point where they need to push China harder.” Some influential Democrats and Republicans agree. The chair and a member of a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee sent a letter to the administration in August with the names of 12 large Chinese banks that, according to a Justice Department filing, had provided bank accounts for a company conducting illicit trade with North Korea. “We must target major Chinese banks doing business with North Korea, such as China Merchants Bank and even big state-owned banks like the Agricultural Bank of China,” House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Edward R. Royce (R-Calif.) said in September. “China’s biggest banks, even state-owned banks, still do business in North Korea. That’s got to end completely.” Rep. Brad Sherman (D-Calif.), the co-author of the letter to the administration, also urged action. “The national security people at Treasury there are ready to go — they have aggressive sanctions ready to go against major Chinese banks,” Sherman said this week. In a statement, the Treasury Department, which imposes such sanctions, said: “The U.S. is committed to relentlessly identifying and designating entities who help North Korea evade sanctions, regardless of the country where the individual, entity, or vessel is located, including those associated with China and Russia.” While it is not known which foreign financial institutions may be under review by the United States, investigations by the Justice Department, the United Nations and prosecutors in Singapore have reported that several Chinese banks have provided services to North Korean front companies. Those foreign bank accounts are essential to the regime because they enable it to make international deals and gain access to foreign currency. Much of North Korea’s trade is conducted in dollars and other foreign currencies because their suppliers do not want North Korean won. So far, however, efforts to cut off North Korea’s access to foreign banks have foundered, in large part because banks around the world have failed to screen out the North Korean front companies. Countries “were found to be exerting insufficient scrutiny on the activities of DPRK bank representatives resident in, or moving through, their territory,” according to an upcoming U.N. report. The existing financial sanctions against North Korea, it says, are “systematically” being undermined. Punishing a major Chinese bank to encourage heightened vigilance, however, could backfire on the United States, some say. The failure of a large Chinese bank could have the same kind of tumultuous economic consequences that the failure of Lehman Brothers, the investment bank, had during the Great Recession. “The implosion of one of the world’s largest financial institutions would send shock waves through the international financial system and trigger large and unpredictable fallout,” former acting treasury secretary Adam Szubin told Congress last year. The result, as some see it, is a dangerous stalemate. “For 20 years, we’ve had the same policy toward North Korea, and during that time, they’ve gotten to a position of being able to destroy all of Los Angeles,” Sherman said. Yet “Wall Street is dead-set opposed to calling into question our trade relationship with China.” Administration officials have said they are focused on banking that benefits the regime — whether in China or anywhere else. Banks in Europe and elsewhere also have allowed North Koreans to conduct banking, according to U.N.
President Donald Trump said late today that “we will be meeting” with North Korea during a speech at the annual Gridiron Dinner in Washington, indicating that negotiations about a potential dialogue between the two countries continue to advance. “I won't rule out direct talks with Kim Jong Un, I just won't. As far as the risk of dealing with a madman is concerned, that’s his problem not mine,” Trump told the more than 600 attendees during his 35-minute address at the Renaissance Washington Hotel on Saturday. “By the way a couple days ago they said we would like to talk, and I said, so would we, but you have to de-nuke, you have to de-nuke. So let’s see what happens … Maybe positive things are happening. I hope that’s true … We will be meeting and we’ll see if anything positive happens.” The White House did not immediately respond to a query as to whether the president was joking or not. (Brent D. Griffiths, “Trump Pokes Fun – and Makes News – at Gridiron Dinner,” Politico, March 4, 2018)

President Moon Jae-in named his special envoy to North Korea as speculations rise over his plans for facilitating US-North Korea talks. Moon named National Security Council chief Chung Eui-yong as his special envoy to North Korea. Chung is to lead a five-member delegation that leaves for Pyongyang on a two-day schedule tomorrow. Along with Chung, Suh Hoon, chief of the National Intelligence Service. Vice Minister of Unification Chun Hae-sung, senior National Intelligence Service Director Kim Sang-gyun, and Yun Kun-young, a Cheong Wa Dae official, are to visit the North as part of the delegation. The high-level officials are also to be accompanied by five working-level officials, Cheong Wa Dae said. “The special envoy delegation will stay in Pyongyang for two days, and hold discussions on establishing peace on the Korean Peninsula and improving inter-Korean relations with high-level North Korean officials,” said Yoon Young-chan, senior secretary for public relations. According to Yoon, the South Korean delegation is to leave for North Korea on a chartered flight that is to take the West Sea route into North Korea. Yoon added that the special envoy’s planned visit to the North is a response to Kim Yo-jong’s visit to the South last month. (Choi He-suk, “Moon Taps National Security Adviser to Head Delegation to N.K.,” Korea Herald, March 4, 2018)

DPRK FoMin spokesperson answer to a question put by KCNA on March 3 “as regards the attitude of the United States taken after we have stated our intention for DPRK-U.S. dialogue: Recently, with regard to the DPRK-U.S. dialogue, the U.S. is taking preposterous action by continuing to trumpet an insistence that it will not have dialogue unless a right condition is met and that it will keep watching if we have intention to abandon nuclear weapons and missiles and so on. The U.S., that was terrified at the rapid development of our nuclear force and has continued to knock the door of dialogue, now feigns an indifference and advances this or that precondition. Not being content with it, it insists that it will have dialogue only for making the DPRK abandon nuclear weapons and persist in "maximum pressure" until complete denuclearization is realized. This is really more than ridiculous. Thanks to our noble love for the nation and great determination to terminate confrontation with fellow countrymen and achieve peace on the Korean peninsula, the north and the south together have ensured successful holding of Pyeongchang Winter Olympics and are now opening a new chapter of reconciliation and cooperation. Out of the desire of our nation and international society aspiring after peace, we have clarified our position that a dialogue with the U.S. will be possible. It is the consistent and principled position of the DPRK to resolve issues in a diplomatic and peaceful way through dialogue and negotiation. The dialogue we desire is the one designed to discuss and resolve
the issues of mutual concern on an equal footing between states. In decades-long history of the DPRK-U.S. talks, there had been no case at all where we sat with the U.S. on any precondition, and this will be the case in future, too. The U.S. attitude shown after we clarified our intention for DPRK-U.S. dialogue compels us to only think that the U.S. is not interested in resuming the DPRK-U.S. dialogue. We have intention to resolve issues in a diplomatic and peaceful way through dialogue and negotiation, but we will neither beg for dialogue nor evade the military option claimed by the U.S. We have full capability and will to confront any option favored by the U.S. Whether peace desired by our nation and the rest of the world settles on the Korean peninsula or a situation that no one desires is developed in the vicious cycle of confrontation depends entirely on the attitude of the U.S. The U.S. should not misjudge our intention for dialogue.” (KCNA, “DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesman on DPRK-U.S. Dialogue,” March 3, 2018)

On an island in the Suez Canal, a towering AK-47 rifle, its muzzle and bayonet pointed skyward, symbolizes one of Egypt’s most enduring alliances. Decades ago, North Korea presented it to Egypt to commemorate the 1973 war against Israel, when North Korean pilots fought and died on the Egyptian side. But now the statue has come to signify another aspect of Egypt’s ties to North Korea: a furtive trade in illegal weapons that has upset President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi’s otherwise cozy relationship with the United States, set off a painful cut in military aid and drawn unremitting scrutiny from United Nations inspectors. Egypt has purchased North Korean weapons and allowed North Korean diplomats to use their Cairo embassy as a base for military sales across the region, American and United Nations officials say. Those transactions earned vital hard cash for North Korea, but they violated international sanctions and drew the ire of Egypt’s main military patron, the United States, which cut or suspended $291 million in military aid in August. Tensions may bubble up again in the coming weeks with the publication of a United Nations report that contains new information about the cargo of a rusty North Korean freighter intercepted off the coast of Egypt in 2016. The ship was carrying 30,000 rocket-propelled grenades worth an estimated $26 million. The report, due to be released this month, identifies the customer for the weapons as an arm of the Arab Organization for Industrialization, Egypt’s main state weapons conglomerate. Sisi heads the committee that oversees the group. Egypt has previously denied being the intended recipient of the weapons, or breaching international sanctions. In response to questions about the United Nations finding, the State Information Service said this past week: “The relevant Egyptian authorities have undertaken all the necessary measures in relation to the North Korean ship in full transparency and under the supervision” of United Nations officials. After the Trump administration slashed aid last summer, Egyptian officials said they were cutting military ties to North Korea, reducing the size of its Cairo embassy and monitoring the activities of North Korean diplomats. The relationship with North Korea is “limited to representation, and there is almost no existing economic or other areas of cooperation,” Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said at a news conference with Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson in Cairo last month. But that diplomatic representation, in an embassy that doubles as a regional arms dealership, is the problem, American officials have said. In addition, Washington worries that North Korea, a longtime supplier of ballistic missile technology to Egypt, is still supplying missile parts, said Andrea Berger, a North Korea specialist at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies. “Ballistic missile customers are the most concerning of North Korea’s partners and deserve the highest attention,” she said. “Egypt is one of those.” North Korea’s largest embassy in the Middle East, an elegant, three-story Victorian building with a rusty brass plate over the entrance, sits on a leafy street on an island in the Nile. Like those of many North Korean outposts, the duties of the Cairo embassy extend well beyond diplomacy. In Africa especially, North Korean diplomats have engaged in a wide variety of ruses and schemes to earn hard currency, United Nations investigators say. In South Africa and Mozambique, North Korean diplomats have been implicated in rhino poaching. In Namibia, North Koreans built giant statues and a munitions factory. In Angola, they trained the presidential guard in martial arts. In Egypt, their business is weapons. United Nations inspectors and North Korean defectors say the Cairo embassy has become a bustling arms bazaar for covert sales of North Korean missiles and cut-price Soviet-era military hardware across a band of North Africa and the Middle East. Shielded by diplomatic cover and front companies, North Korean officials have traveled to Sudan, which was then subject to an international trade embargo, to sell satellite-
guided missiles, according to records obtained by the United Nations. Others flew to Syria, where North Korea has supplied items that could be used in the production of chemical weapons. Inside the embassy, arms dealing goes right to the top. In November 2016, the United States and the United Nations sanctioned the ambassador, Pak Chun-il, describing him as an agent of North Korea’s largest arms company, the Korea Mining Development Trading Corporation. At least five other North Korean officials based in Egypt, employed by state security or various arms fronts, have been sanctioned. One of them, Kim Song-chol, traveled to Khartoum in 2013 as part of a $6.8 million deal for the sale of 180 missiles and missile parts to Sudan. According to this year’s sanctions report, Kim and another sanctioned official based in Cairo, Son Jong-hyok, continue to deal with Sudan’s state-controlled Military Industrial Corporation. “An arms dealer with a diplomatic passport is still an arms dealer,” Samantha Power, the United States ambassador to the United Nations, told the Security Council in 2016. For weeks in the summer of 2016, American intelligence had covertly tracked the Jie Shun, the ship filled with rocket-propelled grenades that has become a focus of Cairo’s ties to North Korea. As it neared the Suez Canal in August, according to a Western diplomat familiar with the case, the Americans warned the Egyptians it might be carrying contraband, effectively forcing them to intervene. The seizure was the largest interdiction of munitions since sanctions were imposed on North Korea in 2006 — a significant victory in the international effort, including an arms embargo and export restrictions, to force Kim Jong-un to abandon his nuclear weapons program. For the next three months, with the Jie Shun impounded at Ain Sokhna port, a diplomatic tug-of-war played out. The Americans wanted to send officials to inspect the dilapidated freighter and its illicit cargo. North Korea sent a diplomat to negotiate its release. The Egyptians refused both demands, but in November 2016 agreed to allow United Nations inspectors to board the ship. But by then, valuable information about the identity of the customer for the rockets, which had been hidden under mounds of iron ore, was missing. The North Korean crew had been sent home, which meant the inspectors could not interview them. But one piece of evidence remained, in the form of a name stenciled on the rocket crates: “Al Sakr Factory for Developed Industries (AOI),” Egypt’s principal missile research and development company and a subsidiary of its sprawling state weapons conglomerate, the Arab Organization for Industrialization. Mohamed Abdulrahman, the chairman of Al Sakr, did not respond to emailed questions about the shipment. In its statement, Egypt’s State Information Service said the measures taken by the country were “praised” by the United Nations’ sanctions committee, “which reiterated that the way Egypt dealt with this case is a model to be followed in similar situations.” The Jie Shun shipment pointed to an established smuggling route and an entrenched military-to-military trading relationship that American officials say has long been a conduit for ballistic missile technology. In the late 1990s, American officials worried that Egypt was trying to buy North Korea’s Nodong missile system, which has a range of about 800 miles. “We were sending démarches to the Egyptians to say, ‘Knock it off — we’re sending you hundreds of F-16s, and you don’t need that North Korean crap,’” said Sirrs, who was based in Cairo at the time and now lectures at the University of Montana. It is unclear if Egypt ever acquired the Nodong missiles. In 2013, a shipment of spare parts for Scud-B missiles, which have a shorter range than the Nodong, was intercepted in transit as it was shipped by air from the North Korean Embassy in Beijing to a military-controlled company in Cairo. The missile components had been labeled parts for fish-processing machinery. Egypt denied that the military company had ordered the Scud parts. Such missiles could strike Israel from deep inside Egyptian territory. They could also reach Ethiopia, with which Egypt has a simmering dispute over a new dam on the Nile. Egypt’s relationship with North Korea runs deep. President Hosni Mubarak was regularly feted in Pyongyang before his ouster in 2011. An Egyptian tycoon, Naguib Sawiris, built North Korea’s main cellphone network and invested in a bank there. Along with the AK-47 monument on the Suez Canal, North Korea built a large war museum in Cairo that is frequently visited by Egyptian schoolchildren. Egypt’s military leaders are reluctant to cut those ties and lose access to Soviet-era weapons and ballistic missile systems, analysts say, a posture bolstered by their reflexive distaste for appearing to bow to American pressure. They may feel that, based on past experience, American criticism will eventually abate. “They think they can evade the consequences,” said Andrew Miller of the Project on Middle East Democracy, who until last year worked on Egypt at the State Department. “That they are continuing to stonewall and obfuscate and pursue this course of action indicates they think they can get away with it, and whatever price will be imposed on
any connection to Togo among the ship’s owners or managers. Analysts say the Yu Yuan’s Chinese
respond to requests for comment delivered by email and text message. sanctions announced by the Trump administration last month. Company officials in China did not
as Chang An Shipping, which was among the Chine owned by Maple Source Shipping, both based in China. Both companies use the same office suite
which arrived Sept. following month by four different ships, three North Korean and the
according to maritime records and the U.N report. There would be seven such voyages over the
summer, there is no record of recent visits to Kholmsk U.N. report, due for relea
West African nation of Togo. There is no record of

The rusting seaport called Kholmsk is one of the sleepiest harbors in Russia’s Far East, a place
that sees more full moons than coal ships in a typical year. Yet for a few weeks late last summer,
this tiny port was chockablock with vessels hauling outlawed North Korean coal. At least four
ships of different flags showed up in August and September to dump North Korean anthracite onto
a pile near the harbor’s southern tip, maritime records show. Then, six other ships arrived to pick
up coal from the same spot and deliver it to foreign markets. Between the voyages, the harbor was
witness to a kind of magic trick: Illicit North Korean coal was transformed into Russian coal,
which can be legally sold anywhere. Some of it ended up in the most unexpected of places: South
Korea and Japan, two of Pyongyang’s main rivals. “They literally ‘laundered’ the coal,” said a
Western diplomat, speaking on the condition of anonymity to describe new details from a
confidential U.N. investigation of the incident. “It’s the same tactic criminals use to launder ill-
gotten cash.” Independent analysts say the movement of coal through Russia’s Kholmsk port last
year was remarkable, because of the timing — it came just as the U.N. Security Council imposed
new sanctions on the sale of North Korean coal — and because of the ruse’s elaborate,
multi-layered deceptions. “It’s a shell game that constantly changes,” said David Thompson, a
North Korea specialist and senior analyst at the Center for Advanced Defense Studies, a nonprofit
organization in Washington that tracks illicit networks. In the case of the Kholmsk affair, he said,
“you’re looking at adaptation taking place in real time.” Despite decades of economic isolation,
North Korea nearly always finds a way to get what it needs, because there are always companies
willing to take the risk, said Andrea Berger, a London-based specialist in proliferation networks
and export controls with the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Monterey, Calif.
“We spend so much of our time trying to put obstacles in the way of North Korea, and in making
the obstacles higher and wider,” Berger said, “but the North Koreans are simply very practiced at
getting around whatever we put in their path.” How North Korea managed to launder its coal in
Russia — and then sell it to two of its biggest adversaries — is essentially a tale of two ships. The
Togolese-flagged Yu Yuan and the Panamanian-flagged Sky Angel, both Chinese owned, were
among two separate sets of cargo vessels that passed in and out of Kholmsk harbor in late summer
and early fall of last year, carrying coal that at least partly originated in North Korean mines. A
chronology of the operation was pieced together by researchers from the Center for Advanced
Defense Studies, using a data system supplied by Windward, a private company that analyzes
ship-tracking data collected by satellites and at ports around the world. The essential narrative also
is contained in a confidential report by the United Nations Panel of Experts, a technical committee
appointed by the world body to investigate alleged sanctions-busting activity. The draft of the
U.N. report, due for release this month, was reviewed by the Washington Post. Before last
summer, there is no record of recent visits to Kholmsk by any of the ships involved. Indeed, no
North Korean cargo vessels of any kind are known to have docked there since at least 2015. The
interest in the obscure port appears to have begun in early August, just as the U.N. Security
Council was meeting to consider new sanctions punishing North Korea after its July test of a new
intercontinental ballistic missile capable of striking the United States. U.N. sanctions banning all
exports of North Korean coal were formally approved Aug. 5. That week, two North Korean-
flagged ships entered Kholmsk to deposit coal in an outdoor bin near the harbor entrance,
according to maritime records and the U.N report. There would be seven such voyages over the
following month by four different ships, three North Korean and the Chinese-owned Yu Yuan,
which arrived Sept. 9. The 305-foot-long Yu Yuan is managed by Rich Mountain Trading and is
owned by Maple Source Shipping, both based in China. Both companies use the same office suite
as Chang An Shipping, which was among the Chinese companies listed in the North Korean
sanctions announced by the Trump administration last month. Company officials in China did not
respond to requests for comment delivered by email and text message. While the Yu Yuan is
Chinese-owned, it sailed under the flag of the West African nation of Togo. There is no record of
any connection to Togo among the ship’s owners or managers. Analysts say the Yu Yuan’s
operators appear to have adopted the common practice of registering the vessel under a “flag of convenience,” which in some cases allows ship owners to enjoy advantages in taxes, fees and labor rules. Commercial shipping data obtained by the Center for Advanced Defense Studies — commonly known by its acronym C4ADS — show the Yu Yuan leaving northeast China’s Wangji Bay in early August and traveling around the Korean Peninsula into the Sea of Japan. Then, on August 6, as the vessel was steaming north along the South Korean coast, its transponder signal appears to vanish from the maritime record. There is no indication of its whereabouts until August 17, when its transponder signal reappears at Nahodka, a port about 100 miles from Vladivostok in Russia’s Far East, the data shows. The temporary silencing of the transponder is a common practice among North Korean-flagged vessels moving sensitive cargoes. Indeed, at least two of the other ships that visited Kholmsk in August and September also appear to have stopped broadcasting their signals for several days before arriving at the Russian port, maritime records show. What the Yu Yuan was doing during those 11 days — and what cargo it carried — might have remained a mystery, except that a satellite photographed the vessel in mid-August. The image, provided to U.N. investigators and included in their confidential report, shows the Yu Yuan docked at the coal terminal in the port city of Wonsan on North Korea’s east coast. The evidence from the photograph is buttressed by a second source: Harbor master records from port authorities in Nahodka. The Russian-language documents, also obtained by C4ADS, record the arrival of the Yu Yuan, a vessel reported to have traveled from Wonsan with a cargo of coal. The Yu Yuan did not discharge its cargo in Nahodka. In fact, it did not enter the harbor but remained anchored just beyond the sea wall, the Russian port documents show. A common practice among contraband runners is to linger outside a port terminal for several days — sometimes called “loitering” — to throw investigators off their trail, said Thompson, the C4ADS analyst. While the Yu Yuan crew’s intentions can’t be deduced from the maritime record, anyone examining the ship’s movements might conclude that the Yu Yuan had docked at Nahodka and perhaps received its cargo there. Neither was true. “It sat anchored outside Nahodka for three days,” said Thompson, citing the Russian records. Then it left, he said, “headed for Kholmsk.” The rest of the Yu Yuan’s voyage was relatively straightforward. On September 2, transponder records show, the cargo vessel arrived in Kholmsk, a town of 30,000 people on Sakhalin island. A second satellite photo shows the Yu Yuan berthed at Kholmsk’s coal terminal. Port records would later reveal that the Yu Yuan reduced its draft — a measure of a ship’s weight determined by how low it sits in the water — by about 10 feet, indicating an offloading of cargo at the Russian port. Its decks were empty, documents show, when the ship briefly returned to Nahodka a few days later to pick up a load of timber before resuming its southward trek along the Korean Peninsula. Separately, on September 21, just over two weeks after the Yu Yuan’s visit, the cargo ship Sky Angel arrived at Kholmsk and docked at the same coal terminal, maritime records show. The Sky Angel left Kholmsk harbor on September 26 after reporting to harbor officials an increase in its draft almost identical to the reduction in the Yu Yuan’s — about 10 feet. On October 2, it discharged its coal at Incheon, South Korea’s bustling harbor a few miles west of the capital city of Seoul. A customs certificate shown to the Washington Post states only that the coal originated in Kholmsk. The pattern was repeated by five other ships that picked up coal from Kholmsk between August and October and delivered it to South Korea or, in one instance, to Rumoi, Japan. None of the ships had previously visited Kholmsk in at least two years, shipping records show. Investigators say the Sky Angel broke no laws in hauling coal from a Russian port to Incheon, although South Korean officials might have viewed the transaction differently if they had known of the coal’s true origins. “You could argue that some of the coal at the Kholmsk terminal was of Russian origin,” said the Western diplomat briefed on the evidence, “but once you’re dumping North Korean coal into that pile, does it make a difference? Especially if you’re dropping off a scoop of North Korean coal and then picking up an equivalent scoop a few days later?” Shipping records shed no light on what is perhaps the biggest remaining mystery: whether, and how, the transactions were coordinated. Who, or what, caused so many ships to converge on an obscure port in Russia around the same time, to move a few thousand tons of coal that could no longer be sold legitimately on the open market? “Who is facilitating the transactions? How high up does it go?” said Thompson, the North Korea analyst. “What is without doubt is the fact that this is North Korean coal and that obfuscation tactics are being used to get around very specific restrictions.” “The most egregious thing,” he added, “is that in spite of everything we’re doing, the coal ends up in the very places
North Korean leader Kim Jong-un met South Korean President Moon Jae-in's special envoys, who are visiting Pyongyang on a mission to broker denuclearization talks between the North and the United States, Seoul's presidential office Cheong Wa Dae said. "Chairman Kim Jong-un is currently hosting a dinner for the special envoys," Kim Eui-kyeom, a Cheong Wa Dae spokesman, told a press briefing. It was the first time the reclusive North Korean leader had met South Korean officials. The delegation, headed by the chief of the presidential National Security Office, Chung Eui-yong, was said to be carrying a letter from the South Korean president for the North Korean leader. (Yonhap, “N. Korean Leader Meets with S. Korean Envoys: Cheong Wa Dae,” March 5, 2018) South Korea seeks to persuade North Korea to resume denuclearization dialogue with the United States and the international community, the chief of a South Korean delegation to the North said of his mission, hours before the five-member team left for the reclusive state. "Most of all, I will deliver President Moon Jae-in's sincere and firm resolve to maintain the dialogue and improvement in relations between the South and the North, which were fostered on the occasion of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula," Chung Eui-yong told a press briefing just hours before his departure. "In addition, I plan to hold in-depth discussions on various ways to continue talks between not only the South and the North, but also the North and the United States and the international community," Chung said. (Yonhap, “Moon’s Envoy Says Trip Aimed at Facilitating U.S.-N.K. Denuclearization Talks,” March 5, 2018)

UN Panel of Experts Report: “The Hwasong-12 and the first stage of the Hwasong-14 appear to be powered by the same liquid-fuel engine with four auxiliary engines tested on 18 March 2017 at the Sohae engine test pad (figure III). Kim Jong Un again supervised the test, which was described as that of a new “high-thrust engine.” Given the unreliability of the Hwasong-10 engine, this new engine was a step-change in allowing the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to rapidly achieve a reliable intermediate-range ballistic missile and intercontinental ballistic missile capability. According to a Member State, this engine could have been derived from the Soviet-era RD-250, a twin-combustion chamber engine. The RD-250 was designed by the “Scientific and Production Association Energomash” (now in the Russian Federation), which in 1965 transferred the design documentation required for serial production to the Yuzhnoye State Design Office and the Yuzhmash Production Association (both now in Ukraine). Ukraine confirmed to the Panel that it was highly likely that the engine of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea contained separate components of this engine and used the same propellant components (nitrogen tetroxide or NTO and unsymmetrical dimethylhydrazine or UDMH). According to information provided to the Panel by the United States of America, “the U.S. Intelligence Community has publicly stated that ‘We have intelligence to suggest that North Korea is not reliant on imports of engines. Instead we judge they have the ability to produce the engines themselves.’” Ukraine informed the Panel that all RD-250 engines suitable for flight use were delivered to the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and, later, the Russian Federation as part of missiles or launch vehicles. The production of RD-250 engines ceased in 1991 and the production line was dismantled in 1994. Ukraine stated that Yuzhnoye and Yuzhmash had “never undertaken attempts, signed contracts or entered into relationship with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.” Ukraine also informed the Panel that “design, manufacturing and other documentation for production of missile technology and components is reliably stored in specially equipped premises.” According to Yuzhnoye and Yuzhmash experts, it is “impossible to modernize or create a new engine based on the existing one within two years without design and technological support.” Franz Klintzevich, first Deputy Chair of the Defense and Security Committee of the Federation Council, Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, asserted that “the cooperation between the Ukrainian specialists and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea had been ongoing for years.” The Panel contacted the Russian Federation to request support for this claim along with the names and passport information of the individuals involved, but did not receive a reply. For its part, Ukraine informed the Panel that “it was continuously tracking employees of aerospace industry companies travelling abroad.” …The Panel investigated more
than 30 cases of exports of coal from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to at least four Member States in South-East Asia, including several cases that involved the trans-shipment of coal via Russian Far Eastern ports. In so doing, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea made use of a combination of multiple evasion techniques, routes and deceptive shipping tactics, including manipulation of the Automatic Identification System, loitering, voyage deviations and fraudulent documentation. The Panel also investigated cases of ship-to-ship transfers of petroleum products in violation of paragraphs 11 and 14 of resolution 2375 (2017) and found that the network behind the vessels was primarily based in Taiwan Province of China while the affiliated companies were registered in the Marshall Islands and the British Virgin Islands, with ships flagged in Dominica, Hong Kong, China, Panama and Sierra Leone. The Panel is also investigating several multinational oil companies for their roles in the supply chain of petroleum products transferred to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea exported a total of $62,184,815 in iron and steel (HS code 72) between January and September 2017 to the following countries: Barbados, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Chile, China, Costa Rica, El Salvador, India, Ireland, Mexico, Pakistan, the Philippines and the Russian Federation. All exports after 4 September 2017 violated paragraph 8 of resolution 2371 (2017), while those before 4 September 2017 violated paragraph 26 of resolution 2321 (2016) unless an exemption was made under paragraph 26(c) of the same resolution. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea exported a total of $10,005,909 in iron and steel products (HS code 73) to China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ghana, India, Mexico, Mozambique, Nicaragua, the Philippines, the Russian Federation and Thailand between January and September 2017. All exports prior to 4 September 2017 constituted a violation of paragraph 26 of resolution 2321 (2016) unless an exemption was made under paragraph 26(c). All exports thereafter constituted violations of paragraph 8 of resolution 2371 (2017). The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea exported a total of $373,926 in copper (HS code 74) to India and Mexico between January and September 2017 in violation of paragraph 28 of resolution 2321 (2016). The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea exported $100,197 and 545,742 kg of copper, including copper ores and concentrates (2,603) in January and February 2017 to China in violation of paragraph 28 of resolution 2321 (2016). No imports were reported between March and September 2017. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea exported a total of $526,018 in zinc (HS 79) to India in January 2017 in violation of paragraph 28 of resolution 2321 (2016). No imports were reported between February and September 2017. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea exported a total of $680,697 and 2,415 metric tons of zinc ore to China between January and March 2017 in violation of paragraph 28 of resolution 2321 (2016). No imports were reported between April and September 2017. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea exported a total of $42,000 in nickel in January 2017 to China in violation of paragraph 28 of resolution 2321 (2016). No imports were reported between February and September 2017. According to Member State reports to the Committee, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea exported a total of $413,555,897.24 in coal (HS code 2701) between January and September 2017, which exceeded by $12,685,879.24 the cap of $400,870,018 specified in paragraph 26(b) of resolution 2321 (2016). However, the section below includes at least 15 cases of deliveries of coal from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea prior to 5 August 2017 that were not reported to the Committee as required by the resolutions. In addition to the above, the Panel investigated more than 30 shipments of coal from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea between January and November 2017 to ports, including in China, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and Viet Nam. Detailed information on all of the shipments is contained in two tables (see annex 5-1). The tables are broken down into the coal shipments delivered between January and 4 August 2017 and those delivered after 5 August 2017, the date on which resolution 2371 (2017), which introduced a full coal ban, was adopted (see annex 5-2). With regard to the table of shipments to China, Malaysia, the Russian Federation and Viet Nam prior to 5 August 2017, the contents of only one shipment were reported to the Committee, by Malaysia. All of the other shipments violated paragraph 26 of resolution 2321 (2016) requiring Member States to report them. In the majority of cases, this was due to the fact that falsified paperwork accompanying the coal claimed its origin as countries other than the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. For that reason, the above calculations of coal from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, which has been exported in excess of the cap, do not present a complete picture. All of the shipments listed in the table as having been delivered after...
the adoption of resolution 2371 (2017) to China, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and Viet Nam would constitute a violation of the resolutions, if confirmed. While the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea also attempted to make a delivery to Thailand in March, the contract was cancelled and the vessel Tai An subsequently rerouted to Vung Tau, Viet Nam. In multiple cases, accompanying paperwork indicated origins other than the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, including the Russian Federation and China. ... The network of foreign traders responsible for violations of the coal ban operates through numerous front companies registered in multiple jurisdictions, some of which the Panel has previously investigated. Front companies are registered in Australia, the British Virgin Islands, the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong, the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Seychelles and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, while they are physically based in different countries and areas, including Australia, the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan Province of China and Singapore. Maison Trading Ltd, which shipped at least four consignments ... is a front company for Dandong Chengtai Trading Co., Ltd (a.k.a. Dandong Zhicheng Metallic Material Co., Ltd), prosecuted by a Member State for money-laundering. Brigit Australia, an Australian-registered property developer, was contracted to ship coal from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to Viet Nam. While the shipping documents claimed Nakhodka as the origin, the vessel never docked there (confirmed by the Russian Federation). According to Australia, it is investigating the company and its director, Livia Wang. Another shipper of coal from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to Viet Nam, a Swedish company, falsely listed the Russian Federation as the origin. The origin was also falsely certified by a company based in Taiwan Province of China. In investigating the above-mentioned coal shipments, the Panel found extensive use of a combination of multiple evasion tactics, including indirect routes, detours, loitering, false documentation, trans-shipment through third countries and manipulation of Automatic Identification System signals and destinations/estimated times of arrival, as well as changes to the class, length and draft of the vessels. These are used to obfuscate actual routes, conceal port calls and give the impression that the coal was loaded in ports other than in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. The consistency and similarity of the tactics suggest that they are part of a centralized strategy on the part of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to evade the commodities ban, especially given that they were also employed in the case of the designated Jie Shun. Route detours almost always involved manipulating Automatic Identification System transmissions while loading coal in ports of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea before rejoining the original route and reactivating the Automatic Identification System in time for delivery. For example, the Fijian-flagged Zhi Kun 7 deviated from its stated destination, Posyet, Russian Federation, on 9 April 2017, turning off its Automatic Identification System to load coal in Wonsan, then rejoining its original voyage, reactivating the Automatic Identification System and entering Nakhodka port on 14 April (figure VII). While in Nakhodka until 17 May, the vessel changed its identity on 11 May 2017 before discharging its coal on 19 May. On its return voyage, the vessel loaded again in Chongjin on 28 May, using the same route deviation tactic, delivering the coal to Nanjing on 7 June 2017. An example of an almost two-week voyage deviation was the delivery of coal by the Petrel 8 to Bayuquan, with a Nakhodka decoy port visit. On 19 July 2017, as it was sailing east out of Bayuquan, it indicated a Nakhodka destination. En route, it switched off its Automatic Identification System and made a deviation to load coal in Taean (near Nampo) on 26 July. Then it rejoined its voyage on 27 July, switched on its Automatic Identification System, sailing on to Nakhodka, docking for a day without discharging its coal, ostensibly to create the impression that the coal’s origin was the Russian Federation. It then sailed back to Bayuquan to unload the coal. While deviating to Songnim (near Nampo) to load coal on 7 August 2017, the Orient Shenyu switched off its Automatic Identification System for eight days before sailing to Lianyungang, where it loitered near the port to claim Chinese origin prior to heading to Cam Pha, Viet Nam, to unload on 26 August. ... Vessels also changed their identities mid-route by adopting new names, flags and call signs. The Xin Guang Hai transmitted a false International Maritime Organization (IMO) number and altered name while carrying coal from Songnim on 31 August 2017 for delivery in Hai Phong, Viet Nam, on 19 September 2017. The vessel also transmitted a false draft change to feign loading in Hong Kong and changed its IMO number and name en route. The Hua Fu shipped coal from Nampo to Cam Pha and also often changed call signs, and the Xin Sheng Hai and the Glory Hope 6 frequently changed length and class. The East Glory 7 changed its class
from “cargo” to “fishing” prior to discharging coal from Nampo in Guangzhou on 16 August 2017. The Panel’s investigations showed extensive evidence of false cargo documentation. Although authentic verification documents and stamps accompanied numerous contracts, bills of lading, certificates and warranties of origin, many vessels never visited the ports in question. For example, while the Kai Xiang documents indicated loading in Vladivostok on 28 July and Nakhoedka on 31 August 2017, the vessel never visited that port. Furthermore, satellite imagery shows it loading in Nampo on 31 August 2017. Similarly, the Hua Fu documents claimed the origin as Liangyangang, China; however, the vessel never visited that port on 6 September 2017, having loaded the coal in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea while its Automatic Identification system was off from 2 to 7 September. The Bai Mei 8 crew list shows the crew joining in Nampo where the coal was loaded and not Nakhoedka as claimed. ... In addition to the Great Spring trans-shipment of coal from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea discharged by the Sun Union on 28 June 2017 in Nakhoedka, the Panel noted the adoption by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea of a new route to a port rarely visited previously, Kholmsk, Russian Federation, following the adoption of resolution 2371 (2017). Tracking data show at least four vessels, including the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea-flagged Ul Ji Bong 6, Rung Ra 2 and Un Bong 2 and the Togo-flagged Yu Yuan, calling at Kholmsk. According to a Member State, they were transporting coal from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. The Panel noted several vessels arriving at the same berth at the coal terminal within a few days based on data available on maritime databases, often indicating an increase in draft upon departure. Shortly after this coal from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea was discharged, some vessels berthed at the same terminal, suggesting that, as was the case with the Great Spring and the Hua Fu, the coal might have been trans-shipped using false origin documents. According to open sources, authorities at Rizhao port and Qingdao port in China announced bans in early August 2017 on all imports of Russian coal based on concerns that coal from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea was being mixed with Russian cargoes. ... According to a Member State, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has been using at least three areas for ship-to-ship transfers: waters off the port of Wonsan; Nampo; and international waters between the Yellow Sea and the East China Sea. The first two tankers that the Panel investigated, the Hong Kong-flagged Lighthouse Winmore and the Panama-flagged Billions No. 18, transferred marine diesel to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea-flagged tankers, the Sam Jong 2 and the Rye Song Gang 1, respectively, on 19 October 2017. Both tankers sailed from Yeosu, Republic of Korea, and switched off their Automatic Identification System a few days before and after the transfers, in a pattern described above with regard to vessels picking up coal from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. Both vessels sailed southwards for transfers, but not to the port of Taichung, Taiwan Province of China, the stated port of destination, instead returning to Yeosu. The Republic of Korea detained the Lighthouse Winmore for investigation on 24 November 2017. A third case involved the ship-to-ship transfer by the Sierra Leone-flagged tanker Jin Hye (IMO No. 8518572) to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea-flagged tanker Chon Ma San (IMO No. 8660313) in the East China Sea on or about 5 December 2017. The Chon Ma San disguised its identity by painting the names “Whale” and “Freetown (Sierra Leone)” over the original name and port of registration and changing the “3”s to “8”s in the IMO number on the superstructure (8660313 to 8660818). The flag of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea on the funnel was also painted over with white paint. A fourth vessel involved in a ship-to-ship transfer with a tanker from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea was the Panama-flagged tanker Koti (IMO No. 9417115), also currently detained by the Republic of Korea for investigation. In a pattern very similar to the transfers by the Lighthouse Winmore and the Billions No. 18 on 19 October 2017, the Koti departed Yeosu and selectively used its Automatic Identification System for four days and again for five days from 30 November 2017. On 20 January 2018, another ship-to-ship transfer took place between the designated tanker of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea Rye Song Gang 1 and the Dominica-flagged Yuk Tung (IMO No. 9030591) in the high seas of the East China Sea. The vessel’s Automatic Identification System had been switched off since its departure from Keelung, Taiwan Province of China, on 2 January. Its owner is Yuk Tung Energy Inc., registered in the Cook Islands, its operator Yuk Tung Energy Pte Ltd, based in Singapore, and its primary business crude oil wholesale. The fact that this transfer took place in the dark shows that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea is adapting its evasion tactics (figure XIII).
Subsequent to its designation, the tanker disguised its identity, repainting its funnel and mast and changing its name to “Song Hae.” The Lighthouse Winmore was chartered the month before the ship-to-ship transfers by the Marshall Islands company Oceanic Enterprise Ltd via a Singapore-based broker. Its sole director and shareholder is Shih-Hsien Chen (also known as “Sunny Chen”), a national of Taiwan Province of China (annex 16). The Yingjen Fishery Company communicated administrative and logistical arrangements to the owner via the broker, while the Billions Bunker Group Corporation issued operational instructions to the captain. The intention to use the vessel for ship-to-ship transfers was evidenced in the charterer’s procurement of three large fenders for the duration of the charter. Chen also embedded a company representative with the vessel’s crew. Shih-Hsien Chen is the sole shareholder, owner and operator of two ships and the companies that own them, the tanker Billions No. 18 and Bunker’s Taiwan Group Corporation (British Virgin Islands), as well as the tanker Billions No. 88 and the Billions Bunker Group Corporation (Marshall Islands), which has also engaged in ship-to-ship transfer to an as yet unidentified tanker. The Panel notes that the owner/operator of the Lighthouse Winmore, Lighthouse Ship Management (also involved in ship-to-ship transfers), was previously known as the similar-sounding Billion Great International Group Ltd (see annex 18), suggesting a link to Chen’s companies. In addition, two of Chen’s tankers, the Lighthouse Winmore and the Golden Rich, utilize the same document of compliance holder and International Safety Management manager, Vanguard Shipping Safety Management Consultant Co. Ltd, which is the owner and operator of the other tanker engaging in ship-to-ship transfers, the Jin Hye. The Panel continues to investigate Shih-Hsien Chen’s central role in transfers of petroleum products to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, which shows the continuation of its reliance on trusted foreign nationals in its illicit activities. … The bills of lading for the petroleum products embarked by both the Lighthouse Winmore (14, 094 metric tons of marine gasoil (gasoil)) and the Billions No. 18 (7,954 metric tons of gasoil (diesel)) prior to the transfer on 19 October 2017 show the multinational company, Trafigura Pte. Ltd, as the shipper, Global Commodities Consultants Ltd as the consignee and the port of Taichung as the destination (which was fabricated). Global Commodities is registered in Hong Kong, but the registered address (12B Wilkinson Road, Singapore, 436759) matches that of the Singaporean company, Global SGP Pte Ltd. (Unique Entity No. 201222231W), both of which share the same director and sole shareholder. Further, all email communications for shipments onboard Shih-Hsien Chen’s vessels came from Global SGP and not Global Commodities Consultants (see annexes 21–22). The Panel continues to investigate other multinational oil companies for their possible roles in the supply chain of petroleum products transferred to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. Oceanic Enterprise prepaid Global SGP for the two shipments delivered free on board (FOB) to the vessels ($4,564,942.80 and $8,510,097.75) through bank transfers to the supplier, with which it had a contract. In addition to these two transfers by the Billions No. 18 and the Lighthouse Winmore, Oceanic had planned another nine shipments with the same two vessels plus another of Shih-Hsien Chen’s vessels, the Sky Ace 1 (as part of the contract) (figure XVI), which according to the plan for the shipments (see annexes 22–25) totaled 95,000 metric tons (with an estimated value of about $65 million according to the rate used for the first two transfers to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea). In addition, Chen requested green dye supplement for the fuel, a common practice for supplies for fishing vessels. Singapore informed the Panel that its authorities were checking the companies related to the transactions. … The Panel continued its investigation into the MKP headquarters in Malaysia as well as the network of its affiliated firms both in Malaysia and around the world. These investigations have so far revealed evasion and breaches of a wide array of sanctions provisions as follows: (a) The involvement of a national of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (and Reconnaissance General Bureau operative), Han Hun Il, in the establishment and operation of numerous companies within the MKP Group of Companies constitutes a violation of the prohibition on joint ventures; (b) The company’s links to designated entities, including Mansudae Overseas Projects, the Reconnaissance General Bureau and the Ocean Maritime Management Company; (c) Links between MKP and financial institutions of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, including the designated Korea Kwangson Banking Corporation and possibly the International Consortium Bank in Pyongyang; (d) Use of diplomats of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in business facilitation; (e) Potential violations of the prohibition on the provision of public or private support for trade with the Democratic
People’s Republic of Korea; (f) Involvement in the provision of security services; (g) Use by MKP of aliases and trading names that obscure the company’s identity; its reliance on a semi-devolved corporate model when operating outside of Malaysia; and its use of foreign facilitators as country directors to create plausible deniability of the control relationship between Han Hun II and the Reconnaissance General Bureau and MKP-linked companies. According to a Member State, Han Hun II, a.k.a. Edward Han, was dispatched to Malaysia in 1995 as a representative of the Mansudae Overseas Project before establishing the MKP Group of Companies jointly with the Malaysian national, Yong Kok Yeap, in 1996. According to a Member State, when Han’s tenure abroad was set to expire in 2006, the National Defense Commission of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea agreed to extend permission for him to remain abroad as a Reconnaissance General Bureau “operative.” MKP has, at one time or another, operated at least 13 companies in Malaysia, of which 10 were still listed as “existing” in corporate registries as at 15 December 2017. Han Hun II remains a director of seven of these companies, although MKP indicated to the Panel that it intends to remove him. Regarding his geographic location, MKP informed the Panel on 4 October 2017 that “Edward Han is now not in Malaysia,” yet declined to provide information on his travel, work visas or copies of passports. A Member State informed the Panel that Han Hun II had travelled to other South-East Asian countries in 2016, including the Lao People’s Democratic Republic in October. At the time of writing, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic had not responded to the Panel’s enquiry. MKP has developed an extensive and sophisticated network spanning several continents and multiple industry sectors, including information technology, construction, mining, coal trading, security, transport and construction, with at least 15 affiliated companies in four countries. The Panel was able to document many of the company’s activities in Africa and Hong Kong, but not those publicly claimed by MKP on its various websites, which include 18 African countries, 6 Middle Eastern States and a range of countries representing all regions of the world. …Corporate registry documents for MKP overseas affiliates indicate that the firm and its directors have devolved some control over those entities, while preserving the use of the MKP brand. These ownership and control patterns indicate that MKP foreign national partners are given discretion to determine where, how and with whom MKP deals. In Zambia, where MKP has at least 12 affiliate firms, an Algerian national, Mohamed Yazid Merzouk, has played the central organizational role, while a small number of Zambian nationals have served as directors. While Zambia has not yet replied to the Panel’s letters, in the reply by MKP of 4 October 2017, Yong Kok Yeap claimed that “MKP (Zambia) and the Zambian operations were/are run by Yazid Merzouk independently of MKP in Malaysia.” Yet, Yazid Merzouk appears extensively in MKP marketing materials as well as in Zambian corporate paperwork alongside several directors of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, including for MKP Holdings and MKP TMS Hospital (see annexes 74–78 and 80–81). He is also a majority owner of MKP Irehab in Zambia, which Yong Kok Yeap acknowledges “is affiliated” with MKP Malaysia. … In 2011, MKP purchased a stake in Commercial Capital Corporation Limited, a bank in Zambia. According to Yong Kok Yeap, “MKP (Zambia) had a minority shareholding (about 10–20 per cent) in Commercial Capital Corporation Limited. While Yong claims that Commercial Capital Corporation Limited has since shut down, corporate registry documentation suggests that the company remains active. The MKP website also advertises its involvement with the Pyongyang-based International Consortium Bank. MKP now denies any involvement with that institution and claims that any evidence suggesting it, including its own advertisements for the institution on its official website, is fabricated. These claims contradict available open-source evidence. Information for Hi-Fund International Bank, which MKP acknowledges is an alias for the International Consortium Bank, has been present on the MKP website since at least 2009 under “services”. The Panel also notes an indirect link between MKP and the Korea Kwangson Banking Corporation through the purchase of coal from the Democratic People’s Republic in Korea in Malaysia. By his own admission, Yong Kok Yeap directs EKB Building Limitada in Angola alongside Angola’s former Deputy Attorney General, Lloyd Chingambo, a shareholder and financier of MKP-Lloyd’s in Zambia, is the Chairman of Zambia’s National Economic Advisory Council and sits on the board of major national banks (see annex 83). An MKP Security Systems Zambia shareholder is the former Minister of Defense of the country. Such relationships help to create new business opportunities, generate sources of financing and facilitate wider access to local decision-makers while also potentially deterring host governments from taking
enforcement action. The way in which MKP established an office in South Africa demonstrates some of the methods it uses to set up overseas operations, including reliance on embassy officials of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to make introductions and facilitate relationships and the use of falsified documents to fulfil partners’ due diligence requirements. In this case, the latter of these practices led the South African partner of MKP, Mr. X, to break off all relations with MKP Malaysia. Han Hun Il and Yong Kok Yeap were introduced to the local partner, Mr. X, in Johannesburg in 2008 by the Ambassador of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to South Africa and the commercial trade attaché. Han Hun II and Yong Kok Yeap presented themselves as businessmen in the construction industry and invited Mr. X to MKP offices in Kuala Lumpur that year, where he was made Chief Executive Officer of MKP Builders and offered 50 per cent of all future profits. The “partnership” signed on 17 September 2009 gave him the mandate to execute business and “forward” project contracts to MKP Malaysia, which would serve as the construction and financing company. When Mr. X requested full audited company financial statements and an advance payment guarantee from Han Hun Il and Yong Kok Yeap, MKP sent him the financial statement of a Hong Kong-based company with which MKP had close relations, WLS Holdings Limited (HK), and a scanned bank guarantee from a major Malaysian bank of US$5 million dated 28 July 2010. Unable to confirm the guarantee, Mr. X travelled to Malaysia along with a client from Rwanda to verify the authenticity of the guarantee at the bank’s headquarters. Interactions with the bank indicated that the documents had been falsified. As a result, Mr. X severed all ties with MKP Malaysia but continued to use the company name (with no apparent reputational costs). The Ugandan and Zambian branches of MKP have undertaken numerous construction projects, many of which are linked to government financing (see annexes 91–92). MKP’s letter to the Panel directly referenced construction or artist contracts in Angola, Malaysia, Uganda and Zambia. Uganda awarded several contracts to MKP and, as recently as in September 2017, was soliciting US$200 million in investment for a “MKP Holdings Ltd” project at the Moroto Marble Mine in Kasimmeri-Moroto municipality. Uganda has not responded to the Panel’s enquiries. The Panel reiterates that Member States are prohibited from providing public or private financing for trade activities of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. In addition to its mining activities, MKP also owns and operates at least three companies in Uganda: “MKP Capital Bernard Co. Limited”, “MKP Builders San Bhd” and “NH-MKP Builders Ltd.” Corporate records show that MKP Capital’s ownership is split between two Ugandan individuals; and “Edward Han” and “Young Kyong Kin” are listed on the paperwork only as “Korean”. MKP Builders San Bhd is likely a branch of one of MKP’s Malaysian companies by the same name, owned by Han Hun Il and Yong Kok Yeap. Furthermore, both MKP Capital and MKP Builders trade in Uganda under the name of “Vidas Engineering Services Company Limited”, registered as a separate entity in Uganda. Vidas has received at least four contracts (one complete, three in progress) from the Ugandan Ministry of Water and Environment to develop the water and sanitation systems in Ugandan cities, projects that have received funding from international development agencies, which might constitute a violation of the prohibition on the provision of public or private support for trade with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. Furthermore, regarding a 2011 project that the Government of Uganda awarded MKP to build housing units, local media reported that MKP took approximately US$5.2 million in advance payment and then abandoned the project. The Panel investigated the activities of Omega MKP Security Systems Zambia, which provides private security services in the country. Omega stated to the Panel that the relationship was established after the director of MKP Security Systems Zambia approached it with a proposal to set up a joint venture. This director stated that the company was seeking a strategic partner who could “fund and equip” it for security-related activities, particularly in relation to a project in which MKP Security Systems had been involved with the Government of Zambia to remotely monitor and secure the borders. According to Omega, it agreed to establish a new company with the directors of MKP Security Systems serving in their personal capacities. Omega also stated that it met Yazid Merzouk only once in 2013. The Panel notes that a photo appearing to show senior Omega staff with Yazid Merzouk has been on the MKP website since at least 3 January 2012. In its response to the Panel, MKP Malaysia characterized the relationship differently, noting that Omega MKP is a “joint venture with Omega” and asserting that Yazid Merzouk manages these activities in Zambia. Discrepancies between the accounts of these parties point to the utility of the semi-devolved and personality-driven corporate
South Korea and North Korea have agreed to hold a summit of their leaders late next month. South Korean President Moon Jae-in's top security adviser said March 6 on the outcome of his trip to the communist North. Chung Eui-yong said the third inter-Korean summit, between Moon and the North's reclusive leader Kim Jong-un, will be held at the Peace House, a South Korean facility in the joint security area of Panmunjom located just south of the inter-Korean border. The summit, if held, would mark the first time a North Korean leader has stepped on South Korean soil since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War. The surprise announcement followed Chung's two-day trip to Pyongyang as Moon's special envoy. While in the North Korean capital, Chung and four other South Korean envoys held an unprecedented meeting with the reclusive North Korean leader. "The South and the North have agreed to set up a hotline between their leaders to allow close consultations and a reduction of military tension, while also agreeing to hold the first phone conversation before the third South-North summit," Chung told a press briefing. North Korea has also restated its commitment to rid itself of nuclear weapons, according to Chung. "The North side clearly affirmed its commitment to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and said it would have no reason to possess nuclear weapons should the safety of its regime be guaranteed and military threats against North Korea removed," he said. The North also expressed its willingness to hold "candid" talks with the United States on ways to realize the denuclearization of the peninsula and normalize the countries' bilateral ties. Chung said the North Korean leader has agreed to put the denuclearization issue on the dialogue table with the U.S. without any conditions. "Chairman Kim said the denuclearization issue may be discussed as an agenda for the North-U.S. dialogue," he told reporters. "What we must especially pay attention to is the fact that (he) has clearly stated that the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula was an instruction of his predecessor and that there has been no change to such an instruction." Chung said the North has also promised to suspend all military provocations, including nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches, as long the U.S.-North Korea talks are progress. "In addition, the North promised not to use not only nuclear weapons but also conventional weapons against the South," he added. Demonstrating the apparent thaw in inter-Korean ties, the North has invited a South Korean taekwondo demonstration team and an art performance team to perform in Pyongyang. The visit, if made, will reciprocate earlier trips to South Korea by their North Korean counterparts during the Pyeongchang Winter Olympic Games held Feb. 9-25. Moon's envoys to North Korea included Suh Hoon, head of the country's spy agency, the National Intelligence Service. Chung said he and Suh will soon visit Washington to explain the outcome of their North Korea trip. After their return from the U.S., Chung will visit China and Russia and Suh Japan. The four countries are members of the so-called six-party denuclearization talks, which also involve the two Koreas. The talks have been stalled since late 2008. (Byun Duk-kun, "Koreas to Hold Third Summit in Late April, Firmly Agree to Denuclearize," Yonhap, March 6, 2018) North Korea's state TV broadcaster on March 6 unveiled footage of leader Kim Jong-un's meeting and dinner with a delegation of South Korea special envoys a day earlier. The North's leader held "openhearted" talks with the South's envoys over "important and sensitive" issues to bring peace and security to the Korean Peninsula, according to the Korean Central TV Broadcasting Station. (Yonhap, "N. Korea TV Airs Footage of Kim's Meeting with S. Korean Envoys," March 6, 2018) The five envoys attended a meeting and dinner hosted by North Korean leader Kim for four hours and 12 minutes starting from 6 p.m. on March 5. After further talks with North Korean officials, the delegation returned to Seoul at 5:58 p.m. March 6 and briefed Moon about its trip. Chung, then, held a media conference to announce the outcome of his visit. According to Kim Eui-kyeom, Moon's spokesman, the meeting and dinner hosted by Kim took place in his office at the headquarters of the North Korean Workers' Party. "It is the first time that South Korean officials visited the Workers' Party headquarters," he said. Kim attended the meeting with two close aides: his younger sister Kim Yo-jong, who serves as the first vice director of the Central Committee within the Workers' Party, and Kim Yong-chol, a vice chairman of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party. Following the meeting, the envoys and the three North Korean leaders attended a dinner, where more members
of Pyongyang’s power elite were gathered. Kim Jong-un’s wife, Ri Sol-ju, attended as well as Ri Son-gwon, chairman of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country, Maeng Kyong-il, deputy director of the United Front Department and Kim Chang-son, chief secretary to the North Korean leader. (Ser Myo-ja, “North Agrees to Talks with U.S.,” JoongAng Ilbo, March 6, 2018) North Korean leader Kim Jong-un promised dismantlement of his country’s nuclear weapons program – not merely a freeze – when he met with South Korean envoys last week in Pyongyang, multiple government sources told JoongAng Ilbo on March 11. “Kim expressed willingness for denuclearization, which includes not only a nuclear freeze but also dismantlement,” said one source familiar with the talks. “Now is the moment where we have to wait and see if the North will actually start the process of dismantling its nuclear program.” Kim’s message of denuclearization was also briefed to the Trump administration, another government source said. “The briefing to the White House included Kim’s promise that he was willing to commit to the denuclearization that the United States wants,” the source said. Diplomatic ties with the United States before the end of this year, another South Korean government source said. “If the North-U.S. summit takes place in May, there will be astounding changes in the geopolitics of the Korean Peninsula.” (Ser Myo-ja, “Kim Is Willing to Dismantle Nukes,” Seoul Says,” JoongAng Ilbo, March 11, 2018)

Following is an unofficial translation of the statement issued by South Korea’s special envoys to the North on their return from a two-day visit to Pyongyang, during which they met North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. 1. The two Koreas agreed to convene the third inter-Korean summit at the Peace House of Panmunjom in late April. To achieve this, the two parties agreed to hold working-level consultations. 2. In order to ease military confrontation and foster further consultation, the two Koreas agreed to establish a hotline between the two countries’ heads of state. 3. North Korea showed its resolve for denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The North also made clear that there is no reason for them to possess nuclear weapons as long as military threats to the North are eliminated and the regime’s security is guaranteed. 4. North Korea expressed its willingness to begin earnest negotiations with the US to discuss denuclearization issues and normalize North Korea-US relations. 5. North Korea made clear it will not resume strategic provocations such as additional nuclear tests or ballistic missile tests while the dialogue continues. 6. In order to sustain a reconciliatory and cooperative mood following Pyeongchang Olympics, North Korea invited a South Korean taekwondo demonstration team and art troupe to Pyongyang. (Yeo Jun-suk, “Text of Special Envoy’s Statement after N.K. Trip,” March 6, 2018)

KCNA: “Kim Jong Un, chairman of the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK), chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the DPRK and supreme commander of the Korean People’s Army, received the members of a delegation of special envoy of the south Korean president who arrived in Pyongyang on Monday [March 5]. Present there were Jong Ui Yong, chief of the State Security Office of Chongwadae who is special envoy of President Moon Jae In; So Hun, director of the National Intelligence Service; Chon Hae Song, vice-minister of Unification; Kim Sang Gyun, vice-director of the National Intelligence Service; and Yun Kon Yong, chief of the State Affairs Office of Chongwadae. Kim Yong Chol, vice-chairman of the Central Committee of the WPK, and Kim Yo Jong, first vice department director of the Central Committee of the WPK were on hand. Shaking hands of the special envoy and his party one by one, respected Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un warmly welcomed them to Pyongyang. Jong Ui Yong courteously conveyed a personal letter of President Moon Jae In to the Supreme Leader. The members of the special envoy delegation presented gratitude to the Supreme Leader for having dispatched high-level delegations and various large-scale delegations with the 23rd Winter Olympics as a momentum to ensure its successful holding. Expressing thanks for this, Kim Jong Un said it is natural to share the joy over an auspicious event of fellow countrymen of the same blood and help them. The recent Winter Olympics served as a very important occasion in displaying the stamina and prestige of our nation and providing a good atmosphere of reconciliation, unity and dialogue between the north and the south, he added. Then he had an openhearted talk with the south side’s special envoy delegation over the matters arising in actively improving the north-south relations and ensuring peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. He repeatedly clarified that it is our
consistent and principled stand and his fixed will to vigorously advance the north-south relations and write a new history of national reunification by the concerted efforts of our nation to be proud of in the world. **After being told about President Moon Jae In's intention for a summit by the special envoy of the south side, the Supreme Leader exchanged views and reached a satisfactory agreement.** He gave an important instruction to the relevant field to rapidly take practical steps for it. He also had an exchange of in-depth views on the issues for easing the acute military tensions on the Korean Peninsula and activating the versatile dialogue, contact, cooperation and exchange between the north and the south. The talk proceeded in a compatriotic and sincere atmosphere. Kim Jong Un had a photo session with the members of the delegation.” (KCNA, “Kim Jong Un Meets Delegation of Special Envoy of S. Korean President,” March 6, 2018)

President Donald Trump said there is "possible progress" in talks with North Korea after the regime floated its willingness to give up its nuclear weapons. "Possible progress being made in talks with North Korea," Trump tweeted. "For the first time in many years, a serious effort is being made by all parties concerned. The World is watching and waiting! May be false hope, but the U.S. is ready to go hard in either direction!" (Yonhap, “Trump Sees ‘Possible Progress’ in Talks with N. Korea,” March 6, 2018)

The Japanese government appeared bewildered by the just-announced agreement between the two Koreas to hold a summit in late April, as it had warned against easing pressure on North Korea amid a diplomatic thaw with South Korea. "We must carefully assess whether this will lead North Korea to give up its nuclear and missile development programs...There is no need to ease pressure until it is confirmed that North Korea is going to change its policies," Defense Minister Onodera Itsunori said. Tokyo is concerned that Pyongyang may be buying time to further develop its nuclear weapons. "We have an impression that things are moving quite enthusiastically," a government official said, apparently stunned by the growing conciliatory mood after numerous missile tests and other provocations. "We don't know if it's real," a source close to Japan-South Korea relations said, referring to Seoul's announcement that North Korea has also voiced a readiness to hold talks with the United States about denuclearization. The South Korean government said it will send to Japan Suh Hoon, director of the National Intelligence Service, to explain the outcome of the talks. Earlier today, the Japanese government said it was confident South Korea remains committed to putting pressure on its northern neighbor over its nuclear program. Asked if South Korea's commitment to the denuclearization of North Korea is wavering due to its priority on dialogue with the North, Foreign Minister Kono Taro said that is not the case. "Japan, the United States and South Korea are in close alignment with each other, so there is no such thing," Kono told reporters after a Cabinet meeting. "North Korea is desperately trying to use 'smile diplomacy' because sanctions are taking effect," Kono said. The head of a group of families of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea decades ago called on the Japanese government to use the latest development as a "chance" to resolve the abduction issue. "We are hoping for the early return of the victims by any means no matter what the situation may be," said 79-year-old Iizuka Shigeo, whose younger sister Taguchi Yaeko was kidnapped in 1978 at age 22. "We want the government to make efforts so that the abduction issue will be included in the agendas to be discussed during the inter-Korean summit," he said. The Japanese government officially lists 17 citizens as having been abducted by North Korean agents and suspects Pyongyang's involvement in other disappearances of Japanese nationals. (Kyodo, “Japan Perplexed over Agreement on Inter-Korean Summit,” March 6, 2018)

Two top U.S. intelligence chiefs expressed skepticism of North Korea's offer to hold talks with the U.S. to end the regime's nuclear program and suspend missile testing. "All efforts in the past have failed and have simply bought North Korea time to achieve what they want to achieve," Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats told the Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday. "Maybe this is a breakthrough. I seriously doubt it." U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Robert Ashley, who is the head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, said North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's proposition was "kind of a show-me." In his opening remarks at the Senate on Tuesday, Ashley said the North
Korean leader "shows no interest in walking away from his nuclear or ballistic missile programs.” He added that Kim has "pressed his nation down a path to develop nuclear weapons and deliver them with ballistic missiles that can reach South Korea, Japan, Guam and the United States." Ashley said he believes that "additional missile launches — from short range to intercontinental range — are a near certainty" as are further nuclear tests. In addition, North Korea may have a stockpile of chemical agents, such as "nerve, blister, blood, and choking agents." (Amanda Macias, “Top U.S. Intelligence Officials Are Skeptical of North Korea’s Offer to Talk about Its Nuclear Weapons Program,” CNBC, March 6, 2018)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: ... “The United States is also grateful to Sweden for advocating for Americans detained in North Korea. I particularly want to thank the Swedish government for its assistance in securing the release of American college student Otto Warmbier last year. Terrible, tragic event. We continue to pray for Otto’s parents, Fred and Cindy — two terrific people — over the tragic death of their son. And we remain determined to achieve a denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. And there’s been a lot of news on that today. Hopefully, it’s positive. Hopefully, it will lead to a very positive result. ...PRIME MINISTER LÖFVEN: Okay. Tina, TT News Agency. Q  So, Mr. President, thank you for hosting us. You mentioned that Sweden has helped the United States with North Korea. How do you see your collaboration in the future to create a future of a peaceful Korean Peninsula? How do you see Sweden’s role there? How do you both view the collaboration? And as a follow-up to that, if I may — Mr. President, I know that you follow the development in Sweden closely, especially when it comes to immigration politics. Now that you’ve spent some time with our Prime Minister, how do you view Sweden in general? What is your take? And also, on our immigration politics? Thank you. ... What about the collaboration on North Korea? PRESIDENT TRUMP: We’ve been working on North Korea. Sweden has somewhat of a relationship with North Korea. We’ve been working with North Korea. As I said, Otto was really brought home, unfortunately in very poor condition, but Otto was brought home largely with the help of Sweden. They’re terrific — terrific people. People from Sweden, the Swedish people, are fantastic people. I have many friends in New York and Washington from Sweden, and they are fantastic people. Thank you. Q And, Mr. Prime Minister, how do you view Sweden and North Korea and the U.S.? PRIME MINISTER LÖFVEN: We have to find a dialogue. I know it’s not easy, but that’s the way it has to be. It’s a very dangerous situation, and we need all to be very concerned about the development of nuclear weapons. But we must look at the Peninsula, the region, the world, and this has to do with world peace or something else. So the key actors is obviously the two countries, South and North Korea, as well as the United States and other big countries. They’re the key actors. We’ve said that we can provide — we can be a channel or do whatever we can to see that the dialogue is smooth. Not being naive. It’s not up to us to solve this problem, but we can definitely, with our long presence on the Peninsula — both in South and North. We have an embassy in Pyongyang, for example. We’ve had that since 1973. So with that relation with North Korea, I believe that they trust us. We are a non-aligning country, and — on military, non-aligning country. And I think if we can — if the President decides, the key actors decide if they want us to help out, we’ll be there. PRESIDENT TRUMP: They really have been terrific. Really terrific. Saagar Enjeti, Daily Caller. Please, Saagar. Q Thank you, Mr. President. Since it’s my first time before you, I thought you might indulge me with two questions. First, sir, do you believe that North Korea’s recent willingness to talk is sincere, or is it an effort to buy time for their nuclear program? And to what do you owe this recent openness to talk? PRESIDENT TRUMP: Me. No, I think that — (laughter). Nobody got that. (Laughter.) I think that they are sincere, but I think they’re sincere also because the sanctions and what we’re doing with respect to North Korea, including, you know, the great help that we’ve been given from China. And they can do more, but I think they’ve done more than, certainly, they’ve ever done for our country before. So China has been a big help. I think that’s been a factor. But the sanctions have been very, very strong and very biting. And we don’t want that to happen. So I really believe they are sincere. I hope they’re sincere. We’re going to soon find out. ...” (White House, Office of the Spokesman, Remarks by President Trump with Prime Minister Lofven of Sweden in Joint Press Conference,” March 6, 2018)
John Bolton meets with President Trump in the Oval Office: “We started off talking about North Korea, and I explained I thought Kim Jong Un was trying to buy time to finish the relatively few (albeit critical) tasks still necessary to achieve a deliverable nuclear-weapons capability. That meant that Kim Jong Un now especially feared military force; he knew economic sanctions alone wouldn’t prevent him from reaching that goal. I wasn’t quite sure Trump got the point, but I also raised reports of North Korea’s selling chemical-weapons equipment and precursor chemicals to Syria, likely financed by Iran. If true, this linkage could be pivotal for both North Korea and Iran, showing just how dangerous Pyongyang was: now selling chemical weapons, soon enough selling nuclear weapons. I urged him to use this argument to justify both exiting the Iran nuclear deal and taking a harder line on North Korea. Kelly agreed and urged me to keep pounding away in public, which I assured him I would.” (John Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020), pp. 28-29)

3/7/18 President Moon Jae-in expressed hope for the start of U.S.-North Korea dialogue, insisting that the North's recent offer to freeze its nuclear and missile activities have created the right conditions for at least what he called "preliminary" talks on the resumption of denuclearization talks. "Right now, there is nothing that has been settled. We only believe that at least the United States' conditions for selective talks, preliminary talks, have been met based on our consultations so far with the U.S.,” the president said while meeting with the leaders of five political parties at his office Cheong Wa Dae. (Yonhap, “Moon Says Conditions Now Right for U.S.-DPRK Talks,” March 7, 2018)

Japan plans to work with the United States and South Korea to push for inspections of North Korean nuclear facilities to verify the North's intentions to denuclearize, sources close to the matter said. According to the sources, Japan wants to push for North Korea to let inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency into its nuclear facilities, primarily the Yongbyon nuclear complex around 100 kilometers north of Pyongyang. "Inspections of the Yongbyon facility are essential in verifying North Korea's denuclearization," a source said. The U.N. nuclear watchdog has not had direct access to North Korean facilities since its inspectors were expelled in 2009. The call for the inspectors reflects Japan's dissatisfaction with North Korea's agreement to merely freeze its nuclear and missile tests. "It reads as if the development (of the weapons) will continue," a Foreign Ministry source said. (Kyodo, “Japan to Seek Int'l Verification of N. Korean Nuclear Pledge,” March 7, 2018)

3/8/18 President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un have agreed to meet by May to discuss the denuclearization of the regime, South Korea's national security adviser, Chung Eui-yong, told reporters at the White House. "President Trump appreciated the briefing and said he would meet Kim Jong-un by May to achieve permanent denuclearization." Kim said he is "committed to denuclearization" and will "refrain from any further nuclear or missile tests," said Chung, who led a five-member presidential delegation to a meeting with the North Korean leader in Pyongyang on March 5. Chung said he expressed to Trump in their meeting earlier in the day South Korean President Moon Jae-in's "personal gratitude" for his leadership on the North Korea issue. "His leadership and his maximum pressure policy together with international solidarity brought us to this juncture," Chung said. "President Trump greatly appreciates the nice words of the South Korean delegation and President Moon," White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said in a statement. "He will accept the invitation to meet with Kim Jong-un at a place and time to be determined. We look forward to the denuclearization of North Korea. In the meantime, all sanctions and maximum pressure must remain." North Korea has in the past demanded the abolition of joint South Korea-U.S. military exercises that it sees as dress rehearsals for an invasion and the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the South. "(Kim) understands that the routine joint military exercises between the Republic of Korea and the United States must continue," Chung said. "The Republic of Korea, the United States and our partners stand together in insisting that we not repeat the mistakes of the past and that the pressure will continue until North Korea matches its words with concrete action.” (Yonhap, “Trump, Kim Agree to Meet by May: Seoul Envoy,” March 8, 2018) In a dramatic shift in geopolitics, U.S. President Donald Trump accepted
an invitation from North Korean leader Kim Jong-un to meet for talks about denuclearization, and a summit will be held by May. Trump was said to have immediately agreed to meeting with Kim when Chung raised Kim’s invitation. “The hidden card was Kim Jong-un saying he wanted to meet in person with President Trump,” a Blue House official told the JoongAng Ilbo. “Rather than exploratory or preliminary talks, it indicates he wants to meet and arrive on a settlement right away.” (Sarah Kim, “Trump, Kim to Hold Summit by May,” JoongAng Ilbo, March 10, 2018)

The president expressed his optimism about the meeting in a post on Twitter, saying that Kim had “talked about denuclearization with the South Korean Representatives, not just a freeze.” “Also, no missile testing by North Korea during this period of time,” Trump added. “Great progress being made but sanctions will remain until an agreement is reached. Meeting being planned!” For Trump, a meeting with Kim is a breathtaking gamble. No sitting American president has ever met a North Korean leader, and Trump himself has repeatedly vowed that he would not commit the error of his predecessors by being drawn into a protracted negotiation in which North Korea extracted concessions from the United States but held on to key elements of its nuclear program. Behind the scenes, events unfolded even more haphazardly. Trump was not scheduled to meet Chung until tomorrow, but when he heard that the envoy was in the West Wing seeing other officials, the president summoned him to the Oval Office, according to a senior administration official. Trump, the official said, then asked Chung to tell him about his meeting with Kim. When Chung said that the North Korean leader had expressed a desire to meet Trump, the president immediately said he would do it, and directed Chung to announce it to the White House press corps. Chung, nonplused, said he first needed approval from President Moon, who quickly granted it in a phone call. Trump later called Prime Minister Abe Shinzo of Japan, and the two discussed coordinating diplomatic efforts. Trump also plans to call President Xi Jinping of China. By day’s end, dazed White House officials were discussing whether Trump would invite Kim to come to the United States. That seemed entirely likely, the senior administration official said, though American officials doubt the North Korean leader would accept. Embarking on a high-level negotiation will pose a stiff challenge to the administration. People briefed by the administration said it had done little planning for how a negotiation with the North would unfold. The State Department’s chief North Korea negotiator, Joseph Yun, recently announced his departure from the Foreign Service. The White House also scotched a plan to nominate another experienced negotiator, Victor Cha, as ambassador to Seoul. North Korea, by contrast, appears to have planned its diplomatic overture methodically, starting with Kim’s conciliatory message toward the South in his New Year’s Day address, and continuing through the North’s charm offensive during the Winter Olympic Games in Pyeongchang. The South Korean envoys said they were carrying additional messages from North Korea, but an American official said that the envoys did not deliver a letter from Kim. In South Korea, people greeted the news of a meeting between Kim and Trump with relief. South Koreans had nervously watched the peninsula edge toward the brink of a possible military conflict last year. “We hope that these developments will become an important turning point for realizing the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and firmly establishing peace there,” Lee Yu-jin, a government spokeswoman, said March 9. (Mark Landler, “North Korea Asks for Direct Talks, and Trump Agrees,” New York Times, March 9, 2018, p. A-1)

ROK National Security Adviser Chung Eui-yong: “Good evening. Today, I had the privilege of briefing President Trump on my recent visit to Pyongyang, North Korea. I’d like to thank President Trump, the vice president, and his wonderful national security team, including my close friend, Gen. McMaster. I explained to President Trump that his leadership and his maximum pressure policy, together with international solidarity, brought us to this juncture. I expressed President Moon Jae-in’s personal gratitude for President Trump’s leadership. I told President Trump that, in our meeting, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said he is committed to denuclearization. Kim pledged that North Korea will refrain from any further nuclear or missile tests. He understands that the routine joint military exercises between the Republic of Korea and the United States must continue. And he expressed his eagerness to meet President Trump as soon as possible. President Trump appreciated the briefing and said he would meet Kim Jong Un by May to achieve permanent denuclearization. The Republic of Korea, along with the United States, Japan and our
many partners around the world remain fully and resolutely committed to the complete
denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Along with President Trump, we are optimistic about
continuing a diplomatic process to test the possibility of a peaceful resolution. The Republic of
Korea, the United States, and our partners stand together in insisting that we not repeat the
mistakes of the past, and that the pressure will continue until North Korea matches its words with
concrete actions.” (UPI, “Full Remarks: South Korean Envoy Announces Trump to Meet with
Kim,” March 8, 2018)

White House statement: “President Donald J. Trump spoke with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of
Japan to discuss the situation in North Korea and to continue the close coordination between our
two countries. President Trump and Prime Minister Abe assessed that the maximum pressure
policy, together with international solidarity, brought us to this critical juncture. The leaders
affirmed their strong intention to continue close trilateral coordination with South Korea to
maintain pressure and enforce international sanctions until such point that North Korea takes
tangible steps toward complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization. President Trump
expressed his hope that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's invitation signals his desire to give
the North Korean people a brighter future.” (White House Office of the Press, Readout of
President Donald J. Trump’s Call with Prime Minister Abe Shinzo of Japan,” March 8, 2018)

Senior Administration Official: “Today, he was briefed by President Moon’s -- a couple of
national security officials -- his National Security Advisor Chung Eui-Yong and his Intelligence
Director Suh Hoon -- who came into the Oval, gave a briefing to the President, as well as several
Cabinet officials -- General McMaster, Secretary Mattis, Deputy Secretary of State Sullivan, Chief
of Staff General Kelly, Director Dan Coats, and CIA Deputy Director Gina Haskell ... and
conveyed a message from Kim Jong-un to the President. Part of that message was a commitment
to denuclearize. It also was a commitment to refrain from testing nuclear weapons or missiles.
And it was also an indication -- oh, and I would also add that Kim Jong-un had made clear that he
understands that routine defensive exercises between the Republic of Korea and the United States
must continue -- or something that will continue. And he conveyed that he wants to meet with
President Trump as quickly as possible. And so President Trump has agreed to accept an invitation
to meet with Kim Jong-un in a matter of a couple of months. And the exact timing and place is
still to be determined. ... Q Hi, I'm Dave Nakamura with the Washington Post. A couple quick
things. There's never been a face-to-face meeting or even phone call, I believe, between sitting
leaders of the two countries. Why not start with meetings at a lower level? And what gives you
the confidence that this is not -- you even, I think, mentioned in a call the other day -- something
that could be less than advertised? And you're already, sort of, agreeing without maybe -- as you
said, there's not even a written letter. Isn't that somewhat risky? And then the other thing I'm
wondering is also -- have you gotten any sense that there would be any talk about the North
Koreans showing some goodwill by releasing the other Americans who are being held there, given
the President's clear interest in detainees, including Otto Warmbier? SENIOR
ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Great. Thanks, Dave, for the question. You know, President
Trump was elected in part because he is willing to do -- take approaches very, very different from
past approaches and past Presidents. That couldn't be better exemplified than it is in his North
Korea policy. Literally, going back to 1992, the United States has engaged in direct talks at low
levels with the North Koreans, and I think that history speaks for itself. In the case we have right
now is -- what we have now is an invitation from the leader of North Korea. As President Moon
expressed, he believes that we're at this juncture precisely because of the approach that President
Trump has taken with maximum pressure. President Trump made his reputation on making deals.
Kim Jong-un is the one person who is able to make decisions under their authoritarian -- uniquely
authoritarian -- or totalitarian system. And so it made sense to accept an invitation to meet with
the one person who can actually make decisions instead of repeating the, sort of, long slog of the
past. Okay, we've got to cut there.” (White House Office of the Press, Background Press Call by a
Senior Administration Official on North Korea Announcement, March 8, 2018)
After President Trump signed an order imposing tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, nations vied for exemptions. South Korea made an impassioned appeal to the American secretary of defense and national security adviser, reminding them of its role trying to defang North Korea. The envoys urged Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis and H.R. McMaster, Trump’s national security adviser, to intervene for the sake of the alliance, said Kim Eui-kyeom, the spokesman for South Korean President Moon Jae-in. Whether the appeals will work is an open question. Despite South Korea’s critical role in defusing tensions with North Korea, the Trump administration has claimed the country is a conduit for Chinese steel evading anti-dumping rules — a practice known as transshipping. South Korean officials have argued that only 2.4 percent of steel exported to the United States in 2016 used Chinese material. Seoul is badly in need of a free pass for its steel industry. The country accounts for almost 10 percent of United States steel imports and stands to suffer the most from tariffs. That highlights a problem with Trump’s protectionist thrust: Most of the producers hurt are friends, or at least thought they were. American allies were particularly floored by Trump’s justification for the tariffs. He invoked a provision of W.T.O. rules that allows countries to impose trade restrictions in the interest of national security. “How India or any other country could be a threat to the U.S. within the steel industry, I don’t know,” said Shivramkrishnan Hariharan, the commercial director of Essar Steel, a large steel manufacturer based in Mumbai. The national security argument seemed even weaker when applied to South Korea or European countries that have formal military alliances with the United States. While foreign officials said they hoped to use diplomacy to win exemptions to the steel and aluminum tariffs, they also reserved the right to get nasty. The European Union, South Korea and others said they would file complaints with the W.T.O., which under international treaties has the power to resolve trade disputes. (Jack Ewing, “Threats, Pleas and a Golf Great: Nations’ Tactics for Tariff Relief,” New York Times, March 10, 2018, p. A-1)

A group of 11 nations — including major United States allies like Japan, Canada and Australia — signed a broad trade deal in Chile’s capital, Santiago, that challenges Trump’s view of trade as a zero-sum game filled with winners and losers. Covering 500 million people on either side of the Pacific Ocean, the pact represents a new vision for global trade on the day the United States imposes steel and aluminum tariffs on even some of its closest friends. Trump withdrew the United States from an earlier version of the agreement, then known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a year ago as one of his first acts in office. “Globally, there has been an increasing level of uncertainty, given the adoption of policies and measures by some key players that question the principles that have contributed to generating prosperity for our peoples,” President Michelle Bachelet of Chile said in a speech shortly before the pact was signed. “We need to stay on the course of globalization, yet learning from our past mistakes.” In its original incarnation as the TPP, the accord was conceived as a counterweight to China, whose vast economy was drawing other Asian countries closer despite its state-driven model and steep trade barriers. Not only does the pact lower trade barriers, it could also prod Beijing to make changes to enjoy the same benefits. When President Obama was advocating the deal, he said that “America should call the shots” instead of China. Now, signatories are opening the door for China to join. Heraldo Muñoz, Chile’s foreign minister, told reporters this afternoon that Chinese officials had been weighing the possibility of signing on. “This will be open to anyone who accepts its components,” Muñoz said. “It’s not an agreement against anyone. It’s in favor of open trade.” The new agreement — known as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership — drops tariffs drastically and establishes sweeping new trade rules in markets that represent about a seventh of the world’s economy. It opens more markets to free trade in agricultural products and digital services around the region. While American beef faces 38.5 percent tariffs in Japan, for example, beef from Australia, New Zealand and Canada will not. Other members include Mexico, Vietnam, New Zealand, Chile, Malaysia, Peru, Singapore and Brunei. The deal will go into effect as soon as the legislative bodies of at least three signers ratify it. How long that will take is unclear. China, which has discussed forming its own regional trade pact, has been more positive about the new deal since the United States pulled out. It sent a high-level delegation a year ago to Viña del Mar, Chile, where the pact’s members sought to regroup after the United States’ withdrawal. Experts said China could feel the pull if still more countries joined. The pact is also built around fostering trade in sophisticated manufactured goods and high-tech products, and China now produces many
of those in abundance. Wang Yi, China’s foreign minister, said on Thursday that the government hoped free-trade agreements in the region would play “a constructive role in their respective fields in resisting trade protectionism and building an open world economy.” The new version of the TPP does not pack the same punch as the earlier iteration. With the United States, the agreement would have represented 40 percent of the world’s economy, giving its provisions added heft. In an interview at the World Economic Forum earlier this year, Trump said, “If we did a substantially better deal, I would be open to TPP.” Steven Mnuchin, the United States Treasury secretary, said he had held discussions about the prospect of rekindling American membership in the pact, though at a congressional hearing in February, he said it was not a priority. The Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington estimates that if five other places — Indonesia, South Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand — joined the partnership, the annual increase to global income would total $449 billion by 2030, almost as much as it would have been if the United States were included. In the deal signed on Thursday, only 22 of more than 600 original provisions have been suspended, relating to intellectual property protection and a grab bag of other issues, several of which had been pushed by the United States. Umemoto Kazuyoshi, Japan’s chief negotiator for the partnership, said that if the United States decided to re-enter the deal, those provisions could be reinstated. (Ernesto Londoño and Motoko, “Allies Sign Sweeping Pacific Trade Accord in a Challenge to Trump,” New York Times, March 9, 2018, p. A-10)

Summoned to the Oval Office on the spur of the moment, the South Korean envoy found himself face to face with President Trump one afternoon last week at what he thought might be a hinge moment in history. Chung Eui-yong had come to the White House bearing an invitation. But he opened with flattery, which diplomats have discovered is a key to approaching the volatile American leader. “We could come this far thanks to a great degree to President Trump,” Chung said. “We highly appreciate this fact.” Then he got to the point: The United States, South Korea and their allies should not repeat their “past mistakes,” but South Korea believed that North Korea’s mercurial leader, Kim Jong-un, was “frank and sincere” when he said he wanted to talk with the Americans about giving up his nuclear program. Kim, he added, had told the South Koreans that if Trump would join him in an unprecedented summit meeting, the two could produce a historic breakthrough. Trump accepted on the spot, stunning not only Chung and the other high-level South Koreans who were with him, but also the phalanx of American officials who were gathered in the Oval Office. His advisers had assumed the president would take more time to discuss such a decision with them first. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, the president’s national security adviser, both expressed caution. If you go ahead with this, they told Trump, there will be risks and downsides. Trump brushed them off. I get it, I get it, he said. The story of how this came about, assembled through interviews with officials and analysts from the United States, South Korea, Japan and China, is a case study in international relations in the Trump era. A president with no prior foreign policy experience takes on a festering conflict that has vexed the world for years with a blend of impulse and improvisation, and with no certain outcome. One moment, he is hurling playground insults and threatening nuclear war, the next he is offering the validation of a presidential meeting. For the opening ceremony, on February 9, Kim sent his sister, Kim Yo-jong, while Trump sent Vice President Mike Pence. The vice president was told of a possible meeting with North Korean officials at the Games if he would tone down his message, not talk about sanctions, not meet with defectors and not bring along Fred Warmbier, whose son, Otto, an American student, died soon after being released from captivity in North Korea. Pence opted to do all of those anyway to show resolve, and the North Koreans canceled the meeting at the last minute. Taking the hardline position he believed the president wanted him to take, a grim-faced Pence refused to stand for the entry of the joint Korean team that included athletes from both North and South and made a point of refusing to greet Kim’s sister, who was just 10 feet away. Pence’s failure to stand was taken as an insult to Moon and the South Korean public, undercutting the vice president’s intent to show solidarity with an ally. Moon had been determined to bring the Americans and North Koreans together, to the irritation of the American delegation, which believed that he was deliberately trying to stage-manage an encounter they considered awkward and inappropriate. Moon, by contrast, hosted Ms. Kim for a lavish luncheon at the presidential Blue House, and she surprised him with a letter from her brother. She told Moon that her brother wanted to convene a summit meeting at an early date. The two spent
nearly three hours together, with Moon doing most of the talking. He said that he really wanted to meet Kim and improve ties, but that there was a limit to how far he could go without progress in dismantling the North’s nuclear program. He urged North Korea to talk to the Americans and said they needed to hurry so as not to lose the rare momentum from the spirit of the Olympics visits. After the unfortunate optics from Pence’s visit and what some viewed as a missed opportunity, Trump sent his daughter, Ivanka Trump, to the closing ceremony of the Games. She had dinner with Moon at the Blue House and briefed him on new sanctions her father would impose on North Korea, then made a public statement to reporters reaffirming the American strategy of “maximum pressure.” Briefed by Pence’s staff, Ms. Trump and her team were “incredibly forceful,” as one official put it, in going over the seating plan for the box and the timing and sequencing of arrivals to avoid any surprises. Ms. Trump proffered a smiling, more open image that went over better in South Korea. She stood for the South Korean athletes, who this time entered the stadium separately from their compatriots from the North, and posed for photographs with famous Korean pop stars. But she too made a point of sending a message; for her guest in the box, she brought Gen. Vincent K. Brooks, commander of American forces in South Korea. When she attended a curling event, Ms. Trump’s team received word that the North Koreans were on their way in what the Americans thought was an effort to make a scene or prompt her to leave in an embarrassing spectacle. Ms. Trump decided to stay, and the North Koreans in the end did not come. With the Olympics over, Moon sent two trusted aides on a two-day trip to Pyongyang: Chung, his national security adviser, and Suh Hoon, his National Intelligence Service director. Flying north, they knew that they were meeting Kim but not when. After landing in Pyongyang, they were taken to a riverside guesthouse where they found their rooms equipped with the internet and access to foreign television channels, including CNN. They could even surf South Korean websites, a rare privilege in the totalitarian state. As soon as they unpacked, Kim Yong-chol, a general who heads inter-Korean relations, showed up and said that they were meeting Kim that evening. Black limousines took the South Koreans to Azalea Hall in the ruling Workers’ Party headquarters, Kim’s workplace. They found Kim and his sister waiting to greet them with broad smiles. Chung and Suh were the first South Koreans to set foot inside the party headquarters since the Korean War. Chung had barely launched into his talking points when Kim said “I know” and “I understand you.” Then he laid out his proposal: talks with the United States on denuclearizing his country; a suspension of nuclear and missile tests during the talks; and his understanding that the United States and South Korea must proceed with annual joint military exercises. The South Koreans found Kim to be an extremely confident leader. He was closely following foreign news media, knew how he was depicted, and even joked about it. He had studied Moon’s speeches and overtures toward the North. He even joked about his missile launches. “I was sorry to hear that President Moon Jae-in had to convene his National Security Council meetings early in the morning because of our missile launchings,” he told the South Koreans. “Now, he won’t lose his early morning sleep any more.” Kim agreed to open a direct hotline to Moon. “Now if working-level talks are deadlocked and if our officials act like arrogant blockheads, President Moon can just call me directly and the problem will be solved,” he said. And, he added, he was eager to hold a summit meeting with his South Korean counterpart. The South Koreans suggested Pyongyang, Seoul and Panmunjom as possible sites and asked Kim to choose. Kim said he would come to the Peace House, a South Korean building inside Panmunjom. The meeting and dinner, complete with wines and traditional Korean liquor, lasted from 6 p.m. to 10:12 p.m. with much laughter and bonhomie. After returning to Seoul on March 6, the South Korean officials briefed Moon and then South Korean reporters. After his news conference, Chung called General McMaster and told him that he was carrying a message from Kim to Trump. Only several people at the Blue House knew that the message included a proposal for a meeting with Trump. Chung and Suh flew to Washington, arriving on the morning of March 8. By the afternoon, they were at the White House, meeting separately with General McMaster and Gina Haspel, the deputy C.I.A. director. The four then got together and were soon joined by other American officials, including Pence, Mattis, Dan Coats, the national intelligence director, Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., the Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, and John F. Kelly, the White House chief of staff. Joined by their ambassador to Washington, the South Korean visitors were not supposed to meet with Trump until the next day, but when he heard they were in the building, he called them to the Oval Office. Kim’s invitation to meet was not a complete surprise to Trump’s team. An American official said they had learned
about it from intelligence agencies, so that morning, before the arrival of the South Koreans, Trump talked by phone with Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson, who was traveling in Africa, about the possibility. What he did not tell Tillerson was that he would accept. Trump was eager enough, however, that once he said yes, they discussed a meeting as early as next month. The South Koreans suggested it would be better to wait until after Moon’s summit meeting with Kim in April, which led to a target of May. Not only did Trump surprise the South Koreans by accepting immediately, he even suggested that they make the public announcement right there and then at the White House. A stunned Chung retreated to General McMaster’s office to draft a statement in collaboration with the Americans. Then, using a secure telephone line, he called Moon early in the morning in Seoul to get his approval. Elated, Trump stuck his head into the White House briefing room to tell reporters there would be an important announcement soon, something he had never done before. Some of the president’s advisers objected to the idea of a foreign official making a statement from the White House lectern, so they had him do it instead on the White House driveway, where visitors typically speak with reporters. Still, it was highly unusual for a foreign official to announce an American president’s decision in a major international situation. Trump’s quick decision caught many off guard, including Tillerson and American allies. Congressional leaders and top officials at the Pentagon and the State Department learned what was happening from news reports. The fact that it came on the same day that the president slapped stiff new tariffs on imported steel that would hit South Korea and Japan hard indicated how hasty and unplanned it was. While Chung headed to the driveway, Trump hurriedly called Prime Minister Abe Shinzo of Japan to let him know. Abe has worked assiduously to cultivate a close relationship with Trump and taken a hard line on North Korea, but he was left out of the loop, a fact that stung. “I have an impression that the Japanese are not quite well informed,” said Mine Yoshihiko, head of a previous Japanese delegation seeking normalized relations with North Korea. “What we have been told is awfully out of tune, I should say.” Trump did not reach President Xi Jinping of China until the next morning “President Xi told me he appreciates that the U.S. is working to solve the problem diplomatically rather than going with the ominous alternative,” the president wrote on Twitter on Saturday. “China continues to be helpful!” But in response to Trump’s planned meeting, China is engaged in what some call “exclusion anxiety,” (?) worried about being shut out. China would like the meeting to be held in Beijing, where six-nation talks were held with North Korea during President George W. Bush’s administration, but Chinese analysts doubt Kim would agree. To his advisers, Trump has said he is impressed that Kim at such a young age has outmaneuvered almost everyone, but he has added that the North Korean leader is a wild card. Of course, so is he. Trump vacillates between confidence and fatalism when it comes to North Korea. For the moment, he is optimistic. “North Korea has not conducted a Missile Test since November 28, 2017 and has promised not to do so through our meetings,” he wrote on Twitter on March 10. “I believe they will honor that commitment!” (Peter Baker and Choe Sang-Hun, “With Snap ‘Yes,’ Trump Rolls Dice On North Korea,” New York Times, March 11, 2018, p. A-1)

Washington’s top diplomat Rex Tillerson, who is in Ethiopia on his first-ever Africa tour, said, “I think as President Trump has indicated, (there are) potentially positive signals coming from North Korea by way of their intra-Korean dialogue with South Korea.” But “in terms of direct talks... we're a long way from negotiations, we just need to be very clear-eyed and realistic about it,” he told journalists. He said a first step would be “talks about talks” to see if “conditions are right to even begin thinking about negotiations.” (“U.S. ‘a Long Way’ from Negotiations with N. Korea: Tillerson,” AFP, March 8, 2018)

At a dinner hosted by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un for a delegation from the South this week, a bespectacled official leaned forward to talk to a grinning Kim -- a scene captured in a photograph displayed prominently in the North’s largest newspaper. That man, Suh Hoon, is South Korea’s top spy, tasked with running espionage operations targeting the North and analyzing intelligence on potential threats. For years he has also played a central role in behind-the-scenes diplomatic outreach to Pyongyang and its autocratic Kim dynasty. The 63-year-old career intelligence officer was instrumental in back-channel contacts that led to the two inter-Korean
summits in 2000 and 2007. In both those cases, Suh met extensively with Kim’s father, North Korea’s then-leader Kim Jong Il. Suh -- who is set to travel to Washington to brief U.S. officials on his visit to the North and Kim’s assertions that he is open to disarmament talks -- has supported engagement with Pyongyang, while at the same time expressing deep doubts about the North’s trustworthiness and intentions. He is also a vocal supporter of Seoul’s alliance with Washington, and told South Korean lawmakers last year that the country should flatly reject any calls by North Korea to remove U.S. troops from the Korean Peninsula -- even if North Korea promises to dismantle its nuclear programs. Intelligence officers have long played a key role as go-betweens with the North. In 1972, South Korea’s president sent his spy chief on a secret mission to Pyongyang, resulting in the first joint inter-Korean communiqué. Suh, born just months after the cease-fire that halted the Korean War in 1953, has spent much of his adult life focused on the rival regime to the North. He joined his country’s intelligence agency in 1979 and for the next 28 years worked his way up the ranks. In July 1997, he became the first South Korean official to be sent to live in the North, as part of efforts to construct light-water reactors in the North following a 1994 deal between Pyongyang and Washington to freeze North Korea’s nuclear program. For the next two years, Suh lived in Sinpo, a city on North Korea’s east coast. Dealing with his North Korean interlocutors was difficult, he recalled in a 2008 book. "Even small things like the freedom to walk over to a local restaurant, walking by the beachfront near where I stayed and taking care of minor traffic incidents all needed to be negotiated with the North Koreans," he wrote. "These negotiations were never easy." He gained more experience in following years, working to arrange summit meetings between the two sides -- a process that involved spending time with North Korea’s previous leader, Kim Jong Il, the father of Kim Jong Un. "Kim Jong Il was fond of Suh," said Chung Dong-young, a former unification minister and current lawmaker who traveled to the North with Suh in 2005. In that meeting, aimed at persuading North Korea to return to denuclearization talks, Chung said he, Suh, and Kim Jong Il spent five hours together. "Suh is likely to have a lot of small talk he can make with Kim Jong Un. And talking about Kim Jong Un’s father is likely to lighten the mood," Chung said. In 2008, Suh wrote a doctoral dissertation on the aims of North Korea’s nuclear-weapons programs, arguing that they were aimed ultimately at letting Pyongyang strike some kind of security deal with Washington. "The North's pursuit of nuclear weapons cannot persist as an eternal strategy," Suh wrote in his dissertation, which was later published as a book. "Eventually, such a foreign policy will become an institutional constraint limiting North Korea's growth." (Jonathan Cheng and Andrew Jeong. “Seoul’s Top Spy Has Played Key Role in Outreach Efforts,” Wall Street Journal, March 8, 2018)

A day after President Trump accepted an invitation to meet Kim Jong-un of North Korea, the White House began planning a high-level diplomatic encounter so risky and seemingly far-fetched that some of Trump’s aides believe it will never happen. The administration is already deliberating over the logistics and location of the meeting, with a senior State Department diplomat noting that the most obvious venue is the Peace House, a conference building in the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea. But several officials said that the United States still needed to establish direct contact with North Korea to verify the message from Kim that was conveyed by South Korean envoys to Trump yesterday. They warned that Kim could change his mind or break the promises he made about halting nuclear and missile tests during talks. “The United States has made zero concessions, but North Korea has made some promises,” said the press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders. “This meeting won’t take place without concrete actions that match the promises that have been made by North Korea.” The White House later clarified that Sanders was not adding new preconditions to the meeting, but merely emphasizing the consequences if Kim conducted tests or interfered with joint military exercises between the United States and South Korea that are scheduled to begin at the end of March. Tonight, Trump tweeted that “the deal with North Korea is very much in the making,” and that it would be, “if completed, a very good one for the World.” “Time and place to be determined,” he said. The White House’s muddled message highlighted the confusion sowed by Trump’s on-the-spot decision to meet Kim. At the State Department, where some diplomats quietly applauded Trump’s gamble, there was a fear that more hawkish aides in the White House might throw up further hurdles to the meeting. The White House, they said, has invested more in sanctions and military options than in diplomacy. Officials there have in the past expressed frustration about what they viewed as the Pentagon’s reluctance to
provide options for a military strike on the North. With all the potential traps and internal misgivings, some officials said they believed the chances of a meeting between the two leaders actually happening were less than 50 percent. Trump’s decision stunned allies and his own advisers, not least Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson, who was caught unaware while traveling in Africa when the president accepted Kim’s invitation. “This was the most forward-leaning report that we’ve have had in terms of Kim Jong-un’s — not just willingness — but his strong desire for talks,” Tillerson said. “What changed was his posture in a fairly dramatic way that, in all honesty, came as a little bit of a surprise to us.” Tillerson’s lack of involvement in the announcement underscored how marginalized the State Department has become in North Korea policy. Other State Department officials insisted that Tillerson had not been singled out; Trump blindsided all of his advisers. And the secretary, speaking to reporters in Djibouti, argued that Trump’s decision was not the bolt from the blue that it seemed. “This is something that he’s had on his mind for quite some time, so it was not a surprise in any way,” Tillerson said. “He’s expressed it openly before about his willingness to meet with Kim Jong-un.” Privately, however, Trump sounded muted rather than buoyant, according to a person familiar with a round of calls he made Thursday evening to solicit feedback about his surprise move. While the president told people he liked the concept of a once-in-a-lifetime breakthrough, the person said, he struck a less boisterous note than he usually does publicly when he places a bet on himself. But in the past 24 hours, the president has told confidants that he felt vindicated by his decision to accept the invitation for a meeting, suggesting his approach has led to a potential new path. Some advisers in the room with Trump and the South Korean envoys — including Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and the national security adviser, Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster — expressed concerns about a meeting, according to a senior official. But nobody vocally opposed it. Trump also had to mollify a rattled ally, Japan, which got no advance notice of his decision. In a call, the president reassured Prime Minister Abe Shinzo Abe that the United States would not ease its pressure campaign on North Korea. Abe, officials said, asked for a meeting with him. Trump’s call this morning with President Xi Jinping of China was more relaxed. The Chinese have long called for direct talks between the United States and North Korea. American officials said they expected that Xi would offer Beijing as a venue for the meeting. The location is one of a number of unresolved issues, including the size and composition of the delegations and the agenda. Some officials said Trump and Kim would set a broad framework for the talks, and leave the actual negotiating to subsequent sessions with lower-level officials. Even the logistical issues might require a couple of preliminary meetings, they said. (Mark Landler, “Administration Tackles Hurdles of a Kim Meeting,” New York Times, March 10, 2018, p. A-1)

White House spokesperson Sarah Sanders: “Q  Sarah, does the President think that Kim Jong-un is sincere about talking about denuclearization? MS. SANDERS: The President is hopeful that we can make some continued progress. Look, what we know is that the maximum pressure campaign has clearly been effective. We know that it has put a tremendous amount of pressure on North Korea. And they have made some major promises. They’ve made promises to denuclearize. They’ve made promises to stop nuclear and missile testing. And they’ve recognized that regular military exercises between the U.S. and its ally, South Korea, will continue. The maximum pressure campaign, we’re not letting up. We’re not going to step back or make any changes to that. We’re going to continue in that effort, and we’re not going to have this meeting take place until we see concrete actions that match the words and the rhetoric of North Korea. Q  But does he think that Kim Jong-un can be trusted as a negotiating partner? MS. SANDERS: Look, we’re not in the negotiation right now. We’ve accepted the invitation to talk, based on them following through with concrete actions on the promises that they’ve made. … Q  Sarah, why did the President accept this invitation without any preconditions? For example, without demanding that the North Koreans release the three Americans that are being held there. MS. SANDERS: Look, that’s something that we’re going to continue advocating for and pushing for. But let’s not forget that the North Koreans did promise something: They’ve promised to denuclearize, they’ve promised to stop nuclear and missile testing, and they’ve recognized that we’re going to continue in our military exercises. Let’s be very clear: The United States has made zero concessions. But North Korea has made some promises. And, again, this meeting won’t take place without concrete actions that match the promises that have been
made by North Korea. Q And I wanted to follow up on that because you just said that now. Do you think that a two-month time period is enough time to make sure that they will actually fulfill those promises? He said he wants to do it by May. MS. SANDERS: Look, we’re working on the determination of the time. But let’s not be lost in the fact that this didn’t happen overnight. This maximum pressure campaign and this process has been ongoing since the President first took office. For the first time in a long time, the United States is actually having conversations from a position of strength, not a position of weakness, like the one that North Korea finds itself in due to the maximum pressure campaign. Q Does that mean it might not be May? MS. SANDERS: Again, we haven’t set a time or a location. Those things have yet to be determined. Q Sarah, you said they promised to denuclearize. Did they promise to denuclearize or did they promise to talk about denuclearizing? MS. SANDERS: The understanding, the message from the South Korean delegation is that they would denuclearize. And that is what our ultimate goal has always been, and that will have to be part of the actions that we see them take. ...

The U.S. president trumpeted during a March 9 phone call with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe that he had "good news." It was anything but. The U.S. leader's announcement of a planned historic summit meeting by the end of May with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un caught Japan off-guard and dismayed. "It never occurred to us that such a decision would be made at this time," said a high-ranking Foreign Ministry official, describing the shockwaves reverberating in Tokyo. The sudden shift in direction by Donald Trump—from belligerent taunts to dialogue—triggered concern in Japan that it could be kept away from the table on negotiations on the denuclearization of North Korea. Although he was reeling from the ace card played by Trump, Abe went on to tell reporters that the two countries were 100 percent together on the issue. Japanese government officials shared the concern of their U.S. counterparts that "dialogue for dialogue's sake was meaningless." While Abe administration officials felt that dialogue between the United States and North Korea would eventually have to happen, based on their take of Washington's end goal, they never expected direct talks would be in the cards without first consulting Tokyo. Japan had argued that North Korea must take specific steps, such as allowing inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency, before any dialogue or negotiations could be held. Many officials painted a bleak picture of what the sudden change in direction by Trump meant. "The decision was made totally over Japan's head," said a former defense minister. "Japan has been left out of the picture." While dialogue between the United States and North Korea is welcome if it leads to an avoidance of a military confrontation, Japan fears being left as the odd man out because it has been among the most vocal proponents of the highest levels of pressure on Pyongyang. Abe himself cited the "national threat" emanating from North Korea as one of the reasons for calling a snap Lower House election last October. The Abe administration's national security policy could also be called into question by the abrupt change orchestrated by Trump. For one thing, the planned deployment of the Aegis Ashore land-based missile defense system was primarily designed to respond to the military threat from North Korea. There are other potential concerns looming for Japan, given a high-ranking Defense Ministry official's view that "It is inconceivable North Korea would ever abandon any nuclear weapons it got its hands on." For Japan, another key concern is that Washington and Pyongyang may reach an agreement on intercontinental ballistic missiles but not include North Korea's other ballistic projectiles that clearly have Japan within range. For those reasons, Abe is expected to make a pitch to Trump during their next meeting to not move too quickly toward a more conciliatory tone with North Korea. But, as the latest decision shows, it will never be easy to predict what effect any advice or warning will have on the U.S. president. (Matsu Nozomi Matsui and Sonoda Koji, “Japan Shocked to Be Left out in the Cold by Trump on North Korea,” Asahi Shimbun, March 10, 2018)
Sigal: “Donald Trump’s acceptance of an invitation to meet with Kim Jong Un is being treated like another abrupt and risky turnaround by an impulsive president. But critics need to recognize that far from being a reward handed to Kim, this meeting gives new momentum to negotiations. And on the perilous road of confrontation that the United States and North Korea have hurtled down since Trump took office, negotiations are the only off ramp. However risky a summit may be, it poses much less risk than stumbling into war. The mere prospect of a meeting removes that risk for the foreseeable future, which is a major relief for South Korea, whose president deserves credit for his steadfast engagement of the North despite carping from his critics. The Trump administration is insisting that its campaign of maximum pressure was what brought North Korea to the negotiating table, but there was one other move by the president that was at least as important: his willingness to drop all preconditions for talks. Instead, he accepted a promise from Kim to halt nuclear and missile tests — and won’t meet if that promise is not kept. That willingness to drop preconditions has shocked many observers, who are today reacting to the news by saying the president has foolishly granted a meeting without extracting anything meaningful in return. But this reaction is a reminder of how little attention has been paid to Trump’s oft-expressed desire to negotiate with the North Korean leader, which came up frequently during and after his presidential campaign. The media mostly overlooked this, and was instead preoccupied with the back-and-forth insults between Trump and Kim and the talk of war — which the North dismissed as mere bluff. Instead, North Korean diplomats paid close attention to his repeated references to negotiating, and began sending signals of their own. Most visibly, the country’s easing of tensions with the South in the lead-up to the Winter Olympics — and its participation in those games — were seen by some of us who watch the region closely as a sign that the regime wanted to reach out. Today, we are seeing the results. The top priority of this meeting must be sustaining Kim’s promised temporary suspension of nuclear and missile testing “while dialogue continues,” and extending it to fissile material production. A commitment by the United Stated to end enmity and reconcile with the North could open the way – a pledge Washington has made in the past but failed to follow up, leading past deals to collapse. Yet getting this done — and pulling off the necessary and difficult verification of any commitment to suspend nuclear work — will take the kind of experienced negotiators that the seriously understaffed Trump administration currently lacks. The top US diplomat in charge of North Korea policy, Joseph Yun, had been skillfully talking to the North Koreans for the past year until he abruptly retired in late February. Persuading him to reverse his resignation should be a high priority. Both countries could improve the atmosphere for talks by making relatively simple gestures — North Korea could resume the search for the remains of U.S. troops missing in action from the Korean War, or release Americans being held in its prisons, while the U.S. could send even a token amount of humanitarian aid through the World Food Program. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson could get things moving by meeting with his North Korean counterpart. Just as Trump has often expressed an interest in talks, Kim Jong Un’s willingness to meet with the US president is also not a new development, and neither are the outlines of what Kim may be willing to negotiate over. In his New Year’s Day speech he hinted that by nuclear testing could stop now that North Korea has the rudiments of an ICBM and a thermonuclear weapon. He also called on South Korea to end “nuclear war exercises” with the United States, implying that the joint military exercises could continue if nuclear assets were excluded. This week, he told the South Korean envoys he saw “no reason” for his country to maintain a nuclear arsenal “as long as military threats to the North are eliminated and the regime’s security is guaranteed.” That is a tall order to fill, and it will take years for the US and its allies to convince Kim Jong Un that his regime is safe from outside threats. But now is the time to get started and test if he really means what he says.” (Leon V. Sigal, “Meeting with Kim Jong Un Is Risky But Not As Risky As War,” Buzzfeed, March 9, 2018)

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Trump signaled tonight in Pittsburgh that he’s uncertain what is to come. “Who know what’s going to happen?” he said, speaking at campaign rally for Republican congressional candidate Rick Saccone. “I may leave fast or we may sit down and make the greatest deal in the world.” Trump also addressed the potential talks with two tweets this afternoon saying in the first that he had discussed the potential meeting with North Korea “at length” with Chinese President Xi Jinping. “President Xi told me he appreciates that the U.S. is working to solve the problem diplomatically rather than going with the ominous alternative,” Trump wrote. “China continues to
be helpful!” Trump noted in a second tweet that North Korea has not conducted a missile test since Nov. 28, and has “promised not to do so through our meetings.” Trump believes North Korea will honor that commitment, he wrote. (Dan Lamothe, “Defense Secretary Says Questions on North Korea Should Be Handled by State Department,” Washington Post, March 11, 2018)

President Trump claimed to have the backing of the leaders of China and Japan for his high-risk plan to hold a summit with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un. In postings to his Twitter account, Trump said that his decision to agree to a meeting with Kim — which caught Asian capitals, and many in his own administration, by surprise — was being viewed as a positive step by leaders who watched nervously as U.S.-North Korea tensions escalated. Trump said that he and Chinese President Xi Jinping had “spoken at length” about the planned but so far unscheduled summit, and that Xi had said he “appreciates that the U.S. is working to solve the problem diplomatically rather than going with the ominous alternative. China continues to be helpful!” Less than an hour later, Trump tweeted that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was “very enthusiastic about talks with North Korea.” (Greg Miller, “Trump Tweets Claims of Support by China and Japan for Summit with Kim Jong Un,” Washington Post, March 10, 2018) Trump signaled tonight in Pittsburgh that he’s uncertain what is to come. “Who know what’s going to happen?” he said, speaking at campaign rally for Republican congressional candidate Rick Saccone. “I may leave fast or we may sit down and make the greatest deal in the world.” Trump also addressed the potential talks with two tweets Saturday afternoon, saying in the first that he had discussed the potential meeting with North Korea “at length” with Chinese President Xi Jinping. “President Xi told me he appreciates that the U.S. is working to solve the problem diplomatically rather than going with the ominous alternative,” Trump wrote. “China continues to be helpful!” Trump noted in a second tweet that North Korea has not conducted a missile test since November 28, and has “promised not to do so through our meetings.” Trump believes North Korea will honor that commitment, he wrote. Defense Secretary Mattis, asked about the military aspects of the discussions, declined to answer. “If I was on your side of the cabin, I would be doing the same thing.” Mattis told a reporter on his plane asking the question. “But what I want you to understand right now is that every word is going to be … parsed apart across different cultures, and at different times of the day, and in different contexts.” (Dan Lamothe, “Defense Secretary Says Questions about Meeting between U.S., North Korea Should Be Handled by State Department,” Washington Post, March 10, 2018) At the rally, the president expressed confidence that Kim would keep his promise to suspend missile tests. “They’re not going to send missiles up and I believe that, I really do,” Trump said. “I think they want to do something. I think they want to make peace.” Riffing off the incredulity of the latest developments, Trump continued, “A lot of people thought we were going to go to war and then all of a sudden they come and say ‘We’re going to have a meeting and there’s no more missiles going off and they want to denuclearize.’ Nobody had heard that. But they said they are thinking about that.” (Ser Myo-ja, “Kim Is Willing to Dismantle Nukes,” Seoul Says,” JoongAng Ilbo, March 11, 2018)

Max Fisher: “President Trump has accepted North Korea’s invitation for direct talks with Kim Jong-un, the North Korean leader, to be held by May. It’s a big deal, but you’re probably wondering how big of a deal, what it means and how to think about it. It’s impossible to say for sure. But here are seven things I’ve learned in the past few years from covering North Korea, diplomacy and, more recently, the Trump administration’s unusual approach to foreign policy. 1. **Short-term, it reduces the risk of war.** Even just preparing for talks changes North Korean and American incentives in ways that make us all less likely to be obliterated in a fiery nuclear inferno. That’s good! The biggest risk was probably always an accident or miscalculation that slid into unintended war, or maybe a unilateral American strike that escalated out of control. This more or less takes those scenarios off the table. Both sides now have reason to reduce rather than increase tensions, to read one another’s actions as peaceful rather than hostile, and to preserve the diplomatic efforts in which both have invested political capital. Still, that only lasts until the talks themselves. 2. **Mismatched signals may have set up the talks to fail.** Usually, before high-level talks like these, both sides spend a long time telegraphing their expected outcomes. Such signals serve as public commitments, both to the other side of the negotiation and to citizens back home.
It’s a way for both sides to test one another’s demands and offers, reducing the risk of surprise or embarrassment. That is not really how things have proceeded with the United States and North Korea. Trump has already committed to granting North Korea one of its most desired concessions: a high-level meeting between the heads of state. In exchange, North Korea has not publicly committed to anything. It has, quite cannily, channeled its public communications through South Korea, making it easier to renege. Further, Trump has declared “denuclearization” as his minimal acceptable outcome for talks, making it harder for him to accept a more modest (but more achievable!) outcome and costlier for him to walk away. The table is now set in such a way that virtually any outcome is a win for North Korea, but only a very narrow and difficult range of outcomes will save the United States from an embarrassing failure. The North Koreans can walk away more freely, while the Americans will be more desperate to come home with some sort of win. It’s a formulation that puts the Americans at significant disadvantage before talks even begin.

3. **The sides do not agree on the point of talking.** It’s worth belaboring the costs of skipping the usual process of mutual public signaling. South Korean officials have said that, Kim is willing to enter talks for “denuclearization” — there’s that word again — which is perhaps why Trump seems to believe this will happen. But Duyeon Kim, a Seoul-based analyst, writes in a column in the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists that “denuclearization” means vastly different things to the United States and North Korea. Americans understand the word as describing North Korea’s full nuclear disarmament, which is very difficult to imagine happening. But North Koreans, she writes, tend to mean it as a kind of mutual and incremental disarmament in which the United States also gives up weapons. Normally, the United States and North Korea would have issued months, even years, of public statements on their goals for direct talks, to clear all this up. But, again, the Americans have made splashy public commitments while letting the North Koreans get by without doing the same.

4. **The Trump administration has gotten the process backward.** It’s practically an axiom of international diplomacy that you only bring heads of state together at the very end of talks, after lower-level officials have done the dirty work. Negotiators need to be free to back down from demands. Or to contradict themselves. Or to play good cop, bad cop. Or to walk away. Lower-level officials can lose face or sacrifice credibility for the sake of talks. Heads of state are much too constrained. Robert E. Kelly, a professor at South Korea’s Pusan National University, wrote on Twitter that, in a more typical process, “there would be a series of concessions and counter-concessions building trust and credibility over time (likely years) eventually rising to a serious discussion of denuclearization.” Instead, the Trump administration is jumping straight to the last step. There is little obvious gain in skipping over a process that is intended to lock North Korea into public commitments, test what is achievable and ensure maximum American leverage and flexibility. There is potentially significant downside, though. Victor Cha, a well-respected North Korea expert, warns in a *New York Times* Op-Ed essay, “Failed negotiations at the summit level leave all parties with no other recourse for diplomacy.”

5. **The State Department is in a shambles.** Wouldn’t this be a good moment to have an American ambassador to South Korea? Or an undersecretary of state for arms control and international security? Both posts are empty. The desk for assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific affairs is occupied by a respected but interim official who has clashed with the White House. Her boss, the undersecretary for political affairs, is retiring. Trump lacks the institutional support and assistance that more experienced presidents found essential. There will be fewer high-level diplomats to run parallel talks, fewer midlevel officials to assist and brief the president, fewer analysts to feel out North Korean intentions and capabilities. This is why the emerging conventional wisdom among analysts, as summed up by the Economist, is that “Mr. Trump — a man who boasts about his television ratings, and who is bored by briefings and scornful of foreign alliances — could end up being played like a gold-plated violin.”

**Everything could turn on the president’s personality.** Trump’s headstrong personalization of North Korea policy may be the most significant aspect of all this. It means that talks and their outcome will be determined, to an unprecedented degree, by Trump’s personal biases and impulses. By his mood at the time of talks. By his particular style of negotiation. Kelly expressed concern over Trump’s “chaotic management style, erratic, moody personality and chronic staffing problems.” He added, “That’s not ideology talking. I am a registered Republican and worked once for a G.O.P. congressman.” Trump’s negotiating record as president, mostly focused on domestic legislative matters, is instructive. He has tended to oscillate unpredictably between policies, throwing talks over the budget or health care into chaos. He has
set members of his own party against one another, weakening their position against Democrats. And he has offered the Democrats sweeping concessions on a whim, to the surprise of his party. When legislative efforts have stalled, Trump has at times lashed out. In domestic politics, that can mean publicly denigrating his target or pressuring them to resign. In a heavily militarized standoff between nuclear powers, the stakes would be higher. “If Trump gets all valedictory over simple willingness to talk, he may also tack hard in the other direction when hopes are dashed,” Mira Rapp-Hooper, a senior fellow at the Center for New American Security, wrote on Twitter. 7.

**North Korea has already achieved a symbolic victory.** For North Korea, high-level talks are a big win in their own right. Kim seeks to transform his country from a rogue pariah into an established nuclear power, a peer to the United States, a player on the international stage. That wins Kim international acknowledgment and heightened status, as well as significant domestic credibility. “Kim is not inviting Trump so that he can surrender North Korea’s weapons,” Jeffrey Lewis, a Korea expert at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, wrote on Twitter. “Kim is inviting Trump to demonstrate that his investment in nuclear and missile capabilities has forced the United States to treat him as an equal.” That’s been a North Korean priority since the 1990s. Trump is granting Kim that victory, thereby surrendering one of the United States’ last remaining opportunities to extract something from North Korea, without getting anything demonstrable in return. North Korea is likely to enter talks with other goals, and the United States does wield other leverage, so it could yet come to something. But with this concession granted and the two parties not even sure of one another’s positions on other matters, that may be the end of it.” (Max Fisher, “Just How Big a Deal Is the Plan to Meet?” The Interpreter, New York Times, March 10, 2018, p. A-6)

President Trump ousted his secretary of state, Rex W. Tillerson, extending a shake-up of his administration, 14 months into his tumultuous presidency, and potentially transforming the nation’s economic and foreign policy. Trump announced he would replace Tillerson with Mike Pompeo, the C.I.A. director and former Tea Party congressman, who forged a close relationship with the president and is viewed as being more in sync with Trump’s America First credo. Tillerson learned he had been fired this morning when a top aide showed him a tweet from Trump announcing the change, according to a senior State Department official. But he had gotten an oblique warning of what was coming on March 9 from the White House chief of staff, John F. Kelly, who called to tell him to cut short a trip to Africa and advised him “you may get a tweet.” It was an abrupt end — after months of speculation — to a rocky tenure for a former oil executive who never meshed with the president who hired him. Tillerson clashed repeatedly with the White House staff and broke publicly with Trump on issues ranging from the dispute between Saudi Arabia and Qatar to the American response to Russia’s cyber aggression. “We were not really thinking the same,” Trump told reporters at the White House. He added: “Really, it was a different mind-set, a different thinking.” Trump announced his decision on Twitter. At the State Department this afternoon, Tillerson said the president had called him from Air Force One just after noon — more than three hours after Trump had tweeted the news of his firing to his 49 million followers — to inform him personally of the dismissal. Tillerson said he planned to immediately step aside from his post, turning over all responsibilities by the end of the day to John J. Sullivan, the deputy secretary of state. During a short statement in a briefing room packed with reporters, Tillerson said he would end his service at midnight on March 31, but was encouraging his policy planning team and undersecretaries and assistant secretaries “to remain in their posts and continue in our mission at the State Department.” He took no questions and left the briefing room. The firing of Tillerson caught even the White House staff by surprise. Just the day before, a White House spokesman berated a reporter for suggesting there was any kind of split between Tillerson and the White House because of disparate comments on Russian responsibility for a poison attack in Britain. But a senior administration official said that Trump decided to replace Tillerson now to have a new team in place before upcoming talks with Kim Jong-un, the North Korean leader he plans to meet by May. The president also wanted a new chief diplomat for various ongoing trade negotiations. The White House’s purge extended to Tillerson’s inner circle. The undersecretary of state for public affairs, Steve Goldstein, was fired, and the status was unclear of Tillerson’s chief of staff, Margaret Peterlin, and his deputy chief of staff, Christine Ciccone. At the C.I.A., Pompeo will be replaced by the current deputy director, Gina Haspel, who
will be the first woman to head the spy agency. Both she and Pompeo would need confirmation by the Senate to take the positions. Trump said Pompeo “has earned the praise of members in both parties by strengthening our intelligence gathering, modernizing our defensive and offensive capabilities, and building close ties with our friends and allies in the international intelligence community.” “I have gotten to know Mike very well over the past 14 months, and I am confident he is the right person for the job at this critical juncture,” the president continued, in a written statement distributed by the White House. “He will continue our program of restoring America’s standing in the world, strengthening our alliances, confronting our adversaries, and seeking the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” Pompeo, a former congressman, has become a favorite of Trump’s, impressing the president with his engaging approach during morning intelligence briefings. But he also, at times, has been at odds with the president — including agreeing with a C.I.A. assessment about Russia’s interference in the 2016 elections. Early enthusiasm for bringing a business sensibility to the State Department faded fast, as Tillerson seemed overwhelmed by the diplomatic challenges before him and isolated by career foreign service officers whom he often froze out of the most important debates. His profound disagreements with the president on policy appeared to be his undoing: Tillerson wanted to remain part of the Paris climate accord; Trump decided to leave it. Tillerson supported the continuation of the Iran nuclear deal; Trump loathed the deal as “an embarrassment to the United States.” And Tillerson believed in dialogue to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis, but Trump repeatedly threatened military options. While other cabinet officers made their goals plain, Tillerson never set clear diplomatic priorities other than to pursue Trump’s slogan of “America First,” a term he never really defined. In an odd admission more than eight months into the job, Tillerson told employees in September that his top priority was to make the State Department more efficient. Yet he never fully addressed what diplomats should be doing with that greater efficiency. Congress rebelled, declining to endorse his suggested 30 percent cuts in the State Department’s budget. But the message of his tenure seemed clear: At a moment when money was being poured into the Pentagon and intelligence agencies, diplomacy seemed less valued than at any time in recent American history. The turning point for Tillerson came when NBC News reported that he had called the president a “moron,” leading him to take the extraordinary step of holding a news conference to affirm his support for Trump and insist that he had never considered resigning. During a trip to Beijing in September, Tillerson told reporters that he already had “a couple, three” lines into North Korea to get communication started with the United States. Trump erupted the next morning, and denigrated the effort on Twitter by saying Tillerson was “wasting his time trying to negotiate with Little Rocket Man.” “Save your energy Rex,” he added, “we’ll do what has to be done!” Trump later said he wished his secretary of state were tougher. The Chinese were left to wonder why Trump sent an emissary whose message the president did not believe in. Part of the reason for Trump’s eruption then was that Tillerson’s suggestion of secret talks with North Korea surprised President Moon Jae-in of South Korea, who called the White House to complain, according to people with knowledge of the exchange. That Tillerson failed to take into account Seoul’s possible reaction was one of several embarrassing stumbles, arising from his own inexperience and decision to insulate himself from the department’s diplomatic corps. Tillerson had some successes, including the growing international isolation of North Korea and improved ties between Saudi Arabia and Iraq. But he is likely to go down as among the least successful secretaries of state in history, and one big reason was his poor management of his relationship with Trump. Once the head of the Boy Scouts of America, Tillerson was outraged when the president spoke to the Boy Scouts in July and turned it into a political event. When Trump declined to denounce white nationalists who paraded in Charlottesville in August, Tillerson made it clear that Trump “speaks for himself.” But perhaps the most puzzling part of Tillerson’s tenure was his poor oversight of the State Department. As a former top business executive, his managerial skills were thought to be his chief asset. But he failed to quickly pick a trusted team of leaders, left many critical departments without direction and all but paralyzed crucial decision making in the department. He rarely sat for comprehensive briefings with many of his top diplomats and often failed to consult the State Department’s experts on countries before visiting. Foreign diplomats — starting with the British and the French — said Tillerson neither returned phone calls nor, with much advance warning, set up meetings with his counterparts. Strategic dialogues with many nations, including nuclear weapons powers like Pakistan, were ended without explanation. The State Department’s policymaking process
devolved into conversations between Tillerson and a lone top aide, neither of whom had much experience or knowledge about many of the countries they discussed. Tillerson became so isolated that even top administration officials like Pompeo and allies like Condoleezza Rice, the former secretary of state whose recommendation was crucial to his selection, had trouble penetrating a phalanx of staff to speak to him directly. “The relationship between top management and the bulk of the State Department was toxic,” said Ambassador James F. Jeffrey, a former senior diplomat and fellow at the Washington Institute who once worked with Tillerson. “And that was a total mystery because the people at the State Department would work for the devil if he is advancing American interests, which Tillerson was.” (Peter Baker, Gardiner Harris, and Mark Landler, “Trump Fires Rex Tillerson and Will Replace Him with Mike Pompeo,” New York Times, March 13, 2018) The move would also put Pompeo, who has been immersed in the details of Pyongyang’s nuclear program, in a central role in running the negotiations with Kim Jong-un, the North Korean dictator whom Trump has said he will meet by May. For all the criticisms of Tillerson — and there were many, particularly in the State Department as he moved to slash its size — he was considered a restraining influence on Trump. Pompeo, in contrast, has been an enthusiastic defender of the president’s policies, to the point that many senior current and former C.I.A. officials worried that he was far too political for the job. In his public comments — including his dubious contention on March 12 that Trump has done more to constrain North Korea than any other president — Pompeo seemed to know that he would probably soon switch from giving the president his daily intelligence brief to carrying out Trump’s blunt America First vision worldwide. “We’ve had a very good chemistry right from the beginning,” Trump told reporters at the White House this morning. Tillerson and Jim Mattis, the defense secretary, had run something of a tag team to keep the president in check, finding common ground on policies from the Middle East to East Asia before stepping into the Situation Room. One senior administration official who often sat in the backbenches of those meetings last week described Trump’s growing frustration at being hemmed in by his two principal national security cabinet members. That seems particularly true on Iran, and Trump singled out that issue today as he was preparing to leave for California. He said he and Tillerson “disagree on things.” “When you look at the Iran deal — I think it’s terrible. I guess he thought it was O.K.,” the president said. “I wanted to either break it or do something. And he felt a little bit differently.” It was clear in recent months that Tillerson and Trump were barely talking. The frequent dinners the chief diplomat shared with the president last spring, when the two men were forming their views of how to approach the world, had ended. Pompeo’s rise will solve one central problem in American diplomacy over the past year: When Tillerson spoke, few thought he was speaking on behalf of the president. “It creates the possibility that someone who is up to speed with the issues, and has a comfortable working relationship with the president, is now in the chair,” said Richard Haass, who served several Republicans and Democrats in senior State Department and National Security Council positions. America’s interlocutors will now believe the secretary of state “is speaking with the power and backing of the president.” Perhaps the biggest unknown in the ascension of Pompeo is how it will affect any negotiations with North Korea. He has warned many times, since last summer, that Kim is “a few months” away from acquiring the ability to strike the United States with a nuclear weapon. That is based on a calculation of how long it will take the North to solve the final problems of designing a warhead that can survive re-entry into the atmosphere atop an intercontinental missile. Pompeo has also been in charge of an active covert campaign against the North, which he has alluded to elliptically on several occasions. The question now is whether that covert effort — believed to include sabotage of North Korea’s supply chain and renewed cyberattacks on its missile and nuclear programs — will buy Trump enough time, and leverage, to make a negotiation work. No agency has been more skeptical about the chances of Kim’s giving up his arsenal than the C.I.A. itself, under Pompeo. In a presentation last fall at George Washington University, one of the agency’s top Korea analysts said that in the C.I.A.’s view, no amount of sanctions pressure would persuade Kim that it was worth giving up the weapons that he believes are his only defense from having his country overrun by the United States and its allies. Associates of Pompeo say he shares that view — which suggests that while he may soon be running the North Korea negotiations, his expectations of success are limited. In retrospect, today’s shift could explain some comments Pompeo made over the weekend. In interviews on Fox and CBS, he said he had spent part of the weekend reviewing the C.I.A.’s internal history of American negotiations with North Korea for
the past quarter-century. That would have been an odd way for a C.I.A. director to spend his reading time; it makes a lot of sense for a future secretary of state. (David E. Sanger, “Pompeo and Trump Share a Worldview, And Some Are Worried,” *New York Times*, March 14, 2018, p. A-13)

Gen. Vincent Brooks will leave his post as commander of United States Forces Korea (USFK) as early as this summer, according to various Korean government sources. “Brooks has expressed his plans to quit his post as commander of the Combined Forces Command in July or August,” one government source told *JoongAng Ilbo*. “However, he has not officially informed the Korean Ministry of National Defense or military authorities yet.” Past USFK commanders who served for just two years were generally transferred to another four-star general post. It has been customary for chiefs of the ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command who served a three-year term to retire from the military afterward. As a commander, Brooks is considered to be understanding of Korea’s positions and worked well with U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis. Brooks previously served under Mattis when the Pentagon chief served as commander of United States Central Command from 2010 to 2013, and Brooks is known to be trusted by Mattis. The government source said, “Brooks did not reveal the reason for leaving the post but it seems to be because of personal reasons.” The Korean Ministry of National Defense and military officials expected Brooks to stay in his post longer and are perplexed, especially as he is considered a commander who understands Korea very well. A successor to Brooks has yet to be decided. (Lee Chul-jae and Sarah Kim, “Brooks Will Step down as USFK Chief: Gov’t Sources,” *JoongAng Ilbo*, March 15, 2018)

The government plans to explore the possibility of a summit between Prime Minister Abe Shinzo and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un as it considers adopting a new way of dealing with Pyongyang, government sources said. The decision came after Abe and other officials were briefed by Suh Hoon, one of the South Korean envoys who spoke with Kim in breakthrough talks in Pyongyang last week. While the Abe administration has long advocated a cautious stance in holding dialogue with North Korea, it now anticipates there is a fresh chance to make progress toward resolving the issue of North Korea’s abductions of Japanese nationals in the 1970s and 1980s, the sources said. “If we’re to resolve the abduction issue, direct dialogue with the top — Kim Jong Un — is essential,” a source at Abe’s office said. A high-ranking government official also expressed expectations for a Tokyo-Pyongyang summit. North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs will be discussed at a U.S.-North Korea summit, the official said, adding, “Japan and North Korea can discuss (at a summit) the abduction issue and the normalization of bilateral ties.” Abe plans to visit the United States early next month and meet Trump to coordinate their North Korea policies ahead of what will be the first-ever meeting between a sitting U.S. president and a North Korean leader. “In the event that we do hold (a summit with North Korea), we will need to watch the actions of both the United States and South Korea, and look for an effective time,” a government source said. “Everything starts from here on,” a senior Foreign Ministry official told reporters. The Foreign Ministry already has its eyes on the resumption of dialogue with North Korea, having decided on a plan to spread the message that Japan is aiming to normalize ties with the North, not just demand an end to its nuclear and missile development and a resolution to the abduction issue. The Abe administration has described North Korea as having taken advantage of previous frameworks for dialogue in order to buy time to further develop its weapons. But the South Korean president’s office said in a statement Tuesday that Abe told Suh, director of the country’s National Intelligence Service, he does not think North Korea will merely use the upcoming summits for that purpose. (Kyodo, “Japan to Explore Possibility of Summit with North Korean Leader, Sources Say,” *Japan Times*, March 13, 2018)

Over the past decades, the US and North Korea have accused each other of violating previous accords since what is known as the first nuclear crisis in 1993 when North Korea threatened to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. A case in point was North Korea’s failure to honor the 1994 “Agreed Framework,” under which the North committed to freezing its illicit plutonium weapons program in exchange for light-water nuclear reactors, heavy fuel and normalized relations with the U.S. Robert Gallucci, who served as the chief US negotiator of the
Agreed Framework during the Clinton administration, said that while North Korea stuck to the deal with regards to plutonium, it had secretly engaged in uranium enrichment after receiving transfers from Pakistani nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan. “They cheated, and we caught them,” Gallucci said in an interview with CNBC on March 10. “From their perspective, they weren’t cheating, they were hedging, and we failed to normalize relations with them, which was a key to that deal in 1994.” “I was under the impression that Kim Jong-un wants to draw up the major blueprints for all the issues that block its relations with South Korea and the U.S.,” Suh Hoon, head of South Korea’s National Intelligence Agency, told Chosun Ilbo on his way to Washington after meeting with Kim on May 5. Those “stumbling blocks” include North Korea’s nuclear and missile program. During his six years in power, Kim has seen his country make significant progress in missile technology and vowed to massively produce missile capable of reaching the US mainland. When he served as a university professor before becoming the spy agency’s chief, Suh suspected that Kim’s decision to walk away from the leap day deal stemmed from the fact that the young leader needed to appease hawkish generals as he had not yet consolidated his power. “Given that this is a leadership meeting, it’s fair to assume that they will be productive, at least in an agreement on issues related to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and on security assurances for North Korea,” DeTrani told the Korea Herald. For DeTrani, the successful model for the US-North Korea talks is the September 19, 2005 Joint Statement, under which North Korea agreed to complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of its nuclear programs, in return for security assurances and other deliverables. But the skepticism persists that the meeting may end up the same way as the previous failed negotiations as North Korea has continued to use the end of the US’ “hostile policy” as a condition for giving up its nuclear and missile programs. “The prospective meeting between Trump and Kim Jong-un will be the same,” Gary Samore, who negotiated with North Korea during the Clinton administration and served as President Barack Obama’s arms-control coordinator, told the Korea Herald. “Previous negotiations failed because North Korea has a very strong determination to possess nuclear weapons and the United States lacks sufficient pressure or inducements to persuade North Korea to give them up.” (Yeo Jun-suk, “Failure of Past Deals Hangs over N.K. Talks,” Korea Herald, March 14, 2018)

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Trump: “...And then you hear about the free traders, because I'm a free trader, but I'm like, I want to be a smart trader, I want to be a fair trader. It's so unfair what's happened to our country, and I don't know, the politicians have lost their way. In some cases like South Korea you know they're making a fortune. Well we backed them many years ago. But we never trade — you know when they became rich we never changed the deal. So we were backing, backing, backing. And no politician ever changed the deal. Now we have a very big trade deficit with them, and we protect them. So we lose money on trade, and we lose money on the military. We have right now 32,000 soldiers on the border between North and South Korea. Let's see what happens. Think I've done a good job with that one. That's sort of interesting. People are saying, oh, his rhetoric is terrible. He's going to go — well, the rhetoric from last 30 years hasn't been so good. It was called appeasement. Please don't do anything. Obama, let's not talk about that. In the meantime, he's making nuclear weapons. He had a test, they had a test of a nuclear weapon about a year ago, and it registered as an 8.6. Now, you heard of that, on the Richter scale, right? So they said, man, there was an earthquake. Eight point six someplace in Asia. Where was it? Oh it was in North Korea. It wasn't — it was a nuclear test, and it shifted a mountain — it was a real mountain. This isn't like a little, you know, ten-foot deal. It's not a hill. And it actually shifted. That's the power. So they're all saying, his rhetoric is terrible and so tough. Little Rocket Man, you know all this stuff. It's so terrible. He's going to get us into a war. Well, you know what's going to get us into a war is weakness. [Applause.] [Unintelligible.] Massive sanctions on North Korea. Massive, like nobody's ever been sanctioned. And in all fairness, China has really helped at the border. They could help more, but they've done more for us than they've done for any president, that I can tell you. So here's a funny subject — everybody's saying, oh, he's going to get us in trouble, in trouble. Then three weeks ago, you hear, we'd love to go to the Olympics and participate. Everybody's like, what? Where did that come from? So they participate in the Olympics, that's nice. Then the delegation comes over from South Korea and they just left North Korea, and they said Mr. President, Kim Jong Un would love to meet with you. And he will not do any testing and he will
The White House has created a working group to prepare for the landmark meeting between President Trump and Kim Jong-un of North Korea. But Trump’s sudden ousting on Tuesday of Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson could delay critical elements of the planning until the Senate confirms his successor, Mike Pompeo. Few officials expect Pompeo’s arrival at the State Department to derail the meeting itself, as long as the president and Kim remain committed to it. But Tillerson’s departure deprives the White House of the person most experienced in efforts to reach out to North Korea. Pompeo will not be able to establish contact with the South Korean foreign minister, let alone his North Korean counterpart, until the Senate approves his nomination — a process that officials on Capitol Hill said could take several weeks. The White House has not yet even completed the paperwork to begin that process, the officials said. Adding to the confusion is the lack of official confirmation of a meeting from North Korea. Trump’s national security adviser, Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, traveled to New York on March 12 to brief members of the United Nations Security Council about the president’s decision to meet with Kim. General McMaster said the invitation vindicated the president’s strategy of imposing “maximum pressure” on the North. But he also counseled caution, according to a person who heard him speak, laying not do missile launches, and he would love to meet with you. I said really? Well. That's good. I said how did that happen. And he said well, you're having an impact. They go out to the press, and the press is there, they were — you never saw so many reporters. Because they heard there was a big announcement on North Korea. So the worst, like CNN, you know, fake news? Erin Burnett said this make him a great president. [Applause.] Right? She said it. She'll probably lose her job. But she actually said that — this could make him a great president. Even the worst — for two hours, three hours they couldn't believe. They said, did you hear what ha — they're looking at each other. Can you believe? Where did this come from, after 25, 30 years, where did this come from? You believe what just come from after 25 30 years from And then it happened. A day later, “Obama could have done that, too.” Obama could not have done it. [“No way,” crowd replies.] It's really, you know, it's really sad. Now, it was almost, you had to smile, because it's so out of control. But what I heard — and I woke up the next morning and said, finally I'm getting some great stuff — because got things, the taxes, the this, they were — a lot of stuff. ...Reporters. Professionals. The ones you see hating all the time. I say, this is the most incredible thing, we've never seen anything like it. But by the time you woke up the next morning, they had a new line: Anybody could've done it. Obama could have met. Bush could have met. I don't know how many Bush fans are in here. But Bush could have — [Laughter.] But they couldn't have met. Because nobody would've done what I did to set the table. And this suffering, I don't want them to suffer. But they're suffering. Lack of food, lack of everything. Nobody would've done that. So you see the narrative change, because now they're saying it will take at least two months to be able to negotiate. And so these are the people who say you will take two months to be able to negotiate. He shouldn't go there. And the greatest line is, President Trump has agreed to meet — these are people who say I can't believe it. Unbelievable. This is great news. This is the biggest thing that's happened in 40 years. The next day: President Trump has conceded a meeting with Kim Jong Un. Because he has met, he has already given them a victory because he's agreed to meet. I mean [unintelligible] media, right? [Applause.] The greatest is when, you know, you're watching them, and these are the people who were so afraid it was going to be — and then they say, and they say it was incredible and then they get back and their bosses tell them what to say. But they say maybe he's not the one to negotiate. He's got, he's got very little knowledge of the Korean peninsula, and maybe he's not the one. Maybe we should send in the people that have been playing games and didn't know what the hell they've been doing for 25 years. [Applause.] [Unintelligible.] What we're finding there, and I don't know if you are now, is, it's a beautiful young, beautiful couple that everybody thinks is a star, and he is a star, and I don't know how the press treats you. [Unintelligible.] [Laughter.] Enjoy it while you can. The better you do, the worse they'll [unintelligible.] And I tell this Korea story because it was, it was somewhat of a miracle. It's actually far ahead of schedule. And you know, you hear that we're making a major concession by agreeing to the meeting, you know, it's the craziest thing. But go back a couple of weeks earlier and listen to what — they were petrified. [Unintelligible.] They were afraid of being blown up. Then all of a sudden they say let's not meet. [Unintelligible.] [Laughter.] And I woke up the next morning and said, finally I'm getting some great stuff. But Tillerson's departure deprives the White House of the person most experienced in efforts to reach out to North Korea. But Trump’s sudden ousting on Tuesday of Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson could delay critical elements of the planning until the Senate confirms his successor, Mike Pompeo. Few officials expect Pompeo’s arrival at the State Department to derail the meeting itself, as long as the president and Kim remain committed to it. But Tillerson’s departure deprives the White House of the person most experienced in efforts to reach out to North Korea. 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out the possible hurdles and reaffirming that the sanctions needed to be kept in place. Matthew Pottinger, the National Security Council’s senior director for Asia, offered the diplomats a litany of reasons previous negotiations with North Korea had failed. Even inside the White House, some officials express regret that Victor Cha was blocked. Among those now under consideration for the post, according to a person briefed by the White House, are two retired generals who commanded troops in South Korea: Walter L. Sharp and James D. Thurman. With no ambassador in place and the State Department in flux, Pottinger and his staff are handling much of the preparations for the meeting. But the National Security Council is itself on edge, amid persistent rumors that General McMaster might soon depart. Even in a hawkish administration, Pompeo’s statements about North Korea have been hardline. Last summer, speaking at the Aspen Security Forum, he came as close as any official in calling for the removal of Kim. “The thing that is the most dangerous about it is the character who holds the control over” North Korea’s nuclear arsenal, Pompeo said. “From the administration’s perspective, the most important thing we can do is separate those two. Right?” he continued. “Separate capacity and someone who might well have intent, and break those two apart.” Pompeo’s C.I.A. background could help him assess the authenticity of the North Korean offer. But with no diplomatic experience, he will not be able to offer Trump much advice on how to handle Kim or how to approach a complex negotiation. Given all those limitations, said Jeffrey A. Bader, a former Asia adviser to President Barack Obama, Trump should consider appointing a special negotiator to take charge after his initial meeting with Kim. “They got two months to pull this together,” Bader said. “They don’t have language from the horse’s mouth on North Korea’s offer, don’t have clarity on a plausible U.S. objective, don’t have a venue, don’t have a date — and they’ve got no experienced negotiator.” (Mark Landler, “Cabinet Changes Could Delay Kim Meeting,” New York Times, March 15, 2018, p. A-11)

North Korea’s foreign minister flew to Sweden amid speculation that the country could be used as a venue for hammering out details of the planned talks between President Trump and Kim Jong-un, or could be the site of the talks themselves. Ri was seen at the Beijing airport with Choe Kang-il, the deputy director general for North American affairs at the North Korean Foreign Ministry, Yonhap reported. Sweden’s prime minister, Stefan Löfven, said on March 10 that he was willing to host a meeting between Trump and Kim. “If we can help in any way, we will do it,” Löfven said at a news conference. During Ri’s two-day trip to Stockholm, he will meet with Margot Wallstrom, Sweden’s foreign minister, the Swedish government said in a statement. The newspaper Dagens Nyheter said the talks would not include American or South Korean officials, but added that the United States and South Korea had been involved in preparations for the talks with Ri. Ri’s trip to Sweden came as South Korea’s foreign minister, Kang Kyung-wha, traveled to Washington today to meet with State Department officials with the aim of keeping a Trump-Kim meeting on track. “It is necessary to maintain close coordination at various levels in making preparations for critical diplomatic events going forward,” Ms. Kang said, alluding to relations between Washington and Seoul. Kang was originally supposed to meet with Tillerson, but will instead meet with John Sullivan, the deputy secretary of state, who is now serving as acting secretary. (Gerry Mullaney, “North Korean Envoy in Sweden amid Planning for Trump-Kim Meeting,” New York Times, March 15, 2018)

Outgoing Secretary of State Rex Tillerson struggled for months to secure the nomination of the State Department’s top Asia official, who hawks have accused of being too soft on China. Now that Tillerson is leaving, many inside the administration and in Congress want his potential successor, CIA Director Mike Pompeo, to choose a new nominee to lead U.S. diplomacy in Asia. Foreign service officer Susan Thornton has been serving as the assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific affairs for more than a year — a position with broad influence over U.S. relationships with 31 Asian governments — and she has been under attack inside the administration the entire time. Former White House chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon told the American Prospect that Thornton was too weak on China, and that he was working to prevent her nomination. “I’m getting hawks in. I’m getting Susan Thornton out at State,” he said last August. But he ended up getting fired first. On Air Force One in November, on the way back from President Trump’s trip to Asia, Tillerson personally persuaded Trump to approve Thornton’s nomination. The White House
announced the nomination in December, and Tillerson’s staff said the move was an affirmation of the value of professional diplomats. But now that that Tillerson is out, Thornton’s detractors want Pompeo to pull her nomination and choose someone else. “I will not be supporting the nomination of Susan Thornton,” Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, told me. “During her time at the State Department, she has undermined our strategic allies like Taiwan and downplayed China’s human rights abuses and its export of authoritarianism, favoring smooth bilateral relations with Beijing over a relationship grounded in reciprocity and reality.” Rubio is expected to place a hold on Thornton’s nomination if and when it is approved by the committee. It would not scuttle the nomination outright, but it could delay it long enough for Pompeo to take over at Foggy Bottom and make his own evaluation. “I am hopeful that once Mike Pompeo is confirmed he will ask the President to nominate someone who understands the long-term threat posed by China,” Rubio said. The Florida senator is not alone in his concerns. Several Republican congressional aides and Trump administration officials told me that Thornton, despite being an experienced foreign service officer, is a bad fit on an Asia team that is increasingly hawkish on China. Additionally, Thornton and Mark Lambert, the director for Korea policy at the State Department, have taken over the North Korea portfolio following the retirement of Joseph Yun. Since Pompeo could have a key role in preparing for a potential Trump summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, he may want his own choice to help manage that effort. Throughout the early days of the administration’s review of China policy and the National Security Strategy process, Thornton was seen as prioritizing continuity in U.S.-China relations over challenging Beijing’s increasingly aggressive behavior around the world. “On every tactical question of consequence on Asia since the inauguration, Susan has been opposed to taking serious action to counter Chinese economic and political aggression,” a senior White House official told me. Thornton and her defenders dispute this characterization, though the State Department declined to comment for this article. This dynamic was on display during her February confirmation hearing, during which Rubio pressed her on some specific instances. (Josh Rogin, “Without Tillerson’s Protection a Top State Department Nominee Is in Trouble,” Washington Post, March 15, 2018)

White House statement: “President Donald J. Trump spoke today with President Moon Jae-in of the Republic of Korea to discuss ongoing efforts to prepare for their upcoming engagements with North Korea. Both leaders affirmed the importance of learning from the mistakes of the past, and pledged continued, close coordination to maintain maximum pressure on the North Korean regime. The two leaders agreed that concrete actions, not words, will be the key to achieving permanent denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and President Trump reiterated his intention to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un by the end of May. The two leaders expressed cautious optimism over recent developments and emphasized that a brighter future is available for North Korea, if it chooses the correct path.” (White House, Office of the Spokesman, Readout of President Donald J. Trump’s Call with President Moon Jae-in of the Republic of Korea, March 16, 2018)

The Central Intelligence Agency has emerged as the primary player in President Trump’s audacious diplomatic opening to North Korea, several officials said, conducting back-channel communications and taking a major role in planning Trump’s coming meeting with Kim Jong-un, the country’s ruler. The White House’s decision to use intelligence, rather than diplomatic, channels in communicating with the North Koreans speaks to the influence of Mike Pompeo, the C.I.A. director whom Trump chose this week to replace Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson. It also reflects the State Department’s diminished role in preparing for the riskiest encounter between an American president and a foreign leader in many years. Pompeo, these officials said, has already been dealing with North Korean representatives through a channel that runs between the C.I.A. and its North Korean counterpart, the Reconnaissance General Bureau. And he has been in close touch with the director of South Korea’s National Intelligence Service, Suh Hoon, who American officials said brokered Kim’s invitation to Trump. Pompeo’s deep involvement, officials said, helps explain the timing of Tillerson’s ouster. Pompeo, a hawkish former Army officer and Republican congressman who has spoken about the possibility of regime change in
North Korea, is viewed as more skeptical about engaging with Kim. It is not clear whether he advised the president in advance of his decision to accept the invitation to talk. But he is an astute reader of Trump’s preferences, and even before his nomination as secretary of state had become a vocal defender of the meeting. “President Trump isn’t doing this for theater,” he said last week on Fox News. “He’s going to solve a problem.” Administration officials declined on Friday to say whether Washington had established direct communication with Pyongyang. Asked the same question earlier in the week, they said there had not yet been contact. A spokesman for the C.I.A. declined to comment on the agency’s role, referring questions to the White House. Officials said Suh, the South Korean spy chief, laid the groundwork for Kim’s invitation in negotiations and a subsequent meeting in Pyongyang with Kim Yong-chol, a powerful general who heads inter-Korean relations and used to run North Korea’s intelligence service. Suh was one of two South Korean envoys who visited the White House last week to brief Trump on their meeting with Kim Jong-un in Pyongyang a few days earlier. Now that Pompeo has been promoted, officials said, the use of the intelligence channel is mostly a convenience. But he still needs to be confirmed by the Senate, a process that could take several weeks. By continuing to work through the C.I.A. channel, he can be involved in the planning while he awaits his move to the State Department. Some officials expressed concern about the C.I.A.’s taking the lead in orchestrating a leader-to-leader meeting — work that would normally be the province of the State Department. The intelligence officials on the North Korean side, they said, are unsavory figures, not least Kim Yong-chol himself, who is accused of masterminding the torpedo attack that sank a South Korean Navy ship in 2010, killing 46 sailors, and a deadly artillery attack on a South Korean island. Still, some diplomats said they were not concerned about the C.I.A.’s role, as long as the meeting did not get derailed. The National Security Council has assembled a working group, composed of officials from several agencies, to strategize ahead of the meeting. The group met for the first time this week, and one official said the White House was determined to include people who brought a range of views on North Korea. It is not the first time, officials noted, that intelligence agents have been involved in sensitive diplomacy with North Korea. In 2014, the director of national intelligence, James R. Clapper, traveled secretly to North Korea to negotiate the release of two Americans, Kenneth Bae and Matthew Miller. He got the Americans out, but said afterward that the North Koreans were crestfallen that he did not bring with him an American proposal for a broader diplomatic breakthrough. (Mark Landler, “Spies, Not Diplomats, Take Lead Role in Planning Trump’s Kim Meeting,” New York Times, March 17, 2018, p. A-10)

The government gathered a team to prepare for the North-South Korea summit just forty days ahead, and the topic of interest is now on the summit agenda. In particular, the problem is how the government will reflect previous agreements between the two Koreas including the agreement to promote the declaration of the termination of hostilities and the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in the current new environment ahead of the first ever summit between North Korea and the United States. Cheong Wa Dae is urging the preparation team to focus on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, a permanent peace system, and the joint prosperity of the two Koreas, which President Moon Jae-in presented in a meeting with his senior secretaries and advisors last week. In other words, preparations for the inter-Korean summit will also be made within this range. Among the president’s advisory group, voices argue that the October 4 inter-Korean summit declaration from 2007 is important in preparing for the April summit for it was the last agreement between the leaders of the two Koreas. The October 4 Declaration states that “We share the view that we must end the armistice and establish a permanent peace system, and we have agreed to cooperate to have the three or four leaders of states directly involved meet in the Korean peninsula and promote the declaration of the end of war.” The leaders of South Korea and the U.S. also discussed the declaration of the end of war. However, this was never realized. North Korea wanted to declare the end of war first and sign a peace agreement later, but the George W. Bush administration opposed, and the six-party talks faltered. Nevertheless, this issue is likely to be addressed again at the upcoming summit. The Moon Jae-in government is determined to overcome the limits of the October 4 Declaration, which does not directly mention the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Thus, the government is expected to link the declaration of the termination of hostilities and the peace system with the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Denuclearization is ultimately a matter between North Korea and the U.S. Thus it is likely to
greatly affect and be affected by the preparations for the North Korea-U.S. summit following the inter-Korean summit. Experts argue that how the government handles the peace agreement following the declaration of the end of war with the denuclearization process on the Korean Peninsula will be the key. Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies said, "In order to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula and establish a peace system, North Korea may, for instance, claim that they will blast or dismantle the Yongbyon nuclear facilities and the Punggyeri nuclear test site and dismantle the strategic forces overseeing the inter-continental ballistic missiles." He added, "In this case, South Korea and the U.S. will have to thoroughly review what they can give North Korea in order to recognize North Korea as a common state and guarantee the security of its regime." In addition to denuclearization and the peace system, economic cooperation for the joint prosperity of the two Koreas may also be included in the agenda for the inter-Korean summit. However, given that the U.S. administration continues to stress maximum pressure and sanctions, the two Koreas are likely to mention this issue in a declaration on a similar level to that in 2007 rather than reach a concrete agreement. (Sohn Jemin, "Discussions on the Declaration of the End of the War, Will It Include Denuclearization," Kyunghyang Sinmun, March 16, 2018)

The United Nations detailed how North Korea gets around international sanctions designed to hobble the government and its nuclear weapons program. President Trump, after accepting an invitation last week to meet personally this spring with the North’s leader, Kim Jong-un, said that sanctions would remain in place during any talks. But the United Nations report shows just how difficult it is for governments to police North Korea and how widespread illicit trade with it is. The experts who compiled the report detailed violations across several countries, including Bulgaria, China, Germany, India, Myanmar, Poland, Russia, Singapore, Tanzania and Uganda.

One of the more eyebrow-raising examples described: Between January and June of last year, India exported $514,823 in diamonds to North Korea, along with other precious metals and stones. Other luxury goods that have made it to North Korea: sparkling wine and spirits from Germany, wine and vermouth from Italy, and perfume and cosmetics from Bulgaria. A Singapore-based company has been stocking department stores in Pyongyang, the capital, with luxury items from Japan and Europe. North Koreans have mastered “how to smuggle sanctioned items,” said Jay Song, a senior lecturer in Korean studies at the Asia Institute at the University of Melbourne in Australia. “Ironically, however, these trades, legal and illegal, grow the North Korean middle class, who then grow grievances against the authorities. They are also highly corrupt.” According to the panel, North Korea generated nearly $200 million between January and September 2017 by exporting “almost all the commodities prohibited in the resolutions.” Its largest export was coal; the report concluded that North Korea exported $413.6 million in coal in that time frame — $12.7 million above the United Nations cap. North Korea also sold $62.1 million in iron and steel, exports that violated sanctions. Using front companies, manipulations of automated signals that radar systems use to detect global shipments, and ship-to-ship transfers in the middle of the night, North Korea was able to “give the impression that the coal was loaded in ports other than in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” the report said. Still, “We’re really forcing the North Koreans to jump through hoops,” said Andrea Berger, a senior research associate and senior program manager at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Monterey. “North Koreans are literally physically concealing the identity of ships at night and doing ship-to-ship transfers,” she said. “That’s not something you do unless you have to.” North Korean firms and individuals, utilizing front companies and working with foreign citizens, have opened bank accounts around the world. The report said some of the country’s banks “maintain a network of overseas representatives who continue to move freely across borders to undertake transactions in multiple countries and to establish residences abroad.” The experts found that many banks do not scrutinize account holders closely enough. It cited a “major European bank” that failed to verify answers that a representative of the Korea Daesong Bank gave to a questionnaire to screen for money laundering and ignored the fact that the account applicant appeared in a financial-crimes database. As previously reported, the experts contend that North Korea has shipped supplies to the Syrian government that could be used in the production of chemical weapons. The report also detailed sales of ballistic missile systems, multiple rocket launchers and surface-to-air missiles to Myanmar. The report detailed an incident in which the North sent a drone toward a military
North Korea has threatened Japan over Tokyo’s policy of heaping pressure on its nuclear-armed neighbor, saying it “may not get a ticket for Pyongyang” if it continues, remarks that come just days after Japanese government sources said the country is exploring the possibility of a summit between Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. “Now is a high time that Japan meditated over its policy toward the DPRK, facing up to the trend of the times for itself,” KCNA said in a commentary late Saturday, using the country’s formal name. “We have already warned that the Japanese reactionaries may not get a ticket for Pyongyang if they go ill-natured without discretion. It would be wise for them to stop useless struggling and follow the trend of the times, before it is too late,” it added. A Kyodo News report last week quoting an unnamed high-ranking official at Abe’s office, said the government believes “direct dialogue with the top — Mr. Kim Jong Un — is essential” if Tokyo is to achieve Abe’s goal of retrieving Japanese nationals abducted by North Korean agents in the 1970s and 1980s. The apparent shift would represent a drastic break from the prime minister’s long-held position that more pressure is needed to force Pyongyang to the negotiating table. It was unclear if the timing of his revised tack was due to fears of being marginalized on the North Korean issue or if an ongoing document-tampering scandal that has re-emerged to threaten his grip on power had played a role in the change. While the Abe administration — a leading supporter of Trump’s “maximum pressure” campaign against Pyongyang — has insisted it remains in lockstep with the White House on North Korea, it has increasingly found itself on the outside looking in amid the thaw in intra-Korean ties and summit agreements. Today’s KCNA commentary lambasted Japan, saying it had “zealously” urged close cooperation among the three on the North Korean nuclear issue, but “faced only serious concern over estrangement.” It added, “Still now, the Japanese reactionaries are making a shrill cry demanding ‘sanctions and pressure on the DPRK,’ indicative of their extreme uneasiness over their frustration.” (Jesse Johnson, “North Korea Says Japan ‘May Not Get a Ticket for Pyongyang’ If Pressure Policy Continues,” Japan Times, March 17, 2018)

With the resumption of talks with North Korea not in sight, Japan has stepped up diplomacy with the United States and South Korea to push for the resolution of Pyongyang’s abduction of Japanese nationals in the 1970s and 1980s. Tokyo’s lobbying of Washington and Seoul to take up the abduction issue during their leaders’ planned meetings with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un reflects Japan’s concern that the issue may get sidelined as the summits appear to be primarily focused on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. But such concern may have eased somewhat after Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono indicated he has won support from senior U.S. and South Korean officials he met in Washington, partly because the two countries also fret about North Korea’s human rights situation. Speaking after talks with U.S. Vice President Mike Pence today, Kono said, “We agreed that Japan and the United States will continue to closely cooperate in resolving the abduction issue.” (Ko Hirano, “Human Rights Concerns Bind U.S., S. Korea, Japan over N. Korea Abductions,” Kyodo, March 18, 2018)
The two sides “discussed opportunities and challenges for continued diplomatic efforts to reach a peaceful solution to the conflict,” according to a statement issued by the Swedish Foreign Ministry at the end of three days of talks between Ri Yong-ho, the North’s foreign minister, and his Swedish counterpart, Margot Wallstrom. The statement added: “Sweden underlined the need for North Korea to dismantle its nuclear arms and missiles program in line with several Security Council resolutions.” In one sign of easing relations, this year’s joint South Korean-American military exercises are expected to be shorter in duration and deploy fewer military assets. Yonhap reported yesterday that the exercises will last only a month instead of two, and that B1 bombers and aircraft carriers would not take part, as they have in the past. The talks in Stockholm also touched on Sweden’s role in North Korea as a diplomatic stand-in for the United States, Canada and Australia, which do not have a presence there. Sweden provides so-called protective consular services for those countries, including meeting with citizens imprisoned there. Other topics included humanitarian conditions in North Korea, sanctions, regional cooperation and security issues for South Korea, Japan, Russia, China and the United States, according to the Swedish ministry. In addition to his talks with the foreign minister, Ri met with Prime Minister Stefan Lofven yesterday morning. Ri arrived in Sweden on the 15th for the talks, which had been long planned but gained widespread attention after Trump accepted Kim’s summit invitation. Lofven said this month that he was willing to host a meeting between Trump and Kim. “If we can help in any way, we will do it,” he said at a news conference, noting that Sweden has had an embassy in Pyongyang since the 1970s. Niklas Swanstrom, the director of the Institute for Security and Development Policy, a Swedish research group, said if the upcoming talks were to be held in a foreign country, then Sweden or Switzerland could be an option, but he added that it was more likely they would take place in the Korean Demilitarized Zone. “The DMZ is more likely, as Mr. Kim has not traveled outside the country since he took power,” Swanstrom said. Yesterday, in a short statement to journalists, Wallstrom said, “We are glad that we can have this meeting.” She added: “But we are not naïve in any way. We do not think that we can solve this issue. It is up to the parties to solve it. If we can use our contacts in the best way, then we will do that.” (Christina Anderson, “North Korea-Sweden Talks Focus on ‘Peaceful Solution’ to Nuclear Conflict,” New York Times, March 17, 2018)

The Blue House said March 19 that Chung Eui-yong, head of the National Security Office, met with U.S. National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster and Japanese National Security Adviser Shotaro Yachi March 17 and 18 in San Francisco. Kim Eui-kyeom, the Blue House spokesman, said the three countries’ security advisers held consultations on the “complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” The spokesman said they “shared the importance of not repeating past failures and agreed to continue close cooperation in the upcoming several weeks.” The talks between Chung, McMaster and Yachi come just two months after a trilateral meeting held over January 13 and 14 in San Francisco to discuss North Korea’s movements ahead of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in February. The meeting over the weekend marked the first such trilateral talks since the inter-Korean summit was agreed upon last month. “The discussions in San Francisco were mostly concentrated on consultations between South Korea and the United States,” a senior aide to President Moon said. “Furthermore, they shared the understanding that in a situation in which the South-North and North Korea-U.S. summits are to be held consecutively in April and May, their success is very important for the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula as well as Northeast Asia, and they discussed in depth how to closely cooperate between South Korea and the United States to this end.” Chung also shared the results of President Moon’s special envoy consultations with China, Japan and Russia over the past week, the aide said. South Korea has been increasing its diplomatic activity ahead of the landmark summits. From March 15 to 17, Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha was in Washington to meet with John Sullivan, the acting U.S. secretary of state, and Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono, who was visiting the United States, to discuss the issue of North Korea’s nuclear weapons and the upcoming summits. “He’s given his word,” Kang said in a pre-recorded interview for today’s broadcast of CBS News’ “Face the Nation,” when asked about North Korean leader Kim’s actual commitment to denuclearization. “The significance of his word is quite weighty in the sense that this is the first time that the words came directly from the North Korean supreme leader himself, and that has never been done before.” She said President Trump’s readiness to accept a summit invitation from
Kim, which caught everyone by “surprise,” clearly demonstrates his “determination to resolve this issue once and for all,” something “hugely appreciated by the South Korean public.” “We believe the North Korean leader is now taking stock,” Kang said. “We give them the benefit of the doubt, and the time that he would need to come out with some public messaging.” She pointed out that the engagement was “very significant in itself,” especially since the North Korean leader has expressed willingness to come south of the demilitarized zone to the truce village of Panmunjom for the inter-Korean summit in April, which would be the third of its kind. (Sarah Kim, “Security Meeting Focuses on Upcoming Summit,” JoongAng Ilbo, March 20, 2018)

Bolton: “RFA: What do you think of President Trump’s decision to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un? Bolton: Well it's obviously an unprecedented development and a very daring move, I think, on the part of President Trump. The real issue is whether the regime in North Korea, after talking for 25 years about its nuclear weapons program and committing on numerous occasions to give up that program, really is prepared to have a serious conversation or whether they're simply buying time to perfect the last stages of the nuclear weapons program and their ballistic missile program. So my hope is that President Trump can have a serious conversation with them about what the real objective should be which is denuclearizing North Korea, and if they're not prepared to have that kind of serious discussion, it could actually be a very short meeting. RFA: You sound still skeptical about North Korea’s intentions in talking with President Trump. Do you expect the summit to be successful? Bolton: I don't know that the North Koreans ever really expected that President Trump would accept the offer of a summit meeting and it’s been some time now since the president's decision was announced. We've heard nothing publicly from North Korea. Now, maybe it's just an anomaly and perhaps the talks will go forward, but I think the positive aspect that we could see here is it's a way to cut through six months twelve months of preliminary negotiations. Let’s have this conversation by May or even before that and let's see how serious North Korea really is. They've made commitments they’ve violated repeatedly in the past 25 years. I am skeptical that they're serious. I think they were trying to buy time but they've made the offer, the president has accepted, let's get on with it. …RFA: That meeting (with Trump) was a day before the agreement to hold a U.S.-North Korea summit was announced. Has there been any change in your views since then? Bolton: The fact of North Korean interest in negotiations was made clear when they accepted South Korea's invitation to show up for the Winter Olympics. I think it was a mistake to understand that as anything other than North Korean propaganda, but it was clear then they were seeking an opportunity to distract attention from just how close they were to a capability to hit targets in North America with thermo-nuclear weapons. I think the pattern that North Korea has followed for decades – the same pattern that Iran followed – is that it used negotiations to camouflage their on-going nuclear and ballistic missile efforts. I think we should not fall for that ploy again. I think we should insist that if this meeting is going to take place, it will be similar to discussions we had with Libya 13 or 14 years ago: how to pack up their nuclear weapons program and take it to Oak Ridge, Tennessee, which is where the Libyan nuclear program. If it's anything other than a conversation about how to do that, then I think it shows it's just camouflage for North Korea to continue working toward its long-sought objective of deliverable nuclear weapons. …RFA: What is your advice to President Trump ahead of the talks with North Korea? Bolton: I think he’s very familiar with the history of North Korea's duplicity on this subject. I don't think he has any illusions about this regime. I don't think he wants to waste a lot of time talking to them without the prospect of success. You know there a lot of considerations here but I believe that it could become very clear very early in this meeting whether North Korea is serious or not or whether they're just playing games, and so I think it's important if the president sees that they're just looking for a way to waste time, that he make the point that he's not there to waste time and that we expect real denuclearization, not talks about talks about denuclearization, but concretely how we're going to eliminate their program as quickly as possible. So if the meeting takes place, we'll see if that's the path that they follow. RFA: What should the U.S. be prepared to offer North Korea in exchange for denuclearization? Economic aid? A peace treaty? Bolton: I don't think we should offer them economic aid. That happened in the context of the Agreed Framework, where they took the heavy oil shipments and yet did not dismantle their nuclear program. There's no way we should give North Korea a peace treaty. They're lucky to have a meeting with the president of the United
The South Korean Army plans to deploy surface-to-surface missiles in a newly created counter-artillery brigade by October, with the aim of destroying North Korea’s hardened long-range artillery sites near the Demilitarized Zone, should conflict erupt on the Korean Peninsula. The plan is part of South Korea’s defense reform for developing an offensive operations scheme, a defense source said. The tactical missiles are developed locally. “The Ministry of National Defense has approved a plan to create an artillery brigade under a ground forces operations command to be inaugurated in October. The plan is to be reported to President Moon Jae-in next month as part of the ‘Defense Reform 2.0’ policy,” the source said. “The brigade’s mission is fairly focused on destroying North Korea’s long-range guns more rapidly and effectively, should conflict arise.” The three-year development of the GPS-guided Korea Tactical Surface-to-Surface Missile was completed last year. Hanwha Corporation, a precision-guided missile maker, led the development in partnership with the state-funded Agency for Defense Development, or ADD. The missile, dubbed “artillery killer,” has a range of more than 120 kilometers and can hit targets with a 2-meter accuracy, according to ADD and Hanwha officials. Four missiles can be launched almost simultaneously from a fixed launch pad. The missiles can penetrate bunkers and hardened, dug-in targets several meters underground. “North Korea’s long-range artillery systems deployed along the border pose significant threats to the security of the capital area of South Korea,” said retired...
Lt. Gen. Shin Won-sik, a former operational director of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. “The counter-artillery brigade is expected to play a key role in neutralizing the North’s long-range artillery fire power, as the new surface-to-surface missile is capable of destroy the hideout of artillery forces.” The artillery brigade is also to operate the Chunmoo Multiple Launch Rocket System, which can fire three types of ammunition: 130mm non-guided rockets; 227mm non-guided rockets; and 239mm guided rockets. The ranges of the rockets are 36 kilometers, 80 kilometers and 160 kilometers, respectively. According to the 2016 Defense White Paper, North Korea has some 8,600 towed and self-propelled artillery, as well as 5,500 multiple-launch rockets. Seventy percent of them were deployed near the border. North Korea has forward-deployed 340 long-range guns that can fire 15,000 rounds per hour at Seoul and the surrounding metropolitan area. (Jeff Jeong, “South Korea to Deploy Artillery Killer’ to Destroy North Korean Bunkers,” Defense News, March 19, 2018)

KCNA commentary titled "Truth Must Not Be Distorted with Sheer Sophism": “Thanks to the proactive measure and peace-loving proposal made by the DPRK, dramatic atmosphere for reconciliation has been created in relations between the north and the south of Korea and there has been a sign of change also in the DPRK-U.S. relations. At this time, the dishonest forces in the U.S. and Japan and the conservative group of south Korea are peddling groundless stories distorting the truth in a bid to mislead public opinion, the commentary said, citing facts. Incumbent and former officials and experts of the U.S. have become vocal, claiming that "north Korea took a change-about attitude even though the U.S. did not make any concession", "Trump's high-intensity sanctions and pressure strategy proves effective" and "it is a sign that north Korea has reached a limit beyond which it can no longer sustain itself", in an attempt to meet their own interests. The Abe group, which is left alone as a result of the unexpected sudden change in the situation of the Korean peninsula, claims that "north Korea's dialogue and peace offensive is a result of the sustained pressure put by the international community" and "hasty dialogue would mean being taken in by north Korea's strategy of gaining time" and that "sanctions should never be slackened under any circumstances." In the meantime, the conservatives of south Korea including the "Liberal Korea Party", conservative media and self-professed experts are reeling off invective that "it is a trite method for the north to opt for dialogue whenever it finds itself in a fix", "it is camouflaged peace offensive" and "it is aimed to make a crack in south Korea-U.S. alliance and to seek lift of sanctions." The great change in the north-south relations is not an accidental one but a noble fruition made thanks to the DPRK's proactive measure, warm compatriotism and will for defending peace. Such an event as today could be possible as the DPRK's dignity has remarkably risen and it has strong might. Such rubbish as "result of sanctions and pressure" and sort of "limit" spread by the hostile forces is just as meaningless as a dog barking at the moon. The economy of the DPRK is rising, not sitting down as claimed by the riff-raffs, and is being put on a Juche and modern basis. Sci-tech achievements and models have been created in different parts of the country, promising the bright future for the improvement of the people's living standard. It is by no means accidental that the public at home and abroad are unanimously commenting that the dialogue peace offensive of the DPRK is an expression of self-confidence as it has acquired everything it desires. It is really an expression of small-mindedness for the riff-raffs to spoil the atmosphere and say this or that even before the parties concerned are given a chance to study the inner thoughts of the other side and are seated at a negotiating table. We do like to remind that it is time for all to approach everything with prudence with self-control and patience. The fault-finders have to face up to the unanimous demand of the public at home and abroad for the improvement of the north-south relations and for peace on the Korean peninsula and stop the mean act of distorting truth." (KCNA, “KCNA Blasts Dishonest Forces’ Distortion of Truth,” March 20, 2018)

South Korean and American military authorities officially announced that the joint military exercises that had been delayed because of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics will begin on April 1 and last for just over one month on a reduced timeline. “We have decided to hold the Foal Eagle exercises for four weeks, beginning on April 1, and the Key Resolve exercises for two weeks, beginning in mid-April,” said senior officials from the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff and the ROK-US Combined Forces Command during a joint press conference on Mar. 20. Foal Eagle is a
field training exercises that the South Korean and American militaries hold each spring, while Key Resolve is a command post exercise that is carried out through computer simulations. When asked about the number of troops who would be participating in the exercises, the officials said, “From the US, there will be 11,500 troops participating in Foal Eagle and 12,200 troops participating in Key Resolve. That’s a similar scale to previous years.” According to the officials, the Ssangyong, or Double Dragon, landing exercises that are held as part of Foal Eagle will take place between Mar. 1 and 8, involving one regiment from the South Korean military and one brigade from the US military. The regiment reportedly consists of a little over 2,000 soldiers, while the brigade is composed of between 4,000 and 5,000 troops. Though Foal Eagle was originally supposed to last two months, from April to May, it was eventually decided to shorten it to the single month of April. And though US aircraft carriers have participated in previous exercises, including the USS John C. Stennis in 2016 and the USS Carl Vinson in 2017, apparently no aircraft carriers will be taking part this time. Downscaling the exercises in this manner is apparently designed to communicate the U.S. and South Korea’s willingness to adjust the scale of military activity in line with the recent movement toward dialogue on the Korean Peninsula. The explanation provided by a senior military official was that “South Korea and the U.S. made this decision in consideration of the schedules of the participating troops.” Officials also explained that the South Korean military was taking the lead in planning the exercises, running the opposition force and debriefing this year, just as it did last year, in order to improve its joint operational capabilities. On the morning of March 20, South Korean and American military officials had the UN Command’s Military Armistice Commission notify North Korea of the content and schedule of the exercises. “The duty officer with the UN Military Armistice Commission read the content of the exercises over a megaphone in front of the military demarcation line at Panmunjom, and the North Korean troops made a recording of that,” said a senior military official. (Park Byong-su, “Joint South Korea-U.S. Exercises to Begin April 1,” Hankyore, March 20, 2018) The South Korean military and U.S. Pentagon issued differing statements regarding the duration of their upcoming joint military exercises, raising suspicions of an attempt by Seoul to contain possible fallout from the resumption of the drills. According to the Ministry of National Defense and Joint Chiefs of Staff, the postponed joint military exercises will start on April 1, with the field-training Foal Eagle exercise that is to be halved in length from two months to one followed about three weeks later by the computer-based Key Resolve exercise. The Pentagon and Combined Forces Command in Seoul, however, stressed that the upcoming drills would be held at the same scale and duration as previous iterations, with no mention that the length of the Foal Eagle exercise would be halved. “The exercises include all services and are of the same scale, scope and duration as previous years,” said Lt. Col. Christopher Logan, a Pentagon spokesman. “Key Resolve and Foal Eagle are annual exercises that are the culmination of many months of planning.” The US-led Combined Forces Command, which oversees the annual drills with the JCS, also said in a press release Tuesday that the upcoming exercises would take place at a scale “similar to that of the previous years.” The differences in the statements by the two countries’ militaries appear to suggest the South Korean military wants to keep the exercise as low-key as possible. During a closed-door briefing with reporters, a JCS official said the military had consulted with the US on scaling back the exercise to one month. A decision was made to sustain the peaceful mood following the Pyeongchang Olympics, the official added. However, the official left open the possibility that the exercise schedule could be adjusted depending on consultations between the allies’ militaries, hinting that the Foal Eagle exercise could be longer than a single month. “There can be flexibility to the exercise schedule as the drill proceeds. ... We have US military augmentee coming all the way from the US mainland and it will take time for them to come back,” another JCS official said. “Our combined exercises are defense-oriented and there is no reason for North Korea to view them as a provocation.” Pentagon spokesperson Logan said. “While we will not discuss specifics, the defensive nature of these combined exercises has been clear for many decades and has not changed. The purpose of the training is to enhance the (South Korea-US) alliance’s ability to defend (South Korea) and enhance CFC’s interoperability and readiness.” The number of US troops participating in the exercises is expected to be similar to that of last year. According to the Pentagon, 23,700 US forces will participate, with 12,200 for the Key Resolve exercise and 11,500 for the Foal Eagle exercise. Last year’s drills -- considered the largest-ever in scope and scale with the participation of US strategic assets -- involved about 23,000 US troops, with 13,000 for Key
Even if President Donald Trump is able to reach an agreement with Kim Jong Un, with North Korea promising to freeze or even dismantle its nuclear program, there will always be uncertainty about possible cheating. Just ask Israel, which, despite having one of the world’s most competent and aggressive intelligence services—the Mossad—nearly missed the fact that North Korea was helping build a nuclear reactor in next-door Syria, a country long viewed by Israel as a dangerous threat. The CIA missed it, too, and now, 11 years after Israeli air force jets bombed the clandestine Syrian facility, Israel’s military censor is finally lifting the veil of secrecy and permitting locally based reporters to publish interviews with participants in the operation for the first time. We spoke with dozens of former cabinet ministers, including Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, as well as military and intelligence chiefs and commanders and even some of the pilots who took part in the operation. The code name for the Sept. 6, 2007, raid, conducted near the remote desert city of Deir ez-Zur: “Outside the Box.” Before today, Israel has never officially acknowledged its existence. Years later, Israeli spooks are still raising bitter questions about the CIA’s intelligence failure. Former Mossad director Tamir Pardo asked in an interview with us: “Where were the Americans? North Korea is a highly important target for them. And it still isn’t clear whether [Syrian President Bashar] Assad was running the nuclear project, or was it the North Koreans?” The former spy chief added that he has some doubts that Syria was going to keep the plutonium, or perhaps it was going to be shipped to North Korea as a supply of which the West would be unaware. “This is a resounding failure by the Americans,” Pardo said. Pardo’s questions raise another: If one of the best intelligence communities in the world, and certainly the most formidable in the Middle East, could be fooled by North Koreans and Syrians, what might the CIA be missing? That could be true in Korea, in Iran, or almost anywhere on Earth. The Israeli air force raid on a secluded, unmarked building in northeastern Syria took place—a few minutes after midnight between the 5th and 6th of September. To attack deep in enemy territory is easy, but Israel’s American-made F-15 and F-16 jets enjoyed protection by sophisticated electronic jamming that blinded Syria’s air defenses, and they had no trouble dropping tons of explosives on the target and confirming visually that it had been flattened. (Photos, many provided by Israeli intelligence, were released by the CIA to Congress—and immediately leaked to the media in Washington.) The Syrian facility was almost identical to the Yongbyon nuclear complex in North Korea that produced plutonium for nuclear bombs, according to Israeli intelligence officials, and it was only weeks away from beginning to produce highly radioactive materials. Olmert, who later resigned amid accusations of corruption, which eventually after being indicted by a court landed him in prison for 18 months, told us it was one of his most important and difficult decisions. Even his nemesis, then-Defense Minister Ehud Barak, said in an interview: “Olmert deserves full credit for the brazen decision.” Lifting the veil of secrecy also reveals an ego battle for credit between Israel’s two largest intelligence agencies. “The exposure of the reactor is one of the great achievements of Military Intelligence [the agency known by its Hebrew acronym, Aman] in particular, and of Israeli intelligence in general,” said Brig. Gen. Shalom Dror, who in 2007 was a major in charge of Aman’s research on Syria. Yet Pardo, who was deputy director of the Mossad at the time (and from 2011 through 2015 the spy agency’s chief), differs: “For years, Syria built a nuclear reactor under our noses, and we did not know about it for years. It was not built on the dark side of the moon, but in a neighboring country where we always thought we know almost everything.” Israel’s highest-ranking general at the time, chief of staff Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, recalled receiving reports on many Arab countries from Aman and the Mossad, but none linked the words “Syria” and “nuclear” in any serious way. “Sure, suspicions arose, but there was no proof,” continued Ashkenazi, who has since retired. “And in intelligence work, there were a lot of suspicions. Syrian nuclear was not a subject considered to be important.” Ram Ben-Barak, senior
man in the Mossad for many years who was then head of one of its operations, told us: “Anyone who says that he knew that Syria was building a nuclear reactor either doesn’t know or isn’t telling the truth. When we brought the information, it was a complete surprise. Until then, the assessment was maybe yes, maybe no—that perhaps they were planning a nuclear project by the route of enriching uranium, and perhaps a reactor to produce plutonium. In short, we didn’t know at all what to look for.” The fact that there was any attention paid to the possibility of a secret Syrian program at all was the result of a trauma suffered by Israeli intelligence near the end of 2003.

Libya’s dictator, the late Col. Moammar Gadhafi, publicly admitted he had a nuclear weapons program. Western governments quickly discovered that the know-how and materials had been sold to the Libyans by Abdul Qadeer Khan, the so-called father of Pakistan’s nuclear bomb, who later became a freelancer and made a fortune as a nuclear trafficker. Israel’s spy chiefs winced as they admitted they had made an error comparable to the 1973 war, when the Jewish state was taken by surprise by its neighbor’s armies on Yom Kippur. Israeli intelligence had not completely ignored Khan. They had strong evidence that he helped Iran launch its military, unacknowledged, nuclear ambitions. But they did not realize that his sales efforts had succeeded elsewhere. Shabtai Shavit, who was the director of the Mossad in the 1990s, told us a few years ago that Israeli intelligence knew about Khan’s travels in the Middle East—hawking his wares—but did not understand how the Pakistani engineer could provide a quick and relatively easy kit for starting the route toward a nuclear arsenal. “If we had understood, I would have recommended that he be assassinated,” Shavit said, “and that would have been one of the few times that eliminating a person could have changed history.” After the revelation that Gadhafi’s Libya was dangerously advanced in its nuclear work, Israel’s military intelligence chiefs ordered that every scrap of evidence that had been collected—but filed away without much analysis—be looked at again. Aman found reports of Khan’s visits to Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria. Because the first two countries were friends of the United States, it seemed highly unlikely they would pursue nuclear weapons. The agency doubled its focus on Syria, where Assad had come to power in 2000 by default when his father died—because his elder brother, groomed for leadership, had perished in a car crash. “I had to explain to my people why I insisted on concerning ourselves with Syria,” said a research head in the agency, retired Brig. Gen. Eli Ben-Meir, because the top topics at that time had been Iran and its proxy force in Lebanon, Hezbollah. Israel fought a war against the Lebanese Shiite militia in the summer of 2006 that was notably frightening due to the constant rain of rockets from Lebanon that compelled almost a million Israelis to descend to shelters or move temporarily to southern Israel. Ben-Meir told us there were clues in Israel’s deep and constant monitoring of Syria. Ships arrived from Asia with no apparent purpose. Trucks moved toward the east. Israel’s intelligence liaisons asked friendly services, including the CIA, if they had noticed anything of a nuclear nature in Syria. The answer was negative. Pardo’s boss at the time, Meir Dagan (who was director of the Mossad from 2002 to 2011 and died two years ago) joined chief of staff Ashkenazi in asking Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for an extra budget specifically to look for a nuclear project in Syria. Aman’s renowned Unit 8200 greatly increased its monitoring of all Syrian communications. Ibrahim Othman, director of Syria’s Atomic Energy Commission, was considered to be the man who had to know the secrets. He became a high-priority target for Israeli intelligence. As reported elsewhere, Mossad’s operatives broke into rooms where he stayed in Europe, including an apartment Othman maintained in Vienna, near the headquarters of the International Atomic Energy Agency—and found a gold mine. Othman had left a digital device and all its data was sucked out and sent to Israeli intelligence laboratories. Surprisingly, because no one believed any vital information had been obtained, deciphering it was not a priority. The data was waiting on the laboratory’s shelves a few days until it was finally deciphered. “My intelligence officer entered my room,” recalls Ben Barak, “and showed me the photos taken from the phone.” He added, smiling, “Sometimes intelligence operations need luck.” The photos from Othman’s device showed him in the company of some North Korean scientists and most importantly were shot inside the structure, which clearly revealed it was a nuclear reactor to produce plutonium. The photos were the “smoking gun”—the ultimate evidence to corroborate Israel’s suspicions. The information was rushed to Prime Minister Olmert, who approached President Bush to ask him if the U.S. would do something about it. Bush said no, explaining that U.S. forces were fully engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan and that he didn’t want to open a third front. Nevertheless, Bush didn’t say anything about an Israeli raid. For Olmert, that was all he needed. He interpreted Bush’s
silence as a green light and instructed Lt. Gen. Ashkenazi to prepare an airstrike. After the raid, Israel kept silent—and so did Assad. Syria didn’t want to admit it had violated its international commitments. Israel, for its part, figured out that if it said nothing in public, Assad would swallow his pride and not retaliate. Privately, Israeli leaders and chiefs of the military and intelligence contacted or met their allies in the West—the U.S., United Kingdom, France, Germany—and in the Arab world (Egypt and Jordan) to share with them the information behind the raid. Olmert also called Russian leader Vladimir Putin. Israel’s calculation that Syria would not strike back proved correct, and the world seemed relieved that someone had removed a potentially serious threat to peace. But to remove Iran’s or North Korean nuclear threats will be a much more difficult task if President Trump decides to exercise the much-trumpeted military option. (Yossi Melman and Dan Raviv, “Inside Israel’s Raid on Syria’s Nuclear Reactor,” Politico, March 20, 2018)

3/21/18

President Moon Jae-in of South Korea said that he and President Trump could sit down for a three-way summit meeting with Kim Jong-un if their individual meetings with the North Korean leader on denuclearizing his country proceed well in the coming weeks. “The North Korea-United States summit, which will follow the inter-Korean summit, will itself be a momentous event in world history,” Moon said at a meeting of ROK officials. “Depending on where the meeting takes place, it will look even more dramatic, and depending on progress, there can be a three-way summit among South and North Korea and the United States.” Moon indicated that his government is working on what analysts have called a “grand bargain” in which it hopes to persuade North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons in return for economic incentives and security guarantees. He said that the negotiations must aim for “the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the permanent peace regime there, the normalization of relations between North Korea and the United States, and improvement of relations between the North and the United States or among the two Koreas and the United States.” He also instructed his officials to consult with the United States. Yesterday, Heather Nauert, the State Department spokeswoman, reported no immediate deal on the release of the Americans. “We would love to have our American citizens brought home — a huge priority for this administration — but as far as we’re concerned there’s nothing underway,” she said. (Choe Sang-hun, “South Korea’s Leader Floats 3-Way Talks with Trump and Kim Jong Un,” New York Times, March 21, 2018)

Finland’s Foreign Ministry described the “track 1.5” meetings between North Korean diplomats and South Korean and American former officials and academics in Helsinki, which concluded today, as “constructive” and “positive.” Some 18 delegates from the three countries kicked off meetings with a dinner in Helsinki March 19 and then held a semi-official conference over the next two days at Konigstedt Manor, a Finnish government-owned building often used for negotiations and accommodating state guests. The Finnish Foreign Ministry in a statement said the participants from the United States, North Korea and South Korea took part in meetings over Tuesday and Wednesday for a conference on Northeast Asian issues, with observers from the United Nations and Europe. “This meeting was one of a series of academic sessions over many years that have explored approaches to building confidence and reducing tensions on the Korean Peninsula,” Kimmo Lahdevirta, director general of the Finnish Foreign Ministry’s Department for the Americas and Asia, told reporters after the conference ended. He added, “The participants had a constructive exchange of views in a positive atmosphere.” The ministry also said in a statement that the conference “was planned well in advance of recent promising developments related to the Korean situation.” It added that the participants in the conference expressed their appreciation to the Finnish Foreign Ministry for hosting the conference. South Korean participants indicated that the meeting included discussions on a wide range of issues encompassing the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, along with the planned inter-Korean and North-U.S. summits. They have also indicated that the delegates developed a consensus during the talks on the need to reduce tensions on the Korean Peninsula and the necessity for the upcoming summits to be successful. Choe Kang-il, a senior diplomat handling North American affairs in North Korea’s Foreign Ministry, who led Pyongyang’s delegation in Finland, flew from Helsinki to Beijing Capital International Airport Thursday, accompanied by several aides. When asked about the talks, Choe,
North Korea shares a border with three countries — South Korea, China and Russia. The one with Russia is just 11 miles, following the Tumen River and its estuary in the far northeast. There is one lone crossing, dubbed the “Friendship Bridge.” It opened in 1959 and offers the two nations a fairly basic rail connection. This week, amid a period of relative calm on the oft-tense Korean Peninsula, Russian representatives traveled to North Korea to discuss an idea: They should open another bridge. Though the planning appears to be at a preliminary stage, it may show that Russia and North Korea are looking toward a trading future beyond sanctions and military tensions. The two nations have long suggested a crossing that would allow vehicles to go between them without a lengthy detour through China. And today, the Ministry for Development of the Russian Far East announced in a statement that the two sides would create a working group on a new crossing. “There are 23 automobile checkpoints between [North Korea] and China, and not one with Russia,” the ministry quoted Ro Tu Chol, a North Korean minister, as saying during the meeting. “Currently, when importing goods from [Russia’s far east], they do not come across the border with Russia, but through China. This greatly extends the path.” Ro suggested expanding the existing bridge, according to the statement. The Russian representative at the meeting, Alexander Galushka, the minister for the development of the Russia’s far east, suggested building a semi-permanent bridge of pontoons. The Russia-North Korea summit caught the attention of NK News, which reported that the two nations would “push ahead” with the new border crossing. Anthony Rinna, an analyst on Russian foreign policy in East Asia for Sino-NK, told the North Korea-watching publication that the new border crossing could be used to “alleviate any unforeseen problems, such as logistical or technical glitches that may undermine North Korea’s rail links.” The proposed bridge may be more noteworthy for its symbolic value than economic worth, said Benjamin Katzeff Silberstein, an associate scholar at the Foreign Policy Research Institute and co-editor of North Korean Economy Watch. Trade between Russia and North Korea is insignificant, Katzeff Silberstein added, largely because of multilateral sanctions imposed by the United Nations, but “there also seems to be a belief that in the longer run, trade will pick back up again.” Artyom Lukin, a professor of international politics at the Far Eastern Federal University in Vladivostok, said it was clear that trade between Russia’s far east and North Korea has been hit considerably in the past two years. He said that the railway bridge had once been important for transporting Siberian coal to the North Korean port of Rajin in the city of Rason, where Moscow owns a terminal. “From this terminal, the coal is sent for export to Asian countries, mostly China,” Lukin wrote in an email. “At least, this was the case prior to introduction of tough sanctions on [North Korea] in the latter part of 2017.” For the time being, Lukin said, it’s hard to imagine Russian backers investing in a bridge. “The North Koreans will expect Russia to provide the funding,” he said. “However, no Russian investor, private or state-owned, will commit to the project unless the political risks related to North Korea subside considerably.” (Adam Taylor, “Russia Wants to Build a Bridge to North Korea. Literally” Washington Post, March 24, 2018)
President Trump named John R. Bolton, a hardline former American ambassador to the United Nations, as his third national security adviser, continuing a shake-up that creates one of the most hawkish national security teams of any White House in recent history. Bolton will replace Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, the battle-tested Army officer who was tapped last year to stabilize a turbulent foreign policy operation but who never developed a comfortable relationship with the president. The move, which was sudden but not unexpected, signals a more confrontational approach in American foreign policy at a time when Trump faces mounting challenges, including from Iran and North Korea. Bolton, an outspoken advocate of military action who served in the George W. Bush administration, has called for action against Iran and North Korea. In an interview on Thursday on Fox News, soon after his appointment was announced in a presidential tweet, he declined to say whether Trump should go through with a planned meeting with North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-un. General McMaster will retire from the military, ending a career that included senior commands in Iraq and Afghanistan. He had discussed his departure with Trump for several weeks, White House officials said, but decided to speed it up because questions about his status were casting a shadow over his exchanges with foreign officials. Trump, the White House officials said, also wanted to fill out his national security team before his meeting with Kim, which is scheduled to occur by the end of May. Bolton, who will take office April 9, has met regularly with Trump to discuss foreign policy. Though he has been on a list of candidates for the post since the beginning of the administration, officials said Trump has hesitated, in part because of his negative reaction to Bolton’s walrus-style mustache. Today, however, Trump summoned him to the Oval Office to discuss the job. Hours later, Bolton was on Fox, where he has been an analyst, for a pre-scheduled interview, in which he confessed surprise at how quickly Trump announced the appointment. “This hasn’t sunk in,” he said. In his interview on Fox News, Bolton declined to discuss his views on Iran, Russia or North Korea, though he acknowledged his positions were hardly a mystery after years of writing and speaking. He described the job of national security adviser as making sure that the bureaucracy did not impede the decisions of the president. Officials said that General McMaster’s departure was a mutual decision and amicable, with little of the recrimination that marked Tillerson’s exit. They said it was not related to a leak on March 20 of briefing materials for Trump’s phone call with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, which infuriated the president and did not help General McMaster’s case. Bolton complained on Fox News that “a munchkin in the executive branch” was responsible for the leak and called it “completely unacceptable.” Trump issued a statement that coincided with his tweet. “H. R. McMaster has served his country with distinction for more than 30 years,” the statement said. “He has won many battles and his bravery and toughness are legendary. General McMaster’s leadership of the National Security Council staff has helped my administration accomplish great things to bolster America’s national security.” General McMaster said in a telephone interview today that his departure had been under discussion for weeks, and, “really, the only issue that had been left open is timing.” He would have preferred to stay in the West Wing until the summer, but the timing was dictated by “what was best for him and the country,” he said, referring to the president. White House officials said the Army sounded out General McMaster, who is a three-star general, about four-star commands after he left the White House, but he declined them. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis has had a contentious relationship with General McMaster, and it was not clear what role he played. Democrats greeted the news about Bolton with deep alarm. “The person who will be first in first out of the Oval Office on national security matters passionately believes the U.S. should launch pre-emptive war against both Iran and North Korea with no authorization from Congress,” said Senator Christopher S. Murphy of Connecticut. “My God.” Republicans, however, expressed satisfaction. “Selecting John Bolton as national security adviser is good news for America’s allies and bad news for America’s enemies,” said Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina. “He has a firm understanding of the threats we face from North Korea, Iran and radical Islam.” Inside the National Security Council on Thursday night, one person described the mood among career officials as somber, with offices largely empty by 9 p.m., unusually early for an agency renowned for its round-the-clock work schedule. General McMaster struggled for months to impose order not only on a fractious national security team but on a president who resisted the sort of discipline customary in the military. Although General McMaster has been a maverick voice at times during a long military career, the Washington foreign policy establishment had hoped he would keep the president from making rash decisions. Yet the president and the general,
who had never met before Trump interviewed General McMaster for the post, had little chemistry from the start, and often clashed behind the scenes. General McMaster’s didactic style and preference for order made him an uncomfortable fit with a president whose style is looser, and who has little patience for the detail and nuance of complex national security issues. They had differed on policy, as well, with General McMaster cautioning against ripping up the nuclear deal with Iran without a strategy for what would come next, and tangling with Trump over the strategy for American forces in Afghanistan. Their tensions seeped into public view in February, when General McMaster said at a security conference in Munich that the evidence of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election was beyond dispute. The statement drew a swift rebuke from Trump, who vented his anger on Twitter. “General McMaster forgot to say that the results of the 2016 election were not impacted or changed by the Russians and that the only Collusion was between Russia and Crooked H, the DNC and the Dems,” Trump wrote, using his campaign nickname for Hillary Clinton. “Remember the Dirty Dossier, Uranium, Speeches, Emails and the Podesta Company!” General McMaster also had a difficult relationship with the White House chief of staff, John F. Kelly, people close to the White House said. Kelly, they said, prevailed in easing out General McMaster but failed to prevent Trump from hiring Bolton, whom they said Kelly fears will behave like a cabinet official rather than a staff member. General McMaster’s position at the White House had been seen as precarious for months, and he had become the target of a concerted campaign by hardline activists outside the administration who accused him of undermining the president’s agenda and pushed for his ouster, even creating a social media effort branded with a #FireMcMaster hashtag. Last summer, Trump balked at a plan General McMaster presented to bolster the presence of United States forces in Afghanistan, although the president ultimately embraced a strategy that would require thousands more American troops. General McMaster had been among the most hardline administration officials in his approach to North Korea, publicly raising the specter of a “preventive war” against the North. He was among those who expressed concerns about Trump’s abrupt decision this month to meet Kim, according to a senior official. (Mark Landler and Maggie Haberman, “Trump Chooses Hawk for 3rd Security Adviser as Shake-Up Continues,” New York Times, March 23, 2018, p. A-1) When President Trump suddenly announced two weeks ago that he would meet the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, John R. Bolton suggested a pithy strategy for how the meeting should proceed. It should “be a fairly brief session where Trump says: ‘Tell me you have begun total denuclearization, because we’re not going to have protracted negotiations. You can tell me right now or we’ll start thinking of something else,’” Bolton, the hardline former diplomat, said on a radio program the next day. He made no secret of what the “something else” should be: a pre-emptive strike against North Korea, which he wrote last month would be a “perfectly legitimate” response to what he views as an imminent threat. Bolton’s ascension to national security adviser, replacing Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, creates the most radically aggressive foreign policy team around the American president in modern memory. The anniversary of the beginning of the Iraq invasion was yesterday. Many who were involved in that decision have since begun to acknowledge the flaws — not only the reliance on what turned out to be false intelligence, but false assumptions about how quickly peace and prosperity would come to Iraq. Bolton continues to assert that it was the right decision and was among those who insisted, in the run-up to the war, that Saddam Hussein was on the brink of getting weapons of mass destruction. His initial instinct was to use force. In North Korea’s case, there is no debate: The country has conducted six nuclear tests, and has demonstrated that its missiles are within striking distance of American cities. If his argument for pre-emptive strikes was convincing to Bush, he can make a far more persuasive case to Trump. (David E. Sanger, “Volatile Problems Ahead for a Team of Hard-Line Advisers,” New York Times, March 23, 2018, p. A-18) A senior Blue House official said Seoul was planning to carry out “various deep negotiations” with Bolton to resolve Korea Peninsular issues, and did not give out the customary response that it “welcomed” Trump’s personnel decision. “We’re aware that he’s trusted by President Trump,” said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. On speculation that Bolton may try to sabotage Seoul’s efforts to bring Trump and Kim together, the official said it “isn’t important” how Bolton thought about the Trump-Kim summit before he was tapped, and that what mattered was the fact that Trump was showing the “will” to meet the North Korean leader. The reaction of Bolton’s South Korean counterpart Chung Eui-yong, head of the National Security Office in the Blue House, was “not bad,” said the Blue House source.
Bolton, who served as American ambassador to the UN from 2005 to 2006, was directly involved in the drafting of UN Security Council resolution 1718, which followed Pyongyang’s first nuclear test in October 2006. “The North Korean ambassador at that time left the conference room in defiance of the resolution,” recalled a South Korean diplomatic source, who asked not to be named. “I remember Ambassador Bolton pointing his finger at the empty seat with rage, yelling North Korea should be expelled from the UN. It truly was a menacing scene unlikely to occur again in the history of the UN Security Council.” In 2003, Bolton was involved in the six-party North Korean denuclearization talks as a member of the American delegation, according to diplomatic sources with knowledge of the series of talks. One time, he described North Korean society as “hell” and called then-North Korean leader Kim Jong-il a tyrant. The North called him a “human scum” and “vampire,” saying he was unqualified to join the six-party talks. Bolton eventually left the delegation, said the sources. (Lee Sung-eun and Yoo Jee-hye, “Trump Picks Hard-Liner as His Security Adviser,” JoongAng Ilbo, March 24, 2018, p. 1) President Trump has been one of the most rhetorically bellicose commanders in chief in modern American history. He’s bragged about the size of his “nuclear button,” repeatedly threatened military action and used playground taunts to demean the United States’ adversaries. But in the first 15 months of his presidency, Trump has been cautious when it comes to actually using military power and putting U.S. forces in harm’s way. The last two weeks could mark a major turning point in his presidency. In selecting John Bolton as his new national security adviser and Mike Pompeo as his secretary of state, Trump has elevated two of the most consistently hawkish Republicans in Washington. Now, the question is how these two advisers will change a president with few, if any, fixed views on foreign policy. Bolton has been a fervent advocate for using U.S. military power to prevent rogue regimes, such as Iran and North Korea, from acquiring and proliferating nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. “He is unabashed about this,” said Mark Groombridge, a former top adviser to Bolton at the State Department and United Nations. “He has no problems with the doctrine of preemption and feels the greatest threat that the United States faces is the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.” Trump was initially drawn to Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, whom he dismissed today as national security adviser, for his reputation as a warrior in Iraq and Afghanistan. But McMaster’s methodical and academic style grated on the president, who often complained that he couldn’t stand being around him. Bolton and Pompeo are much more of a stylistic match. “Trump likes the pugnacious, tough-guy style, and they reinforce it,” said Eliot Cohen, a former Bush administration official and Trump critic. They are also far more savvy bureaucratic operators than McMaster, who had never served in Washington and often tried to wear Trump down rather than woo him. The challenge for Bolton and Pompeo will be persuading Trump to support their aggressive plans. McMaster pressed the Pentagon for military options to strike targets in Iran. But his entreaties were routinely rebuffed by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, said U.S. officials. “Mattis has been daggers drawn with H.R. on everything,” said a person close to both men who requested anonymity to discuss the issue. In most of these disputes, Trump either backed Mattis or did not weigh in with his feuding advisers, the person said. In Afghanistan, McMaster took a similarly tough line, pressing Trump to agree, against his own instincts, to double the size of U.S. forces to 15,000 troops and back a strategy that relies heavily on the United States’ ability to improve Afghanistan’s inefficient and corrupt government. But Trump never seemed to buy into the new strategy and resented McMaster for pushing it on him, U.S. officials said. Pentagon officials have said that they feel under intense pressure to show progress on the battlefield this year before Trump pulls the plug. In approaching North Korea, Bolton has suggested that Trump should demand that Kim Jong Un denuclearize and allow international arms inspectors unfettered access to the country — an outcome most Korea experts say is highly unlikely. Absent a total North Korean capitulation, Bolton is likely to press Trump to reject lesser concessions such as a freeze of North Korea’s nuclear program, said those who have worked with him. “John hates the word ‘freeze,’” Groombridge said. “Hates it.” At the White House, Bolton is likely to reinforce Trump’s “America First” view of the world. The president and his new national security adviser share a long-standing animus toward any treaties, international laws or alliances that limit the United States’ freedom to act on the world stage. Bolton has also shown he knows how to influence Trump. Even when he was frozen out of a White House job at the start of the administration, Bolton managed to gain access to the president. For a brief period after White House Chief of Staff John F. Kelly took over, Bolton was completely blocked from the Oval
President Trump imposed tariffs on as much as $60 billion worth of Chinese goods to combat the rising threat from a nation that the White House has called “an economic enemy.” The measures are Trump’s strongest trade action yet against a country that he says is responsible for thousands of lost American jobs and billions in lost revenues. Financial markets plunged on fears of a potential trade war between the world’s two largest economies, with the Standard & Poor’s 500-stock index dropping by 2.5 percent. The White House said it was taking action in retaliation for China’s use of pressure and intimidation to obtain American technology and trade secrets. The measures include a significant change in Trump’s looming steel and aluminum tariffs that would aim them primarily at China. After Trump announced the moves, China’s Ministry of Commerce said that it was proposing tariffs of its own on 128 products from the United States, like nuts, wine and pork, that it valued at about $3 billion. China urged the Trump administration to resolve differences through dialogue to “avoid damage to the broader picture of Chinese-U.S. cooperation.” The president’s actions fulfill his frequent campaign pledge to demand fairer trade deals with nations around the globe and to retaliate against trading partners if the United States does not secure better agreements. “We have one particular problem,” the president said before signing an order that will impose tariffs on hundreds of Chinese products, from shoes and clothing to consumer electronics. “We have a tremendous intellectual property theft situation going on.”


Tokyo has asked North Korea through diplomatic channels for a summit between Prime Minister Abe Shinzo and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, Kyodo News reported. Tokyo wants to discuss how to implement a 2002 agreement signed by then-Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro and then-North Korean leader Kim Jong Il and find solutions to abductions of Japanese citizens by North Korea in the 1970s and 80s abduction and the nuclear issue. Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide neither confirmed nor denied the report. “We have been exchanging views with North Korea through the use of our Beijing embassy channel as well as through government-to-government bilateral negotiations,” he said, adding there have been “various opportunities and means” to approach North Korea. (Kim Soo-hye, “Japan Asks N. Korea for Summit,” Chosun Ilbo, March 23, 2018)

North Korea's parliament plans to convene a session April 11, KCNA said, amid attention over whether the North will send messages targeting South Korea and the United States ahead of its planned summits with them. The SPA holds a plenary session every April to deal with budgets, cabinet overhaul and other issues. Hundreds of deputies attend the meeting. Focus will be placed on whether the North will express a potential change of its stance toward the country's nuclear weapons program. At a parliamentary meeting in April 2012, the North stipulated in the preamble of its Constitution that the country is a nuclear state. The following year, the SPA adopted a law
Pabian, Bermudez, and Liu: “Commercial satellite imagery of North Korea’s Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Site from mid-March 2018 suggests that there has been a significant slowdown in tunneling and a reduced presence of related personnel at the site when compared to just two weeks earlier. During this same time period, high-level talks between North and South Korea moved forward, including Pyongyang’s proposal for a summit with U.S. President Donald Trump. Imagery from early March had shown signs of continued tunneling excavations at the West Portal, including mining carts and significant amounts of new spoil deposits. Large groups of personnel were also noted in the open support areas serving the nuclear test site’s Command Center. However, imagery from March 17 showed no evidence of tunneling operations or the presence of any personnel or vehicles at any of the support areas including those near the Command Center. This is an important development given efforts to establish high-level meetings between the United States, South Korea and North Korea. However, whether this is just a temporary development or whether it will continue over time is unclear.” (Frank V. Pabian, Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. and Jack Liu, “North Korea’s Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Site: Significant Slowdown in Tunneling,” 38North, March 23, 2018)

The United States Forces Korea (USFK) plans to hold its first-ever mass evacuation exercise to the U.S. during the upcoming joint military drills with South Korea next month, according to reports. The USFK has held the evacuation exercises, called Focused Passage, twice a year to brace for any worst-case military scenarios. But this is the first time some volunteers of USFK families and noncombatant troops will fly to the U.S. mainland, overseas media said. For this year, the evacuation rehearsal is scheduled from April 16 to 20. The drills will come as part of this year’s joint military exercises between the U.S. and South Korea. President Moon Jae-in has also taken advantage of Kim’s rare signal for dialogue by mediating talks between Washington and Pyongyang. U.S. President Donald Trump also accepted Kim’s gesture for dialogue, with both sides expected to meet sometime in May. Under the peace momentum, Seoul and Washington reached a consensus over keeping the upcoming drills low-key without any strategic weapons — such as nuclear submarines. (Lee Min-hyung, “USFK Mulls Mass Evacuation Exercises during Joint Drills with S. Korea,” Korea Times, March 23, 2018)

For Japan, the hits just keep on coming. Only last week, Tokyo was scrambling to recover after being caught flat-footed by President Trump’s abrupt acceptance of an invitation to meet Kim Jong-un personally to discuss North Korea’s nuclear program. Today, officials in Japan awoke to the news that it was the largest American ally to be left off a list of countries temporarily exempted from stiff tariffs on steel and aluminum imports by the Trump administration. The omission of Japan, the largest foreign supplier to be so excluded, was especially pointed. Australia, Brazil, Mexico and even South Korea, which is engaged with the United States in tense renegotiations of a free-trade pact, appeared on the list. The move also seemed a personal snub of Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, who has courted Trump through rounds of golf, frequent telephone calls and lavish steak meals. “It’s really kind of almost tragicomic,” said Nakano Koichi, a political scientist at Sophia University in Tokyo and frequent critic of the Japanese leader. “Abe was being really sycophantic in trying to please Trump, and at a certain point, quite recently, he was talked about as the closest friend that Trump has. And it all turns out that that wasn’t good for anything when it comes to furthering the national interests of Japan.” But for anyone who has been paying attention, there have been hints all along that in matters of trade, Tokyo should regard
Trump as much “frenemy” as friend. During the presidential campaign, he seemed to harbor three-decades-old perceptions of Japan, chastising it for “crushing” the United States in trade, invoking the specter of the 1980s and the height of the trade wars between the two countries. After he was elected, he threatened to impose a “big border tax” on Toyota if it built a new auto plant in Mexico. In niggling comments during a visit to Tokyo last fall, Trump told Japanese executives to “try building your cars in the United States instead of shipping them over,” ignoring the fact that Japanese carmakers build nearly four million vehicles in plants in the United States annually, more than twice the number the industry ships from Japan. “They knew that this was a president who had pretty well-established views when it came to how he thought about Japan and the economic relationship with the U.S.,” said Tobias Harris, a vice president and Japan analyst at Teneo Intelligence, a political risk consultancy based in New York. When announcing $60 billion in tariffs against China yesterday, Trump directed a sugarcoated barb against Japan and Abe. “I’ll talk to Prime Minister Abe of Japan and others — great guy, friend of mine — and there will be a little smile on their face,” Trump said. “And the smile is, ‘I can’t believe we’ve been able to take advantage of the United States for so long.’ So those days are over.” In any case, the tariffs are unlikely to hurt Japan’s economy that much. The country’s steel exports to the United States represent just 5 percent of its total steel exports, and it produces very little aluminum. (Motoko Rich, “Misreading Trump: Ally Japan Is Spurned on Tariff Exemptions,” New York Times, March 23, 2018)

3/24/18

North Korea has accepted South Korea's proposal to hold high-level talks on March 29 to discuss the date and agenda items for an inter-Korean summit slated for late April, the Ministry of Unification said. Two days ago, Seoul notified Pyongyang via a border communication channel of its proposal for talks March 29 on the northern side of the border truce village of Panmunjom, saying the South's three-member delegation will be led by Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon. "North Korea delivered its agreement via the border communication channel today, saying it will send a three-member delegation headed by Ri Son-gwon, chairman of the Committee for Peaceful Reunification," said the ministry in a release. "The government will make full preparations for the inter-Korean summit through the March 29 talks," it added. (Yonhap, “North Korea Agrees to High-Level Talks March 29: Ministry,” March 24, 2018)

3/25-28/18

Kim Jong Un has made a surprise visit to Beijing on his first known trip outside North Korea since taking power in 2011, three people with knowledge of the visit said. Further details of the visit, including how long Kim would stay and who he would meet, were not immediately available. The people asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the information. A special train may have carried Kim through the northeastern Chinese border city of Dandong, Japan’s Kyodo News said earlier. Nippon TV showed footage of a train arriving March 25 in Beijing that looked similar to one used by Kim’s father, Kim Jong II, to visit the Chinese capital shortly before his death in 2011. (Bloomberg, “Kim Jong Un Is Making a Surprise China Visit, Sources Say,” March 26, 2018) North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has pledged to denuclearize and meet U.S. officials, China said on March 28 after an historic meeting with President Xi Jinping, who promised China would uphold its friendship with its isolated neighbor. KCNA made no mention of Kim’s pledge to denuclearize, or his meeting with President Donald Trump anticipated for some time in May. China’s Foreign Ministry cited Kim in a lengthy statement as telling Xi that the situation on the Korean Peninsula is starting to improve because North Korea has taken the initiative to ease tensions and put forward proposals for peace talks. “It is our consistent stand to be committed to denuclearization on the Peninsula, in accordance with the will of late President Kim Il Sung and late General Secretary Kim Jong Il,” Kim Jong Un said, according to the statement. North Korea is willing to talk with the United States and hold a summit between the two countries, he said. “The issue of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula can be resolved, if South Korea and the United States respond to our efforts with goodwill, create an atmosphere of peace and stability while taking progressive and synchronous measures for the realization of peace,” Kim said. State television showed pictures of the two men chatting amiably and Kim’s wife, Ri Sol Ju, getting an equally warm welcome from Xi’s wife, Peng Liyuan. China briefed Trump on Kim’s visit and the communication included a personal message from Xi to Trump, the White House said in a
statement. “The United States remains in close contact with our allies South Korea and Japan. We see this development as further evidence that our campaign of maximum pressure is creating the appropriate atmosphere for dialogue with North Korea,” the statement said. A top Chinese diplomat, Politburo member Yang Jiechi, will brief officials in Seoul on March 29, including President Moon Jae In, on Xi’s meeting with Kim, according to the presidential office in Seoul. Kim told a banquet hosted by Xi the visit was intended to “maintain our great friendship and continue and develop our bilateral ties at a time of rapid developments on the Korean Peninsula,” according to KCNA. Xi accepted an invitation “with pleasure” from Kim to visit North Korea, KCNA said. However, China’s statement made no mention of Xi accepting an invitation, saying only that Xi pledged to keep frequent contacts with Kim through the exchange of visits and sending special envoys and letters to each other. (Reuters, “Kim Makes No-Nukes Pledge to Xi as Meeting Confirmed,” Yomiuri Shimbun, March 28, 2018)

Xinhua: “At the invitation of General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee and President Xi Jinping, Kim Jong-un, Chairman of the Korean Workers Party and Chairman of the State Council, paid an unofficial visit to China from March 25th to 28th. ... Both leaders exchanged in-depth views on the international and Korean Peninsula situation. Xi Jinping pointed out that "since the beginning of this year, the situation on the Korean Peninsula has undergone positive changes. The DPRK has made important efforts to this end. We appreciate this. On the issue of the Peninsula, we insist on achieving the goal of denuclearization on the Peninsula, maintaining peace and stability on the Peninsula, and solving problems through dialogue and negotiation. We call on all parties to support the North and South sides of the Peninsula to improve relations and jointly make practical efforts to promote peace talks. China is willing to continue to play a constructive role on the issue of the Peninsula and work together with all parties including the DPRK to jointly promote the relaxation of the tension on the Peninsula." Kim Jong-un said that "the current situation on the Korean Peninsula has begun to develop well. We took the initiative to take measures to ease tension and put forward proposals for peace dialogue." In accordance with the wishes of late President Kim Il Sung and late General Secretary Kim Jong Il, he is committed to achieving the denuclearization of the Peninsula. "This is our consistent position. We are determined to transform North-South relations into a relationship of reconciliation and cooperation. We will hold a North-South summit meeting and are willing to hold dialogues with the United States and hold summits between North Korea and the United States. If South Korea and the United States respond to our efforts in good faith, create a peaceful and stable atmosphere, and adopt periodic and simultaneous measures to achieve peace, the denuclearization of the Peninsula can be resolved. In this process, we hope to strengthen strategic communication with China to jointly maintain the momentum of consultation and dialogue and peace and stability on the Peninsula." (Xinhua, “Xi Jinping Holds Talks with Kim Jong Un,” March 28, 2018)

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un offered to give up his nuclear weapons during a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing if Seoul and Washington take “phased” steps for peace and stability, according to Chinese media reports. “We voluntarily offered dialogue to the South and the United States, and have since taken appropriate steps to ease tension on the peninsula,” Kim was quoted as saying during the summit by China Central Television (CCTV) and Xinhua News Agency, March 28. Kim returned to Pyongyang the same day after a four-day visit to Beijing. “Once the U.S. and South Korea take phased and simultaneous measures in response to our peace efforts, the issue of denuclearization of the peninsula can be resolved,” the young dictator said. (Lee Min-hyung, “Kim Jong Un Offers Conditional Denuclearization,” Korea Times, March 28, 2018)

KCNA: “There were talks between Kim Jong Un, chairman of the Workers’ Party of Korea and chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, and Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, president of the People’s Republic of China and chairman of the Central Military Commission, at the Great Hall of the People on March 26. The supreme leaders of the two parties and two countries of the DPRK and the PRC exchanged views on important matters including the development of the
DPRK-China friendly relations and the issue of handling the situation of the Korean peninsula. Kim Jong Un said that he was pleased to have the first significant meeting with Xi Jinping. He said that it is the fixed determination of the Workers' Party of Korea and the government of the DPRK to carry forward the precious tradition of the DPRK-China friendship, provided and strengthened by the leaders of elder generations of the two countries, and put it on a new high stage as required by the developing era. He talked about the need to meet often Chinese comrades including Xi Jinping to further deepen friendship and strengthen the strategic communication and strategic and tactical cooperation so as to consolidate the unity and cooperation between the two countries. He voiced his expectation that the Chinese people would achieve shining successes in the cause of building modern and powerful socialist country in the new era and in the struggle to realize China's dream of the great prosperity of the Chinese nation under the correct leadership of the Communist Party of China with Xi Jinping at the core. Xi Jinping warmly welcomed Kim Jong Un for visiting China as his maiden foreign trip. He stressed that it is the strategic option and unshakable will of the Chinese party and government to attach importance to and steadily carry forward and develop the Sino-DPRK friendship which the leaders of elder generations personally provided and nurtured with sincerity in the course of contributing to the victorious advance of the socialist cause, out of common ideal, faith and deep revolutionary friendship. The recent positive change observed in the situation of the Korean peninsula is a fruition of strategic decision made by Kim Jong Un and the efforts exerted by the party and government of the DPRK, he said. He expressed the conviction that under the leadership of Kim Jong Un the Workers’ Party of Korea would register fresh successes in steadily advancing along the socialist path, developing the economy and improving the standard of people's living by guiding the Korean people. Kim Jong Un invited, on behalf of the party and government of the DPRK, Xi Jinping to make an official visit to the DPRK at a convenient time and the invitation was accepted with pleasure. Present at the talks from the DPRK side were Ri Su Yong and Kim Yong Chol, members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK and vice-chairmen of the WPK Central Committee, and Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho, member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK. Present from the PRC side were Wang Huning, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and member of the CPC Central Committee Secretariat, Ding Xuexiang, member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, member of the CPC Central Committee Secretariat and director of the CPC Central Committee General Office, Huang Kunming, member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, member of its Secretariat and head of its Publicity Department, Yang Jiechi, member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, Wang Yi, state councilor and minister of Foreign Affairs, and Song Tao, head of the International Liaison Department of the CPC Central Committee.” (KCNA, “Kim Jong Un Has Talks with Xi Jinping,” March 28, 2018)

KCNA: “General Secretary Xi Jinping made a speech at a grand banquet arranged in welcome of the China visit by respected Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un. He said that the visit by Chairman Kim Jong Un is the one of great significance at a special time, and it suffices to prove that Chairman Kim Jong Un and the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea attach utmost importance to the relations between the two parties and two countries of China and the DPRK. It is also of weighty significance in deepening the communication between the two sides, strengthening cooperation and promoting partnership, he added. He said the visit would make an important contribution to putting the relations between the two parties and two countries on a new stage and promoting the regional peace, stability and development at a new historical time. The traditional Sino-DPRK friendship was personally provided and cultivated with much effort by the leaders of elder generations of the two parties and two countries, he said. He noted that President Kim Il Sung visited China over 40 times in his lifetime, forging deep friendly feelings with the Chinese leaders of elder generation including Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai. The traditional Sino-DPRK friendship is the unique one in the world that has been sealed in blood, and it provides the two parties and two peoples with happiness just as a luxuriant tree with deep roots and a never-drying spring, he pointed out. When General Secretary Kim Jong Il visited China in May 2010, he said that the DPRK-China friendship is a heritage provided and bequeathed down to us by the revolutionaries of elder generation and that it is our historic and strategic option and
unshakable stand to value it generation after generation, Xi Jinping said. He said he had talks with Kim Jong Un in a friendly atmosphere. We reached a consensus that it is in the common interests of both sides and a strategic option common to both sides to carry forward and glorify the traditional Sino-DPRK friendship, he said, adding: We are convinced that no matter how the international and regional situations may change, both sides would take firm control of the general trend of the world development and the over-all phase of the development of Sino-DPRK relations, strengthen high-level visits, deepen strategic communication, and expand exchanges and cooperation, thereby providing the two countries and peoples with happiness. At present the Chinese party, government and people are struggling and striving to realize the “Two Centenary Goals” and the dream of China, i.e. great prosperity of the Chinese nation, under the strategic assignments set forth by the 19th Congress of the Communist Party of China. Xi Jinping said that the diligent and resourceful Korean people are making redoubled efforts to build a socialist economic power under the leadership of the Workers’ Party of Korea headed by Chairman Kim Jong Un. He voiced firm support to the Korean comrades in their active efforts for defending the political stability and promoting the economic development and hoped that they would steadily make new greater successes in the cause of socialist construction in Korea, adding he is convinced of it.” (KCNA. “Kim Jong Un’s Speech at Banquet,” March 29, 2018)

KCNA: “Respected Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un made a speech at the grand banquet hosted by Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People. Kim Jong Un said that he made a visit to the People’s Republic of China like lightning with the sole desire to invariably maintain the long-standing historical tradition of great DPRK-China friendship, to live up to the revolutionary obligation and to creditably carry forward and develop the relations between the DPRK and the PRC generation after generation under the new situation prevailing on the Korean peninsula. He expressed his heartfelt gratitude to General Secretary Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan for devoting their time and according warm and cordial hospitality just as they would do for their own brothers and sisters, though being busy with the party and state affairs. He said that he was deeply moved by the sincerity and deep consideration shown by Xi Jinping and leading officials of the Chinese party and state so that the successful visit would be made in a short period after gladly accepting the proposal for the visit, and noted that he was very thankful for it. He warmly congratulated Xi Jinping on his election as president of the People's Republic of China and chairman of the Central Military Commission of the PRC after the successful conclusion of "two conferences" following the grand 19th Congress of the Communist Party of China. It is quite natural that the capital of China was chosen for his maiden foreign trip, he noted, adding it is also a noble obligation of him who has to value the DPRK-China friendship as his own life and carry it forward generation after generation. The peoples of Korea and China, who have closely supported and cooperated by dedicating their blood and life to the protracted joint struggle, have clearly realized in their life experience that their destinies are inseparable and how valuable the peaceful environment and stability in the region are for the two countries, fraternal neighbors who are linked by the same river, and how costly it is to win and defend them, he added. He said that he together with Xi Jinping had an in-depth exchange of views on important matters including the development of the DPRK-China friendly relations and the urgent issue of handling the situation of the Korean peninsula and affirmed the shared will to consolidate the socialist systems in the two countries and provide the two peoples with happiness and future. He noted that it is the unshakable stand of the Workers’ Party of Korea and the DPRK government to develop on a new stage the DPRK-China friendly relationship which was forged in the sacred common struggle for the socialist cause and which has maintained its nature despite all tempests of history, true to the noble intention of the preceding leaders. The WPK and the people of the DPRK are rejoiced at their own over the fact that the Chinese people have registered signal achievements in the cause of building a modern and powerful socialist country in the new era and the international prestige of China is rising as the days go by under the guidance of the Communist Party of China with General Secretary Xi Jinping at the core, he pointed out. Kim Jong Un sincerely hoped that the Chinese people would brilliantly carry out the tasks set forth by the 19th Congress of the CPC and achieve great prosperity of China under the guidance of General Secretary Xi Jinping.” (KCNA. “Kim Jong Un’s Speech at Banquet,” March 29, 2018)
Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said that Tokyo has been communicating with Pyongyang through “various means” on the possibility of meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, while also voicing a positive note about the prospects of opening a three-way dialogue involving Washington. Abe’s remarks during an Upper House Budget Committee session came on the heels of recent media reports saying Tokyo had conveyed to Pyongyang Abe’s willingness to hold talks with Kim, in the hope of making headway on the long-stalled abduction issue concerning Japanese taken by North Korean agents in the 1970s and ’80s. “We have been communicating with North Korea through various means, including using embassy channels in Beijing, but I will refrain from revealing any further details,” Abe said in a carefully crafted response to a question about a potential Abe-Kim meeting by Ichita Yamamoto, a member of the prime minister’s ruling Liberal Democratic Party. (Osaki Tomohiro, “Abe Says He’s in Contact with North about Meeting Kim, Suggests in Diet He’d Be Open to Trilateral Summit with U.S.,” Japan Times, March 26, 2018)

The Trump administration says trade sanctions are undermining the North Korean economy and that the financial squeeze has compelled Kim Jong Un to negotiate. “There’s no question these sanctions are working and that’s what brought them to the table,” Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said. But information about the North Korean economy is scarce at best. It has never published reliable economic figures. And amid the statistical blackout, there are some signs the country has remained stable, according to specialists working from commercial satellite photography, reports gathered at great risk from people in North Korea, and other sources. The value of the North Korean currency, the won, has been steady, according to those reports. So, too, the prices for basics such as rice and corn. The price of gasoline spiked in the fall, but it has been falling in recent months. New construction projects continued to pop up, as least through January, according to satellite photography; the lights at night in Pyongyang and the border with China appeared relatively brighter, although the country as a whole was growing less so. “There’s certainly a lot of anecdotal evidence that growth is, if not positive, at least flat,” said Daniel Ahn, who in February left his post leading the Office of the Chief Economist at the U.S. State Department, where he studied the economic effects of sanctions. Few doubt that the sanctions have shrunk North Korea’s trade with the rest of the world, particularly over the past nine months. What remains unclear, though, is how much that reduction has constrained the country’s economy. What the sanctions appear to have achieved is a huge cut in North Korea’s exports — its sales to the rest of the world, mainly China. Exports from North Korea plunged from about $240 million a month in 2016 to less than $50 million a month by the end of last year, according to IHS Markit Global Trade Atlas. Anecdotal accounts from traders in Chinese cities bordering North Korea back up those figures, too. They say that North Korean factories are closing for lack of Chinese customers. “I do believe a major reason why they’re having this meeting is because the economic sanctions have a very big impact on both their economy and their ability to get pieces of material and other things they need for their weapons program,” Mnuchin said. What those trade losses have meant for the overall North Korean economy is unclear, however, because while economists expect to see a downturn, they have seen few signs of it. “The sanctions have to be creating havoc for the regime,” said William B. Brown, an economist who grew up in South Korea and who has worked in the analytical arm of the CIA, the State Department, the U.S. Embassy in Seoul and the National Intelligence Council. “All those coal and textile workers who were producing for export — what are they doing now?” Brown, who now teaches Chinese and Korean economics at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, said he’s been expecting that the North Korean economy — what little we know of it — would begin reflecting that havoc. “But,” he said, “we’re not seeing it yet.” To understand an economy, economists often bring to bear huge data sets. But when it comes to North Korea, they must rely on shreds of information. One measure of the information scarcity is that the most widely used economic indicators from North Korea may be the price estimates produced on a shoestring budget by the Daily NK, a website run out of an office in Seoul. Roughly once or so a month, reporters at the Daily NK confer via cellphone with a network of sources in three North Korean cities. The reporters, some of them defectors, poll their sources back home on a handful of very basic questions: What is the price of rice? Of corn? Of gasoline? What is the exchange rate? And despite the sanctions, the exchange rate for the North Korean won has remained stable for more than three years — about 8,000 won per dollar — a remarkable equilibrium given the growing trade deficit. “The single greatest mystery in the North
Korean economy is the stability of the won,” Marcus Noland said. It is a mystery because, among other things, the kind of trade deficit that North Korea is running — it is importing much more than it is exporting — normally would depress the value of the won. So what’s keeping the value up? Economists propose a number of possibilities. It could be that the government is propping up the won, spending reserves of foreign currency to bid it up. Or the regime could be expanding its illicit businesses, such as cyber-crime and counterfeiting, to fill in the official trade deficit. Or it could be that the growing tolerance for markets and private investment in North Korea is providing the kind of upward boost necessary to keep the economy aloft. We just don’t know,” Noland said. Gas prices spiked in the fall, more than tripling in price to 24,000 won per kilogram. That fluctuation was quickly seen as evidence that the sanctions, which limit sales of refined petroleum products to North Korea, were having an effect. But in recent months, that price, too, has fallen back, though not all the way, to about 12,000 won per kilogram. As a result, analysts who have been waiting years for signs that the sanctions are “biting” are still mostly waiting. The central bank of South Korea, which publishes an annual estimate of the size of the North Korean economy based on scraps of public data as well as national intelligence, said that the North Korean economy grew 4 percent in 2016 — more than either the U.S. or South Korean economies. Through 2016, it had grown four of the past five years. Its estimate for 2017 is expected in July. “While estimates vary widely, the South Korean central bank says the North Korean economy has grown. … I, too, think the direction is likely positive,” said Ahn, who is a professorial lecturer at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Some satellite photography leads to similar conclusions. Curtis Melvin, a researcher at the U.S.-Korea Institute at the Johns Hopkins SAIS, spends much of his days analyzing satellite photographs of North Korea, looking for new construction or other signs of economic activity, such as smoke from a factory. He said that the pace of major building projects tapered last year but that big projects are still going up, including a coastal tourist resort, and the economy does not appear to be shrinking. “I look at satellite imagery every day. I have the largest nongovernmental database of North Korean factories,” said Melvin, noting that his review runs up only through June 2017. “And from the satellite imagery, I cannot point to anything that says this factory was closed since the sanctions have been adopted.”Ahn’s analysis of nighttime images of North Korea, by contrast, offers mixed results. Ahn has conducted an analysis of satellite photography at night, comparing the brightness of North Korean cities over time. The measurement of brightness can be difficult because of cloud cover and the reflection of moonlight from the Earth’s surface, but economists often use it as a measure of economic activity. Ahn said the results suggest that the country as a whole has dimmed over time, though some key areas, such as Pyongyang and the border with China, have brightened relatively speaking. “At a broad level, the images of North Korea are getting darker, but parts are getting brighter,” Ahn said. One explanation, Ahn said, is that “the regime is shifting what limited resources it has toward its own elites in those areas to ensure it remains in power.” It might just be a matter of timing. It wasn’t until March 2016 that the sanctions began to target, in a general way, the North Korean economy. Until that point, the U.N. sanctions against North Korea were largely “targeted” — that is, they were aimed at specific individuals, firms or military items directly related to the regime. But since then, the sanctions have been broader in scope, targeting exports of North Korean coal, textiles and seafood, some of the country’s most important sources of revenue. Last year, the trade statistics began to reflect those measures, particularly after China enforced the sanctions more rigorously. North Korean exports dropped steeply. (The trade figures are about the only detailed economic figures we have from North Korea, and they are available because North Korea’s trade partners publish them, not North Korea.) Anecdotally, at least, that drop in trade has created hardship. “Multiple sources have told us that a common phrase circulating throughout the country is: ‘Those who were eating three meals a day are down to two, and those previously eating two meals have only one,’” the Daily NK representatives said by email. Reports like that, as well as last year’s decline in North Korean exports, have renewed hopes that the sanctions are working and putting pressure on Kim. “Maybe Kim, now reaching out to Seoul and Washington, is all the evidence we need,” Brown said. (Peter Whoriskey, “Trump Says Sanctions Are Hurting the North Korean Economy. But in Some Ways It Seems Stable,” Washington Post, March 26, 2018)
said. The National Intelligence Service (NIS) briefed lawmakers. "We are not to hold talks on the premise of the security guarantee for the North's regime," the spy agency was quoted as saying by lawmakers on the parliamentary intelligence committee. "There will be simultaneous pursuit of giving the North what it wants and making it abandon nuclear weapons." The NIS told lawmakers that North Korea has a firm resolve for dialogue and a willingness for denuclearization. "North Korea hopes to be recognized as a real, normal state," a lawmaker said, citing the briefing from the NIS. (Yonhap, "Seoul to Seek Both Security Guarantee for N.K., Denuclearization: Spy Agency," March 26, 2018)

Ning Fukui, a veteran diplomat is set to take over as China’s deputy special representative for Korean affairs, amid plans for North Korea to hold talks with both South Korea and the United States, sources said. Ning, who served as ambassador to South Korea from 2006-08, and was involved in the four- and six-party talks in the 1990s and 2000s, is expected to work under Kong Xuanyou, China’s special envoy to Pyongyang and vice-foreign minister on North Korean affairs, the diplomatic sources said. While Ning’s appointment has yet to be formally announced, he started work at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs earlier this month, one of the sources said. (Laura Zhou, “Chinese Diplomat Gets Key Role on North Korea Issues as Beijing Fights to Remain Relevant,” South China Morning Post, March 26, 2018)

ROK Statement: “Trade Minister Kim Hyun-chong announced on March 26 that Korea and the U.S. reached an agreement on amending their six-year old free trade agreement (Korea-U.S. FTA) and on exempting Korea from U.S. steel tariffs. He made the comment during a press briefing held at the government complex in Seoul. Trade Minister Kim said both sides reached an agreement in principle on FTA amendments. He stressed to the press that there will be no further opening of agricultural markets and no changes to the tariffs that had already been lifted. Under the updated agreement, Korea will allow the U.S. to extend its 25 percent tariff on imports of Korean pickup trucks by additional 20 years to 2041. The tariff was originally scheduled to expire in 2021. Korea will also allow U.S. automakers selling fewer than 50,000 units per year in Korea to be exempt from Korean safety standards as long as they meet U.S. safety standards, up from 25,000 vehicles previously. Regarding the steel tariff issue, Trade Minister Kim said that the U.S. agreed to exempt Korea from steel tariffs imposed under Section 232 of the U.S. Trade Expansion Act and that Korea agreed to receive a quota of about 2.68 million tons of steel exports annually. This is equivalent to about 70 percent of the annual average Korean steel exports to the U.S. between 2015 and 2017.” (ROK Ministry of Trade, Industry and Commerce Statement, March 26, 2018)

If President Trump actually meets Kim Jong-un in the next few months — an encounter that many American officials still doubt will come to pass — his challenge will be much larger than merely persuading North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons. Trump must also get Pyongyang to give up the factories, reactors and nuclear-enrichment facilities that produce the nuclear fuel needed to build more weapons — even as new satellite evidence suggests that a new North Korean reactor that appears to be coming online now, after years of construction, according to analysts. It sits in the Yongbyon nuclear complex. North Korea insists the reactor is intended to produce electricity for civilian use. But the new reactor can also make plutonium, one of the main fuels used in nuclear arms. It can thus supplement the output of the aging, existing facilities at Yongbyon. The new reactor could be a central issue in the Trump-Kim talks, if the goal, as the United States insists, is complete denuclearization. Even if Kim agrees to a freeze on nuclear and missile testing, he would still be able to accumulate more bomb fuel for a larger arsenal as long as the negotiations dragged on. But if the talks fail, or simply drag on, the reactor could also be part of the justification for military action — at least if the past arguments of Trump’s newly appointed national security adviser, John R. Bolton, prevail. In March 2015, just before the Iran deal was struck, Bolton argued in a New York Times op-ed that neither negotiations nor sanctions would stop Iran from bolstering its nuclear and weapons programs. “The inconvenient truth is that only military action like Israel’s 1981 attack on Saddam Hussein’s Osirak reactor in Iraq or its 2007 destruction of a Syrian reactor, designed and built by North Korea, can accomplish what is required,” Bolton wrote. “Time is terribly short, but a strike can still succeed.” Before and after the
announcement of Bolton’s appointment last week, the National Security Council did not respond to several requests for comment on the evidence that North Korea’s new reactor is being started up. The image of the North Korean reactor from February 25 shows what look like emissions from a smokestack. That suggests that preliminary testing may have begun at the new reactor, according to a report by *Jane’s Intelligence Review* and the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University. The plant is called the experimental light water reactor. It has the potential to make 25 to 30 megawatts of electricity, enough to power a small town. The plant could also potentially produce about 20 kilograms of weapons-grade plutonium each year, according to the Institute for Science and International Security, a private group in Washington that tracks nuclear weapons. This would be more than four times the amount made annually by the North’s only other large reactor, which has long supplied the country with plutonium for its nuclear arsenal. Imagery analysts at Stanford found that activity around the new reactor increased significantly in 2017, suggesting that the North has been rushing toward its full operation. Throughout 2017, analysts observed what appeared to be major work to complete a river cooling system, shown below, for the new reactor. Analysts also found some evidence that could support North Korea’s assertion that the new reactor would be used for power generation. Satellite images appeared to show that power lines and a transmission tower had been erected around the site. “There are a number of objects that have been put in place that lead me and a number of experts to the conclusion that this might be used for production of electricity,” said Allison Puccioni of the Stanford team. She cautioned against assuming that North Korea sees the reactor as a way to make more fuel for nuclear weapons. In 2010, satellite imagery showed signs that the North was beginning construction of a new reactor. By 2013, the exterior of the new reactor appeared to be completed, and activity around it was relatively stagnant after that, according to the Stanford group. Siegfried Hecker, with two other nuclear engineering experts, wrote in the *Korea Observer* in 2016 that North Korea was still developing the technology needed to start the reactor. Over roughly the same period, the country began taking steps to get its old reactor running again, despite earlier promises to abandon the plant. In a satellite image from January 17, 2018, steam is visible from the existing five-megawatt reactor’s turbine building, and hot water appears to be melting snow at a discharge pipe. The evidence suggests that the reactor could again be in active use. “The five-megawatt reactor has been in continuous operation more or less for the entirety of 2017,” said Puccioni, who has been studying satellite imagery of Yongbyon for almost a decade. Yet the issue is not insurmountable. The usual approach is to rely on inspectors who ensure that no spent reactor fuel gets mined for plutonium. The International Atomic Energy Agency did so before at Yongbyon, before its inspectors were expelled, and could surely do so again. Trump administration officials say the denuclearization inspections, however, would have to cover the entire country, because there are suspected undeclared uranium enrichment facilities outside of Yongbyon. Private analysts say they plan to keep monitoring Yongbyon for clues about when the new reactor becomes fully operational and if it is, in fact, producing new fuel for the North’s growing arsenal of nuclear weapons. (K.K. Rebecca, William J. Broad, and David E. Sanger, “Why a New Nuclear Plant Could Upset Any Talks with North Korea,” *New York Times*, March 28, 2018, p. A-9)

Pabian, Bermudez, and Liu: “In a March 27, 2018, *New York Times* (NYT) article entitled, “North Korea Is Firing up a Reactor. Why That Could Upset Trump’s Talks with Kim,” the authors conclude that North Korea’s Experimental Light Water Reactor (ELWR) is now in the process of starting up. Although the article draws heavily from an earlier article by *Jane’s Intelligence Review* which is generally consistent with our own reporting, the NYT article went too far in suggesting that the reactor is beginning operations. In the absence of other corroborating data, that conclusion is premature at best and is likely wrong. Commercial satellite imagery from February 25, 2018 shows what could be a small wisp of some type of vapor emanating from the elevated ventilation stack that serves the ELWR. There are serious doubts as to whether this is actually vapor; it may simply be a ground feature of a lighter color associated with the driveway. But even if it is vapor, a ventilation stack is not intended for the removal of any operations exhaust, steam or smoke. Rather, it is designed to provide a mechanism to allow small releases of filtered, radioactive gases that accumulate in the reactor halls and for pressure relief to prevent containment failure due to internal gas pressure in the event of an accident. The *Jane’s* authors originally
suggested this apparent emission—if it is an emission—could be evidence of “pre-operations testing.” However, such a visible emission could just be evidence that the North Koreans were testing part of the ventilation or emergency overpressure gaseous relief system, which is a reasonable course of action but does not necessarily mean that the next step will be to start operations. In doing so, the North Koreans could have exposed the pressure relief valve to a source of high pressure inert gas leading to the apparent wisp emission. Moreover, the NYT mislabeling of this ventilation stack as a “smokestack” creates further unnecessary confusion over the operational status of the ELWR. In reality, any emission from the ventilation stack serving the reactor is only indicative of testing of the emergency ventilation systems and not a signature of “firing up the reactor” as the title suggests. In fact, any “smoke” from a ventilation stack that serves a nuclear reactor would only suggest that the reactor is on fire. If commercial satellite imagery from February 25 does actually show a wispy emission of some kind from the reactor ventilation stack—and again there are serious doubts that it does—it is most likely part of a checkout procedure for the ventilation system. However, no emission from the stack can be construed as indicative of startup operations as that is not the purpose of a ventilation stack. Rather, such an emission should only be interpreted as evidence of ongoing checkout preparations, moving the ELWR closer to operations at some as yet indeterminable time in the future.” (Frank V. Pabian, Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. and Jack Liu, “Not So Fast: A Closer Look at What’s Going on with North Korea’ Experimental Light-Water Reactor,” 38North, March 29, 2018)

Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force underwent its biggest organizational shake-up, in the midst of a challenging security environment, with its command streamlined for flexible operations nationwide and the creation of amphibious forces tasked with defending remote islands. The launch of the Ground Component Command to provide unified command over regional armies and the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade, Japan's version of the U.S. Marines, came as Tokyo seeks to beef up its defenses against North Korea's nuclear and missile programs and China's maritime assertiveness. "We are expecting more situations in which the Ground, Maritime and Air Self-Defense Forces have to work together to rapidly respond at a nationwide level against ballistic missile launches, attacks on islands and major disasters," Defense Minister Onodera Itsunori said at a press conference, emphasizing the role of the Ground Component Command in such occasions. A senior GSDF member said earlier that establishing a central command headquarters was a "deep desire" of the organization, which was established as part of the Self-Defense Forces in 1954. Unlike the air and maritime services, the GSDF had no central headquarters to control its units, which belong to five regional armies, each operating under commanding generals. Therefore, orders had to be issued to each regional army to mobilize its divisions and brigades. The GSDF's command structure remained decentralized amid bitter memories of the Imperial Japanese Army's intervention in politics and its role in wartime military aggression, some political experts say. Onodera asserted that civilian control over the military will be properly maintained "based on prewar lessons." Headquartered at the GSDF's Asaka base that straddles Tokyo and Saitama prefectures, the Ground Command Component will play the role of coordinator not only with other SDF units but also with the U.S. military. The GSDF's first full-scale amphibious operations unit -- the other highlight of the reorganization -- was launched with around 2,100 members mainly drawn from the Western Army's infantry regiment stationed at Camp Ainoura in Sasebo, Nagasaki Prefecture. The GSDF amphibious brigade would be tasked with retaking Japanese islands, stretching southwest from Kyushu toward Taiwan, if they are illegally occupied. The isles include Miyako Island, which is about 210 kilometers from the Japan-controlled Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea that are claimed by China, which calls them Diaoyu. Chinese government vessels have repeatedly entered Japanese waters around the islands, creating tension. But the amphibious brigade still appears to be a fledgling unit, with the government yet to secure a permanent base for the Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft that will play a key role in the transportation of troops. The government plans to deploy 17 newly acquired U.S.-made V-22 Ospreys at Saga airport in southwestern Japan, with their delivery to Japan expected from around the fall. But the government has not won local consent and is not in a situation to push through the plan due to a GSDF helicopter crash in Saga Prefecture in February. The Ground Component Command is headed by Lt. Gen. Kobayashi Shigeru, who formerly led the GSDF’s Central Readiness Force, and the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade is led by Maj. Gen.
Aoki Shinichi, former deputy chief of staff of the Western Army. (Kyodo, “Japan GSDF Undergoes Biggest Shakeup amid N. Korea, China Tensions,” March 27, 2018)

Sigal: “‘North Korea just stated that it is in the final stages of developing a nuclear weapon capable of reaching parts of the United States,’” President-elect Donald Trump tweeted a day after Kim Jong Un’s New Year’s Day speech last year. “It won’t happen.” Now the North Korean leader has made Trump’s pledge possible. He has stopped testing just short of demonstrating a reliable thermonuclear weapon and an ICBM with a reentry vehicle capable of delivering it. If President Trump is prepared to negotiate in earnest and live up to his commitments, he might make his wish come true—but not if he heeds advice to confront Kim at the summit with an ultimatum to disarm or else. John Bolton may offer that advice in the mistaken belief that brandishing sanctions and threatening war gives Trump leverage, but Kim retains far greater leverage by resuming tests. Kim may also be willing to commit to denuclearize and even take some steps to disarm if Trump commits to end enmity and take reciprocal steps in that direction. An end to US enmity remains Kim Jong Un’s aim just as it was his grandfather’s and father’s for the past thirty years. Throughout the Cold War, Kim Il Sung had played China off against the Soviet Union to maintain his freedom of maneuver. In 1988, anticipating the Soviet Union’s collapse, he reached out to improve relations with the United States, South Korea and Japan fundamentally in order to avoid overdependence on China. That has been the Kims’ aim ever since. From Pyongyang’s vantage point, that aim was the basis of the 1994 Agreed Framework, which committed Washington to “move toward full normalization of political and economic relations,” or, in plain English, to end enmity. That was also the essence of the September 2005 Six Party Joint Statement which bound Washington and Pyongyang to “respect each other’s sovereignty, exist peacefully together, and take steps to normalize their relations subject to their respective bilateral policies” as well as to “negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.” For Washington, the point of these agreements was the suspension of Pyongyang’s nuclear and missile programs. For nearly a decade, the Agreed Framework shuttered the North’s production of fissile material and stopped the test-launches of medium and longer-range missiles and did so again from 2007 to 2009. Both agreements collapsed, however, when Washington did little to implement its commitment to improve relations and Pyongyang reneged on denuclearization. So-called experts ignore that history at their peril. …Instead of basing the approach to the summit on a gross misreading of the past, President Trump would do better to test whether or not Kim means what he says now.” (Leon V. Sigal, “Bad History Makes for Flawed Policy,” 38North, March 27, 2018)

The White House declared itself “cautiously optimistic” that the planned summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un will take place sometime in May, even as key details such as where Kim will meet with President Trump, and the parameters of their talks, remain undetermined. “We feel like things are moving in the right direction,” press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said. Amid debates about whether the Chinese move was good or bad for U.S. aims, administration officials ultimately decided to declare it a positive result of its “maximum pressure” campaign against North Korea. The president said on Twitter early today that he had received a message from Chinese President Xi Jinping late Tuesday that the meeting with Kim “went very well and that KIM looks forward to his meeting with me.” A State Department spokesman said that the “personal message” from Xi was conveyed as part of a briefing the White House received from the Chinese government after the visit. It remained unclear whether the administration has received a direct confirmation from North Korea about the proposed Trump-Kim summit. As far as the administration is concerned, State Department spokesman Justin Higgins said, the messages conveyed by Seoul and Beijing are enough confirmation to begin planning. “North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has said he is committed to denuclearization, pledged to refrain from any further nuclear or missile tests, and understands routine joint military exercises between the Republic of Korea [South Korea] and the United States will continue,” Higgins said. “Kim also expressed his desire to meet with President Trump as soon as possible. In light of this, President Trump has accepted Kim Jong Un’s offer to meet in person.” Trump’s national security staff, with his newly designated national security adviser and secretary of state not yet in place, has held a series of
discussions on the upcoming summit, but senior officials said even the most basic questions have not been answered. No decision has been made among a number of options for the location of the meeting, including the Peace House in the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea, or countries such as Sweden that maintain diplomatic relations with both North Korea and the United States. While some experts have suggested Beijing, a senior administration official said that was likely to be unacceptable to the White House because the location is “a major espionage risk, for starters.” Official U.S. visitors to China assume that their conversations, movements and private meetings are monitored, and that all of their bags are thoroughly searched. Another question is whether there will be what the official called “senior-level engagement” between the two governments before the summit. “I can’t rule it out. The president and [Kim] are not going to hash out” details of their meeting “over the phone,” said the official, who spoke about closed-door planning. Bolton, who served as the head of arms-control policy at the State Department during the George W. Bush administration, wrote in a 2007 book, “The DPRK will gladly ‘engage’ with us, accept our concessions, and then violate its own commitments. . . .” Ironically, North Korea’s policies have often been more sensible than our own, where the hope of the High Minded seems always to triumph over contrary experience.” Trump seemed to take the opposite tack early today. “For years and through many administrations, everyone said that peace and the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula was not even a small possibility,” he said in another tweet. “Now there is a good chance that Kim Jong Un will do what is right for his people and for humanity. Look forward to our meeting!” Bolton has acknowledged that he “has his own views and has been outspoken” in his writing and on television as a commentator for Fox News, the senior official said. “He has also said that as national security adviser he will put those views aside and make himself an arbiter of options” placed before the president by his senior national security advisers. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, who has advocated diplomacy with North Korea, told reporters Tuesday that he had “no reservations, no concerns at all” over Bolton. “Last time I checked, he’s an American, and I can work with an American,” Mattis said. Xi’s decision to meet with Kim was seen by some experts as an effort to take control of the situation as North Korea’s main economic and diplomatic partner, as well as a reaction to Trump’s lack of consultation before agreeing to meet Kim, and to last week’s announcement of new U.S. trade penalties against China. “Panicked is too strong a word, but they seemed concerned or very wary ever since Thursday,” when Trump signed the memorandum authorizing $60 billion in new intellectual property tariffs against China, said Michael Pillsbury, a China scholar at the Hudson Institute and a defense adviser on East Asia during the George H.W. Bush administration. “They had been assured by various friends that these things wouldn’t happen.” The “Trump people,” Pillsbury said, “were upset they didn’t get advance consultation from Xi.” His advice to them, he said, was to consider it “a big breakthrough for you. . . . It’s China stepping up to the plate.” Another reason “the Chinese jumped,” said Robert Carlin, a former U.S. intelligence officer and State Department adviser on North Korea negotiations, “was because they had the feeling Kim was deliberately cutting them out . . . with his moves toward South Korea and the United States.” Carlin also suggested that Kim wanted to meet with Xi because “he needs to have his flanks covered. He needs to know that the Chinese are not going to do something to sell him out, which they did once before,” he said, citing an earlier episode in the long, convoluted history of negotiations over the future of the Korean Peninsula.

“thoroughly” talked over the matter, but agreed to discuss specific details later. In principle, Pyongyang’s agenda was “not too different” from that of Seoul, Cho continued, and the two leaders will basically talk about denuclearizing and establishing a “peace regime” on the Korean Peninsula, and improving South-North ties. The high-level meeting Thursday was held in Tongilgak, a North Korean-controlled building in Panmunjom, to iron out specifics for the upcoming South-North summit, which both countries previously agreed to hold in Peace House, a South Korean-controlled building in Panmunjom. The inter-Korean summit will be South Korean President Moon Jae-in’s first face-to-face meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and the third summit of its kind between two Korean leaders after 2000 and 2007. Subsequently, Kim is expected to meet U.S. President Donald Trump for what will be the first-ever summit between the two countries, though the date and venue have yet to be determined. South Korean interlocutors who participated in the high-level dialogue included Unification Minister Cho, Vice Unification Minister Chun Hae-sung and Yoon Young-chan, senior presidential secretary for public affairs. The North was represented by Ri Son-gwon, chairman of the Committee of the Peaceful Reunification of the Country of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, a cabinet-level agency overlooking relations with the South; Jon Jong-su, vice chairman of the same committee; and Kim Myong-il, a director-level official from the committee. “There’s only a month left before the North-South summit,” Ri said in closing remarks, according to pool reports, “and during this short period, there are many things to discuss at the working-level. But if both sides keep deeply aware of the historic significance and importance of the summit meeting, and work hard with prudence and a cooperative attitude, we will be able to discuss and resolve every issue swiftly and smoothly.” (Lee Sung-eun and Joint Press Corps, “Third Inter-Korean Summit Set for April 27,” JoongAng Ilbo, March 30, 2018)

President Donald Trump abruptly threatened to put the implementation of the recently-revised free trade agreement with South Korea on hold to use it as leverage to strike a deal with North Korea. “We’ve redone it, and it’s going to level the playing field on steel and cars and trucks coming into this country,” Trump reportedly said in a speech in Richfield, Ohio. “I may hold it up until after a deal is made with North Korea,” Trump added. “You know why? Because it’s a very strong card and I want to make sure everyone is treated fairly.” Trump’s remarks came just a day after a joint statement by United States Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and South Korea’s Trade Minister Kim Hyeon-chong announced that a deal had been clinched. The statement said the two countries “have reached an agreement in principle on the general terms of amendments and modifications” of the FTA. In the preliminary agreement reached over months of negotiations, South Korea and the United States decided to raise the number of U.S. cars imported into South Korea that don’t have to comply with domestic safety regulations from an original 25,000 to 50,000. The two countries also decided to extend a U.S. tariff on South Korean pickup truck exports by an additional 20 years to 2041. In conjunction with the amendments to the FTA, the United States agreed to exempt South Korea from new steel tariffs. South Korea agreed to a quota on its steel exports to the United States of 70 percent of the amount exported from 2015 to 2017. The statement by Trump came after Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in an interview with Fox News March 25 that the new agreement would be signed soon, calling the deal a “win-win.” The president himself called it a “great deal for American and [South] Korean workers” on his Twitter page after the details were announced by the U.S. trade representative. “We are actually in the process of figuring out what exactly President Trump meant by what he said because it was very abrupt,” a high-ranking official from the South Korean Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy who was directly involved in the renegotiation of the FTA told JoongAng Daily March 30. “It’s very confusing and nothing’s been officially confirmed yet.” (Choi Hyung-jo, “Trump Threatens to Delay Renegotiated FTA until Deal Is Made with North Korea,” JoongAng Ilbo, March 30, 2018) South Korea settled disputes with the Trump administration over steel tariffs and the revision of a free-trade agreement this week. With those stumbling blocks cleared, it hoped the two governments could focus on the more pressing crisis of North Korea’s nuclear weapons. As it turned out, South Korea was celebrating too early. Today, President Trump said he might postpone finalizing the trade agreement with South Korea, which he had earlier described as “a wonderful deal with a wonderful ally,” until he secured a deal in denuclearizing North Korea. “You know why?” he said. “Because it’s a very strong card.” By tying a trade deal with South
Korea to progress in denuclearizing North Korea, Trump is showing how little direct leverage Washington has over the isolated, nuclear-armed North just as South Korea and the United States prepare for talks with Kim Jong-un, the North’s leader. Instead, analysts say, Trump has been left to exert leverage on South Korea, which is taking the lead in orchestrating the talks, and the South’s president, Moon Jae-in. “Things are not going as Trump has wished for, so he is twisting South Korea’s arms so that Moon will work for the kind of results Washington wanted when he meets with Kim Jong-un,” said Koh Yu-hwan, a professor of North Korean studies at Dongguk University in Seoul, the South Korean capital. “Like the businessman he is, Trump is telling Moon, ‘I will pay you — when you produce the results.’” (Choe Sang-hun, “Trump, Lacking Leverage over North Korea, Aims at South,” *New York Times*, May 31, 2018, p. A-7)

Today marked two years since security-related laws came into force. How can Japan deal with North Korea, which has continued with its nuclear and missile development, and China, whose maritime advances are becoming increasingly assertive? In November 2017, a B-1 strategic bomber of the U.S. Air Force took off from Andersen Air Force Base in the U.S. territory of Guam and flew above the Pacific Ocean to airspace near the Kyushu region. There, F-15 fighter jets of the Air Self-Defense Force joined the B-1 bomber in mid-flight. As the B-1 flew toward the Korean Peninsula, the F-15s occasionally flew close to the bomber; at other times, they kept their distance while staying vigilant for suspicious aircraft that might approach the bomber. This was the first operation to protect U.S. aircraft conducted under the security-related laws. A B-1, which can fly from Guam to the Korean Peninsula in about two hours, can carry many precision-guided bombs. It is considered one of the main weapons that would be called into action in a contingency on the peninsula. The laws expanded the range of situations in which the SDF can use force to protect its own weapons and other items during peacetime — including the protection of foreign military forces conducting activities to defend Japan. This boosted the integration of Japan-U.S. operations. Based on the laws, the Maritime Self-Defense Force has, since last year, supplied fuel once or twice a month to U.S. Aegis-equipped vessels conducting warning and surveillance activities against North Korean ballistic missile launches. According to figures released by the Defense Ministry, Japan and the United States conducted joint exercises 62 times in fiscal 2017 — more than triple the 19 conducted in fiscal 2015, before the laws were enacted. In his policy speech delivered in January, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo said the SDF had conducted a mission to protect a U.S. vessel and aircraft for the first time based on the laws. “An alliance that allows two nations to provide mutual aid will further deepen their ties,” he said. The government opted to introduce a missile defense system at the end of 2003. But in a mock drill in 2004, it failed. Under the drill’s scenario, North Korea fired 20 Rodong missiles, which have a range of about 1,300 kilometers, toward Kanto over an about 30-minute period. While 18 missiles were intercepted and another failed to launch from North Korea, the remaining projectile landed around Tokyo’s Ichigaya district where the Defense Agency — now the Defense Ministry — was located. The drill was conducted on the assumption that four Aegis-equipped destroyers from Japan and the United States had been deployed around the Sea of Japan and Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) surface-to-air guided missile interceptors had been deployed throughout the nation. “The drill was based on estimates for the future, so the result wouldn’t really change if the same drill was held again,” a government source revealed. Currently, four Aegis destroyers with missile defense capabilities have been deployed. One Aegis ship is said to be able to deal with two or so ballistic missiles at the same time. In the event of a “saturation attack” in which an overwhelming number of ballistic missiles are simultaneously fired, “It would be difficult to intercept all of them,” a senior Defense Ministry official said. The ministry is working to enhance the defense system. In fiscal 2020, it will possess a total of eight Aegis destroyers, including both renovated and newly built units. The ministry plans to deploy a land-based Aegis Ashore missile defense unit in Akita Prefecture and another in Yamaguchi Prefecture, with operations scheduled to begin around fiscal 2023. In addition to the North Korean threat, Japan is wary of China’s cruise missiles. The government is working on an integrated air-and-missile defense (IAMD) initiative to simultaneously respond to both cruise and ballistic missiles. However, improving a missile defense system has its limitations. To deal with North Korea, Japan must depend on the “extended deterrence” (see below) afforded by the U.S. nuclear umbrella. The United States is obliged to defend Japan under the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, but Japan is not obliged to reciprocate. Tokyo
China virtually halted exports of petroleum products, coal and other key raw materials to North Korea in the months leading to this week’s summit between Kim Jong Un, the North Korean dictator, and Chinese President Xi Jinping. The export freeze, which went further than existing UN sanctions, showed how China had recently raised pressure on Pyongyang over its nuclear program. It suggested that despite Xi’s talk this week of a “profound revolutionary friendship”, China had actually been playing hard ball with its neighbor. “China has effectively turned off the petroleum taps flowing into North Korea,” said Alex Wolf of Aberdeen Standard Investments, who analyzed Chinese data. “The North Korean economy is under a great deal of pressure and this has undoubtedly contributed to North Korea’s change in policy,” Wolf said, “It is Chinese ‘maximum pressure’ that may be bringing a change in North Korean policy.” Official Chinese data showed that the monthly average of refined petroleum exports to North Korea in January and February was 175 tonnes, or 1.3 per cent of the monthly average of 13,553 tonnes shipped in the first half of last year. The reduction went far beyond the 89 per cent cut in petroleum product exports stipulated by UN sanctions. Chinese coal exports to North Korea also fell to zero in the three months to the end of February, after a monthly average of 8,627 tonnes in the first half of 2017. Exports of steel ran at a monthly average of 257 tonnes over the same period, down from a monthly average of 15,110 tonnes in the first half of 2017. Shipments of motor vehicles also dried up, with just one being exported in February, official Chinese data showed. Concerns over the accuracy of China’s statistics are common, but analysts stressed that such consistent and bold drops were unlikely to have been the result of official massaging by Beijing. (James Kynge, “China Froze Exports to North Korea in Run-Up to Kim’s Meeting with Xi,” Financial Times, March 31, 2018)

Considering the Self-Defense Forces’ exclusively defense-oriented policy, the Japanese government has so far refrained from possessing equipment capable of long-range attacks that could be regarded as attacks on enemy bases. For that reason, the SDF does not possess full-scale air-to-surface missiles. In terms of range, Japan’s air-to-ship missiles are shorter than China’s. A Defense Ministry senior official reflected the mounting sense of urgency, saying, “If an actual battle took place, the SDF would be put at an extreme disadvantage because of its shorter-range missiles.” The fiscal 2018 budget enacted March 28 included costs related to the introduction of three kinds of long-range cruise missiles, with a range of about 500 kilometers to 900 kilometers, including joint strike missiles (JSMs) that Air Self-Defense Force F-35A fighters are to carry. “It’s a change in defense policy,” a senior government official said emphatically. At a press conference on December 28, 2017, when the ministry decided to allocate the related costs, Defense Minister Onodera Itsunori repeatedly described the missiles to be introduced as “standoff missiles” — missiles that are capable of attacking targets outside the range of enemy fighters, meaning SDF fighters would not expose themselves to danger. Without explicitly saying so, Onodera apparently had Japan’s efforts to counter China’s long-range attack capability in mind. Japan’s current missile
defense system would struggle to intercept all the missiles in a “saturation attack” — in which a large number of missiles are fired simultaneously — by North Korea. Missiles such as JSMs are capable of attacking inland parts of North Korea from over the Sea of Japan. By possessing such equipment, Japan also aims to enhance its deterrent against North Korea. An expert said, “It paves the way for Japan to possess the capability to attack enemy bases.” As a policy, Japan does not have the capability to attack enemy bases. Constitutionally, however, the government is in a position to allow the country to possess the ability. On March 20, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party’s Research Commission of National Security compiled a summary of proposals concerning the National Defense Program Guidelines that the government will review at the end of this year. It included the need to discuss possessing the capability to attack enemy bases. However, there are cautious views even within the LDP. A party lawmaker heavily involved in national defense said, “It would be inappropriate to give an impression about a change of the character of the SDF while we’re trying to amend Article 9 of the Constitution.” Under such circumstances, the capability to attack enemy bases is unlikely to be included in the defense guidelines. Attacks on enemy bases would require large-scale equipment, including satellites to detect targets and electronic warfare equipment for obstructing enemy radars. It will be difficult for the SDF to fully establish the capability to attack enemy bases unless the capability is included in the new defense guidelines and the budget is expanded for that purpose. Nevertheless, a senior Defense Ministry official stressed the significance of introducing long-range cruise missiles. “If [they] cannot pose a threat to enemies, there is no point in possessing long-range cruise missiles. But if [the SDF] operates them in tandem with U.S. equipment, they could be used for enemy base attacks and enhance Japan’s deterrent,” the official said. (Yomiuri Shimbun, “Having Long-Range Missiles a Matter of Deterrence,” March 31, 2018)

CIA Director Mike Pompeo met with Kim Jong Un today, Easter Sunday.

He clapped and he smiled, even posing for a group photo with a K-pop band. The appearance by Kim Jong-un at a concert by South Korean musicians in Pyongyang was all the more unusual because his authoritarian government has been struggling to stave off what it sees as an infiltration of the South’s pop culture among his isolated people. Kim shook the hands of members of South Korea’s most popular girl band, Red Velvet, which he and his wife, Ri Sol-ju, watched from a balcony. After watching Red Velvet perform, Kim reportedly pronounced the event a “gift for Pyongyang citizens.” It was the first time a North Korean leader watched a South Korean musical performance in the North’s capital. They were the first South Korean singers to perform in North Korea in more than a decade. Their visit reciprocated a North Korean art troupe’s performances in South Korea during its Winter Olympics in February. Their tunes are so infectious that the South Korean military has broadcast them across the border in a psychological warfare campaign. Their tunes are so infectious that the South Korean military has broadcast them across the border in a psychological warfare campaign. Their tunes are so infectious that the South Korean military has broadcast them across the border in a psychological warfare campaign.

But apparently, even North Korea had a limit to how far it would go in accepting K-pop. South Korean officials said the North had rejected their suggestion that the global star Psy, the singer famous for his “Gangnam Style” hit, be included in the visit. “Please tell President Moon how good this kind of exchange is. I know there has been attention to whether I will come and see Red Velvet,” Kim was quoted as telling South Korean officials. “I thank you for bringing this gift to Pyongyang citizens.” Kim Yong-chol, a vice chairman of the North’s ruling Workers’ Party, visited the reporters’ hotel and apologized for their having been denied entry to a theater in Pyongyang, the capital, where the North’s leader, Kim Jong-un, watched South Korean musicians perform last evening. “We invited you and we are obliged to guarantee free coverage,” Kim Yong-chol was quoted in the reporters’ dispatches from Pyongyang as saying. “On behalf of the North’s...

The Blue House said it wants three-way talks involving South and North Korea and the United States before having a four-way negotiation that also includes China, which was proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping. The Blue House made clear its intention to remain at the steering wheel on Korean affairs. A senior Blue House official told reporters today, “It is President Moon’s wish to have three-way talks following the upcoming Pyongyang-Washington summit,” said the official. In a phone call to President Trump on March 9, Xi proposed a four-way negotiation involving the two Koreas, China and the United States to settle a peace treaty between the two Koreas to formally end the 1950-53 Korean War, according to Kyodo News yesterday. Moon Chung-in, special adviser to President Moon on security, foreign and inter-Korean affairs, echoed the Blue House’s reservation about the Libya framework in a speech delivered at Waseda University in Tokyo on March 31. “The process to denuclearize the North has no other option but to proceed in a gradual manner,” said Chung, adding Seoul and the international community should adopt a “give and take” approach in each phase of Pyongyang’s denuclearization. “If the North displays concrete signs of denuclearization, our government could ask the United Nations to roll back economic sanctions [on the North] along with China and the United States,” he said. (Kang Jin-kyu, “Three-Way Talks Are Next Round, Says Blue House,” JoongAng Ilbo, April 3, 2018)

On February 17, Japan, the United States and others conducted a drill at the Utapao Royal Thai Navy Airfield in Thailand to practice procedures to protect Japanese living in the country. Since the security-related legislation came into force in March 2016, SDF personnel have been permitted to use arms to rescue Japanese living abroad. Until then, their activities were limited to transporting Japanese mainly using vehicles and airplanes. How to evacuate about 57,000 Japanese nationals, including tourists, and an estimated more than 200,000 Americans and others from South Korea is a pressing issue. The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation (see below) stipulates that both countries cooperate in the evacuation of noncombatants. The Japanese government intends to evacuate Japanese citizens to shelters South Korea has designated across the country. If the situation is brought back under control within 72 hours or so after war has broken out, it plans to begin their repatriation. However, protecting Japanese nationals overseas based on the security-related legislation can be realized only when the country concerned agrees to accept the SDF deployment. While Tokyo is sounding Seoul out to see if it will accept the possibility of SDF activities in South Korea, Seoul has been rejecting the idea, stating the South Korean people are sensitive about the SDF for historical reasons. As the second-best policy, the Japanese government plans to share roles for evacuation with the United States. Under the plan, it is widely believed that U.S. forces based in South Korea will transport by land Japanese and U.S. civilians to southern parts of South Korea, then carry them from Busan Port to Tsushima Island in Nagasaki Prefecture on vessels of the Maritime Self-Defense Force and helicopters of the Ground Self-Defense Force, in cooperation with U.S. military vessels. They are to be evacuated there temporarily and then transported to Kyushu by MSDF. Although the South Korean side does not agree to the docking of MSDF vessels at South Korean ports, a senior Japanese Foreign Ministry official said, “Docking MSDF vessels alongside U.S. vessels at ports would be possible.” In early February, Sonoura Kentaro, a special adviser to the prime minister in charge of national security, visited the Kure Naval Base in Kure, Hiroshima Prefecture, to inspect the Shimokita, an Osumi-type transport vessel, and confirm its capacity. It is said that an Osumi-type vessel can carry about 2,000 people. It is likely the ship will be one of the main vessels to transport Japanese nationals in South Korea during an evacuation. “A plan to evacuate Japanese citizens is close to being compiled, but has yet to be completed. With inter-Korean and U.S.-North Korea summit meetings set, it’s necessary to complete the plan while the situation on the Korean Peninsula remains calm,” said a source with links to the Japanese government. (Yomiuri Shimbun, “SDF Faces Obstacles in Evacuating Japanese Nationals from S. Korea,” April 2, 2018)
China appreciates North Korea's "important efforts" to ease tension on the Korean peninsula, Wang Yi, a State Councillor and China's Foreign Minister, told North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho, hours after he called on all sides to stay focused on talks. China's Foreign Ministry gave only hours' notice that Wang would meet Ri. Wang told Ri that Xi and Kim had reached an important consensus on achieving a peaceful resolution to the peninsula nuclear issue during Kim's visit to Beijing. "China appreciates North Korea's position working toward denuclearization of the peninsula and its important efforts to ease the situation on the peninsula, and supports meetings between the leaders of the North and South and between the North and the United States," Wang said, according to a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement. The ministry cited Ri as saying that North Korea would "maintain close strategic communications" with China on peninsula-related issues, and that the Kim-Xi meeting was an "important juncture" in the development of bilateral relations. North Korea's official news agency KCNA had said that a delegation headed by Ri left today to meet other foreign ministers in Azerbaijan and to visit Russia, but made no mention of China. Earlier in the day, Wang said during a joint news briefing with visiting Swiss Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis that he hoped a planned meeting in May between Kim and U.S. President Donald Trump would "increase mutual understanding." "But historical experience tells us that at the moment of easing of the situation on the peninsula and as first light dawns on peace and dialogue, frequently all manner of disruptive factors emerge," Wang said. "So we call on all sides to maintain focus, eliminate interference, and firmly follow the correct path of dialogue and negotiation." Cassis said that he would discuss with Wang the role that Switzerland could play in the strategic meetings between Kim and "some important partners on the international level", but he did not elaborate. (Michael Martina, “China Tells It Appreciates Its Efforts on Denuclearization,” Reuters, April 3, 2018)

Carlin: “In the current pre-meeting phase, it would make little sense for Pyongyang to lean too far forward in its public statements. Overall, although Pyongyang has not explicitly touched on the subject of a possible Kim-Trump summit through its state-sponsored media apparatus, North Korea has, since March 9, been adjusting and trimming its public posture in preparation for moving to engage the US should the two sides firm up plans for a date and venue. Furthermore, it is not unusual for DPRK media not to report a North Korean leader’s remarks on denuclearization in conversations with the Chinese—as happened recently with Kim’s remarks to Xi Jinping reported by Xinhua but not KCNA. This “silence,” as many pundits have labeled it, is not unusual. In fact, it is not even really “silence.” The North has been clearly signaling—both in what it has and what it hasn’t said—a very different posture than it did last year. For starters, Pyongyang has virtually stopped referring to its nuclear program over the past three weeks, ever since the visit to Washington by two ROK envoys who had just met with Kim Jong Un. At the same time, it has begun to open up space for a negotiating position to deal with the issue. A March 23 Rodong Sinmun article characterized sanctions as “the main contents of the US hostile policy.” That linkage raises the possibility that Pyongyang could deliberately portray movement on easing sanctions as a lessening of the U.S. “hostile policy.” In turn, since the North’s consistent position has been that its nuclear program was a result of U.S. hostile policy, any movement on the latter could give Pyongyang justification for movement on the former. Recently, Pyongyang has also significantly cut back what had been standard, frequent references to a US military threat. A March 25 Rodong Sinmun article criticizing the South Korean military for bolstering the ROK defense posture sounded the familiar theme that “dialogue and confrontation can never go together.” An article like this would normally have included complaints about the annual US-ROK exercises, set to begin only a week hence. However, in line with reports that Kim Jong Un told the ROK envoys that this year’s exercises would not be a problem, the article did not mention them. It also has so far made no reference to the April 1 start of the US-ROK Foal Eagle exercise. In fact, on the day the exercises started, Kim appeared at a concert by South Korean pop performers in Pyongyang. The last reference to the exercises in central North Korean media appeared on February 26. Although North Korean media have so far not explicitly referred to the possibility of a U.S.-DPRK summit, Pyongyang has pretty transparently addressed the subject. A March 20 KCNA commentary noted “there has been a sign of change” in the DPRK-U.S. relations. In an obvious reference to the possibility of talks, it criticized “small-minded” efforts to “spoil the atmosphere and say this or that even before the parties concerned are given a chance to study the
inner thoughts of the other side and are seated at a negotiating table.” This is the time, the commentary emphasized, for “all to approach everything with prudence with self-control and patience.” Apart from central media, Pyongyang appears to be using the pro-DPRK newspaper in Japan, Choson Sinbo, to advance a positive line. On March 10, in an extremely quick reaction to the news of the South Korean envoys visit to Washington, the newspaper carried “analysis” by its long-time and well-connected correspondent in Pyongyang. The article was careful not to say that Kim had actually empowered the South Korean envoys to deliver an offer to the U.S. President, but rather that the envoys had “grasped” Kim’s “intent” and on hearing that, President Trump “expressed his intent” for a summit. The item did specifically note that Kim had said the North can refrain from conducting nuclear and ballistic rocket test launches. The item also referred, without elaboration, to Kim Jong Un having made a “big, resolve, decisive decision,” the sort of formulation frequently used to signify a major shift in policy. Playing to the US President’s claim that policies of previous administrations have all failed, the article predicted that Kim will “show the president—who claims to be ‘the master of deals’—the way to evade the repeated failures of his predecessors and will call for his decisive decision.” This “analysis” on March 10 was followed quickly with another mention of a possible U.S.-DPRK summit in a March 14 column in Choson Sinbo. The column painted the best outcome in terms of a “win-win strategy”—not a usual North Korean formulation. The column did not rule out having denuclearization on the agenda, though it used a tortured construction to make the point, noting that it would be “extremely foolish” for the President to think that in the talks he could seek “only” Korea’s denuclearization. The column implied that Pyongyang was aiming for a major realignment of the structure in Northeast Asia, noting “there is no eternal foe, and no eternal ally.” (Robert Carlin, “Reading North Korean Intent: The Importance of What Is and Is Not Said,” 38North, April 3, 2018)

South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un may soon talk directly through a hotline between their offices. Seoul and Pyongyang officials will discuss the installation of the direct line during their working-level talks on Saturday at the northern side of Panmunjom truce village, JoongAng Ilbo reported. The two sides had agreed to establish a line between their leaders to hold consultations and reduce military tensions and to hold their first phone conversation before their summit on April 27. A Seoul presidential official explained that a communication line that currently runs through Panmunjom would be extended to Moon’s office to establish the hotline. The official added that Seoul may install a separate telephone for the cross-border line "for the sake of symbolic significance." Prior to Saturday's talks, Seoul and Pyongyang are set to hold working-level discussions to prepare for their leaders' meeting. Seoul's Unification Ministry said today that North Korea proposed the two Koreas postpone the session to tomorrow, a day later than originally scheduled. The North also notified Seoul that it will send a six-member delegation to the talks where the two sides will discuss protocol, security and media coverage of the summit. Pyongyang also suggested holding discussions on installing the hotline on March 7. The ministry said Seoul will accept the North's proposal, adding that the South Korean government will make thorough preparations to ensure the summit is held successfully. (Jennie Oh, “South, North Korea to Arrange Direct Hotline between Leaders,” UPI, April 4, 2018)

Seoul's top diplomat said that North Korea’s human rights record is unlikely to be discussed at this month’s summit, after Pyongyang denounced the South for supporting a fresh UN resolution against the North. Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha said Seoul maintains a “firm stance” against the “dire human rights situation” in the North but that the prospect of Moon discussing it with Kim this month was unlikely. "In order to enhance dialogue, the topics that both sides have agreed upon will be discussed," Kang told reporters. “So to include it in the agenda of South-North dialogue, I think the government will need more preparation,” she said. Pyongyang’s state media condemned South Korea yesterday for its "dubious double dealing", after Seoul welcomed a new United Nations resolution against North Korea’s human rights violations. Such action could jeopardize future dialogue, the North warned. “This is an open political provocation to the DPRK and an intolerable act of chilling the atmosphere for dialogue," the North's official KCNA agency said in a commentary, using North Korea’s official acronyms. It added: "Whom are they going to
North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has received an invitation from Moscow to visit, US Director of National Intelligence (DNI) Dan Coats was quoted as saying by TASS. Cooperation among the members of one of the Korean Peninsula’s key axes – North Korea, China, and Russia – is tightening with simultaneous Russia visits by China’s diplomatic and defense leaders and successive visits to China and Russia by North Korea’s Foreign Minister. “We know that [Kim] went to China to hold talks with [Chinese President] Xi [Jinping]. We know that there is an invitation to go to Russia,” Coats was quoted by TASS as telling reporters in Washington today. Visiting Russia as a special envoy for Xi, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met individually for talks with President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on April 5 to discuss an upcoming China visit by Putin and also affairs on the Korean Peninsula, TASS reported. Putin is expected to meet with Xi while visiting China in June to attend a Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Qingdao. Also visiting Russia was Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe, who met on April 3 with his Russian counterpart Sergei Shoigu and attended the Moscow Conference on International Security today. On his choice of Russia as his first overseas destination since taking office on April 3, Wei said it was intended “so that the Americans will understand the close relationship between the Chinese and Russian militaries.” Russia’s Foreign Ministry announced today that North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho was expected to visit Russia on April 9–11 for a foreign ministers’ meeting. (Kim Oi-hyun, “Kim Jong Un Reportedly Receives Invitation to Visit Moscow,” Hankyore, April 6, 2018)

Pubian, Bermudez, and Liu: “Commercial satellite imagery from March 30 indicates that North Korea may have shut down the 5 MWe (plutonium production) reactor for the time being. A major excavation project has also begun near the cooling water outfall, which, when coupled with recent efforts to dam the river below this point to create a reservoir, could indicate an attempt to provide a more steady flow of water into the facility. This would allow for the reactor to run more continuously and safely in the future. There is also new truck activity at the reactor, the purpose of which is unclear but could include maintenance or repairs, the movement of spent fuel rods to the Radiochemical Laboratory from the spent fuel storage pond, or the offloading of fresh fuel to the reactor. Despite the apparent reactor shutdown, there was no evidence (as of March 30) of plutonium reprocessing taking place at the Radiochemical Laboratory. However, this development should be monitored closely in the future. At the Experimental Light Water Reactor (ELWR), work continues on an adjacent building that may be a laboratory or for engineering support, but there are no obvious signs that the reactor is approaching operational status. Recent commercial satellite imagery indicates that the 5 MWe reactor may have been shut down since it was last observed in late February, given the lack of clearly visible steam plumes at the Generator Hall. Moreover, a major transformation is underway in the area where the reactor cooling water outfall is located, which involves a large excavation project along the riverbank. While it is still too early to tell the exact purpose of this work, given its location along the river and near the existing outfall, it could be related to the reactor’s secondary water-cooling system. Coupled with the recent addition of an earthen dam and sluiceway below this point creating a reservoir, the end result might be to alleviate previous concerns about the steady supply of water to the system due to seasonal variations in river flows. This would enable the reactor to operate on a more continuous basis in the future. Additionally, an unusual number of large vehicles were parked at the rear of the 5 MWe reactor. Among these vehicles, there are at least three large trucks, two of which appear to have a tank/cylinder/cask on their trailer beds. What may be a mobile crane covered with a tarp is located nearby. The purpose of these vehicles is unclear, but could be part of a new maintenance project, related to the transfer of spent fuel rods from the reactor’s adjacent spent fuel storage pond to move them from the facility to the Radiochemical Laboratory for reprocessing, or to deliver fresh fuel.” (Frank V. Pubian, Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., and Jack Liu, “North Korea’s Yongbyon Nuclear Reactor Center: Major Activity at the Five Megawatt Reactor,” April 4, 2018) “At the Radiochemical Laboratory, there are no visible indicators that a new reprocessing campaign has started such as the nearby
presence of specialized rail cars. Moreover, there is no smoke coming from the coal-fired Thermal Plant that provides steam to the Laboratory and no vapor emanating from the Laboratory’s cooling tower. Imagery shows only some truck movement in the motor pool since March 30, and a probable mobile crane near the receiving building near where a small object had previously been observed.” (Frank V. Pabian, Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., and Jack Liu, “North Korea’s Yongbyon Nuclear Research Center: Construction Proceeding Rapidly near Reactors; No Sign of Reprocessing,” 38North, April 6, 2018)

4/5/18 North Korea's top diplomat has said an atmosphere is emerging on the Korean Peninsula for inter-Korean reconciliation and trust-building and that a "breakthrough" for reunification could be made if the two Koreas closely cooperate, media reports showed. North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho made the remarks during a ministerial-level meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Baku, Azerbaijan, on Thursday (local time). "An atmosphere is emerging on the Korean Peninsula between North and South Korea," Ri was quoted as saying. "Up until last year, the global community's anxiety and concerns directed over the Korean Peninsula ... has given way to applause of support and welcome." Ri said the recent developments have proved that the two Koreas, if they cooperate, could improve inter-Korean relations, ease tensions and make a "breakthrough" for reunification free from outside intervention, the reports showed. (Yonhap, “N. Korean Diplomat Says Atmosphere of Reconciliation Emerging, Hopes for Breakthrough,” Korea Herald, April 6, 2018)

4/6/18 Former President Park Geun-hye was sentenced to 24 years in prison and fined 18 billion won ($16.8 million), after a Seoul court found her guilty of 16 charges of corruption and power abuse. “Park, in conspiring with Choi Seo-won, better known by her former name Choi Soon-sil, requested and received bribes worth over 23 billion won,” said Judge Kim Se-yoon of the Seoul Central District Court. “When a culprit receives a bribe worth more than 100 million won, he or she can be sentenced to life or to more than 10 years. Her fines were calculated based on the laws she has violated.” Of the 18 charges of corruption and power abuse the prosecution had levied against Park, who did not attend the sentencing, the court found her guilty of 16. They include forcing conglomerates to contribute 77.4 billion won to two non-profit foundations Choi controlled. The court said she is also guilty of receiving bribes worth 7.2 billion won from Samsung Group, though it cannot determine how much she kept for herself. Park was also found guilty of abusing her power by blacklisting artists and cultural figures critical of her administration and exercising undue influence in the appointment of civil servants. She was also found guilty of ordering an aide to leak government secrets to Choi. “Park abused the power given to her by the people of the country and conspired with Choi to demand bribes from companies and meddle in their business decisions,” Kim said. “She abused her power as the president and received 14 billion won worth of bribes from Samsung and Lotte, and requested 8.9 billion won from SK Group. “She additionally blacklisted cultural figures based on their political leanings,” Kim said. “When her crimes came into light one by one, it threw the country into confusion. She has to take heavy responsibility to make sure these misdeeds are not repeated.” Park’s verdict, which lasted nearly two hours, was broadcast, the first time that the verdict in a criminal case has been aired live in Korea. Though she filed an injunction requesting that only a section of the hearing be broadcast, the court dismissed it. The court earlier cited the public’s need to know about the high-profile case as the reason for allowing a live broadcast of the hearing. Park, impeached in December 2016 and formally removed from office in March 2017, was indicted last April on 18 charges of corruption and power abuse. Prosecutors in February recommended a punishment of 118.5 billion won in fines in addition to a 30-year prison term. In February, her confidante Choi was sentenced to 20 years in jail and fined 18 billion won in her trial for power abuse and bribery. (Esther Chung, “Former President Park Gets 24 Years in Prison,” JoongAng Ilbo, April 6, 2018)

4/7/18 The United States and North Korea have been holding secret, direct talks to prepare for a summit between President Donald Trump and North Korea leader Kim Jong Un, a sign that planning for the highly anticipated meeting is progressing, several administration officials familiar with the discussions tell CNN. Central Intelligence Agency Director Mike Pompeo and a team at
the CIA have been working through intelligence back-channels to make preparations for the summit, the officials said. American and North Korean intelligence officials have spoken several times and have even met in a third country, with a focus on nailing down a location for the talks. Although the North Korean regime has not publicly declared its invitation by Kim Jong Un to meet with Trump, which was conveyed last month by a South Korean envoy, several officials say North Korea has since acknowledged Trump’s acceptance, and Pyongyang has reaffirmed Kim is willing to discuss the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The North Koreans are pushing to have the meeting in their capital, Pyongyang, the sources said, although it is unclear whether the White House would be willing to hold the talks there. The Mongolian capital Ulaanbaatar has also been raised as a possible location, the sources said. The talks between intelligence officials are laying the groundwork for a meeting between Pompeo and his North Korea counterpart, the head of the Reconnaissance General Bureau, in advance of the leaders’ summit. Once a location is agreed upon the officials said that the date will be set and the agenda discussed in greater detail. Officials said the decision to use the already existing intelligence channel was more a facet of Pompeo’s current status as CIA director as he awaits confirmation as secretary of state than a reflection of the content of the discussions. Pompeo is expected to begin the process of Senate confirmation in the next several weeks. One of Trump’s most trusted national security advisers, Pompeo has led efforts to prepare for the summit, which Trump has pressed his aides to organize. If he confirmed, he will assume oversight of the diplomatic preparations. As recently as this weekend, Trump told associates he was looking forward to the summit, which he agreed to on the spot when presented the invitation from Kim. The timeline, however, remains unknown. Officials said the current target is late May or even June. Trump is due to meet in two weeks with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at his Mar-a-Lago estate. Abe is expected to come bearing a list of concerns about opening talks with Kim. The New York Times first reported last month that the CIA was taking the lead in preparing for the Trump-Kim summit. Officials said the participation of the North Koreans in the preparatory talks give them more confidence that Kim is serious about meeting. Until the talks between US and North Korean intelligence officials began in earnest, Trump and his aides have relied partly on the characterizations of the South Koreans, which have experienced a rapprochement since the Olympic games held in Pyeongchang in February that led to Kim’s historic invite to Trump. The Chinese have also provided a briefing to the White House after Kim and President Xi Jinping met in Beijing late last month. State Department officials continue to communicate with the North Koreans though their mission to the United Nations, discussions which are referred to as the "New York channel." The talks with North Korea are informing coordination among government agencies which are preparing for the summit, an effort led by Matthew Pottinger, the top Asia official at the National Security Council. Incoming national security adviser John Bolton, who starts work at the White House on Monday, is expected to assume a large role in the planning for the talks, along with Pompeo. At the State Department, leading the diplomatic effort are acting Assistant Secretary Susan Thornton and deputy special representative for North Korean policy Marc Lambert, who speaks with North Korean officials through the “New York channel.” Their work includes scouting potential locations, coming up with names of US officials who can help staff the talks and pouring over records on previous negotiations with North Korea. They are also leading diplomacy with South Korea, as well as Japan, China and Russia. (Elise Labatt, Kevin Liptak, and Jenna McLaughlin, “Secret Direct Talks Underway between U.S., North Korea,” CNN, April 7, 2018) The CIA on May 10, 2017 launched a Korea Mission Center to deal with the North Korean nuclear issue, according to a press release. "Creating the Korea Mission Center allows us to more purposefully integrate and direct CIA efforts against the serious threats to the United States and its allies emanating from North Korea," CIA Director Mike Pompeo said in a statement. "It also reflects the dynamism and agility that CIA brings to evolving national security challenges." The CIA has been establishing mission centers since 2015 to effectively manage intelligence, but the Korea Mission Center is the first country-specific unit while the others are regional or mission-specific including the Middle East, Europe, Africa, and counterterrorism. The aim is "to harness the full resources, capabilities, and authorities of the agency in addressing the nuclear and ballistic missile threat posed by North Korea," the press release added. The center "will work closely with the Intelligence Community and the entire U.S. national security community." An intelligence source here said it will be headed by Andrew
North Korea has confirmed directly to the Trump administration that it is willing to negotiate with the United States about potential denuclearization, administration officials said today, a signal that the two sides have opened communications ahead of a potential summit between President Trump and Kim Jong Un next month. The message from Pyongyang offers the first reassurance that Kim is committed to meeting Trump. The U.S. president accepted an offer made in March on Kim’s behalf by South Korean emissaries during a meeting at the White House, but Pyongyang had not publicly commented. “The U.S. has confirmed that Kim Jong Un is willing to discuss the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” said a senior administration official, who was not authorized to speak on the record. A second official also confirmed that representatives of North Korea had delivered a direct message to the United States, which was first reported by the Wall Street Journal. At the same time, U.S. officials cautioned that Pyongyang offered no details about its negotiating position and noted that North Korea has violated past agreements, during the George W. Bush administration, to freeze its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs.

Foreign policy analysts warned that the Kim regime has long defined the concept of denuclearization differently than the United States has, seeking the removal of U.S. troops from the Korean Peninsula and an agreement that the United States will no longer protect allies South Korea and Japan with its nuclear arsenal. Previous U.S. administrations have unilaterally rejected such demands. “It means the removal of the threat posed by us, not them,” said Evans Revere, an Asia analyst at Albright Stonebridge Group who was a high-ranking State Department official before retiring in 2007. “It’s been defined as this for us on many occasions. My conclusion is this is not new. Various outlets are describing this as a major breakthrough on North Korea’s commitment toward denuclearization. It’s no such thing.”

Christopher R. Hill, a former State Department official who led the U.S. delegation in the “six-party talks” with the North during the Bush era, said the North Koreans are sophisticated negotiators who know what the United States wants. “The question is when and how and what they want in return for it,” Hill said. “If the notion is denuclearization where you take all the forces that threaten them off the Korean Peninsula, it’s not going to work. . . . If they have in mind the sorts of things on offer in 2005 — energy assistance, economic assistance, cross recognition of states, a peace treaty — we’re in business. But at this point, we just don’t know.” Trump administration officials declined to disclose how the North Koreans delivered their direct message. (David Nakamura, “North Korea Confirms It Is Ready to Negotiate,” Washington Post, April 9, 2018, p. A-1)

China has banned exports to North Korea of 32 “dual-use” items that can be applied in the development of weapons of mass destruction, the commerce ministry said. The list of items, which include radiation monitoring equipment and software that can be used to model fluid dynamics or neutrons, is in line with a UN Security Council resolution adopted in September to curb North Korea’s ballistic missile and nuclear programs. The ban also applies to items with potential dual use in the development of conventional weapons, according to a ministry statement published late today. (AFP, “China Bans Exports of ‘Dual Use’ Items to North Korea,” April 9, 2018)

President Donald Trump speaking to reporters ahead of a Cabinet meeting on foreign policy at the White House, said, “We’ve been in touch with North Korea - we’ll be meeting with them sometime in May or early June.” The president added that a meeting “is being set up with North Korea,” confirming in person that preparations for a summit are in progress, in line with reports over the weekend of direct back-channels of communication being used by the two countries. “I think there’ll be great respect paid by both parties, and hopefully we’ll be able to make a deal on the de-nuking of North Korea,” he continued. “They’ve said so; we’ve said so. Hopefully, it will be a relationship that’s much different than it’s been for many, many years.” (Sarah Kim, “Trump Predicts ‘De-Nuking’ Deal Ahead,” JoongAng Ilbo, April 10, 2018)

North Korea’s leader Kim Jong Un has acknowledged the prospect of talks with the US, state media reported in his first official mention of dialogue with Washington ahead of a planned
Prime Minister Abe Shinzo said that during his trip to the United States next week ahead of the first-ever U.S.-North Korea summit he will ask President Donald Trump to seek the elimination of all North Korean missiles that could reach Japan. Getting rid of only intercontinental ballistic missiles, which North Korea says can reach the U.S. mainland, "has no meaning for Japan, so I want to tell the president that (North Korea) should also abandon short and intermediate-range missiles that put Japan within range," Abe said during a parliamentary committee session. He also reiterated that he will ask Trump to raise the issue of North Korea's past abductions of Japanese nationals with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. "This is an important opportunity for me and President Trump to align our plans ahead of the inter-Korean and U.S.-North Korean summits," Abe said during the session. Abe said he will also impress upon Trump the need to maintain pressure on North Korea over its nuclear and missile development even as Pyongyang opens up to dialogue with other countries. "I want to confirm that we must not give North Korea a reprieve from sanctions or other rewards for merely agreeing to hold dialogue," he said. Abe plans to visit the United States between April 17 and 20 and hold two days of talks with Trump. He said the visit will "clearly display both domestically and abroad that our countries have always been, and will always be, with each other 100 percent." (Kyodo, “Abe to Ask Trump to Seek End of N. Korea Missile Threat to Japan,” April 9, 2018)

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has accepted an invitation extended by Ri Yong Ho, his North Korean counterpart, to visit Pyongyang at some point in the future, an indication of the close ties that still exist between the two countries despite the international pressure on the regime of Kim Jong Un. Ri issued the invitation during talks in Moscow today, where Lavrov said in a press conference that Russia welcomes the "gradual normalization" of the situation on the Korean Peninsula, as well as plans for direct negotiations between North Korea and the United States to resolve longstanding security problems in the region. (Julian Ryall, “Lavrov-Ri Talks Show Depth of Russia-North Korea Ties,” Deutsche Welle, April 11, 2018)

The United States and North Korea have been negotiating with “will and sincerity” over the details of the planned talks between President Trump and the North’s leader, Kim Jong-un, President Moon Jae-in of South Korea said. Trump said two days ago that American officials had been talking directly with the North Koreans to prepare for his meeting with Kim, which he said would probably take place in May or early June. Moon said the two sides were discussing where to hold the meeting, among other issues. “I hear that the United States and North Korea are preparing for the summit with both will and sincerity, holding detailed negotiations over the time, venue and agenda,” Moon’s office quoted him as saying during a meeting with officials preparing for his own talks with Kim on April 27. “I am expecting the North Korea-United States summit to produce significant steps toward denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula and establishing permanent peace here,” Moon said. According to former South Korean officials who have dealt with the North, it fears that any deal it signs with Washington could come to an end after a change in American administrations. So rather than surrender its nuclear facilities up front, it wants incremental steps, matched with corresponding incentives from the United States. For their part, American officials have said that North Korea has never been sincere in dealing with them, using negotiations to buy time while persisting in clandestine nuclear weapons development. Some hard-liners in Washington, like Trump’s new national security adviser, John R. Bolton, have demanded a quick dismantling of the North’s nuclear weapons program, suspecting that the North only wants to ease the tough international sanctions against it in exchange for a temporary, and deceptive, freezing of its nuclear program. South Korea hopes that North Korea and the United States will agree on a road map toward denuclearization and quickly implement key steps before. Trump’s term ends in January 2021, according to scholars advising Moon’s government. They said that a
key challenge for Moon would be to persuade Kim and Trump to exchange key trust-building steps soon after they meet, like granting inspectors unfettered access to the North’s nuclear facilities and setting up liaison offices in each other’s capitals. “We will have to make preparations for the South-North Korean summit meeting to serve as a guide for the North Korea-United States summit,” Moon said today. In a sign of warming relations between Pyongyang and Beijing, a senior Chinese diplomat, Song Tao, will bring an art troupe to North Korea this week. North Korean and Chinese state media reported today. The Chinese delegation will arrive in North Korea on March 13 to attend an international arts festival, the report said. (Choe Sang-hun, “U.S. and North Korea in ‘Detailed’ Talks on Trump-Kim Meeting,” New York Times, April 11, 2019)

South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha and her Japanese counterpart Kono Taro stressed the importance of the upcoming summits involving Pyongyang in achieving the joint goal of denuclearization and establishment of permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula in bilateral talks held in Seoul. A Japanese foreign minister last visited the country in December 2015, and this marks Kono’s first trip to Seoul since he took the post as Tokyo’s top envoy last August. The two envoys, according to Seoul’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasized building a future-oriented bilateral relationship along with joint coordination and communication among Seoul, Tokyo and Washington on how to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue. Kono emphasized that Tokyo seeks a resolution to the North Korean nuclear and missile problem and the issue of the abductions of Japanese citizens by North Korean agents in the 1970s and 1980s, according to a senior Foreign Ministry official in Seoul. He expressed Japan’s hope that the issue can be raised at the upcoming summits, which he said are a “turning point.” Kang was said to have replied that the “South Korean government has worked at and will continue to work toward humanitarian issues” such as the abduction issue, as well as that of reunions for families torn apart during the 1950-53 Korean War. She continued, “However, at the current stage, aside from the three general agenda items of denuclearization, establishment of peace and advancing of inter-Korean relations, we do not know what kind of detailed agenda will be put on the table at the summit.” Another diplomat who sat in on the discussions added that Kono called for the complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement (CVID) and the “complete resolution to North Korean nuclear and missile problem.” Kono conveyed that Japan will “maintain pressure on North Korea until it shows its words as action on its commitment to denuclearize.” Kang, the official said, replied that “until there is actual progress in denuclearization, pressure and sanctions on the North will continue to be maintained.” She emphasized the importance of maintaining the “momentum for dialogue as North Korea has declared it will not conduct any provocations while talks are ongoing.” (Sarah Kim, “Japan’s Top Envoy Visits Korea after a Long Time,” JoongAng Ilbo, April 12, 2018)

Bolton: “I met with my South Korean counterpart, Chung Eui-yong, Director of their National Security Office. In March, in the Oval, Chung had extended Kim’s invitation to meet to Trump, who accepted on the spur of the moment. Ironically, Chung later all but admitted that it was he who had suggested to Kim that he make the invitation in the first place! This whole diplomatic fandango was South Korea’s creation, relating more to its ‘unification’ agenda than serious strategy on Kim’s part or ours. The South’s understanding of our terms to denuclearize North Korea bore no relationship to fundamental US national interests, from my perspective. It was risky theatrics, in my view, not substance. I urged Chung to avoid discussing denuclearization at the upcoming April 27 North-South summit, to prevent Pyongyang from driving a wedge between South Korea, Japan, and the US, one of its favorite diplomatic strategies. I told Trump that we needed the closest possible coordination with Moon Jae-in to avoid North Korea’s engineering a split between Washington and Seoul. I wanted to preserve US–South Korean alignment, and avoid the headline ‘Trump rejects South Korea compromise,’ but he seemed unconcerned. Later in the morning, I met with my Japanese counterpart, Shotaro Yachi, who wanted me to hear their perspective as soon as possible. Tokyo’s view of the looming Trump–Kim meeting was 180 degrees from South Korea’s—in short, pretty much like my own. Yachi said they believed the North’s determination to get nuclear weapons was fixed, and that we were nearing the last chance for a peaceful solution. Japan wanted none of the ‘action for action’ formula that characterized Bush 43’s failed Six-Party Talks. ‘Action for action’ sounded reasonable, but it inevitably worked to benefit North Korea (or any proliferator) by front-loading economic benefits to the North but
dragging out dismantling the nuclear program into the indefinite future. The marginal benefits to Pyongyang of even modest economic aid (or release from pain, like easing sanctions) was much greater than the marginal benefits to us of the step-by-step elimination of the nuclear program. Kim Jong Un knew this just as well as we did. At that point, Japan wanted dismantlement to begin immediately upon a Trump-Kim agreement and to take no longer than two years. I urged, however, based on the experience in Libya, that dismantlement should take only six to nine months. Yachi only smiled in response, but when Abe met Trump at Mar-a-Lago the following week, Abe asked for dismantlement to take six to nine months! Yachi also stressed North Korea’s abduction of Japanese citizens over many years, a powerfully emotional issue in Japan’s public opinion and a key element in Abe’s successful political career. At Mar-a-Lago and later, Trump committed to pursuing this issue and followed through faithfully in every subsequent encounter with Kim Jong Un.” (Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened*, pp. 70-71)

The Donald Trump administration is said to have begun to study incentives to be offered to North Korea at the upcoming summit with the North if Pyongyang takes concrete actions toward its denuclearization. The United States has been opposing North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s call for “progressive and synchronous” denuclearization measures, emphasizing “unconditional denuclearization.” As Washington has verified Kim’s commitment to denuclearization once again during the ongoing working-level contact with the North, the Trump administration appears to be discussing detailed action plans that would prompt Pyongyang to take substantial action to denuclearize. According to multiple sources in the South Korean government, Washington is considering ways to achieve “partial normalization” of its relations with Pyongyang within this year if the Trump-Kim summit becomes successful. This suggests that as the North demanded that Washington provide a full guarantee of Pyongyang’s regime during the working-level contact, the Trump administration has started to study how it can ensure the guarantee. It is said that the Trump administration has offered to open liaison offices in Pyongyang and Washington, start humanitarian aid to the North, and establish embassies in both countries. However, the option of economic assistance, including easing sanctions on the North, is said to have been excluded for now. Reportedly, the U.S.-North Korea working-level contact, led by intelligence authorities of the two countries, is taking place in multiple places including Beijing, China and Sweden. (Shin Jin-Woo, “U.S. Considers Opening Embassy, Liaison Office in DPRK,” *Dong-A Ilbo*, April 12, 2018)

Mike Pompeo, the nominee for U.S. secretary of state, told his Senate confirmation hearing that the Trump administration does not plan to repeat the failures of past negotiations that provided Pyongyang with economic aid before its nuclear program was undone. “It is the intention of the president and the administration not to do that this time to make sure that before we provide rewards, we get the outcome permanently, irreversibly, that it is that we hope to achieve,” said Pompeo, who currently serves as director of the Central Intelligence Agency. "It is a tall order, but I am hopeful that President Trump can achieve that through sound diplomacy," he said. He expressed confidence that the administration will come up with conditions for a peaceful solution to the North Korean nuclear issue. "No one is under any illusions we'll reach a comprehensive agreement through the president's meeting," Pompeo said. "But to set up the conditions acceptable to each side, for the two leaders who will ultimately make the decision about whether such an agreement can be achieved and then set in place, I'm optimistic that the United States government can set the conditions for that appropriately." Then Trump and Kim "can have that conversation" and "set us down the course of achieving the diplomatic outcome that America and the world so desperately need." The nominee denied that he had ever advocated for regime change in the North. "My mission, and I've articulated my own personal views on this -- we have a responsibility to achieve a condition where Kim Jong-un is unable to threaten the United States of America with a nuclear weapon," he said. Pompeo said the U.S. may have to move "past diplomacy" if there were indications of a direct North Korean threat to the U.S. But he also agreed with a Democratic senator that the consequences would be "catastrophic" if the U.S. initiated an attack on the North. (Yonhap, “Pompeo Rules out Giving Rewards to N. Korea before Denuclearization,” April 13, 2018)
The United States has reportedly demanded that South Korea share the cost of deploying U.S. strategic assets around the Korean Peninsula during recent talks to renew their cost-sharing agreement for American troops stationed in South Korea. This is the first time that Washington publicly demands that South Korea share the deployment cost of strategic assets that are used to deter North Korea’s threats not only on South Korea but also on the U.S. mainland such as nuclear powered aircraft carriers, nuclear powered submarines, and strategic bombers. “The cost of strategic assets was mentioned by the U.S. side during the negotiation,” said a South Korean Foreign Ministry official today, referring to the second round of talks to conclude the 10th special defense agreement (SMA) held in the southern island of Jeju starting two days ago. “It is not that the United States demanded South Korea bear the entire cost of deploying strategic assets,” said the official. “The government stressed our basic stance that the agreement deals with how to share the upkeep cost of stationing the U.S. troops, not the cost of deploying strategic assets.” The two countries have also shown different views on the total cost of stationing U.S. forces in South Korea. The official said that there are “big differences to be ironed out” in the amount of money proposed by each side, but did not provide specific numbers. Seoul’s contribution is 960.2 billion won this year, but the United States is reportedly demanding South Korea pay up to twice what it currently contributes. (Shin Na-ri, “U.S. Demands S. Korea Share the Cost of Deploying Strategic Assets,” Dong-A Ilbo, April 13, 2018)

The North Korean leader Kim Jong-un offered a personal welcome to a senior envoy from Beijing, feting him and a visiting Chinese art troupe with a gala dinner, the North’s state-run news media reported on Sunday, as the estranged Communist allies continued efforts to mend ties. Kim exchanged “deep thoughts” on international issues of concern to North Korea and China and vowed to improve bilateral relations during the meeting today with the senior Chinese diplomat, Song Tao, KCNA reported. Kim’s friendly welcome also contrasted with the reception that Song received the last time he visited North Korea, as a special envoy of Xi in November. At that time, Kim refused to meet him and launched an intercontinental ballistic missile several days later. Kim “expressed satisfaction with improving ties between the two parties and nations,” KCNA said. “He voiced a need to elevate the traditional friendship to a new level of development meeting new demands of the times.” (Choe Sang-hun, “Chinese Envoy Is Embraced by a Warmer North Korea,” New York Times, April 16, 2018, p. A-7)

The U.S. Forces Korea practices evacuating American civilians to the U.S. mainland today and tomorrow in preparation for a war on the Korean Peninsula. The USFK carries out the exercise twice a year, but normally volunteers are only taken to Japan rather than all the way to the U.S. Stars and Stripes first reported the change last month. The civilian volunteers will be transported to a U.S. military base in Japan first and then all the way to the U.S. mainland, a USFK source said. A military aircraft is on standby at Osan Air Base in Pyeongtaek, Gyeonggi Province, and the USFK has selected about 100 volunteers, mostly families of service personnel. Normally the drill is carried out using computer simulations in South Korea, though in November 2016, right after North Korea’s fifth nuclear test, civilians were taken on a military transport plane to a U.S. base in Japan. But now North Korea’s missiles have a longer reach, civilians are taken further out of harm’s way. (Jun Hyun-suk, “USFK Practices Evacuating Civilians to American Mainland,” Chosun Ilbo, April 16, 2018)

Kim Jong-un, North Korea’s leader, plans to formally announce his willingness to denuclearize his country when he meets with President Moon Jae-in of South Korea this month, an official from the South said. The statement is expected to be part of a joint declaration that the two leaders will adopt when they meet on April 27, said Moon’s chief of staff, Im Jong-seok. Negotiators from both Koreas have agreed on a rough framework for the joint declaration, he said. They are still discussing other aspects of the joint statement, such as whether the two Koreas would commit to holding summit meetings on a regular basis, Im said. South Korea is also trying to convince North Korea that Moon and Kim should hold a joint news conference at the end of their meeting in Panmunjom, the so-called truce village on the inter-Korean border. If necessary, Moon’s national security adviser, Chung Eui-yong, and his spy chief, Suh Hoon, will visit the North Korean
CIA Director Mike Pompeo made a top-secret visit to North Korea as an envoy for President Trump to meet with Kim Jong Un, and plans for a possible summit between the two leaders are underway, Trump confirmed today. The extraordinary meeting between one of Trump’s most trusted emissaries and the authoritarian head of a rogue state was part of an effort to lay the groundwork for direct talks between Trump and Kim about North Korea’s nuclear weapons program. The clandestine mission came late last month, soon after Pompeo was nominated to be secretary of state. The Pompeo mission was first reported yesterday by The Washington Post, citing two people with direct knowledge of the trip. Today, Trump acknowledged the outreach and said “a good relationship was formed” that could lead to a landmark meeting between the president and Kim. “Mike Pompeo met with Kim Jong Un in North Korea last week,” Trump tweeted. “Meeting went very smoothly and a good relationship was formed. Details of Summit are being worked out now. Denuclearization will be a great thing for World, but also for North Korea!” Trump did not give further details of the talks, which took place over Easter weekend, according to the two people who first described the Pompeo trip to the Post. It was unclear why Trump referred to “last week” in his tweet. “I’m optimistic that the United States government can set the conditions for that appropriately so that the president and the North Korean leader can have that conversation [that] will set us down the course of achieving a diplomatic outcome that America so desperately — America and the world so desperately need.”

Pompeo told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last week during his confirmation hearing. Speaking at his Mar-a-Lago resort yesterday, Trump appeared to allude to the extraordinary face-to-face meeting between Kim and Pompeo when he said the United States has had direct talks with North Korea “at very high levels.” The president didn’t elaborate at the time. About a week after Pompeo’s trip to North Korea, U.S. officials said that officials there had directly confirmed that Kim was willing to negotiate about potential denuclearization, according to administration officials, a sign that both sides had opened a new communications channel ahead of the summit meeting and that the administration believed North Korea was serious about holding a summit. “We have had direct talks at very high levels, extremely high levels with North Korea,” Trump said yesterday during a bilateral meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach. Opening a two-day summit with Abe, Trump took some credit for the rapid developments related to North Korea, whose nuclear and ballistic missile tests his administration
President Trump declared that he would scrap a planned summit meeting with North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-un, or even walk out of the session while it was underway, if his diplomatic overture was not heading toward success. Trump continued to express optimism — verging on eagerness — about sitting down with the North’s reclusive leader. But as the momentum for a meeting grows in both Washington and East Asia, the president acknowledged that it was a perilous undertaking that could still end in failure. “If I think that it’s a meeting that is not going to
be fruitful, we’re not going to go,” Trump said at a news conference at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, standing alongside Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan. “If the meeting, when I’m there, is not fruitful, I will respectfully leave the meeting.” He also did not demand any new concessions from North Korea beforehand, underscoring how determined he is to make history by convening with the leader of a country he threatened with war a few months ago. In preparing for the planned event, Trump’s decision to dispatch his C.I.A. director reflected the president’s trust in and comfort with Mike Pompeo, as well as how diplomats were sidelined in brokering what could be a landmark encounter. “Meeting went very smoothly and a good relationship was formed,” Trump said in an early morning Twitter post before he went golfing with Abe. “Details of Summit are being worked out now. Denuclearization will be a great thing for World, but also for North Korea!” Pompeo met with Kim on Easter Sunday [April 1], a senior official said, bringing along several aides from the C.I.A. — but nobody from the State Department or the White House. Some former administration officials expressed surprise that he returned from Pyongyang with no visible concessions, like the release of the three Americans detained in North Korea. Pompeo raised the issue, another official said, adding that the White House would continue to push for their release. Yesterday, Trump told reporters that the White House was looking at five potential locations. The White House has begun narrowing the list of options, a senior official said, eliminating sites like Pyongyang and the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea, which could pose an optics problem for Trump. Meeting somewhere in the United States remains a possibility, though that could raise similar issues for Kim. The administration is studying several third countries — Singapore and Vietnam, in Asia; Sweden and Switzerland, in Europe — though all are far from North Korea, posing a challenge to Kim. Mongolia, which is closer to the North, is a long shot, the official said. Without a site, however, the White House has been unable to announce a date, though officials are sticking to Trump’s recent declaration that the meeting will be in late May or early June. Yesterday, Trump added to the mystery surrounding the visit by appearing to confirm that he had been in direct contact with Kim himself. He later clarified that while the talks were at “the highest levels,” he would “leave it a little bit short of that.” Pompeo’s involvement with North Korea predated Trump’s decision to meet Kim, several officials said. He has been dealing with North Korean representatives through a channel that runs between the C.I.A. and its North Korean counterpart, the Reconnaissance General Bureau. He also has been in close touch with the director of South Korea’s National Intelligence Service, Suh Hoon, who American officials said brokered Kim’s invitation to Trump. Officials said Suh laid the groundwork for Kim’s invitation in negotiations and a subsequent meeting in Pyongyang with Kim Yong-chol, a powerful general who leads inter-Korean relations and used to run North Korea’s intelligence service. Suh was one of two South Korean envoys who visited the White House to brief Trump on their meeting with Kim Jong-un in Pyongyang — which led to the president’s impromptu decision to accept Kim’s invitation. Pompeo has expressed extremely hawkish views about North Korea, suggesting over the summer that the United States should push for regime change. “It would be a great thing to denuclearize the peninsula, to get those weapons off of that, but the thing that is most dangerous about it is the character who holds the control over them today,” Pompeo said at the Aspen Security Forum. “So from the administration’s perspective, the most important thing we can do is separate those two.” Last week, Pompeo insisted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that he had never advocated such change. “Just to be clear, my role as a diplomat is to make sure that we never get to a place where we have to confront the difficult situation in Korea that this country has been headed for now for a couple of decades,” he added. (Mark Landler, “President Warns He Could Depart Pyongyang Talks,” New York Times, April 19, 2018, p. A-1)

Trump: “As you know, I will be meeting with Kim Jong-un in the coming weeks to discuss the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Hopefully, that meeting will be a great success. And we’re looking forward to it. It would be a tremendous thing for North Korea and a tremendous thing for the world. So we will be doing everything possible to make it a worldwide success, not just for the United States or South Korea or North Korea or Japan, but for the entire world. We hope to see the day when the whole Korean Peninsula can live together in safety, prosperity, and peace. This is the destiny of the Korean people who deserve and have gone through so much over the years. We hope it all works out, and we’ll be trying very hard. … During my visit to Japan last fall, I met with Japanese families who endured the terrible heartbreak of having their loved ones
abducted by the North Korean regime. We want to see these families reunited as soon as possible. And I know for a fact that it's one of the truly most important things on Shinzo's mind. We talk about it often. So important to you. And we're going to do everything possible to have them brought back, and bring them back to Japan. I gave you that promise. ...ABE: “The situation surrounding North Korea, due to the decisive decision by President Trump on the first-ever U.S.-North Korea summit, is at a historical turning point. The past mistakes should never be repeated. On this point, President Trump and I were in full agreement. On the occasion of the 1994 framework agreement or the 2005 Six-Party Talks agreement, North Korea committed to abandon nuclear weapons development. But those promises were broken, and the effort of the international community to engage in dialogue were all entirely exploited to buy time to develop nuclear weapons and missiles. Based on such lessons learned, both the U.S. and Japan, together with the international community, we will demand that for all weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles complete a verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles to North Korea. By envisioning multiple scenarios, we carefully thought out our policies and directions at a concrete and detailed level. Just because North Korea is responding to dialogue, there should be no reward. Maximum pressure should be maintained, and actual implementation of concrete actions towards denuclearization will be demanded. This firm policy has once again been completely shared between us. On this occasion, we also agree to continue our effort towards the earlier resolution of the top priority matter of abduction. Just now, President Trump, on this spot here, has mentioned that with the return of the abductees, maximum effort will be made. With a clear promise just made here, we are deeply encouraged, Donald. Half a year ago, when you visited our country, you listened intently to each and every family member of the abductees. You listened carefully and kindly said you would like to help. Your image on that occasion is indelibly etched in the eyes and minds of many of the Japanese people. Going forward, we wish to work closely with the United States and towards the immediate return of all abductees. We are determined to strengthen our approach vis-à-vis North Korea. North Korea has diligent workforce and is blessed with resources. If North Korea advances in the right direction, they can make their populations richer. If North Korea takes the right path under the Japan-North Korea Pyongyang Declaration, there could be a possible path to settle the unfortunate past and to normalize diplomatic relationship. For that to happen, a comprehensive resolution of multiple concerns -- including abduction, nuclear, and missile -- will be the fundamental precondition. Through the upcoming historic U.S.-North Korea summit, we certainly hope for a breakthrough in this situation. ... Questions. Mark Landler? Mark. Q. ...Mr. President, you sent your CIA Director to Pyongyang a couple of weeks ago, and he returned without three Americans who are being detained there, and also without any other visible signs of concessions the North Koreans had made to the United States in advance of your meeting with Mr. Kim. My question is: Do you intend or are you willing to sit down with Kim Jong-un if Americans are still being held in North Korea? And will you insist on other tangible concessions from the North Koreans in return for gestures like sending a potential future Secretary of State to North Korea? ...TRUMP: Thank you, Mark, very much. The fact is that they do have three prisoners. We have been talking about them. We are negotiating now. We are doing our very best. As you know, they've been there a long time and it's harsh treatment. We fought very hard to get Otto Warmbier back. And when we came back, he was in very, very bad condition. It was a very sad event. We are likewise fighting very diligently to get the three American citizens back. I think there's a good chance of doing it. We're having very good dialogue. We will keep you informed. But we are in there and we are working very hard on that. We have come a long way with North Korea. We were, as you know -- and when I say "we", for many years, they've been talking to North Korea and nothing has happened. This should have been taken care of by past administrations when they were not nearly so far along. But we put unbelievably powerful sanctions on, and many other things. I want to thank publicly President Xi of China, who has done more for us than he's done for any other administration, or than any leader of China has done for any President or administration. He has clogged up the border, as you know, and he's done it very, very powerfully. He would tell you himself that he never thought he would go to this extent, and I appreciate that very much. But it's put a lot of pressure on. As you know, 93 percent of the goods coming into North Korea come in from China. And President Xi understands that this is a very important set of months that are lying ahead. He doesn't want to see a Korea -- North Korea, or any Korea -- that has nuclear
North Korea has dropped its demand that American troops be removed from South Korea as a condition for giving up its nuclear weapons, South Korea’s president said today in presenting the idea to the United States. But in Washington, the Trump administration privately dismissed the idea that it was a capitulation by the North because an American withdrawal from the South was never on the table. Mike Pompeo, the C.I.A. director whom President Trump secretly sent to Pyongyang two weeks ago to meet Kim Jong-un, the North Korean leader, did not ask him to take such a step, senior officials said. The move could increase pressure on the United States to support negotiations between North and South Korea on a peace treaty that would end the Korean War. While Trump gave those talks his blessing this week, officials said his ultimate goal is to force
North Korea to relinquish its nuclear program. A peace treaty, they said, should be signed only after the North has given up its weapons. Analysts and former officials said the White House was right to be wary of Kim’s offer. They said it could drive a wedge between the United States and South Korea, which is deeply invested in bringing an end to the 68-year military conflict on the Korean Peninsula and will view Kim’s offer as an important step in that direction. “It’s a classic, deft North Korean maneuver, which puts us at a disadvantage and makes us look like bad guys if we reject it,” said Evan S. Medeiros, a former Asia adviser to President Barack Obama. “The North Koreans did not present any conditions that the United States could not accept, such as the withdrawal of American troops in South Korea,” Moon told newspaper publishers in Seoul. “They only talk about an end to hostilities against their country and about getting security guarantees,” Moon said. “It’s safe to say that the plans for dialogue between the North and the United States could proceed because that has been made clear.” Since the 1990s, however, North Korean officials have occasionally told the Americans and South Koreans that they could live with an American military presence if Washington signed a peace treaty and normalized ties with the North. Kim’s father and predecessor, Kim Jong Il, sent a party secretary to the United States in 1992 to deliver that message. When South Korea’s president at the time, Kim Dae-jung, met with Kim Jong Il in Pyongyang in 2000, the North Korean leader was quoted as saying that keeping American troops in Korea for “stability in Northeast Asia” even after a reunification was “not a bad idea, provided that the status and the role of U.S. troops be changed.” “It is desirable that U.S. troops stay as a peacekeeping force in Korea, instead of a hostile force against the North,” Kim Jong Il said, according to the book “Peacemaker,” by Lim Dong-jung, a party secretary who attended the 2000 inter-Korean summit meeting. Despite their suspicions about the younger Kim’s motives, American officials did not diminish the significance of his offer from a domestic standpoint. For decades, they said, the Kim family has survived by fueling a narrative of American aggression against the North. Declaring they could live with troops could undercut that narrative. To some extent, administration officials also need to manage Trump, who speaks often of the historic opportunity he has to settle one of the world’s longest-running conflicts. “We’ve never been in a position like this with that regime, whether it’s father, grandfather or son,” Trump said yesterday. “And I hope to have a very successful meeting.” Administration officials have been extremely circumspect about what Pompeo discussed with Kim during their meeting over Easter weekend. But he did raise the issue of three Americans detained in North Korea, and officials expressed cautious optimism that the United States was making progress in getting them out. Analysts said that even if North Korea accepted an American military presence in the South, it might demand that it be significantly reconfigured and reduced. In its 2016 statement, North Korea also demanded that the United States stop deploying long-range bombers, submarines and other “nuclear-strike capabilities” in and around South Korea if it wanted a nuclear-free peninsula, a condition that analysts said would doubtless please China. Today, Moon dismissed concerns that the United States might end up recognizing North Korea as a de facto nuclear power in return for a promise to freeze its nuclear and missile programs. “I don’t think there is any difference between the parties over what they mean by denuclearization,” Moon said. “North Korea is expressing a willingness to denuclearize completely.” In the separate South Korean and American summit meetings with Kim, Moon said there would be “no big difficulties” in reaching “broad agreements in principle.” North Korea, he said, would agree to denuclearize in return for normalized ties with the United States; aid to help rebuild its economy; and a peace treaty to formally end the Korean War. The challenge, he said, is in working out a road map to such a deal. “As they say, the devil is in details,” Moon said. (Mark Landler and Choe Sang-hun, “An Olive Branch by North Korea Is Viewed Warily,” New York Times, April 20, 2018, p. A-1) Kim Jong-un, North Korea’s leader, has removed a key obstacle to negotiations with Washington by no longer demanding that American troops be removed from South Korea as a condition for denuclearizing his country, the South’s president, Moon Jae-in, said. The change in stance, if officially confirmed by the North, could affect the United States’ long-term military plans in Northeast Asia and ease Washington’s reluctance to strike a deal with North Korea. “The North Koreans did not present any conditions that the United States could not accept, such as the withdrawal of American troops in South Korea,” Moon told newspaper publishers in Seoul. “They only talk about an end to hostilities against their country and about getting security guarantees,” he said. “It’s safe to say that the plans for dialogue between the North and the United States could proceed because that has been made
clear.” But a retreat from that demand would not be entirely surprising, according to officials who have dealt with North Korea. Since the 1990s, North Korean officials have occasionally told the Americans and South Koreans that they could live with an American military presence in the South if Washington signed a peace treaty and normalized ties with the North. Kim’s father and predecessor, Kim Jong Il, sent Kim Yong-soon, a party secretary, to the United States in 1992 to deliver that message. When South Korea’s president at the time, Kim Dae-jung, met with Kim Jong Il in Pyongyang in 2000, the North Korean leader was quoted as saying that keeping American troops in Korea for “stability in Northeast Asia” even after a reunification was “not a bad idea, provided that the status and the role of U.S. troops be changed.” “It is desirable that U.S. troops stay as a peacekeeping force in Korea, instead of a hostile force against the North,” Kim Jong Il said, according to the book “Peacemaker,” by Lim Dong-won, who attended the 2000 inter-Korean summit meeting. At a forum organized this month by the Seoul-based website Newsispim, Lim said that although North Korea had regularly demanded the withdrawal of American troops, it was important to differentiate its “propaganda policy” from its “real policy.” Lim, a former unification minister of South Korea, said he believed that the North could accept an American military presence and negotiate away its nuclear weapons if it was offered the right incentives. But analysts said that even if North Korea accepted an American military presence in the South, it might demand that it be significantly reconfigured and downsized. In its 2016 statement, North Korea also demanded that the United States stop deploying long-range bombers, submarines and other “nuclear-strike capabilities” in and around South Korea if it wanted a nuclear-free peninsula, a condition that analysts said would doubtless please China. Moon dismissed concerns that the United States might end up recognizing North Korea as a de facto nuclear power in return for a promise from it to freeze its nuclear and missile programs. “I don’t think there is any difference between the parties over what they mean by denuclearization,” Moon said. “North Korea is expressing a willingness to denuclearize completely.” In Seoul’s and Washington’s separate planned summit meetings with Kim, Moon said there would be “no big difficulties” in reaching “broad agreements in principle” in which North Korea would agree to denuclearize in return for normalized ties with the United States, international aid to help rebuild its economy and a peace treaty to formally end the 1950-53 Korean War. The challenge is in working out a detailed road map to carry out such a deal, he said. Analysts and former negotiators said the countries would face extremely complicated negotiations on how to verify that North Korea was not cheating on its commitment to denuclearize, as it has been accused of in the past, and on when to provide security guarantees and other incentives. Past agreements to denuclearize North Korea all collapsed in disputes over how to verify a freeze of its nuclear activities. “As they say, the devil is in details,” Moon said. (Choe Sang-hun, “North Korea Removes Major Obstacle to U.S. Negotiations, South Says,” New York Times, April 19, 2018)

Oleg Shcheka: “Chronic power shortages are one of North Korea’s major vulnerabilities. The country is extremely reliant on hydropower stations which, according to North Korean official sources, provide 56 percent of the national power-generating capacity. Hydropower output depends on precipitation and drops drastically in dry years. Developing nuclear energy has long seemed an obvious option for North Korea to bolster its energy security. Already for many decades the DPRK has been making efforts to build an atomic power industry, although the lack of funding and Pyongyang’s severely restricted access to the international market of civilian nuclear technologies have seriously hampered the its progress in this area. Still, the DPRK continues to pursue nuclear-power generation. In particular, progress is being made on the 100 megawatt-thermal Experimental Light Water Reactor (ELWR) at the North’s Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center, of which construction began in 2010. There might also be other, as yet undisclosed, nuclear facilities in development and under construction designed to combine civilian (power generation) and military (plutonium production) functions. ...Part of the rationale for nuclear power plants may also be strategic—using them as a shield to deter possible attacks on the North. The United States and South Korea might have to think twice before conducting military strikes in the areas where North Korea’s active nuclear power plants would be located given how close they are to Seoul and other densely populated areas. Pyongyang’s newfound interest in jump starting nuclear energy projects is evidenced by the shift in priorities in the specialization of North Korean science interns sent to study in Russia. Before the late 2000s, mostly physicists came to
Russia, including those who demonstrated their interest in nuclear physics. However, since the early 2010s, they were increasingly replaced by specialists in the fields of heat engineering, cooling systems and other areas of energy engineering required to build and operate nuclear power reactors. It should be noted that Russia has always maintained due diligence when admitting North Korean interns to science and technical departments in order to prevent any leaks of dual-use tech. Controls have been considerably strengthened since 2016, after the adoption of UN Security Council resolutions which made studies and research in proliferation-sensitive areas off limits to the DPRK citizens… What kind of reactors can North Korea build for its nuclear power plants with the available technical and intellectual capabilities? Most probably it could build reactors similar to the Soviet RBMK-1000, a variety of light water graphite reactor—the same type as the reactor that exploded at Chernobyl. Such reactors are channel-type, heterogeneous, uranium-graphite (graphite and/or water are used as the moderators of neutrons), boiling-type on thermal neutrons, which use boiling water as a coolant in a single-circuit scheme and can produce saturated steam at a pressure of about 70 kgf/cm². The creation of such an open-frame reactor is much easier for the DPRK compared to reactors using high-strength large-sized casings that require significant industrial production capacity. In addition, a casing puts limitations on overall dimensions. Absence of a casing allows for greater generating capacity of the power unit. Moreover, in an open-frame design, the fuel assemblies can be replaced without shutting down the reactor, which ensures an increase in the reactor power factor. However, such a simple design feature, together with the desire to crank up more power to generate electricity, inevitably leads to an increased risk of disasters associated with human errors as well as imperfect operation and protection systems. The most tragic example is the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in 1986, when the plant’s staff, running the reactor in an experimental mode, made gross errors while manipulating the graphite moderators of neutrons. The concern is that the North Koreans may attempt to launch nuclear power plants with substandard and poorly tested reactors. Doing so would keep with the North Korean tradition of sacrificing safety standards to accelerate construction of high-priority industrial facilities. Soviet technical specialists who assisted the DPRK in the 1960s repeatedly noted North Koreans’ willingness to cut corners in terms of safety standards for the sake of construction speed. Based on the political and economic realities of the DPRK, one can assume with a high degree of certainty that the North Koreans will try to wring out the maximum capacity from their nuclear reactors. However, even slight movements beyond safe operating parameters of an RBMK-type reactor can cause rapid irreversible consequences, namely destruction of the fuel assembly, deformation of the core’s graphite masonry, and injection of a significant amount of radioactive substances from the destroyed fuel assembly into the reactor space. If this happens, a brief increase in pressure may occur in a section of the gas circuit, which will result in large volumes of water flooding the reactor space. Its instantaneous evaporation will cause a sharp increase in pressure in the reactor space, which in turn will lead to extrusion of the reactor’s hydraulic locks and, as a consequence, release of the radioactive vapor-gas mixture from the reactor space into the atmosphere. In other words, rapidly increased pressure inside the construction will destroy it, and the radioactive elements in the vapor mixture will be thrown out. As a result, a huge territory could be contaminated with radioactive substances. Based on the reactor’s power generating capability, and depending on weather conditions, such as strength and direction of the wind, up to 100 million people in North and South Korea, the eastern provinces of China, in the south of Russia’s Far East and on the west coast of Japan could be exposed to mortal danger. While North Korea’s nuclear weapons program gets most of the international attention, implications of Pyongyang’s pursuit of civilian nuclear energy should be a concern, too. Indeed, just as already happened with the DPRK’s nuclear and missile program, which—unexpectedly to many—has made great strides in a relatively short time, it may not take very long for North Korea to launch power-generating nuclear reactors whose technical parameters may be far from the best standards of safety. Any search for solutions to the Korean nuclear crisis must take this concern into account as well. (Oleg Shcheka, “Should We Worry about a North Korean Chernobyl?” 38 North, April 19, 2018)
for four minutes before South Korea’s Moon Jae-in and North Korea’s Kim Jong Un talk ahead of next week’s summit, the office said. “The call quality was very good and we felt like we got a call from our next-door neighbor,” South Korea’s director for the Government Situation Room, Youn Kun-young, told reporters. Moon will now be able to pick up his office phone to talk to Kim, instead of communicating through a hot line at the Joint Security Area in the border village of Panmunjom. (Heekyong Yang and Hyonhee Shin, “Person to Person: North and South Korea Get Neighborly with Direct Hot Line,” Reuters, April 20, 2018)

On a dark February night, the trucks unloaded their contraband near Hyesan, a North Korean town across a narrow river from China. As border guards looked the other way, workers used carts to pull the cargo of metal ore — tungsten, lead, zinc, copper and gold concentrates, all banned from export under United Nations sanctions — across the frozen river. By sunrise, all that was left were tire tracks and footprints across the river’s frozen surface. A North Korean witness told an acquaintance living in South Korea that ore, as well as other materials, was being smuggled into China at the crossing almost every night. He said smugglers also headed the other way, moving sugar, flour and 50-kilogram sacks of fertilizers into North Korea. There is growing evidence that tough new sanctions imposed on North Korea to stop its nuclear weapons and missile programs have begun to bite, and bite hard. Factories have closed because of a lack of raw materials, fishermen have deserted their boats and military units are resorting to charcoal-engine vehicles and even ox-driven carts for transport. But the elaborate efforts to smuggle goods in and out of North Korea are among the signs that the closed, secretive country is finding ways to cope. The North is also responding with patriotic appeals, with belt-tightening and by prioritizing the allocation of resources to the military and political elite. Despite shortages, exchange rates and key consumer prices are stable, and there is no sign of an approaching famine, according to recent visitors and North Korean defectors who remain in contact with people inside the country. President Trump and South Korea’s president, Moon Jae-in, say their policy of “maximum pressure” on the government of the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, has helped bring him to the bargaining table. It is far from clear, however, whether the pain from sanctions is forcing Kim to make concessions, and whether it could be enough to drive him to trade away his nuclear arsenal. Many analysts and North Korean defectors have doubts about whether economic pressure alone, no matter how painful, can change the behavior of an impoverished, tightly controlled nation that has endured extreme hardship before. Kim seemed to reinforce that perception when he recently warned his people that they must be prepared to overcome further hardship. “Our revolution faced the harshest-ever challenges,” Kim said in his New Year’s Day speech. “If you think the North Koreans would revolt or the regime would collapse because of sanctions, you don’t know anything about the North Koreans,” said Kang Mi-jin, a North Korean defector who collects North Korean consumer prices for the South’s central Bank of Korea. “These are people who survived the famine by eating weeds and even talk proudly about it.” But there is no doubt the latest sanctions are causing pain in a way that earlier rounds did not. Some analysts suggest that changes within North Korea such as the formation of a new middle class, and Kim’s own promises to improve the lives of his long-suffering people, could make him more willing to give up his nuclear weapons, if he can receive convincing guarantees of his government’s survival. “We are starting to see the first major test of the North Korean economy under Kim Jong-un,” said Curtis Melvin, a researcher at the U.S.-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. The latest rounds of United Nations sanctions have been like no others that North Korea has faced before. Since September, the United Nations Security Council has banned all key North Korean exports, including coal, iron ore, seafood and textiles. If enforced fully, they could eliminate a full 90 percent of the country’s total exports in dollar terms. Especially painful was the decision last December to limit the North’s imports of refined petroleum products to half a million barrels a year, a 90 percent reduction from the previous year. North Korea can still extract 1.2 million barrels of gasoline, diesel and kerosene from the four million barrels of crude oil a year it is allowed to import, mostly from China, said an energy analyst, Lee Jong-heon. But the combined 1.7 million barrels of refined petroleum would be less than half the amount needed to run all of the 280,000 cars in North Korea, much less heat homes and meet other needs, Lee said. Experts said the sanctions, and China’s apparent willingness to enforce many of them, had dealt a blow to one of the few bright points in the North Korean economy: trade with China, which had
been an eager market for ore and other North Korean natural resources. “Production has sharply decreased, if not come to a complete halt, in coal, iron, zinc and copper mines,” said Ishimaru Jiro, who runs Asia Press, a Japan-based website that monitors North Korea with the help of informants inside the country. “Many miners don’t report for work because management can’t provide rations or pay wages.” North Korean exports to China, which account for more than 90 percent of the North’s external trade, plunged by one-third to $1.65 billion last year, with volumes dropping by 60 to 95 percent in recent months. Its official trade deficit against China more than doubled to $1.68 billion last year. “Petty traders from the North who used to cross into China in the morning on foot or in small cars and then returned in the evening with auto parts and food to sell on the black market no longer come,” said Wu Qiang, a North Korea expert in China. The sanctions have also led China and other nations to send home tens of thousands of North Korean workers, cutting off another key source of hard currency for Kim’s government. Without foreign currency, North Korea will struggle to finance imports of consumer goods for its people and raw materials for its factories. It will also be unable to import fertilizer in time for the planting season, raising the specter of a return of food shortages, said Jin Qiangyi, director of the Center for North and South Korea Studies at Yanbian University. Humanitarian aid workers who have recently visited the country warn that food shortages could be exacerbated by the lack of fuel, which could hamper North Korea’s ability to transport grain from areas of surplus to places where there is not enough. Trucks that used to carry goods twice a day now run only once a day on some routes, though some are extending their decks to carry more loads. Recent visitors also describe shortages of medicine. This was evident last year, when South Korean doctors operated on a North Korean soldier who defected through a hail of bullets. When they examined him, they found his intestines filled with worms. Despite these privations, analysts say there are few signs that North Korea’s economy has reached a breaking point. In Pyongyang, there is still enough electricity to keep streetlights on at night, said South Korean journalists who visited this month. Everyone seemed to carry a cellphone, and women were more fashionably dressed than before, they said. After soaring last year, gasoline prices have stabilized in recent months, though they remain nearly twice as high as a year ago. North Korea is likely to respond by further reducing its reliance on oil — petroleum accounts for only 12 percent of its energy production — using North Korean coal that it once exported to China in its own domestic power plants instead, said Lee, the energy expert. “I don’t think the North will surrender its nuclear weapons because of oil shortages,” he said. Many experts and frequent visitors to North Korea say its economy is also more robust than many outsiders realize. Kim’s government has introduced market-oriented reforms, allowing more autonomy for farms and factories and tolerating growing market activities that have improved food supplies for the people. A new, albeit still small, middle class of moneyed entrepreneurs has emerged. The elites have also been enriched, allowing them to stockpile goods and foreign currency. “We have seen no big disruption in markets yet that could be attributed to sanctions,” Ishimaru of Asia Press said. “North Korean markets have proved quite resilient against sanctions.” Kang, the defector who collects data using informants in the North, said the country was now far better positioned to ride out the sanctions than in the past. “They have markets,” she said. “There is rice there. Many have cash reserves.” She said the North had also benefited from smuggling that had brought in hard currency and some consumer goods. A United Nations panel of experts tallied $200 million last year through illegal trading, including weapons sales. In February, Washington blacklisted 56 vessels and shipping companies found to have carried out ship-to-ship transfers of fuel and other banned goods on high seas. North Korea is also active in cyber theft schemes, say experts. The actual extent of smuggling could be far larger than estimated. Nighttime smuggling operations have become more common along the border with China, said defectors with sources inside North Korea. North Korean secret police officers collude with border guards to create a window of several hours during which smugglers are free to move goods in and out of the country, they said. Kang, who also reports for the Seoul-based website Daily NK, said her sample study of North Korean towns near the border showed that the number of smugglers had doubled in recent years, especially since sanctions began to make their effects felt last year. “The screws have been tightened, so the pain is now bigger, but I don’t think it is lethal,” said Rüdiger Frank, an economist at the University of Vienna who studies the North. “I am not convinced that the sanctions were the main factor that led to the current talks.” It may be too early to judge the full impact of the sanctions, which began to hurt only in the second half of 2017,
after China appeared to step up enforcement. This means conditions in North Korea could deteriorate further. Some analysts have argued that Kim’s decision to travel to Beijing and meet with President Xi Jinping last month may have been a sign of his desperation to ease sanctions. Sanctions could be a true “bunker-buster” for the North Korean economy, said Kim Byung-yeon, an economist at Seoul National University. He said that if the sanctions remained in place, they could threaten the government by creating privation among both the elites and the general population. The recent improvements in living standards in North Korea could mean its political elite and new middle class may be unwilling to tolerate a return to economic hardship, said Kim Dong-yub, a North Korea analyst at the Seoul-based Institute for Far Eastern Studies. In Pyongyang, some families make fewer trips to restaurants and choose cheaper domestic goods over more expensive imports. Outside the capital, rural families now sometimes make do with only two meals a day. “My worry is that the gains and progress made in recent years in terms of food security and marketization could fade as a result of the sanctions,” said Katharina Zellweger, who has visited North Korea 70 times since 1995, living there from 2006 to 2011 to run a Swiss aid program. “That would mean we are moving backward.” One Chinese trader who does business with middle-class North Koreans said that he had noticed a growing discontent with the government because of the shortages. “I can feel they are not satisfied with the government, and if the authorities cannot resolve the sanctions problem, such dissatisfaction will go on and on,” said the trader, who asked to be identified only by his English name, Terry, for fear of repercussions in North Korea. “They have lost the loyalty toward the regime.” But the Kim government still has enormous power to suppress discontent, or deflect it. No organized antigovernment resistance exists in North Korea, where the government maintains a tight grip on society and relies on the police, backed by a system of informers, to imprison critics. Complete control over the news media, and the North’s almost total isolation from the internet, allows the government to shape how many people perceive reality. Bombarded by daily propaganda appeals, North Koreans are as likely to see themselves as citizens of a small nation persecuted by hostile Americans as they are to blame Kim’s government for their economic hardship, recent visitors and defectors say. “These ineffective sanctions are being used as propaganda tools to further flame anti-American sentiments,” said Kim Tae-hoon, co-founder of DoDaum, a humanitarian group that has organized an H.I.V. diagnosis and treatment program in the North. “We do ask people about sanctions,” said Linda Lewis, the North Korea country representative for the American Friends Service Committee, a humanitarian aid group, who last visited in November. “We ask about the impact of them. The answer that we usually get from people is: ‘We’ve never experienced a life without sanctions, so how would we know?’” (Choe Sang-hun, “Can Sanctions Push the North into reforms?” New York Times, April 21, 2018, p. A-1)

KCNA: “The 3rd Plenary Meeting of the 7th Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea took place in Pyongyang on April 20. Kim Jong Un, chairman of the WPK, guided the plenary meeting. Attending the meeting were Presidium members, members and alternate members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK and members and alternate members of the C.C., WPK and members of the Central Auditing Commission of the WPK. Present as observers were members of the WPK Central Committee and party and administrative officials of ministries, national institutions, provinces, cities and counties, major industrial establishments and institutions and co-operative farms and members of the armed forces organs. The plenary meeting dealt with the following agenda items: 1. On tasks of our party to further accelerate socialist construction as required by a fresh high stage of the developing revolution 2. On bringing about a revolutionary turn in science and education 3. Organizational matter The first agenda was discussed at the meeting. Kim Jong Un made a report on the first agenda. He said that the plenary meeting was to be convened to discuss and decide important matters for attaining goals of higher stage of socialist construction as required by the developing revolution and under the prevailing situation. Saying that the overall situation is rapidly changing in favor of the Korean revolution thanks to the DPRK’s proactive action and efforts after the declaration of completing the state nuclear force last year, he informed that a fresh climate of détente and peace is being created on the Korean peninsula and the region and dramatic changes are being made in the international political landscape. He said that the miraculous victory of having perfectly accomplished the great historic cause of building the state nuclear force in a short span of less than five years is the
great victory of the WPK’s line of simultaneously pushing forward the economic construction and the building of a nuclear force and, at the same time, a brilliant victory that could be won only by the heroic Korean people. He referred to the progress made in the economic construction along with the all-party, all-state and all-people struggle for implementing the above-said line. He declared with pride that the historic tasks under the strategic line of simultaneously developing the two fronts set forth at the March 2013 Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the Party were successfully carried out. He said that the victory of the WPK’s line was won and thus the struggle of the Korean people who worked hard with their belt tightened to acquire a powerful treasured sword for defending peace was successfully concluded and the firm guarantee by which our descendants can enjoy the most dignified and happiest life in the world was provided. He said that no nuclear test and intermediate-range and intercontinental ballistic rocket test-fire are necessary for the DPRK now, given that the work for mounting nuclear warheads on ballistic rockets was verified as the whole processes of developing nuclear weapons were carried out in a scientific way and in regular sequence, and the development of delivery and strike means was also made scientifically. He added that the mission of the northern nuclear test ground has thus come to an end. He clarified the WPK’s peace-loving stand to make positive contributions to the building of the world free from nuclear weapons in conformity with the aspiration and desire common to mankind, provided that the DPRK’s might was put on the level wanted by it and it became possible to reliably guarantee the security of the state and the safety of the people. He said that today when the historic tasks listed by the strategic line of simultaneously developing the two fronts were successfully carried out, the WPK is facing important tasks to accelerate the advance of the revolution with confidence in victory and thus hasten the final victory of the socialist cause. He clarified that at the present stage in which the DPRK was successfully put on the position of the world-level politico-ideological and military power, it is the strategic line of the WPK to concentrate all efforts of the whole party and country on the socialist economic construction. He said that it is necessary to launch a general revolutionary offensive and make a dynamic advance in the economic construction under the uplifted militant banner of "Let us further accelerate the advance of our revolution by concentrating all our efforts on socialist economic construction!" He noted that the immediate goal of the struggle for realizing the new strategic line is to keep production going at full capacity at all industrial establishments and reap a rich harvest in all agricultural fields during the period of carrying out the five-year strategy for national economic development and thus make the people's laughter resound far and wide across the country. He pointed out that the long-term goal is to put the national economy on a Juche, modern, IT and scientific basis and provide all the people with affluent and highly civilized life so that they can live as well as others. He clarified the tasks for thoroughly carrying out the new strategic line, and ways for doing so including the issue of prioritizing economic work in the overall work of the party and the state, tapping all the human, material and technical potentials of the country for economic development. He called on all the fields and units to thoroughly rely on science and technology, steadily improve the self-development spirit and effect production surge and leap under the unfurled slogan of self-reliance and self-sufficiency. In order to thoroughly implement the new strategic line on channeling all efforts on the economic construction, it is necessary to drastically enhance the role of party organizations, he stressed. He urged the economic guidance organs including the Cabinet to occupy their position as the master responsible for the economic affairs, meticulously organize the operation and command for making rapid economic progress. He also urged all the fields and units to be unconditionally subordinate to the unified command of the Cabinet for implementing the economic policy of the party. ...” (KCNA, “3rd Plenary of 7th C.C., WPK Held in Presence of Kim Jong Un,” April 21, 2018)

President Donald Trump welcomed North Korean leader Kim Jong-un’s pledge to suspend nuclear and missile tests and shut down its nuclear test site. “North Korea has agreed to suspend all Nuclear Tests and close up a major test site. This is very good news for North Korea and the World - big progress! Look forward to our Summit,” Trump said on Twitter. (Yonhap, “Trump Welcomes North Korea’s Freeze on Nuclear Tests,” April 21, 2018)
During the same week that CIA Director Mike Pompeo flew to Pyongyang for secret talks on ending North Korea’s nuclear program, U.S. weapons experts were studying a construction site near the Chinese border for clues that North Korean officials might be moving in the opposite direction. Analysts pored over satellite images of the northern city of Chongsu, keying in on a large, red-roofed building that some experts suspect is a factory for making an ultrapure form of graphite. The material is essential for making nuclear reactors of the kind North Korea uses domestically, and, according to a new report, Pyongyang has recently attempted to sell the same nuclear-grade graphite to customers overseas. The CIA has declined to comment about the mysterious building, the true purpose of which remains uncertain. But the questions over the construction project underscore a key difficulty in evaluating North Korea’s proposals to freeze or give up portions of its nuclear program: North Korea has a long history of concealing illicit weapons activity from foreign eyes. “The Kim family regime’s past behavior gives new meaning to the traditional arms control challenge of ‘trust but verify,’” said Robert Litwak, director of international security studies at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, a Washington think tank. According to weapons experts, the suspected graphite production facility in Chongsu could help North Korea achieve multiple goals, allowing its weapons program to quietly advance while creating an additional source of badly needed export revenue. The site was identified in a report released late April 20 by the Institute for Science and International Security, a Washington nonprofit that researches nuclear weapons programs. David Albright, the institute’s founder and a former U.N. weapons inspector, said the facility came to light partly because of a glossy marketing brochure North Korea has been providing to select customers offering to sell nuclear-grade graphite. The black mineral, when purified through a manufacturing process, is used in making nuclear reactors and missile components, in addition to other industrial applications. With guidance from an unidentified “knowledgeable official,” the institute’s experts were able to spot the suspected facility inside a guarded industrial zone near the banks of the Yalu River. A sequence of satellite images taken over seven years shows its construction on the grounds of a defunct coal-burning power plant, which was dismantled and replaced by modern industrial buildings “surrounded by a new security perimeter wall with a security checkpoint building” at the front entrance, the institute’s report states. While the report offers no concrete proof that the facility is intended for making nuclear-grade graphite, Albright cites multiple strands of evidence pointing to North Korea’s interest in expanding its production of the material. Pyongyang already possesses one graphite factory, and in recent years, North Korea’s atomic energy agencies have acquired new equipment and dispatched scientists to China for advanced training in producing the substance. “This example illustrates why the United States needs to obtain a well-defined, verified commitment from North Korea not to proliferate nuclear weapons, fissile materials and nuclear and nuclear-related goods,” Albright said. Regardless of the building’s purpose, independent weapons experts say, it is crucial that North Korea allows access to such facilities. Without such transparency, it would be difficult to take Kim’s pledges seriously, analysts say. “There is good reason to be skeptical, or at least realistic,” Jon Wolfsthal, a former senior director for arms control in the Obama administration’s National Security Council, said in a Twitter post hours after the freeze was announced. “It is, after all, North Korea.” (Joby Warrick, “Factory Shows Difficulty of Vetting Kim’s Pledges,” Washington Post, April 22, 2018, p. A-16)

President Donald Trump will urge North Korea to act quickly to dismantle its nuclear arsenal when he meets North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and isn’t willing to grant Pyongyang substantial sanctions relief in return for a freeze of its nuclear and missile tests, administration officials said. “When the president says that he will not make the mistakes of the past, that means the U.S. will not be making substantial concessions, such as lifting sanctions, until North Korea has substantially dismantled its nuclear programs,” a senior Trump administration official said. “If North Korea is willing to move quickly to denuclearize, then the sky is the limit. All sorts of good things can happen,” the official added. Trump himself described the test suspension as “big progress” in a tweet, though in a Twitter message today he added a note of caution. “We are a long way from conclusion on North Korea, maybe things will work out, and maybe they won’t—only time will tell. ... But the work I am doing now should have been done a long time ago!” During Kim’s meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing last month, the Chinese Foreign Ministry quoted the North Korean leader as saying that he favored “phased, synchronized
measures to achieve peace.” In a meeting in Pyongyang over the Easter weekend, Kim tried to push Central Intelligence Agency Director Mike Pompeo toward a phased agreement in which each side would make paired concessions on a timetable that could stretch out for years, according to a person familiar with the matter. But the Trump administration is wary of making economic and diplomatic concessions upfront for steps to dismantle the North Korean arsenal that would only to be taken later. The administration favors what one person called a “big bang” approach, in which major concessions would be made by each side early on. “A freeze in itself is easily reversed,” the senior Trump administration official said. “When it comes to allowing economic activity to resume, that is something North Korea is going to have to earn.” Some experts say there may be ways to make sure that the steps taken during the initial phase cannot be easily reversed. Joel S. Wit, a former State Department official, said officials from the two sides could negotiate procedures that would make the shuttering of North Korea’s nuclear test site irreversible. This might also involve visits by international monitors to the site. Given the decades of enmity between the two sides, Wit said a phased process to build up trust before taking ambitious steps is logical. “There has to be a period of confidence-building between the two countries,” Wit said. “That is one of the advantages of a phased approach. Each side can monitor the other, and if the U.S. finds North Korea is not living up to its promises, it can stop before moving to the next phase.” But there is also a widespread perception among officials in Washington that North Korea has used previous rounds of negotiations to pursue economic benefits and sanctions relief without abandoning its nuclear weapons program and agreeing on the difficult question of verification arrangements. “I have a hard time imagining everything happening all at once because it is too big a step to take,” said Robert L. Gallucci, a professor at Georgetown University and the chief negotiator with North Korea during the Clinton administration. “A successful outcome will require some staging. But I think everybody, the United States and others, will not want any serious sanction relief to be given to the North until we are confident they have dismantled their fissile material production capability and extended range ballistic missile capability as well.” While a moratorium on missile and nuclear tests would have some security benefits, the administration is seeking a more far-reaching agreement. “They are not going to get the sort of relief from economic sanctions I am sure they are looking for in the absence of dramatic progress in dismantling their programs,” the senior administration official said. (Michael Gordon and Jonathan Cheng, “Trump Will Tell Kim Jong Un That Dismantling Nuclear Arsenal Must Precede Economic Benefits,” Wall Street Journal, April 23, 2018)

South Korea announced that it has stopped propaganda broadcasts over the border ahead of inter-Korean summit talks this week, saying it's expected to help boost the reconciliatory mood on the peninsula. "The Ministry of National Defense halted the loudspeaker broadcasts against North Korea in the vicinity of the military demarcation line (MDL) at the start of Monday," the ministry said in a statement. The move is aimed at "reducing military tensions between the South and North and creating a mood for peaceful talks" on the occasion of the summit, the Ministry of National Defense said in a statement. The talks are scheduled to take place at the truce village of Panmunjom on April 27. The ministry expressed hope that the measure will lead to the suspension of criticism and propaganda activities between the two Koreas. (Lee Chi-dong, “S. Korea Halts Propaganda Broadcasts along Border with N. Korea,” Yonhap, April 23, 2018)

Trump: “The United States and France are also cooperating to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. We are grateful for France’s key partnership in our campaign of maximum pressure on the North Korean regime. As you know, I will soon be meeting with Kim Jong-un as we seek a future of peace, harmony and security for the whole Korean Peninsula and, in fact, for the whole world. However, in pursuit of peace, we will not repeat the mistakes of past administrations. The campaign of maximum pressure will continue. ...Q. ...And on one other topic, you mentioned today that you thought the leader of North Korea has behaved openly and honorably. What did you mean when you called him that? TRUMP: Well, we will start with your second part of the question. And I hope that we will be able to deal in a very open and honorable fashion with North Korea. I started a process, and when I did, everybody thought I was doing it absolutely
wrong. But in the meantime, for 25 years, people have been dealing and nothing happened. And a lot is happening right now. I can tell you that, Jeff. A lot is happening. And I think it’s going to be very positive. And I hope it’s going to be very positive for North Korea and for South Korea, and Japan, and the rest of the world. But I am starting at a level that, frankly, I shouldn’t have had to start. This should have been worked out a long time ago. This should have been worked out many years ago. We were discussing that we shouldn’t be having this situation happen to the United States and the world. This should have been resolved by other Presidents and by other leaders of other countries a long time ago. With that being said, I think we’re doing very well. Meetings are being set up. And I want to see denuclearization of North Korea. A lot of concessions have already been made. We have made no concessions, despite some of the media saying that I’ve made concessions. I don’t — I haven’t even discussed a concession other than the fact that meeting is a great thing. And I’m sure that a lot of other people would have liked to have had the position we’re having. I will say this: We put the strongest sanctions on a country that we ever have put on any country, by far. China, President Xi, has been very strong in helping us to solve this problem — in his case, at the border. He’s allowing very little to get through. I think he’s doing that for a number of reasons. We have a very good relationship, and also it’s very important in terms of trade, because I do play the trade card. If you look at what’s happening with trade in China, it hasn’t been fair for many, many years to the United States, and we’re going to solve that problem. In fact, we’re having Secretary Mnuchin and a couple of other folks heading over to — Bob Lighthizer — heading over to China, at the request of China. They came here, as you know, last week. And we’re having very substantive discussions on trade. But I think it all plays to the border and the fact that they have been extremely strong on the border and very little has gotten through, much to the surprise of a lot of people. And I believe the trade will work out, but I also think that China has never treated us with more respect than they have over the last short period of time that I’m President. I have a very excellent, as you know, relationship with President Xi. And I think that relationship is very important as to what’s happening with North Korea. So the end result is, we’ll see. Maybe good things will happen and maybe we’re all wasting a lot of time. But hopefully it will be good for everybody concerned. ... Q. And just to follow up, if I may, sir. On North Korea, you said you believe in complete denuclearization. What does that mean exactly? TRUMP: It means they get rid of their nukes. Very simple. They get rid of their nukes, and nobody else would say it. It would be very easy for me to make a simple deal and claim victory. I don’t want to do that. I want them to get rid of their nukes. ... (White House, Office of the Spokesman, Remarks by President Trump and President Macron in Joint Press Conference,” April 24, 2018)

South Korean President Moon Jae-in will meet President Donald Trump in mid-May, before the U.S. leader holds a historic summit with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un. Seoul’s presidential office said that National Security Adviser Chung Eui-yong and his U.S. counterpart John Bolton agreed the summit would take place, during their hour-long meeting in Washington, the Hankyore reported. Yesterday, the two officials discussed preparations for the inter-Korean summit and ways to strengthen joint efforts to denuclearize the North. They, also, agreed that Moon and Trump would hold a phone conversation to discuss the results of the inter-Korean meeting, shortly after it ends on April 27. Two days ahead of the cross-border meeting, Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha reaffirmed that talks between President Moon Jae-in and Kim Jong Un will focus on denuclearization, and it will be a chance for the North to verify its commitment to dismantling its nukes. She stressed that denuclearization of North Korea and establishing peace on the Korean Peninsula are two sides of the same coin, with the former being a "prerequisite" for sustainable peace. Kang added that the establishment of a "peace system" between the two Koreas could enable the prevention of military clashes and easing of tensions as well as economic cooperation and humanitarian issues at the summit, Yonhap reported. On the possibility of Seoul and Washington failing to see eye-to-eye with Pyongyang, Kang said there would be "much to agree on" as North Korean leader understands that his country cannot achieve his goal of economic advancement, under the status quo of sanctions and pressure imposed on the North. (Jennie Oh, “Moon, Trump to Hold Summit before U.S.-North Korea Talks,” UPI, April 25, 2018)
North Korea stopped propaganda broadcasts across the demilitarized zone this afternoon, a day after South Korea halted its own broadcasts ahead of the upcoming inter-Korean summit. "About 10 of the North Korean propaganda speakers continued to blare broadcasts across the military demarcation line until this morning," a military spokesman said. "But they were turned off this afternoon." "We’re not sure if that's permanent. We'll know for sure only if the regime makes an official announcement," the spokesman added. (Yu Yong-weon, “N. Korea Stops Propaganda Broadcasts at Border,” Chosun Ilbo, April 25, 2018)

Adm. Harry Harris, the outgoing chief of the U.S. Pacific Command, is now the White House’s choice to become ambassador to Seoul, a long-vacant position, according to various officials Tuesday. U.S. President Donald Trump named Harris, 61, as his ambassador to Australia on Feb. 9, and the Australian government approved the choice. But according to the Washington Post Tuesday, a senior White House official confirmed that Harris was going to be nominated as top envoy to Seoul, and the Trump administration asked the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to postpone his confirmation hearing for the Canberra post, which had been scheduled for Tuesday. Harris was said to have told Mike Pompeo, the director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and Trump’s secretary of state nominee, that he is willing to serve as ambassador to South Korea, according to the White House official. A spokesperson for the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Bob Corker, Micah Johnson, confirmed to CNN that, at the request of the Trump administration, Harris’ confirmation hearing “has been postponed until early May.” The post of U.S. ambassador to Seoul has been vacant for nearly a year since Mark Lippert, who served under the Barack Obama administration, stepped down in January 2017 with the inauguration of Trump. Marc Knapper, the chargé d’affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, has served as the acting ambassador for the past 16 months. Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said today that she was contacted by acting U.S. Secretary of State John Sullivan the previous day and was informed that “Harris was to be reassigned to another diplomatic post so his nomination process will not be going ahead this week,” and that she “understands” the decision by the White House to re-assign Harris. She told Sky News Australia, “While we would have welcomed Harry Harris here to Australia, we understand there are challenges for the United States on the Korean Peninsula and my understanding is he will be reassigned to other duties.” With 39 years in the Navy, Harris, a four-star admiral, was born in Yokosuka, Japan, to an American Naval officer and a Japanese mother. His father was a Korean War veteran. He graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1978 and held several other command assignments in the Navy, including with the U.S. Pacific Fleet and the Sixth Fleet. He became commander of the Pacific Command in May 2015 and had been set to retire next month. He was the first Asian-American appointed to lead a combat command. As head of the Pacific Command, he oversees about 375,000 military and civilian personnel, conducting operations in a region that spans more than 100 million square miles, or more than half the earth’s surface. Among various medals and honors including the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, he is also a recipient of the prestigious Tongil National Defense Medal in 2014, the highest in the order of Korean national security merit citations, awarded to individuals who render distinguished service and meritorious contributions to the security of the Republic of Korea. Harris was expected to easily gain confirmation in the U.S. Senate as ambassador to Australia. If appointed, he will be the first U.S. admiral to become ambassador to Korea, a position usually filled by diplomats and scholars, and one diplomatic source told the JoongAng Ilbo today, “If Admiral Harris is appointed, he would be the highest-ranking U.S. ambassador to Korea to date.” (Sarah Kim, “Trump Picks Adm. Harry Harris as Seoul Ambassador Nominee,” JoongAng Ilbo, April 25, 2018)

US intelligence officials appear to be in Pyongyang negotiating preparations for the US-North Korea summit. According to Asahi Shimbun, a number of US officials who appear to be associated with the CIA have been in Pyongyang since CIA Director Mike Pompeo’s visit earlier this month. The report said that Pompeo’s visit was arranged through South Korea’s National Intelligence Service, and that he was accompanied by five high-level officials. According to the Japanese paper, Pompeo met with Kim Jong-un three or four times during his visit. Their meetings were conducted in a friendly atmosphere with Kim praising Pompeo for his “guts,” according to the
The inter-Korean summit will kick off with President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un meeting at the Military Demarcation Line in Panmunjom at 9:30 a.m. tomorrow. The two leaders will then attend a welcome ceremony and begin their meeting at the South’s Peace House at about 10:30 a.m., Moon’s chief of staff Im Jong-seok said. The welcome ceremony will include a review of South Korea’s honor guard. The two sides will break for lunch, and resume talks later in the day after Moon and Kim take part in a tree-planting ceremony and a walk around the grounds. “The two leaders will plant a pine tree, a symbol of peace and prosperity, on the MDL that has symbolized conflict and division for 65 years,” Im said. The tree, which is said to have germinated in 1953, the year the armistice was signed, will be planted using soil gathered from Hallasan on Jeju Island and Baekdusan in the North. In the second part of the talks, Seoul hopes for the two sides to reach an agreement on outstanding issues including denuclearization. Im, however, said that the form and content of the agreement remain unclear. “At this point in time, when North Korea’s nuclear and ICBM (intercontinental ballistic missile technologies) are highly advanced, reaching a denuclearization agreement is a matter that is fundamentally different from agreements reached in the early 1990s and 2000s. This is what makes this summit difficult,” said Im, who also serves as the chief of the preparation committee for the inter-Korean summit. Im added that as the issue of denuclearization involves more than the two Koreas, Moon and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un reaching a clear understanding on denuclearization would constitute a success for the summit. “If (North Korea’s) will to denuclearize can be stipulated, and (that the agreement on the issue) means complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, I think this summit would be very successful regarding denuclearization,” Im said. “(Such an agreement) will be an excellent guide to lead into the US-North Korea summit.” While remaining cautious about the summit’s results, Im said that the composition of Kim Jong-un’s entourage hints at the importance Pyongyang is placing on the meeting. Kim Jong-un will be accompanied by North Korea’s top officials including ceremonial head of state Kim Yong-nam, and Kim Jong-un’s sister Kim Yo-jong, and a number of ranking officials from North Korea’s Workers’ Party and the military. Officials accompanying Kim Jong-un include Kim Yong-chol, Choe Hwi, chief of the general staff of the Korean People’s Army Ri Myong-su and Minister of People’s Armed Forces Pak Yong-sik. The delegation will also include Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho and Ri Son-gwon, chairman of North Korea’s Committee for Peaceful Reunification. “(Kim Jong-un’s entourage) includes core military and diplomatic officials, which was not expected,” said Im. “(Seoul) takes the move as a sign that the North is not considering just the inter-Korean summit, but looking ahead to the US-North Korea talks, and international cooperation that will follow.” As for Kim Jong-un’s wife Ri Sol-ju, Im said Seoul hopes for her presence but that related negotiations have not been conclusive. Moon will be accompanied by Im, National Security Office chief Chung Eui-yong, National Intelligence Service Director Suh Hoon, Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon, Defense Minister Song Yong-moo, Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha and Gen. Jeong Kyeong-doo, the chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. (Choi He-suk, “Moon Jae-in, Kim Jong Un Set to Hold Historic Summit in DMZ,” Korea Herald, April 26, 2018)
They are claiming damages to be decided by the court. “North Korea has repeatedly lied about the causes of Otto’s condition and refuses to acknowledge its abhorrent actions,” the 22-page complaint said. “In fact, North Korea, which is a rogue regime, took Otto hostage for its own wrongful ends and brutally tortured and murdered him.” The Warmbiers did not coordinate the lawsuit with the administration, but the White House expressed its support. “Americans remain committed to honoring Otto’s memory, and we will not forget the suffering of his parents,” said Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House press secretary. Another senior official said the administration was not worried that the suit would hamper its efforts to free the other Americans. On the contrary, the official said, the prospect of more such lawsuits might give Pyongyang the incentive to free the remaining detainees — three Korean-Americans who were arrested in 2016 and 2017 on suspicion of “hostile acts” against the North Korean state. “They’ve been there a long time and it’s harsh treatment,” Trump said at a news conference last week, referring to the three detainees: Kim Hak-song, also known as Jin Xue Song; Tony Kim, also known as Kim Sang-duk; and Kim Dong-chul. He expressed guarded optimism about winning their release. The lawsuit details the abuse inflicted on Warmbier, 22, saying that after he was returned to Ohio in a coma, doctors diagnosed “an extensive loss of brain tissue” that was “caused by the cessation or severe reduction of blood flow to the brain.” He had a “scarred wound” on his left foot and his teeth had been misaligned, “forced into abnormal positions.” When Warmbier’s parents boarded the plane that carried him to Cincinnati, the suit said, “They were stunned to see his condition.” “Otto was blind and deaf,” the suit said. “He had a shaved head, a feeding tube coming out of his nose, was jerking violently and howling, and was completely unresponsive to any of their efforts to comfort him.” The suit does not include new information or theories about what caused Warmbier’s injuries. It cites Trump’s statement in September 2017 that he was “tortured beyond belief by North Korea,” as well as a report in The New York Times in June, citing a senior American official, which said Warmbier had been repeatedly beaten. During a televised news conference a month later, Warmbier confessed to taking down the poster, saying he had done so at the behest of Friendship United Methodist Church near Cincinnati, which promised him a used car as payment. He also said he had been encouraged to do so by Z, a secret society at the University of Virginia that has ties to the C.I.A. The lawsuit said Warmbier’s confession was coerced: He had no ties to the church or the secret society, and the Z Society, the suit said, is not linked to the C.I.A. The only genuine expression by Warmbier, it said, was his begging to be forgiven and returned to his family. Warmbier’s parents have retained Richard Cullen, a politically connected former federal prosecutor and attorney general of Virginia. He also represents Vice President Mike Pence in the special counsel’s investigation of the Trump campaign’s ties to Russia. Among Cullen’s other clients are Tom DeLay, the former House majority leader, and Elin Nordegren, the ex-wife of the golfer Tiger Woods. (Mark Landler, “Parents Sue North Korea over Student’s Death,” New York Times, April 27, 2018, p. A-9)

4/27/18

Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula: “During this momentous period of historical transformation on the Korean Peninsula, reflecting the enduring aspiration of the Korean people for peace, prosperity and unification, President Moon Jae-in of the Republic of Korea and Chairman Kim Jong-un of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea held an Inter-Korean Summit Meeting at the ‘Peace House’ at Panmunjom on April 27, 2018. The two leaders solemnly declared before the 80 million Korean people and the whole world that there will be no more war on the Korean Peninsula and thus a new era of peace has begun. The two leaders, sharing the firm commitment to bring a swift end to the Cold War relic of longstanding division and confrontation, to boldly approach a new era of national reconciliation, peace and prosperity, and to improve and cultivate inter-Korean relations in a more active manner, declared at this historic site of Panmunjom as follows:

1. South and North Korea will reconnect the blood relations of the people and bring forward the future of co-prosperity and unification led by Koreans by facilitating comprehensive and groundbreaking advancement in inter-Korean relations. Improving and cultivating inter-Korean relations is the prevalent desire of the whole nation and the urgent calling of the times that cannot be held back any further.

(1) South and North Korea affirmed the principle of determining the destiny of the Korean nation on their own accord and agreed to bring forth the watershed moment for the improvement of inter-
Korean relations by fully implementing all existing agreements and declarations adopted between the two sides thus far.

(2) South and North Korea agreed to hold dialogues and negotiations in various fields including at high level, and to take active measures for the implementation of the agreements reached at the Summit.

(3) South and North Korea agreed to establish a joint liaison office with resident representatives of both sides in the Kaesong region in order to facilitate close consultation between the authorities as well as smooth exchanges and cooperation between the peoples.

(4) South and North Korea agreed to encourage more active cooperation, exchanges, visits and contacts at all levels in order to rejuvenate the sense of national reconciliation and unity. Between South and North, the two sides will encourage the atmosphere of amity and cooperation by actively staging various joint events on the dates that hold special meaning for both South and North Korea, such as June 15, in which participants from all levels, including central and local governments, parliaments, political parties, and civil organizations, will be involved. On the international front, the two sides agreed to demonstrate their collective wisdom, talents, and solidarity by jointly participating in international sports events such as the 2018 Asian Games.

(5) South and North Korea agreed to endeavor to swiftly resolve the humanitarian issues that resulted from the division of the nation, and to convene the Inter-Korean Red Cross Meeting to discuss and solve various issues including the reunion of separated families. In this vein, South and North Korea agreed to proceed with reunion programs for the separated families on the occasion of the National Liberation Day of August 15 this year.

(6) South and North Korea agreed to actively implement the projects previously agreed in the 2007 October 4 Declaration, in order to promote balanced economic growth and co-prosperity of the nation. As a first step, the two sides agreed to adopt practical steps towards the connection and modernization of the railways and roads on the eastern transportation corridor as well as between Seoul and Sinuiju for their utilization.

2. South and North Korea will make joint efforts to alleviate the acute military tension and practically eliminate the danger of war on the Korean Peninsula.

(1) South and North Korea agreed to completely cease all hostile acts against each other in every domain, including land, air and sea, that are the source of military tension and conflict. In this vein, the two sides agreed to transform the demilitarized zone into a peace zone in a genuine sense by ceasing as of May 1 this year all hostile acts and eliminating their means, including broadcasting through loudspeakers and distribution of leaflets, in the areas along the Military Demarcation Line.

(2) South and North Korea agreed to devise a practical scheme to turn the areas around the Northern Limit Line in the West Sea into a maritime peace zone in order to prevent accidental military clashes and guarantee safe fishing activities.

(3) South and North Korea agreed to take various military measures to ensure active mutual cooperation, exchanges, visits and contacts. The two sides agreed to hold frequent meetings between military authorities, including the Defense Ministers Meeting, in order to immediately discuss and solve military issues that arise between them. In this regard, the two sides agreed to first convene military talks at the rank of general in May.

3. South and North Korea will actively cooperate to establish a permanent and solid peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. Bringing an end to the current unnatural state of armistice and establishing a robust peace regime on the Korean Peninsula is a historical mission that must not be delayed any further.

(1) South and North Korea reaffirmed the Non-Aggression Agreement that precludes the use of force in any form against each other, and agreed to strictly adhere to this Agreement.

(2) South and North Korea agreed to carry out disarmament in a phased manner, as military tension is alleviated and substantial progress is made in military confidence-building.

(3) During this year that marks the 65th anniversary of the Armistice, South and North Korea agreed to actively pursue trilateral meetings involving the two Koreas and the United States, or quadrilateral meetings involving the two Koreas, the United States and China with a view to declaring an end to the War and establishing a permanent and solid peace regime.

(4) South and North Korea confirmed the common goal of realizing, through complete denuclearization, a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula. South and North Korea shared the view that the
measures being initiated by North Korea are very meaningful and crucial for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and agreed to carry out their respective roles and responsibilities in this regard. South and North Korea agreed to actively seek the support and cooperation of the international community for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

The two leaders agreed, through regular meetings and direct telephone conversations, to hold frequent and candid discussions on issues vital to the nation, to strengthen mutual trust and jointly endeavor to strengthen the positive momentum towards continuous advancement of inter-Korean relations as well as peace, prosperity and unification of the Korean Peninsula.

In this context, President Moon Jae-in agreed to visit Pyongyang this fall. April 27, 2018 Done in Panmunjom

Moon Jae-in, President, Republic of Korea
Kim Jong-un, Chairman, State Affairs Commission, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

The English version of the Panmunjom Declaration circulated to the United Nations member countries is causing a controversy as it stated that the two Koreas “agreed to declare the end of war this year.” Unlike the original text, which says, “During this year … South and North Korea agreed to actively pursue trilateral meetings involving the two Koreas and the United States, or quadrilateral meetings involving the two Koreas, the United States and China with a view to declaring an end to the War,” the English version is firmly stating that two Koreas will declare an end to the War within the year. Some people in the diplomatic circle express concern that altering the phrase in the English version in the intention of North Korea a head of the upcoming inter-Korean summit could negatively affect cooperation between the United States and South Korea, especially when Washington is maintaining its principle not to declare an end to the War unless North Korea takes concrete steps toward denuclearization. The Article 3, section 2 of the English version of the Panmunjom Declaration, which the two Koreas submitted jointly to the United Nations on Thursday, states that both parties (South and North Korea) “agreed to declare the end of war this year.” The English version mentions replacing the armistice with a peace agreement or holding a trilateral or quadrilateral meeting in a separate sentence, using the word “promote.” This is different from the English version of the Panmunjom Declaration circulated by Cheong Wa Dae right after the inter-Korean summit on April 27. It said the two Koreas “agreed to actively pursue” trilateral or quadrilateral meeting to declare an end to the War within the year just like it is written in the original text. The English version of the Panmunjom Declaration submitted to the United Nations is particularly controversial as it is almost the same as the English version written by North Korea. The Korean Central News Agency wrote in its English edition that “The north and the south agreed to declare the end of war this year.” (Dong-A Ilbo, “English Version of Panmunjom Declaration Submitted to the UN Causes a Stir,” September 13, 2018)

The leaders of North and South Korea agreed to work to remove all nuclear weapons from the Korean Peninsula and, within the year, pursue talks with the United States to declare an official end to the Korean War, which ravaged the peninsula from 1950 to 1953. At a historic summit meeting, the first time a North Korean leader had ever set foot in the South, the leaders vowed to negotiate a peace treaty to replace a truce that has kept an uneasy peace on the divided Korean Peninsula for more than six decades, while ridding it of nuclear weapons. A peace treaty has been one of the incentives North Korea has demanded in return for bargaining away its nuclear weapons. “South and North Korea confirmed the common goal of realizing, through complete denuclearization, a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula,” read a statement signed by North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-un, and the South’s president, Moon Jae-in, after their meeting at the border village of Panmunjom. The agreements came at the end of a day of extraordinary diplomatic stagecraft emphasizing hopes for reconciliation and disarmament that was broadcast live around the world, beginning with a smile and handshake that Kim and Moon shared at the border and extending to a quiet, 30-minute talk they had near the end of the day in a wooded area of the village. Their meeting was marked by some surprisingly candid moments but also sweeping pledges, with Kim saying, “I came here to put an end to the history of confrontation.” Trump and his aides are expected to seek a quick timetable for the North to eliminate its nuclear weapons, mindful that it has failed to deliver on its promises in the past, including a pledge not to develop
such weapons. And Friday’s agreement between Moon and Kim was notably short on specifics like timing. “South and North Korea agreed to actively seek the support and cooperation of the international community for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” their statement said. Trump, early today in Washington, cautiously praised the Korean leaders’ meeting on Twitter: “Good things are happening, but only time will tell!” Fifteen minutes later, he declared in an all-caps tweet, “KOREAN WAR TO END!” and said that all Americans should be “very proud” of what was taking place on the Korean Peninsula. In another tweet, he thanked President Xi Jinping of China for his “great help” in the process. The tone of the Moon-Kim session — broadcast live nationally on South Korean television — was convivial and at times jocular, with Kim showing surprising honesty about the differences in conditions between the two nations. Yoon Young-Chan, Moon’s spokesman, said Kim acknowledged the poor road conditions in his country, a startling admission for a member of his ruling family, which is considered godlike and faultless among North Koreans. Kim also revealed that the North Koreans who visited the South during the Winter Olympics in February all admired the bullet train there. After Moon spoke of wanting to visit North Korea, Kim said, “It will be very embarrassing,” alluding to roads there. Kim also repeated a lighthearted line he had used in his meeting with South Korean envoys in Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, last month, apologizing to Moon for disturbing his sleep with missile tests and forcing him to attend meetings of his National Security Council. “I heard you had your early-morning sleep disturbed many times because you had to attend the N.S.C. meetings because of us,” Kim said. “Getting up early in the morning must have become a habit for you. I will make sure that your morning sleep won’t be disturbed.” Moon joked back: “Now I can sleep in peace.” The move to end the Korean War formally would face obstacles, including China’s likely demand for the withdrawal of American troops from South Korea as part of a peace treaty. An armistice brought about a cease-fire to the Korean War in 1953, but the conflict never ended because the parties could not agree to a formal peace treaty. The two leaders agreed that Moon would visit Pyongyang in the fall. Their statement also said that within a year, they would push for a trilateral conference with the United States, or a four-party forum that also included China, with the aim of “declaring an end to the Korean War” and intentions to “replace the armistice with a peace treaty.” Kim and Moon also vowed to improve inter-Korean relations by opening a liaison office in the North Korean border town of Kaesong and arranging a reunion later this year of families separated by the war. Moon also offered some capitalistic carrots during the talks, reminding Kim that South Korea had in years past promised huge investments to help improve the North’s road and train systems. Those agreements eventually collapsed as the North persisted in developing nuclear weapons. Moon, a progressive leader who says he likes to see South Korea “in the driver’s seat” in pushing the peace effort forward, is trying to broker a successful summit meeting between Kim and Trump, which is expected in late May or early June. During their morning talks, Kim pushed for more summit meetings with Moon, saying he would like to visit the presidential Blue House in Seoul. He said North Korea would cooperate to make a “better world.” But he also voiced caution, suggesting South Korea and the United States deserved blame for scuttling previous deals. “As the expectations are high, so is the skepticism,” he said. “In the past, we had reached big agreements, but they were not implemented for more than 10 years. There are people who are skeptical that the results of today’s meeting will be properly implemented.” (Choe Sang-hun, “Two Koreas Unite in Goal to Banish Nuclear Arms,” New York Times, April 28, 2018, p. A-1) Kim Jong-un crossed the inter-Korean border in the border village of Panmunjom at 9:29 a.m. today, becoming the first North Korean leader to set foot in South Korean territory. Kim and Moon shook hands with the MDL between them. Kim then invited Moon to step back across the MDL with him and spend a moment on North Korean soil. Moon agreed. “It’s a pleasure to meet you,” said Moon. “Indeed, I’m so filled with excitement because of the meeting at this historic site.” Kim replied. “And I was truly moved that you have come all the way to receive me at the military demarcation line at Panmunjom.” Moon praised Kim’s “bold and courageous decision” to attend the summit, noting they “made a historic moment.” After reviewing the honor guard, the two leaders greeted delegation members from each side before entering Peace House for a first round of talks. Kim Jong-un wrote in a guestbook, “A new history is from now. An era of peace, the starting point of history,” along with his name and the date, April 27, 2018. For the talks, Kim sat with two of his delegates: his sister Kim Yo-jong to his left and Kim Yong-chol, vice chairman of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party and director of the committee’s United Front Department, to his
Kim did not mention the word “denuclearization” when he appeared before the press and to the reporters here that we will have a good talk — necessary talks — to make good results.” In reply, Moon said, “The entire world’s eyes and ears are focused on Panmunjom. The people of South and North Korea, and Koreans living abroad, hold very high expectations, which is why I think both our shoulders feel the weight.” Recalling the moment Kim made the historic crossing over the MDL, Moon said, “The moment Chairman Kim Jong-un crossed the military demarcation line for the first time, Panmunjom became a symbol of peace, not a symbol of an armistice.” He expressed high hopes for the meeting. “We have all the time today to talk. Let’s talk about everything we haven’t talked about over the last 10 years.” The meeting was not without some candid talk and jokes, especially by Kim. “The talk of the town seems to be what we’re having for dinner tonight,” Kim said in his opening speech, provoking laughs. “I brought some Pyongyang cold noodles for you to taste tonight.” He continued, “The noodles have come from afar.” He stopped himself and turned to his sister to say, “Oh perhaps we shouldn’t use the word ‘far’ [to describe the distance between the two countries] in this case, eh?” According to the Blue House, Kim even made a joke about missiles in the introductory meeting before the official summit dialogue. “Kim said, ‘I heard that, Mr. President, you have not been able to sleep much lately because of National Security Council meetings set up because of us,’ ” Yoon Young-chan, senior presidential secretary for public affairs, told the press. The reference was to early morning National Security Council meetings that are usually called following North Korea’s nuclear and missile tests. Though the talk was sometimes light, Kim and his entourage showed extreme care about his safety and security during the visit. Before Kim sat on a chair in the lobby on the first floor of Peace House to sign the guestbook, two of his security officials stepped forward to spray the chair with disinfectant and water and wipe it with a cloth. They also sprayed disinfectant on the guestbook. The first round of talks ended at 11:55 a.m., 100 minutes after it began at 10:15 a.m. When the two leaders adjourned for lunch, a Mercedes-Benz that carried Kim from Peace House to the northern side of the MDL was surrounded by 12 security officials who trotted alongside for the entire trip back into the northern side, disappearing down the road that led back to Tongilgak, a building on the northern side of the Joint Security Area. “Both sides had a serious and frank discussion about the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the establishment of a permanent peace and ways to improve inter-Korean relations [during the first round of talks],” said Yoon, the senior presidential secretary for public affairs. In the afternoon, the two sides were to continue drafting a joint declaration. (Joint Press Corps, Kang Ji-kyu, Sarah Kim, Esther Chung, and Lee Sung-eun, “North Korea’s Kim Jong Un Makes History by Crossing into South Korea,” JoongAng Ilbo, April 27, 2018) North Korea’s Kim Jong Un has laid the foundations for a meeting with President Trump as soon as next month, signaling a willingness to discuss denuclearization and trying to dispel the idea that he’s an unreliable “Little Rocket Man.” In an astonishing turn of events, a beaming Kim on Friday stepped across the border into South Korea for a day of talks that began and ended with him holding hands with the president of the South, Moon Jae-in. They talked, they joked, they walked, they ate, and when they signed a joint statement pledging to work toward their “common goal” of denuclearizing their peninsula, they hugged. Kim and Moon signed a three-page “Panmunjom Declaration,” named after the truce village in the demilitarized zone between the two Koreas where it was forged, stating that “South and North Korea confirmed the common goal of realizing, through complete denuclearization, a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.” The two Koreas agreed “to actively seek the support and cooperation of the international community” in that endeavor, it said. But the agreement was short on details, and the phrase “a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula” will ring alarm bells in Washington because it implies that nuclear weapons will not be allowed in South Korea, either. The United States, South Korea’s security ally, regularly sends nuclear-capable aircraft and ships to the South during military exercises, so this clause will raise suspicions that Pyongyang is calling for a significant change in the U.S.-South Korea alliance. Moon previously had said that Kim would not insist on the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the South, and there was no mention of this in today’s agreement. Kim did not mention the word “denuclearization” when he appeared before the press after signing the agreement, although he stayed on message throughout. “We will work to make
sure that the agreement bears good results by closely communicating to ensure that the failure to implement North-South agreements in the past will not be repeated,” Kim said, standing in front of cameras. Previous inter-Korean agreements also have pledged denuclearization, and there is significant skepticism in Washington and Tokyo, in particular, about whether this time will be any different. That Kim signed his name to a statement that even included the word “denuclearization” marked significant progress after a year of threats and missile launches that brought the specter of war back to the Korean Peninsula. And Friday’s agreement marks a significant change from Kim’s previous statements that he would continue to expand his nuclear arsenal, said Patrick McEachern, a fellow at the Wilson Center in Washington. Instead, the two leaders established a framework for plausible resolution of the most pressing issues on the peninsula, he said. “This is a great start and should be cause for cautious optimism,” said McEachern, who worked on North Korea in the State Department. “The public conversation should now shift from speculation on whether North Korea would consider denuclearization to how South Korea and the United States can advance this denuclearization pledge in concrete steps.” Even the most optimistic analysts were surprised at the scope of the agreement. “You can’t ask for more than that,” said John Delury, a professor of international relations at Yonsei University in Seoul and a keen proponent of engagement. “Yes, there are still questions about how to guarantee North Korea’s security on the path to denuclearization. But I’m surprised they would go this far at this early stage, that Kim Jong Un didn’t save this for his meeting with Trump,” Delury added. Kim and Moon also agreed to work to turn the armistice agreement that ended the Korean War in 1953 into a peace treaty that would officially bring the war to a close. “South and North Korea will actively cooperate to establish a permanent and solid peace regime on the Korean Peninsula,” the joint statement said in English, as officially translated by the South’s presidential Blue House. The Korean-language version used the words “peace treaty” — an important distinction. “Treaty” generally refers to a piece of paper, while “regime” means a system for peace, such as stopping military activities. “Bringing an end to the current unnatural state of armistice and establishing a robust peace regime on the Korean Peninsula is a historical mission that must not be delayed any further,” the statement said. The United States signed the armistice agreement 65 years ago on behalf of the South Korean side, and shortly after today’s announcement, Trump tweeted, “KOREAN WAR TO END!” The two sides also plan to set up an inter-Korean liaison office in Kaesong, a city just inside the northern side of the border, and Moon said he would visit Pyongyang this fall. Kim said he would happily travel to Seoul if invited. (Anna Fifield, “Koreas Pledge to Work Together,” Washington Post, April 28, 2018, p. A-1) Kim Jong Un said the country will close down its main nuclear testing site sometime in May. South Korean presidential press secretary Yoon Young-chan said April 29 that Kim agreed to the plan during a meeting between the leader and South Korean President Moon Jae-in. Kim also pledged to invite “experts and journalists” from both South Korea and the U.S. to visit the site to verify the deactivation. South Korea did not specify an exact date for either event. “The U.S. is constitutionally averse to North Korea, but through dialogue, it will become apparent that we have no intention to target South Korea, the Pacific Ocean or the U.S. with nuclear weapons,” Yoon quoted Kim as saying. “If we are able to build trust with the U.S. through frequent meetings, and promises to end war, and practice a policy of non-aggression, there’s no reason for us to live a hard life with nuclear weapons.” (James Doubek, “Kim Jong Un Pledges to Shut down Main Nuclear Test Site in May, South Korea Says,” NPR, April 29, 2018) South Korean presidential office Cheong Wa Dae said that North Korea has offered to close down its nuclear test site in Punggye-ri in May. During a live broadcast delivered by President Moon Jae-in’s chief press secretary Yoon Young-chan, he said Moon and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un also agreed to make public when North Korea dismantles the northern test site. Kim said he would invite security experts and journalists to the North. "Some say that we are terminating facilities that are not functioning, but you will see that we have two more tunnels that are bigger than the existing ones and that they are in good condition," Yoon quoted Kim as saying. "Although I am inherently resistant toward America, people will see that I am not the kind of person who fires nukes at South Korea, the Pacific or America," he said. "Why would we keep nuclear weapons and live in a difficult condition if we often meet with Americans to build trust and they promise us to end the war and not to invade us?” Kim said he will not repeat the "painful history of the Korean War," adding. "Concrete measures are necessary to stop any accidental military confrontation from happening." (Yonhap, “N. Korea to Close Its Nuclear Test Site Next Month,
The South Korean government said on April 29 that North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-un, had told President Moon Jae-in that he would abandon his nuclear weapons if the United States agreed to formally end the Korean War and promise not to invade his country. A South Korean government spokesman, Yoon Young-chan, provided remarkable details of a summit meeting the two Korean heads of state. North Korea’s promise to invite outsiders to Punggye-ri reflected “Mr. Kim’s determination to actively and pre-emptively deal with the process of verifying denuclearization,” Yoon said. In another conciliatory gesture toward South Korea, Kim made his own pledge of nonaggression toward the South. “I am determined not to repeat the painful history of the Korean War. As the same nation living on the same land, we should never shed blood again,” he told Moon, according to Yoon.

Kim even vowed to readjust his country’s clock to match the time zone in South Korea, which with the rest of the region run 30 minutes ahead of the North’s. “When I was sitting in the waiting room, I saw two clocks on the wall, one of the Seoul time and the other of the Pyongyang time, and I felt bad about it,” Kim was quoted as telling Moon. “Why don’t we reunify our clocks first?”

Kim has shown signs of being a reformer, granting farms and factories more autonomy, allowing more markets to open, and setting off a building boom in his showcase capital, Pyongyang. He exhorts his country to follow “international development trends” and “global standards” and even admits failing to deliver on his promise that his long-suffering people would “no longer have to tighten their belts.” “My desires were burning all the time, but I spent the past year feeling anxious and remorseful for the lack of my ability,” Kim said in a nationally broadcast speech last year, a startling admission for a member of the family that has ruled North Korea with the help of a personality cult since its founding in 1948. After meeting him, Moon called Kim “open-minded and practical.” If Kim pursues the route of economic reform, energy and transportation are the two areas where he most needs outside help. In his meeting with Moon, Kim admitted to the “embarrassing” condition of his roads and railways, South Korean officials said. Trains running on electricity remain North Korea’s main means of transport, carrying 90 percent of its cargo and 60 percent of its passenger traffic, according to Ahn Byung-min, a senior analyst at the South’s government-funded Korea Transport Institute. But its rail systems are so decrepit that its fastest train, which runs to the Chinese border from Pyongyang, travels at 28 miles an hour. Other trains run at less than half that speed, Ahn said.
Lacking cash for oil imports, North Korea produces all its electricity from hydroelectric dams and coal-burning power plants. But the country’s power industry is trapped in a vicious cycle, energy experts say. Chronic electricity shortages make it difficult to produce coal and transport it to power plants. People in search of firewood for heat and cooking have denuded their hills, causing floods and droughts and making silt pile up at dams. That cuts down hydroelectric generation. North Korea’s electricity generation amounts to only 4.4 percent of South Korea’s, according to Park Eun-jeong, an analyst at the South’s Korea Development Bank. “Electricity is the Achilles’ heel for North Korea,” said Lee Jong-heon, an energy analyst in Seoul. Moon’s proposal to modernize the North’s roads and railways and link them to the South’s is not meant to help just North Korea. South Korean policymakers say that the two Koreas must first integrate their economies to make an eventual reunification less chaotic. They also envision building trans-Korean railways to find faster and cheaper routes to export South Korean goods to China, Russia and Europe, and bring Russian oil and gas into the South through pipelines for its power-hungry economy. In 2007, the two Koreas temporarily connected two short stretches of railway across their border, but further efforts to reconnect the two systems have been suspended amid rising tensions over the North’s nuclear program. In 2004, South Korea opened a joint industrial park in the North Korean town of Kaesong and sent electricity to run it. But the park was closed after the North’s nuclear test in 2016. “Reunification can start with reconnecting energy and transport lines of the two Koreas,” said Lee. (Choe Sang-hun, “South Korea Offers the North’s Leader a Path to Prosperity on a Flash Drive,” New York Times, May 11, 2018, p. A-10)

South Korea said that President Moon spoke on the phone with President Trump for more than an hour. Trump said he was pleased with the inter-Korea summit and the two leaders spoke about preparing for a proposed meeting between Trump and Kim that could happen as soon as May. “Just had a long and very good talk with President Moon of South Korea. Things are going very well, time and location of meeting with North Korea is being set,” Trump tweeted this morning. "It's going be a very important meeting, the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula," Trump said at his campaign rally in Michigan tonight, according to The Associated Press. (James Dobbek, “Kim Jong Un Pledges to Shut down Main Nuclear Test Site in May, South Korea Says,” NPR, April 29, 2018)

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is willing to hold talks with Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, South Korea’s presidential Blue House said. Kim told South Korean President Moon Jae-in during their talks that he is ready to hold a dialogue with Japan at “any time,” the Blue House said, adding that Moon had relayed Kim’s remark to Abe in a telephone call this morning. Abe told Moon that Tokyo intends to work to hold a bilateral summit with Pyongyang, adding he hopes Moon will mediate if necessary, the Blue House said. Moon replied that he will gladly do so, it added. Moon also discussed the abduction issue during the summit, Abe said after the telephone call. For Japan, resolving the issue of the Japanese who were abducted by North Korea in the 1970s and 1980s remains a top priority. “I would like to thank (the South Korean president) for his sincerity” in taking up the issue as promised, Abe told reporters. Abe said Moon conveyed his ideas about the abduction issue and Tokyo’s relations with Pyongyang to Kim but declined to comment on how Kim reportedly responded. “At this stage, I cannot give details,” Abe said. But the abduction issue remains a possible roadblock to talks with Pyongyang. Tokyo officially recognizes 17 people as having been kidnapped by the North in the 1970s and 1980s. Five were returned in 2002, but the North insists eight died and the other four never entered its territory. The telephone talks were held for Moon to personally brief Abe on the inter-Korean summit. Moon and Kim agreed to achieve a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula and seek a formal end to the 1950-1953 Korean War by the year’s end. Abe said he told Moon he appreciates the fact that “complete denuclearization” of the Korean Peninsula was included in the declaration issued. Following the telephone talks, Abe met with Suh Hoon, director of South Korea’s National Intelligence Service, who visited Tokyo to brief Abe on the landmark summit. Suh told reporters after the meeting that he agreed with Abe that “the international community must cooperate so (the denuclearization pledged by the North) can move to the implementation stage.” (Kyodo, “Kim Jong Un ready to Talk to Abe at ‘Any Time,’ Blue House Reveals after North-South Summit,” Japan Times, April 29, 2018)
Secretary of State Mike Pompeo spoke for the first time about a “good conversation” he had with Kim during his secret visit to Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, over Easter weekend. Pompeo told ABC News in a broadcast that the Trump administration’s objective was “complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization” with North Korea, and that Kim was prepared to “lay out a map that would help us achieve” denuclearization. “We had an extensive conversation on the hardest issues that face our two countries,” Pompeo said. “I had a clear mission statement from President Trump. When I left, Kim Jong-un understood the mission exactly as I described it today.” But National Security Adviser John Bolton, a longtime critic of past diplomacy with North Korea, expressed skepticism yesterday, recalling past moments that looked hopeful. Those would include a commitment by Pyongyang in the 1990s to give up its nuclear program and the destruction of a nuclear power cooling tower in 2008 as part of a similar promise. “We want to see real commitment,” he said on “Face the Nation” on CBS. “We don’t want to see propaganda from North Korea. We’ve seen words. We’ve seen words so far.” Asked about North Korea’s insistence on a promise by the United States not to invade, Bolton noted that was an old demand that had been rolled out on other occasions. “We’ve heard this before,” he said. “The North Korean propaganda playbook is an infinitely rich resource.” Trump sees the potential for a historic deal with Kim, “a breakthrough nobody would have imagined a few months ago,” Bolton told Fox News, but his administration is not “starry eyed about what may happen here.” (Choe Sang-hun, “Kim Says He’d End Nuclear Pursuit for a U.S. Truce,” New York Times, April 30, 2018, p. A-1)

Bolton: “MARGARET BRENNAN: You're just about three weeks on the job now you have this South Korean led diplomatic breakthrough. Do you believe that Kim Jong Un is ready to negotiate away his weapons or is he just trying to soften his image? BOLTON: Well I don't think we know at this point. I think if he has made a strategic determination that- that North Korea would be better off without nuclear weapons then I think we've got something to talk about and I think the president would be eager to capitalize on the opportunity. But I think it's clear we're here where we are today because of the pressure that the Trump administration has put on North Korea. Economic pressure, political, military pressure. I think this is widely recognized president Moon of South Korea himself has repeatedly said the opportunities for the Olympics, the opportunity for the North-South summit would not have occurred without this pressure campaign. The Prime Ministers of Japan and Australia, the president of France, the chancellor of Germany have all said the same thing. So that's why we're here now. And I think it's up to the North Koreans to show us that they really do intend to give up nuclear weapons. BRENNAN: Well arguably North Korea also walks in in a position of some strength- economic weakness perhaps but this nuclear program is further along than any past administration has encountered. So are- BOLTON: Well because of the mistakes of 25 years of past administrations- BRENNAN: -but is it a requirement that Kim Jong Un agree to give those weapons before you give any kind of concession? BOLTON: I think that's right. I think we're looking at the Libya model of 2003, 2004. We're also looking at what North Korea itself has committed to previously and most importantly I think going back over a quarter of a century to the 1992 joint North-South denuclearization agreement where North Korea committed to give up nuclear weapons and committed to give up uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing. Now we've got other issues to discuss as well; their ballistic missile programs, their biological and chemical weapons programs, their keeping of American hostages, the abduction of innocent Japanese and South Korean citizens over the years. So there's a lot to talk about. BRENNAN: Will the U.S. accept this invitation from the North to inspect their nuclear site when it's taken down in May as promised? BOLTON: Well we'll see exactly what that is, you know the-the BRENNAN: Well the South says that's what the North promised. BOLTON: the North- the North. Well it's- it's interesting because we've been to this place before. I hope it's a sincere commitment by the North. But I'll just read you a sentence if I may. "In a gesture demonstrating its commitment to halt its nuclear weapons program, North Korea blew up the most prominent symbol of its plutonium production Friday. The destruction of the cooling tower bore witness to the incremental progress that has been made and U.S. led multilateral efforts to end North Korea's nuclear weapons program." June 27, 2008, New York Times. Now the selfsame New York Times last month reported that President Trump is going to have difficulty with North Korea because new satellite evidence suggests that North Korea is expanding its plutonium production. So- we want to see real
commitment. We don't want to see propaganda from North Korea. BRENNAN: You haven't seen such act-actions so far? BOLTON: We've seen words. BRENNAN: No dismantlement? BOLTON: We've seen words so far. BRENNAN: Continued development. BOLTON: You're-t. They've said that they're going to give up nuclear testing and ballistic missile testing. They haven't conducted any recently. That's true. That could be a very positive sign or it could be a sign that they've reached the level of development where they don't need testing now. We've seen this in other contexts as well. President Trump is determined to see this opportunity through. Hopeful that we can get a real breakthrough, but we're not naive in the in the administration and-and a lot's going to ride on this meeting with Kim Jong Un. BRENNAN: So there are these headlines that-- from South Korea saying Kim Jong Un would abandon his weapons if the U.S. promises not to invade his country. Are you going to make any kind of promise like that? BOLTON: Well, we've heard this before. This is- the North Korean propaganda playbook is an infinitely rich resource. BRENNAN: But it puts a burden on the United States. BOLTON: I don't think it does really, I think that if you look at the decision to give up nuclear weapons as a real strategic decision that North Korea has to make. What we want to see from them is evidence that it's real and not just rhetoric. In the case of Libya for example and it's a different situation in some respects those negotiations were carried out in private they were not known publicly. But one thing that Libya did that led us to overcome our skepticism was that they allowed American and British observers into all their nuclear related sites. So it wasn't a question of relying on international mechanisms. We saw them in ways we had never seen before. BRENNAN: That sounds like you want inspections before any kind of sanctions relief. BOLTON: Well I think it would be a manifestation of the strategic decision to give up nuclear weapons doesn't have to be the same as Libya but it's got to be something concrete and tangible it may be that Kim Jong Un has some ideas and we should hear him out. BRENNAN: According to CBS' reporting, Singapore is the preferred location for this meeting between President Trump and Kim Jong Un. When will you make this determination on location and how important is it? BOLTON: Well I think that the when- when the present is ready to announce that he'll announce it. We're still working on the location. We're still working on the date. BRENNAN: He said within the next few weeks. Three to four. BOLTON: He- the president is ready to go on this. And- and so we're eager to come to a conclusion so we can do all the logistical planning but I don't want to preempt any any news that that he may want to make. We just don't have we don't have it pinned down yet. BRENNAN: Is there any update on the three Americans that are being held prisoner in North Korea? I mean are they essentially going to be held hostage to the success of this diplomacy or do they need to be released before the president walks into that room? BOLTON: Well I don't want to get into the discussions that-that we've had. I'll just say this. These three Americans are at the top of the president's mind. And in- in exchanges between normal nations these people wouldn't even be held. So I think North Korea should look at this very seriously. BRENNAN: This is a gesture though that they're not required to take before the meeting? BOLTON: It would be a demonstration of their sincerity. We're waiting to see what their decision is. BRENNAN: Can you tell us anything about their status? BOLTON: Well I'd rather not get into the discussions-- at this point but it's very much on the president's mind. (CBS, Transcript: National Security Adviser John Bolton on “Face the Nation,” April 29, 2018)

Pompeo: “JONATHAN KARL: So, I want to start with those incredible images that we saw of Kim Jong-un stepping into South Korea for the first time we have ever seen a North Korean dictator do that. How big, how significant was that moment? POMPEO: Yeah, Jonathan, I think it's a big deal. It is important, every step along the way matters. The objective remains the same: complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization. That has been the administration's goal. President Trump has put economic pressure on the North Koreans and it appears to have given us an opening, this real opportunity for something that would be transformative for the world if we can achieve it. KARL: And let's look at those more remarkable images of your meeting with Kim Jong-un. The two of you just standing there side-by-side. What was going through your mind at that moment? POMPEO: I was on a mission, Jonathan. I had a mission to begin to lay the groundwork for President Trump's meeting with Kim Jong-un. We wanted to make sure we understood that the North Koreans, Kim Jong-un, was prepared to talk about things that matter most, to give us a grounds, a basis to have that meeting between the president and the chairman. I
was very focused on that in that moment. KARL: The president said that the meeting -- the meeting between the two of you -- was entirely unplanned and it lasted for more than an hour. How did it come about? POMPEO: Well, I was there on a mission. I was aiming to achieve the goals that the president set forward to me, it became clear that I was going to get the chance to meet with Kim Jong-un to discuss some of the details, but most importantly to take a read on whether there was an opportunity here for our two countries to achieve this. And when I came back, I reported to the president the discussion. It was a productive one. There remains a great deal of work to do. But we at least have the opportunity here to do something that’s incredibly important. KARL: As the CIA director, you obviously spent a lot of time in the CIA, spent years, resources on trying to read the North Korean leadership, trying to understand Kim Jong-un. What did you come away learning about him in that meeting? POMPEO: Well, anytime you get a chance to meet face-to-face with someone, you get a better read about what they’re thinking, whether they’re really prepared to do something that is historic and different. And we have got a long history of negotiating with North Korea. Repeatedly, they have taken actions only to find that those promises proved false or unworthy or they were incapable of achieving them. My goal was to try and identify if there was a real opportunity there. I believe there is. Who knows how the ultimate discussions will go. There is a lot of work left to do, but I am very hopeful that the conditions that have been set by President Trump give us this chance. KARL: The president said you have good relationship with Kim Jong-un after this. A good relationship. Do you? POMPEO: We had a good conversation. We talked about serious matters. He was very well prepared. I hope I matched that. We had an extensive conversation on the hardest issues that face our two countries. I had a clear mission statement from President Trump. When I left there, Kim Jong-un understood the mission exactly as I’ve described it today. And he agreed that he was prepared to talk about that and to lay out a map that would help us achieve that objective. Only time could tell if we can get that done. KARL: So, you went down there to set up this summit meeting between Kim Jong-un and the president or take steps toward doing that. What do you -- looking at this, what is your assessment? What is the best plausible outcome that we can see after this first meeting of Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un? POMPEO: Well, we hope a number of things could be achieved. I talked about getting the release of the American detainees. And then we talked a great deal about what it might look like, what this complete, verifiable, irreversible mechanism might look like. And so, when the two leaders, the only people that can make those decisions, will be in a room together, they can set the course, they can chart the outcome. They can then direct the teams to go deliver that outcome. And the best outcome would be that the two agree that they’re going to get there and charter their teams to go make that happen. KARL: So, I just want to play for you something that the national security adviser John Bolton said shortly before he came into the administration but right after this planned meeting was announced. This is what he said about negotiating with the North Koreans. (BEGIN VIDEO CLIP) JOHN BOLTON, NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR: There is an old purpose joke here. Question: How do you know that the North Korean regime is lying? Answer: Their lips are moving. (END VIDEO CLIP) KARL: So, that was obviously before John Bolton became national security adviser. He is now working on this meeting. But given all of the broken promises on the nuclear issue that we have seen under President Clinton, President Bush, President Obama, three different North Korean leaders now, can you really trust anything that comes out of a meeting with Kim Jong-un? POMPEO: Jonathan, this administration has its eyes wide open. We know the history. We know the risks. We’re going to be very different. We’re going to negotiate in a different way than has been done before. We’re going to require those steps – we use the word irreversible with great intention. We’re going to require those steps that demonstrate that denuclearization is going to be achieved. We’re not going to take promises. We’re not going to take words. We’re going to look for actions and deeds. And until such time, the president has made it incredibly clear we will keep the pressure campaign in place until we achieve that. That’s different. And so in each case, both countries will have to do more than words, will have to actually deliver an outcome that is the one that Kim Jong-un and I had the chance to talk about at the direction of the president. KARL: So, you looked into his eyes, you spent an hour with him, you said it was a good conversation. The president said it was a good relationship that was developed. The president also called him a madman. And the president is not alone in calling Kim Jong-un a madman. How do you build a relationship with somebody who is seen as a madman?
POMPEO: You know, I’m not one to do much about naval gazing or eye staring. I’m looking for actions. And that’s what President Trump is asking for, too. We have built a coalition -- a diplomatic coalition has come together to put pressure on Kim Jong-un. President Trump and that pressure campaign are the reasons Kim Jong-un want this meeting. It’s the objective of our administration to achieve the outcome. That -- that’s what we’ll be looking for between the president and Kim Jong-un. KARL: Did you think he’s really had a change of heart on this? I mean, if you look at Kim Jong-un this is somebody who assassinated his uncle right after coming into power, poisoned his half-brother, did more to advance North Korea’s nuclear facilities, its missile capabilities than his father, did more to advance the military than his grandfather. Do you really think that he has had a change of heart on this and he is ready to give up the pride of that country right now: its nuclear program? POMPEO: Kim Jong-un’s going to have to make a decision. He’s going to have to make a big decision. Does he want the pressure campaign to continue? Does he want President Trump to continue to place him in the location that he finds himself today? Or is he looking for something big and bold and different, something that hasn’t happened before? I don’t know which way it will go. As the president has said, only time will tell.

**But we have a mission set, we have an obligation to engage in diplomatic discourse to try and find a peaceful solution so that Americans aren’t held at risk by Kim Jong-un and his nuclear arsenal.** That’s the mission. That’s the goal. Only time will tell if we’re going to be able to achieve it. KARL: And you have been clear this is complete irreversible dismantlement of their nuclear programs. Get rid of the nukes, get rid of the capabilities. Is he going to get anything in return before he does that? Is there any lifting, any easing of sanctions, any reward given before the total irreversible dismantling of that nuclear program? POMPEO: Jonathan, the administration’s been very clear. We’ll see how the negotiations proceed, but we’re going to do it in a fundamentally different way than the previous efforts to persuade the North Koreans to get rid of their nuclear weapons program. We have -- we have our eyes wide open, Jonathan. KARL: But nothing before it is done? No partial steps? POMPEO: Jonathan, we have our eyes wide open.

KARL: You were CIA director for 15 months. You had a sense of -- you’ve seen all of the intelligence on this. You’ve seen the assessments. Are you confident that we truly know the extent of the North Korean nuclear program? Do we know where his bombs are? Do we know where all of his nuclear facilities are at this point? POMPEO: Jonathan, I’m not going to go into any detail on that. KARL: Well, I am just asking if you are confident in the assessment. I am asking you what the assessment is. Do you believe -- because he has hidden nuclear capabilities in the past...

POMPEO: Jonathan, Jonathan, I’m not going to -- I’m not going to talk about intelligence matters on the show this morning. I apologize for that. I just -- you do understand that I simply can’t do that. KARL: So, if diplomacy fails on this, is there a military option? Is there a realistic military option for getting rid of that nuclear program? POMPEO: The president has been very clear, Jonathan. We’re not going to allow Kim Jong-un to continue to threaten America. We’re not going to let him develop a program such that Americans are held at risk. KARL: I want to play something that you said in July at the Aspen. POMPEO: Jonathan I’m sorry -- Jonathan I’m sorry -- I’m going to have to apologize -- I’m going to have to run. KARL: Can I just ask one more question before we head out here? POMPEO: Sure. KARL: I want to play something that you said at the aspen forum in July. (BEGIN VIDEO CLIP) POMPEO: The Korean people I am sure are lovely people and would love to see him go as well. As you might know, they don't live a very good life there. (END VIDEO CLIP) KARL: So, that was in July. Now, since then, you have been to North Korea. You have met directly with Kim Jong-un. Do you still think that the people there in North Korea would like to see him go? POMPEO: Jonathan, what I said that evening I still believe. The people in North Korea live in very difficult conditions. I believe that one of the reasons that Kim Jong-un is engaged in this conversation is that the pressure campaign that has been applied by President Trump, and indeed by the world, has put them in an even more tenuous, more difficult position. And so I’m -- I’m optimistic. We will work hard to see if we can find a solution so that the North Korea people can in fact live a better life. KARL: Our thanks to Secretary Pompeo who spoke to us from Saudi Arabia. (ABC, “This Week” Transcript: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Rep. Adam Schiff, April 29, 2018)
President Trump fanned expectations for his meeting with Kim Jong-un, saying he would like his talks with the North Korean leader to take place at the Demilitarized Zone that separates the two Koreas because “there’s a great celebration to be had on the site” if the negotiations are successful. In a sign of his high hopes and grand ambitions for the encounter, Trump is pushing back against advisers who are proposing more neutral sites, like Singapore. He would prefer to meet at the Peace House, which sits in the two-and-a-half-mile-wide strip of land — ringed by razor wire and heavily armed guard posts — that is one of the Cold War’s last frontiers. At a Rose Garden news conference with the president of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, Trump marveled at the recent rush of diplomatic gestures from Kim, a 34-year-old dictator with whom he was trading threats of nuclear war only four months ago. Kim, he said, “has been very open, and very straightforward so far.” He praised Kim for sticking to a pledge not to test nuclear weapons or ballistic missiles, and for promising to shut down a nuclear site. “The United States has never been closer to potentially having something happen with respect to the Korean Peninsula, that can get rid of the nuclear weapons, can create so many good things, so many positive things, and peace and safety for the world,” he declared. Trump added a familiar caveat that the whole effort could still fall apart. But as talk of a Nobel Peace Prize for the president has begun — stirred both by South Korea’s president, Moon Jae-in, and by chanting supporters at a weekend rally in Michigan — the president clearly senses that a history-making achievement is within his grasp. He briskly dismissed a question about whether ripping up the Iran nuclear deal — as many believe he will do when he faces the next deadline of May 12 to act on it — would jeopardize the prospects for an agreement with North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons. “I think it sends the right message,” he said. The president acknowledged that some on his staff had qualms about holding the meeting in the Demilitarized Zone. For weeks, the White House had played down that option, in part because aides did not like the optics of Trump traveling to Kim’s doorstep. Instead, they have discussed sites as far-flung as Singapore, Vietnam, Mongolia and even a Navy warship anchored in the Pacific. But all that was before the vivid images of Kim greeting Moon at the line of demarcation between North and South, and then sitting down with him in the Peace House. “Some people maybe don’t like the look of that, and some people like it very much,” the president said. “There’s something I like about it, because you’re there, if things work out, there’s a great celebration to be had on the site, not in a third-party country.” The Demilitarized Zone has other
advantages. The Secret Service is used to securing the site for presidents, and security could be an issue in other countries, like Mongolia, while there are questions about Kim’s ability to travel long distances, given the rickety condition of his aircraft. Singapore is safe and politically inoffensive, but it is still 3,074 miles from Pyongyang. Trump first floated the Peace House in a morning tweet that felt like a trial balloon or even an exercise in crowdsourcing. “Numerous countries are being considered for the MEETING,” the president wrote, “but would Peace House/Freedom House, on the Border of North & South Korea, be a more Representative, Important and Lasting site than a third party country? Just asking!” Trump’s enthusiasm for the meeting with Kim has drawn expressions of concern from former officials in both Republican and Democratic administrations. Others, however, dismiss those fears as naysaying from officials who failed in their own efforts to deal with North Korea. “We can’t have it both ways — hating him for almost starting a war and hating him for having a summit,” said Joel S. Wit, an expert on North Korea at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, who was involved in diplomacy during the Clinton administration that led to a nuclear agreement in 1994. “There are certainly dangers, given his style, in a summit,” he said, “but I prefer that to the possibility we were facing last year of armed conflict since it at least gives us the possibility of a peaceful future.” When he started talking about the coming negotiation with Kim during a rally in Washington, Mich., on Saturday, scattered cries of “Nobel! Nobel!” began and then grew into a sustained chant. “That’s very nice, thank you,” Trump replied. “Nobel,” he said with a chuckle, as if testing the ring of it. “I just want to get the job done.” Trump reiterated on Monday that his ultimate goal is to rid North Korea of its nuclear weapons. But he has shown far more openness than previous presidents to the concept of a peace treaty that would formally end the Korean War. North Korea has long pushed for such a treaty, and the current South Korean government favors it as well. (Mark Landler, “Trump Wants Talks with North Korea in DMZ, a Cold War Holdover,” New York Times, May 1, 2018, p. A-11)

In one heated exchange between the two men before February’s Winter Olympics in South Korea, Kelly strongly — and successfully — dissuaded Trump from ordering the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from the Korean Peninsula, according to two officials. For Kelly, the exchange underscored the reasoning behind one of his common refrains, which multiple officials described as some version of “I’m the one saving the country.” (Carol E. Lee, Courtney Kube, Kristen Welker and Stephanie Ruhle, “Kelly Thinks He’s Saving U.S. from Disaster, Calls Trump ‘Idiot,’” Say White House Staffers,” NBC, May.1, 2018)

Sigal: "’North Korea just stated that it is in the final stages of developing a nuclear weapon capable of reaching parts of the United States,’ President-elect Donald Trump tweeted a day after leader Kim Jong Un’s New Year’s Day speech in 2017. ‘It won’t happen.’ By stopping nuclear and missile testing just short of having a proven thermonuclear weapon and an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) to deliver it to all of the United States, Kim has made it possible for Trump to achieve his wish, but only if he is prepared to sustain negotiations and live up to his commitments. By contrast, if Trump follows advice to confront Kim at the summit with an ultimatum to disarm or else, North Korea could resume testing. Whether Kim may be willing to disarm and what he will want in return is a matter of mere speculation. Concrete proposals for reciprocal steps and diplomatic give-and-take is the only way to find out. If Trump wants a successful summit, he will seek a statement of principles in which Kim commits to denuclearization and to take some specific steps toward that end. Kim may be willing to make such a commitment to denuclearize, Trump’s ultimate goal; but in return, he will want Trump to pledge an end to enmity. That has been North Korea’s aim ever since 1988, when Kim’s grandfather, Kim Il Sung, anticipating the Soviet Union’s collapse, reached out to reconcile with the United States, South Korea, and Japan in order to avoid overdependence on China. For Pyongyang, that aim was the basis of the 1994 Agreed Framework and the September 2005 six-party joint statement. For Washington, the point of these agreements was suspension of Pyongyang’s nuclear and missile programs. Under the Agreed Framework, North Korea shuttered production of fissile material and stopped test launches of medium- and long-range missiles for nearly a decade and did so again from 2007 to 2009. Both agreements collapsed, however, when
Washington did little to implement its commitment to reconcile and Pyongyang reneged on
denuclearization. That past is prologue. The most urgent step now is to induce North Korea to
suspend production of fissile material. Without it, a North Korean commitment not to proliferate
would not be as valuable. Remote monitoring may prove of some use at known production
facilities, but delaying suspension to negotiate detailed verification would allow time for more
plutonium and highly enriched uranium (HEU) to be produced in the interim. A starting point
would be for North Korea to declare how much potential bomb fuel, that is, plutonium and HEU,
it has produced and how many nuclear weapons it has. That declaration would be subject to
subsequent verification. Beyond a shutdown of fissile material production, Trump might seek a
halt to new deployments of intermediate- and intercontinental-range missiles, which also can be
monitored remotely. In return, Kim will want evidence that Trump is willing to reconcile. The
Trading with the Enemy Act sanctions imposed before the nuclear issue arose could be relaxed yet
again, and energy assistance, unilaterally halted by South Korea in 2008, could be resumed.
Verification will require more steps to end enmity, including a commitment to diplomatic
recognition starting with an exchange of liaison offices, a pledge by Washington to begin a peace
process in Korea, and more energy aid. South Korea could halt its development of a new 300-
kilometer-range ballistic missile and allow reciprocal inspections of sites the North suspects host
nuclear weapons. Such a standstill agreement would enable Trump to claim the success he wants.
If he demands too much, however, he could torpedo the summit. The odds of persuading North
Korea to go beyond another temporary suspension and dismantle its nuclear and missile
production facilities are slim without firm commitments from Washington and Seoul to take more
far-reaching steps toward political and economic normalization, engage in a peace process to end
the Korean War, and negotiate regional security arrangements, among them a nuclear-weapon-free
zone that would provide a multilateral legal framework for denuclearization. Dismantling
production facilities and disarming will take years, as will convincing steps toward reconciliation.
Only then will it become clear whether Kim is willing to give up his weapons. If negotiations fail
to stop North Korea from arming, the United States and its allies can continue to rely on
deterrence. Yet, some steps each side takes to bolster deterrence raise the risk of deadly conflict,
as shown by the March 2010 sinking of the South Korean corvette Cheonan in retaliation for the
South firing on a North Korean naval vessel the previous November and the subsequent exchange
of artillery fire in the West Sea. So even then, the United States will need to complement
deterrence with diplomatic engagement to reduce the risk of war, just as it took the Cuban missile
crisis to get the United States and the Soviet Union to negotiate in earnest.” (Leon V. Sigal, “The
Art of the Summit,” Arms Control Today, May 2018, pp. 12-13)

Prime Minister Abe Shinzo said that Japan is seeking to resolve the North Korean abduction,
nuclear and missile issues “in a comprehensive manner” and normalize diplomatic ties with the
North, following Pyongyang’s recent diplomatic moves. Speaking at a news conference in
Amman, Abe also reiterated Japan’s commitment to keeping pressure on North Korea so as to
persuade the country to ditch its nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction. Praising
South Korean President Moon Jae-in’s efforts to hold the landmark inter-Korean summit last
Friday, Abe said, “We must lead the momentum (created in the talks) to having North Korea take
congcrete steps toward complete denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula.” Abe said his stance is
to “put the past behind and normalize ties with” the North based on a 2002 bilateral declaration.
(Kyodo, “Abe Aims to Resolve Abduction and Nuclear Issues, Normalize Diplomatic Ties,”
Japan Times, May 2, 2018)

Lewis and von Hippel: “... Congress and the Trump administration are on the verge of throwing
additional tens of billions of dollars into the same black hole. Indeed, the congressional
appropriation for ballistic missile defense in fiscal year 2018 is the largest ever. U.S. policy needs
an overhaul. The problems with current U.S. policy fall into two realms: the political reactions of
China and Russia and the technical emphasis on missile interception above the atmosphere. This
article explains the problems and proposes an alternative approach. The current U.S. focus is on
North Korea’s ballistic missiles. China and Russia, however, see U.S. ballistic missile defense
systems as a potential threat to their nuclear deterrents. Their scientists understand that current
U.S. systems can be countered with penetration aids, commonly known as countermeasures; but their policymakers worry that eventually these U.S. systems could become effective, especially if a U.S. first strike decimated their deterrent missiles. As a result, China is increasing the number of ballistic missile warheads that can reach the United States; Russia is unwilling to join the United States in further nuclear weapons reductions; and China and Russia are developing alternative warhead-delivery systems, such as hypersonic boost-glide weapons, that will further fuel a nuclear arms race. The U.S. approach to ballistic missile defense emphasizes interception above the atmosphere, the longest portion of an ICBM warhead’s trajectory. Unfortunately, interception can be made particularly difficult here, posing high technical hurdles to success. Due to the absence of air resistance, lightweight countermeasures can be deployed that are indistinguishable from the warhead or can conceal its exact location from the defender’s detection systems. Instead of continuing to apply the current flawed approach, an alternative policy consisting of more effective ballistic missile defenses against North Korea and diplomacy and arms control should be pursued. First, although countermeasures against above-the-atmosphere (exoatmospheric) defenses are within North Korea’s technical reach, the country is so small that interception of its ICBMs during the boost phase may be possible using fast interceptors based on or over international waters. Such an approach would not have the reach to threaten ICBMs currently based deep within China or Russia. Second, war with North Korea would be catastrophic for the people of North and South Korea, Japan, and quite possibly the United States. Although North Korea’s threats are appalling, there is little evidence that its leadership is suicidal. Diplomacy should be pursued to create a common understanding of the danger and avoid war in the near term, creating time for a long-term strategy for nuclear risk reduction in the region. Similarly, nuclear arms negotiations must begin with China and be revived with Russia. These negotiations almost certainly will have to include limitations on ballistic missile defenses. For the purposes of discussing interception, it is convenient to divide the flight of an attacking ballistic missile into three phases. Boost phase involves the first minutes during which the payload is being accelerated by its rocket booster. Midcourse, after the booster burns out and its payload coasts through space on a ballistic trajectory, is in the vacuum of space and is the primary focus of current U.S. efforts against longer-range ballistic missiles. Terminal phase involves the last tens of seconds during which a missile or warhead plunges back through the atmosphere toward its target. Currently deployed U.S. ballistic missile defense systems target only the midcourse and terminal phases, although there has been interest in boost-phase interception since the 1950s. U.S. ballistic missile defense systems are comprised of sensors, interceptors, and command-and-control systems that link the two. The ballistic missile tracking system starts with data from early-warning satellites in high-altitude orbits that detect the infrared emissions from missile-booster plumes and provide data on their launch points and approximate trajectories. Thereafter, radars are used to track the warheads. The long-range interceptors that defend the United States are guided primarily by five large, long-range, early-warning radars located in California, Cape Cod, Greenland, the United Kingdom, and Alaska, plus the Cobra Dane radar in the Aleutian Islands, which was originally built in the 1970s to observe the flight tests of Soviet ballistic missiles. All these radars have been upgraded to allow them to track ballistic missiles accurately enough to guide exoatmospheric interceptors. The wavelengths of their signals are too long, however, to measure the shapes of the objects that they are tracking in enough detail to discriminate between an actual attacking warhead and other similar-sized objects. In 2008 the U.S. Missile Defense Agency (MDA) deployed the sea-based X-band radar. Based in Honolulu, this radar system can sail to any desired location in the Pacific region. Although specifically built for target discrimination, it could be fooled by decoys or other midcourse countermeasures and has other serious deficiencies. Shorter-range interceptors are guided by their own shorter-range radars, although they can be cued by early-warning satellites and also potentially use data from other radars. Currently, the United States has five deployed ballistic missile defense systems: the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense (GMD), Aegis BMD ships, Aegis Ashore, Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), and Patriot systems. The current focus for U.S. homeland defense is the GMD system, whose deployment was initiated by the G.W. Bush administration to defend all U.S. states against ICBMs. By the end of 2017, a total of 44 interceptors were deployed, 40 at Fort Greely in Alaska and four at the Vandenberg Air Force Base missile flight-test site in California. Each interceptor carries a homing exoatmospheric kill vehicle (EKV). Guided by the long-range radars, the booster propels the EKV into outer space.
toward its incoming target at a speed of about six kilometers (3.8 miles) per second. The EKV uses its infrared seeker and divert thrusters to maneuver itself into a direct, high-speed collision with its target. Thus far, the GMD system has succeeded in killing its target warhead in only half of the 18 interception tests. Most of the failures have been due to quality control issues resulting from the rush to meet the politically motivated 2004 deadline for declaring the system operational. The problems with the EKV are so severe that the MDA has decided to replace the deployed EKVs with the Redesigned Kill Vehicle, starting in 2022. The GMD system has cost about $40 billion to date, or $1 billion per deployed interceptor, but was assessed in June 2017 by the Department of Defense’s operational test and evaluation office to have only “demonstrated the capability to defend the U.S. Homeland from a small number of intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) or intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) threats with simple countermeasures.” This ambiguous statement does not mean the GMD system would be effective in actual use. The Navy currently has about 85 Aegis destroyers and cruisers each equipped with four-faced SPY-1 phased-array radar systems and about 100 vertical launch tubes. In addition to ballistic missile defense interceptors, the launch tubes can carry anti-aircraft missiles, land-attack cruise missiles, and anti-submarine weapons. Thus far, more than 35 Aegis ships have been upgraded to be able to perform ballistic missile defense missions. The number is increasing at a rate of about four per year—two via upgrades of existing ships, two by new construction. By the mid-2030s, it is likely that the entire fleet will be capable of ballistic missile defense activities. The Aegis missiles are variants of the Standard Missile-3 (SM-3). These are exoatmospheric interceptors with infrared-homing kill vehicles similar to but much smaller than the GMD interceptors. SM-3 Block I interceptors have a burnout speed of about three kilometers per second with a maximum intercept range of a few hundred kilometers, which is too low to defend a large area such as the United States. By 2019, however, the Navy plans to begin deployment of a new higher-speed Block IIA interceptor being co-developed with Japan. With a burnout speed of about 4.5 kilometers per second, it could defend the entire United States from a small number of offshore and onshore locations, using the long-range GMD radars for determining approximate intercept points. Congress has recently mandated that the Block IIA missile be tested against an ICBM by the end of 2020 “if technologically feasible.” The Navy also has developed a land-based version known as Aegis Ashore. One such facility is operational in Romania, and a second is being built in Poland. Both projects were launched early in the Obama administration when there was concern that Iran, like North Korea, might acquire nuclear weapons and longer-range ballistic missiles. These Aegis Ashore bases have infuriated Russia, which claims that they could be used to forward-base cruise missiles in violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. Yet, the United States is not reconsidering their deployment, despite the constraints Iran has accepted on its nuclear program and its self-imposed 2,000-kilometer-range limit on its ballistic missiles. The United States operates an Aegis Ashore test facility in Hawaii that could be converted into an operational facility to defend against North Korean ICBMs. Japan, which operates six Aegis ships and plans two more, has recently announced its intention to build two Aegis Ashore facilities to guard against North Korean missiles. The United States has recently begun deploying Standard Missile-6 interceptors on Aegis ships, which can intercept shorter-range missiles in their terminal phase. The THAAD and Patriot systems are terminal-phase ballistic missile defense systems designed to intercept attacking missiles in the atmosphere as they descend toward their targets. The THAAD system also can operate just above the atmosphere. Patriot missiles are intended for use against shorter-range missiles and aircraft. Although the areas that THAAD and Patriot batteries could protect would be much too small for them to be used to defend the entire United States, THAAD missiles could be used as a second layer of defense for metropolitan areas. It is deployed in South Korea and Guam. The GMD intercept test May 30, 2017, cost $244 million. It would be extremely costly to conduct enough intercept tests to cover the full range of possible battle conditions, including credible countermeasures. Therefore, intercept tests for midcourse systems essentially are highly scripted demonstrations to validate simulations. When they fail, it is usually because of a quality-control failure in the hardware. The GMD system has failed half of its 18 intercept tests. The Aegis system has done better, with an 82 percent success rate in SM-3 Block I intercept tests, but the Block IIA has failed in two of its three intercept tests. Establishing that a given ballistic missile defense system can work reliably against targets under ideal conditions (e.g., during the day with the sun behind the kill vehicle illuminating a target unaccompanied by serious
penetration aids) is only the first step toward establishing the operational effectiveness of the system. The fundamental question is how well these systems would work in actual combat conditions when unexpected circumstances and enemy countermeasures must be addressed. The experience of the Patriot Advanced Capability-2 system highlights the difference between reliability on the test range and operational effectiveness in battle. Although it was reportedly successful in all 17 of its prewar intercept tests, it failed nearly completely during the 1991 Persian Gulf War in 44 engagements against Iraqi Scud missiles that had characteristics quite different from the targets against which it had been tested. The challenge of exoatmospheric countermeasures has been part of the public discussion of ballistic missile defense for 50 years. In the absence of air resistance, light and heavy objects travel on indistinguishable trajectories in outer space. Warheads can be concealed in clouds of radar-reflecting chaff or inside aluminized balloons, and decoys can be constructed of very lightweight materials. The temperatures and therefore the infrared signatures of objects also can be manipulated in outer space by varying their surface coatings or by adding small battery-powered or chemical heat sources inside. All five of the original nuclear-weapon states have developed countermeasures for their long-range nuclear-armed ballistic missiles. Many countermeasures are simple enough such that a 1999 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate concluded that ‘[m]any countries, such as North Korea, Iran, and Iraq probably would rely initially on readily available technology—including separating [re-entry vehicles (RVs)], spin-stabilized RVs, RV reorientation, radar absorbing material (RAM), booster fragmentation, low-power jammers, and simple (balloon) decoys—to develop countermeasures…. These countries could develop countermeasures based on these technologies by the time they flight test their missiles.’ A 2012 study by the National Academy of Sciences found, however, that the MDA had abandoned significant efforts to deal with countermeasures. Based on the information presented to it by the Missile Defense Agency (MDA), the committee learned very little that would help resolve the discrimination issue in the presence of sophisticated countermeasures. In fact, the committee had to seek out people who had put together experiments…and who had understood and analyzed the data gathered. Their funding was terminated several years ago, ostensibly for budget reasons, and their expertise was lost. When the committee asked MDA to provide real signature data from all flight tests, MDA did not appear to know where to find them. Details about the testing of U.S. interceptors against countermeasures are highly classified, but there is no public indication of change in the fundamental fact that, because of their susceptibility to countermeasures, ballistic missile defense systems requiring exoatmospheric interception can promise little in the way of effective defense. Building and deploying them wastes billions of dollars that could be used more effectively on other activities, including potentially more effective types of ballistic missile defense. One way to force the MDA to acknowledge the countermeasure problem would be to establish an independent testing team to equip target missiles with penetration aids considered within the reach of North Korea. Indeed, a congressionally mandated 2010 study of countermeasures by JASON, a high-level independent technical review panel, recommended such an approach. The MDA tried to suppress the report. In addition to high costs and doubtful effectiveness, exoatmospheric ballistic missile defense systems can have serious adverse effects on U.S. security. One is to undercut Russia’s willingness to reduce further the number of its nuclear warheads or consider taking its missiles off hair-trigger alert. In the wake of the Cold War, Washington and Moscow agreed to deep cuts in their deployed strategic weapons. Even after the United States began deploying its GMD system in 2004, the two countries were able to reduce weapons levels further, to 1,550 deployed strategic warheads under the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START). This last reduction was possible only because the U.S. GMD system initially had very limited objectives and was deployed slowly. The goal of 30 interceptors was achieved only in 2010, and the total number reached 44 only at the end of 2017. Galvanized by the threat of North Korean nuclear-armed ICBMs, the United States is now embarking on a much larger and more rapid expansion of ballistic missile defense systems. Congress has recently approved funds to deploy an additional 20 GMD interceptors by 2023 and to plan for a further increase to at least 104 interceptors. Planned qualitative improvements to the GMD system include the deployment of multiple, small kill vehicles on GMD boosters and a new discrimination radar. More importantly, in terms of numbers of long-range interceptors, the number of SM-3 Block IIA interceptors with their theoretical capabilities to intercept strategic missiles could climb to between 300 and 400 or more by the 2030s, with deployments on 80 to 90
ships and at Aegis Ashore sites. The congressional mandate that the SM-3 Block IIA interceptors be tested against an ICBM will almost certainly increase Russian and Chinese perceptions of threat to the deterrent value of their strategic ballistic missile forces. Congress has acknowledged this problem by requiring that the Pentagon assess whether testing the SM-3 Block IIA against ICBMs would undermine the nuclear deterrence capabilities of nuclear-armed adversaries other than North Korea. When it signed New START in April 2010, Russia stipulated that a buildup of U.S. missile defenses could be grounds for Moscow to withdraw. At that time, Russia had nearly 50 times more strategic nuclear ballistic missile warheads than the United States had strategic-capable interceptors. Even without taking into account losses from a hypothetical U.S. first strike, that ratio will soon fall into the single digits. At best, therefore, the expansion of the GMD system and the large-scale deployment of SM-3 Block IIA interceptors on Aegis ships would lock the United States and Russia into the current New START levels for the indefinite future. The U.S. ballistic missile defense buildup may already be provoking China to augment its strategic offensive forces. China has been increasing the number of its ICBMs, begun deploying submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and is developing ICBMs with multiple warheads, actions widely viewed as being at least in part a response to the U.S. ballistic missile defense program. China also may be moving away from its historical practice of deploying its missiles separately from their nuclear warheads to protect against accidental or unauthorized launch, and Russia and China are developing alternative delivery systems, including hypersonic boost-glide vehicles that cannot be intercepted by current or planned U.S. ballistic missile defense systems. Furthermore, they could respond to U.S. actions by accelerating their own missile defense programs, increasing the danger of a destabilizing, three-sided offense-defense competition. Despite the availability of countermeasures to the systems that the United States is deploying today, the ultimate driver of Russian and Chinese offensive counters to the U.S. ballistic missile defense program is that it is completely open-ended. There is no indication of when or if the process of expanding and layering of defenses will end. Boost-phase missile defense offers a technical fix to the problem of North Korean ICBMs and provides a potential avenue to address some Russian and Chinese concerns. Although ballistic missile defense advocates are reluctant to admit how easily midcourse defenses could be defeated, some tacitly acknowledge the problem by promoting boost-phase defenses. Countermeasures are much less of a problem for boost-phase interception than for midcourse interception because, for instance, a decoy would have to have a full-size operational rocket booster. The technical challenge is that the boost phase is only a few minutes long. Therefore, the defense must be deployed close to the attacking missile’s launch site, although obviously it cannot be stationed within the target country’s airspace. For surface- or air-based interceptors or drone-borne lasers, these constraints limit the feasibility of defenses against ICBMs to launches from small countries, such as North Korea. One benefit is that such boost-phase defenses would be much less threatening to land-based ICBMs deep in the interiors of large countries such as Russia or China and therefore would be less likely to trigger an offense-defense competition. Currently, the MDA’s only boost-phase program is an effort to deploy electrically driven lasers on high-altitude drones. Such a system faces many technical challenges and, even if they are overcome, would not be operational until the mid-2020s. Given the urgency of the North Korean threat, an approach that uses small, high-acceleration, high-speed interceptors on drones or ships could provide a boost-phase capability earlier. One notional system would deploy such interceptors on Predator drones based in South Korea. The drones would patrol roughly 100 kilometers off North Korea’s east and west coasts. A preliminary analysis indicates that two such interceptors could be carried on a Predator B drone. If developed as an expedited Defense Department program using existing technologies, such a boost-phase defense could potentially be operational within three years. Its advantages would include reducing political pressures to expand the GMD system, with its counterproductive effects on the future of nuclear arms control with China and Russia. Although North Korea might eventually be able to build faster-burning, solid-fueled boosters that would be more difficult for this boost-phase system to counter, it takes many years to master the technology of large solid-fueled boosters, buying time for diplomacy. It is not as clear that such an alternative system would reduce the demand for SM-3 Block IIA interceptors. Although they could be used to defend U.S. territory, they are justified primarily as defenses against shorter-range missiles aimed at U.S. allies and carrier battle groups. Boost-phase defenses would be less effective against shorter-range missiles because they have shorter boost times. Preventing
deployments of the SM-3 Block IIA interceptor from halting or even reversing progress in reducing nuclear weapons will thus likely require quantitative limits on its deployment. The current political environment would seem to rule out a formal treaty imposing such limits, but a recognition by the United States of the long-term consequences of unlimited SM-3 Block IIA deployments might lead it to some restraint in deployment. Although the SM-3 Block IIA has some significant advantages over the SM-3 Block IB, a mixed force comprised mostly of SM-3 Block IBs would also have advantages, in particular a significantly lower cost that could allow the acquisition of greater numbers of interceptors. If reduced numbers of SM-3 Block IIA interceptors were combined with other measures, such as limits on testing against long-range missiles, it might significantly reduce Russian and Chinese concerns and their responses to deployment. Interceptor speed and testing limits were discussed with Russia during the Clinton administration as a way to deal with Russia’s concerns about U.S. theater missile defenses, and it was agreed that interceptors having a burnout speed of less than three kilometers per second, that is, the speed of the SM-3 Block I interceptors, would be of little concern if they were not tested against targets with the speeds of strategic missiles. The confluence of Iran’s announcement on constraining its missile ranges and the congressional mandate to examine the implications of SM-3 Block IIA interceptor deployments on other countries’ deterrent capabilities may present an opportunity to reconsider its deployment. An important first step would be to reverse the congressional requirement to test the interceptor against an ICBM. The best alternative to continuing on the current trajectory of the U.S. ballistic missile defense program would be a combination of diplomacy and arms control. In the 16 years since President George W. Bush withdrew the country from the ABM Treaty, the United States has spent about $150 billion in today’s dollars on ballistic missile defenses. That expenditure has produced systems susceptible to countermeasures that are within the technological reach of North Korea. It has also revived the arms race with Russia and provoked a Chinese offensive buildup. Perhaps it is time to try something else. The alternative approach that made it possible to end the Cold War nuclear buildup was arms control, starting with the ABM Treaty. Perhaps that would be a good place to start again. In fact, the United States has not moved far from the limits of the ABM Treaty and the 1997 theater missile defense demarcation agreement with Russia. The United States has fewer than 100 long-range interceptors and has not yet begun to deploy theater missile interceptors with burnout speeds greater than three kilometers per second. Perhaps it is not too late.” (George Lewis and Frank von Hippel, “Improving U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense Policy,” Arms Control Today (May 2018), pp. 16-22)

The Blue House said it does not regard China’s participation as being absolutely necessary for its plan to declare the end of the Korean War this year. Even so, it emphasized that China has a major role to play in a peace treaty. The apparent plan for the Korean Peninsula peace process is for the declaration of the end of the war, which is of political significance, to be made by South Korea, North Korea and the US, and for the peace treaty, which is an institutional development, to be signed by those three parties along with China. “Declaring the end of the war is a political declaration about resolving hostile relationships, and it’s worth thinking about whether China needs to be a party to that,” a senior official at the Blue House said in a meeting with reporters on May 2. While China is a belligerent in the Korean War, in other words, it is necessary to consider that China has already resolved its own hostile relationships by establishing diplomatic relations not only with South and North Korea but also with the US. “But a peace treaty means the creation of a legal and institutional instrument, and China would have quite a large role to play since this is not just a matter for South and North Korea or for North Korea and the US,” the official added. The implication is that China’s participation is a necessary condition for making a peace treaty. By clarifying which parties will be involved in declaring the end of the war and signing a peace treaty, the Blue House is apparently seeking to accelerate the timeframe for building a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula in accordance with the Panmunjom Declaration released on April 27. (Seong Yeon-cheol and Noh Ji-won, “Declaring End of the War to Be Done by South and North Korea and U.S., Blue House Says,” Hankyore, May 3, 2018)

North Korea and the United States have confirmed that North Korea will strengthen verification of nuclear facilities and the scrapping of its existing nuclear weapons at the upcoming bilateral summit and are discussing specific approaches of the inspection. North Korea has also expressed
intention to accept special inspections by the IAEA. According to intelligence sources, both countries have utilized unofficial channels to discuss how the verification of denuclearization would take place. “North Korea has been known to tentatively agree to demands for special inspections,” said a key intelligence source. (Jin-Woo Shin and Gi-Jae Han, “North Korea, U.S. Agree to Complete Nuclear Inspections by 2010,” Dong-a Ilbo, May 4, 2018)

President Trump has ordered the Pentagon to prepare options for drawing down American troops in South Korea, just weeks before he holds a landmark meeting with North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-un, according to several people briefed on the deliberations. Reduced troop levels are not intended to be a bargaining chip in Trump’s talks with Kim about his weapons program, these officials said. But they acknowledged that a peace treaty between the two Koreas could diminish the need for the 28,500 soldiers currently stationed on the peninsula. Trump has been determined to withdraw troops from South Korea, arguing that the United States is not adequately compensated for the cost of maintaining them, that the troops are mainly protecting Japan and that decades of American military presence had not prevented the North from becoming a nuclear threat. His latest push coincides with tense negotiations with South Korea over how to share the cost of the military force. Under an agreement that expires at the end of 2018, South Korea pays about half the cost of the upkeep of the soldiers — more than $800 million a year. The Trump administration is demanding that it pay for virtually the entire cost of the military presence. The directive has rattled officials at the Pentagon and other agencies, who worry that any reduction could weaken the American alliance with South Korea and raise fears in neighboring Japan at the very moment that the United States is embarking on a risky nuclear negotiation with the North.

Officials declined to say whether Trump was seeking options for a full or partial reduction of troops, though a full withdrawal was unlikely. They emphasized that rethinking the size and configuration of the American force was overdue, regardless of the sudden flowering of diplomacy with North Korea. But Trump’s meeting with Kim injects an unpredictable new element. His enthusiasm for the encounter — and the prospect of ending a nearly 70-year-old military conflict between the two Koreas — has raised concerns that he may offer troop cuts in return for concessions by Kim. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis added to those concerns April 27 when he suggested that the future of the American military presence might be on the table. “That’s part of the issues that we’ll be discussing in negotiations with our allies first, and of course with North Korea,” he said. “For right now, we just have to go along with process, have the negotiations and not try to make preconditions or presumptions about how it’s going to go.” For Trump, withdrawing troops would have multiple benefits, said Victor D. Cha, a Korea scholar at Georgetown University. It would appeal to his political base, save the United States money and give him a valuable chit in his negotiation with Kim. “But from the perspective of the U.S.-South Korea alliance,” Cha said, “it would represent a major retraction.” Kelly E. Magsamen, a top Asia policy official at the Pentagon during the Obama administration, said, “U.S. presence in South Korea is a sacrosanct part of our alliance.” The South Korean government reiterated this week that the troops were still needed and would not be pulled out as a result of a peace treaty with North Korea. But even close allies of President Moon Jae-in have raised doubts about the rationale for a long-term American presence. “What will happen to U.S. forces in South Korea if a peace treaty is signed?” Moon Chung-in, an adviser to the president, said in a widely read article published this week. “It will be difficult to justify their continuing presence.” Kim recently declared, through South Korean officials, that he would drop the North’s longstanding insistence that American troops leave the peninsula. Some experts argue that watching American soldiers depart is far less important to him than winning relief from economic sanctions. Trump, however, has long argued that America’s military presence is not an asset but a liability — not just in South Korea but in Japan as well. As both countries became wealthy, he said, they should have taken on more of the burden for their defense. During the 2016 presidential campaign, he even suggested that the two nations acquire their own nuclear weapons so they did not have to depend on the American nuclear umbrella. Grudgingly, Trump admitted that the troops had kept the peace on the peninsula. But he said they had not prevented the North from acquiring nuclear weapons or menacing its neighbors. “We’ve got our soldiers sitting there watching missiles go up,” he said in an interview with the New York Times in July 2016. “You say to yourself, ‘Well, what are we getting out of this?’” Over the past year, officials said, Trump has continued to question the need
for troops with aides like his former national security adviser, Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, and his
between the United States and North Korea were high, the president broached the idea of
withdrawing the dependents of troops from South Korea for security reasons. His chief of staff,
John F. Kelly, talked him out of the plan, a former official said, because it would have stoked fears
of an imminent military strike against the North. During that period, tensions flared between the
White House and the Pentagon because Trump’s aides believed the military was dragging its feet
in providing the president with options for a limited strike on North Korea. Now, officials said, the
situation was reversed: The Pentagon worries that Trump will push too swiftly to demilitarize.
(Mark Landler, “U.S. Considers Reducing Force in South Korea,” New York Times, May 4, 2018,
P. A-1) President Trump said that he will not offer to remove U.S. troops from South Korea or
reduce their presence there during his summit with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un.
But Trump left open the possibility of doing so in the future. Speaking to reporters at Joint Base
Andrews, Trump said he was not considering such a move “at this moment” and emphasized that
Pyongyang has not asked the United States to do so. “No, no no,” Trump said, when asked about a
New York Times report that he had instructed the Pentagon to develop options on troop removal.
But Trump added that “at some point in the future, I’d like to save the money” that it costs to base
30,000 troops on the peninsula. Trump said a date and location have been decided for the summit
with Kim, but he declined to disclose those details, saying they would be announced soon. Earlier
Friday, national security adviser John Bolton called the Times report "utter nonsense." “The
President has not asked the Pentagon to provide options for reducing American forces stationed in
South Korea,” Bolton said in a written statement. In his remarks to reporters, Trump said his
administration is in “constant contact” with North Korean leadership. He said that the
administration is having "very substantive talks with North Korea" about three Americans who
have been held hostage in that country. “A lot of things have already happened with regard to the
hostages,” Trump said. “I think you’re going to be seeing very, very good things.” (David
Nakamura, “Trump: U.S. Troop Withdrawal from South Korea Is Not on the Table — for Now,”
Washington Post, May 4, 2018)

During a meeting between White House National Security Advisor John Bolton and Japanese
National Security Advisor Yachi Shotaro, the White House reported, Bolton and Yachi
“reaffirmed the shared goal of achieving the complete and permanent dismantlement of North
Korea’s weapons of mass destruction, including all nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, biological
and chemical weapons, and related programs.” This shows that the US is expanding the scope of
denuclearization to include weapons of mass destruction. Some observers think that the issue of
Japanese abducted by North Korea might also be added to the agenda. On May 5, the US also
reconfirmed that North Korea’s launches of satellites using ballistic missile technology violated
resolutions by the UN Security Council. This implies that satellite launches are part of the halt on
nuclear tests and intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test launches approved during a plenary
session of the North Korean Workers’ Party (KWP) on March 20 20. The North has long argued
that its satellite launches cannot be subject to sanctions because they are part of its peaceful space
program. (Yoo Kang-moon, Noh Ji-won and Seong Yeon-cheol, “North Korea and U.S. Locked in
Tug-of-War over Summit Agenda,” Hankyore, May 8, 2018)

Ignatius: “President Trump deserves credit for seizing the moment for negotiations with North
Korea. But some little-noticed documents reveal that Kim Jong Un has been planning his
denuclearization offer and opening to the United States for the past five years. ...It’s a complicated
story, but it appears that Kim has been the main driver. He has relentlessly pursued a dual strategy:
to obtain a usable nuclear weapon, and then pivot toward dialogue and modernization of his
economy. He sought his nuclear deterrent with almost reckless determination, but he has been
surprisingly nimble in making the turn toward diplomacy. Would Kim have moved toward
negotiations regardless of who was president? We’ll never know. But there’s no denying that
Trump’s confrontational approach created an opportunity for crisis diplomacy — and that he was
bold enough to embrace Kim’s offer of direct talks. The North Korean documents were
highlighted for me by Robert Carlin, a former CIA and State Department analyst who has visited
the North more than 30 times since 1996. He retired from the government in 2004 and has since
worked at Stanford University. In our many conversations over the past year, Carlin has been consistently accurate in predicting what Kim would do. Kim first outlined his dual approach, known as the “byungjin line,” in a speech at a Korean Workers’ Party meeting in March 2013, two years after taking power. He said that North Korea wanted to strengthen its nuclear weapons capability but also improve its backward and impoverished economy. The United States didn’t pay much attention, because Kim also said he wasn’t prepared to discuss denuclearization. But that soon changed. Kim’s regime explicitly put denuclearization on the table in a June 16, 2013, statement by the National Defense Commission (NDC). Though the statement had the usual rhetoric, calling the United States a “war arsonist” at one point, it also included this remarkable language: “The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is the behest of our leader” and “must be carried out . . . without fail.” The statement also urged “high-level talks between the DPRK [North Korea] and the U.S. authorities to...establish peace and security in the region.” Reinforcing the message, a North Korean official privately told American contacts a few weeks later that “underpinning the new policy articulated in the NDC statement was Kim Jong Un’s personal, positive stance toward improving relations with the United States,” according to an unclassified summary of the conversation. North Korea amplified the denuclearization message in a July 6, 2016, statement by a government spokesman that sought to anchor this policy as part of the dynastic legacy of Kim’s father and grandfather. “The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is the behest of the Great Leader [Kim Il Sung] and the Fatherly General [Kim Jong Il] and the steadfast will of our party, army and people,” the statement said. Despite the talk of denuclearization, Kim’s regime drove defiantly toward the nuclear weapons capability that the statements claimed he was ready to give up. This push culminated in a series of nuclear and missile tests last year, after Trump became president. Despite Trump’s bellicose threats, the North Koreans kept testing. Late last year, Kim declared, in effect, “mission accomplished.” After a missile launch on November 29, he proclaimed “with pride that now we have finally realized the great historic cause of completing the state nuclear force.” On New Year’s Day came the pivot. Kim said that although “the nuclear button is on my office desk all the time,” and that his missiles could target all of America, he now wanted to stress “the building of a prosperous country” and a diplomatic outreach to South Korea. Kim proposed that North Korea attend the Pyeongchang Olympics to “ease the acute military tension” and “create a peaceful environment on the Korean Peninsula.” From that proposal flowed the extraordinary chain of meetings, confidence-building measures and public promises about denuclearization — and the pathway to the expected Trump-Kim summit. Last month, Kim said at a Workers’ Party plenum that the byungjin line had triumphed and that he was shifting to a “new strategic line” devoted to boosting the economy. Kim is like an illusionist who tells you what trick he’s going to do, and then does it before your eyes, daring you to guess the secret. Trump sees himself as a clever, confrontational dealmaker, but he may have met his match with the kid from Pyongyang.” (David Ignatius, “Should Kim Get Credit for the Thaw?” Washington Post, May 6, 2018, p. A-23)

DPRK FoMin spokesman’s answer to a question put by KCNA “as regards the U.S. increased pressure against the DPRK: Recently, the U.S. is misleading the public opinion, arguing as if the DPRK’s clarification of its intention for denuclearization of the Korean peninsula made through the Panmunjom Declaration adopted at the historic north-south summit is the result of so-called sanctions and pressure. At the same time, it is making open remarks that it would not ease the sanctions and pressure until the DPRK gives up its nuclear weapons completely and also moving to aggravate the situation on the Korean peninsula by deploying strategic assets on the peninsula and increasing its attempt of taking up "human rights" issue against the DPRK. The U.S. is deliberately provoking the DPRK at the time when the situation on the Korean peninsula is moving toward peace and reconciliation thanks to the historic north-south summit and the Panmunjom Declaration. This act cannot be construed otherwise than a dangerous attempt to ruin the hardly-won atmosphere of dialogue and bring the situation back to square one. It would not be conducive to addressing the issue if the U.S. miscalculates the peace-loving intention of the DPRK as a sign of "weakness" and continues to pursue its pressure and military threats against the latter.” (KCNA, “DPRK FM Spokesman Flays U.S. Increased Pressure on DPRK,” May 6, 2018)
As he weighs opening nuclear disarmament negotiations with North Korea, President Trump faces a regime that for decades has hidden key elements of its nuclear programs from international monitors and has banned inspectors from the country. As a result, the first step in any meaningful agreement would be a declaration from North Korea about the scope of its nuclear program, a declaration that no one would believe. It would have to be followed by what experts call the most extensive inspection campaign in the history of nuclear disarmament, one that would have to delve into a program that stretches back more than half a century and now covers square miles of industrial sites and hidden tunnels across the mountainous North. And it might demand more than the 300 inspectors the International Atomic Energy Agency now deploys to assess the nuclear facilities of nearly 200 countries. For Trump, getting the right declaration and inspection process is critical given his argument that false declarations from Iran undercut the legitimacy of the 2015 nuclear accord, which he is debating pulling out of later this week. “North Korea could make Iran look easy,” Ernest J. Moniz, the former Energy Department secretary and nuclear scientist who negotiated many details of the 2015 deal during the Obama administration, said last week. “This isn’t ‘Trust, but verify,’” he said, using President Ronald Reagan’s phrase from arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union. “It’s ‘Distrust everything and verify, verify, verify.’” Success with a relatively small force of inspectors in North Korea, according to former weapons inspectors, depends on the full cooperation of its leader, Kim Jong-un, in opening up the vast nuclear enterprise he inherited from his father and grandfather. Four years ago, the RAND Corporation estimated that finding and securing the North’s weapons of mass destruction if the nation fell apart — or into any situation in which it might be hostile to inspection — put the American force requirements at 73,000 troops in a situation where it was unclear how they would be received, or up to 273,000 if there was active resistance. That is far more than the peak of the American occupying force in Iraq. The study, conducted for the United States Army, imagined the North’s collapse and a military rush to secure and remove its weapons of mass destruction. The troop estimates were driven by the need to secure the nuclear sites, though the study also looked at North Korea’s chemical and biological arms, as well as long-range missiles. In addition, the study took into account a wide range of expected opposition and hostility from North Korea’s military. Currently, the United States keeps about 28,000 troops in South Korea. Like Iran, North Korea would have to begin any denuclearization pact with a comprehensive listing of all its atomic sites, factories and weapons — which American intelligence agencies would immediately compare with their own estimates. Everyone agrees that such a program of disarmament would involve the North’s surrendering its nuclear arms. But American intelligence agencies have vastly differing estimates of the size of the arsenal, be it the C.I.A.’s assessment of around 20 nuclear weapons or the Defense Intelligence Agency’s estimate of about 60. That means it is possible that inspectors would never know for sure if they had found everything. So far, the Trump administration has not said whether North Korea would have to dismantle most or all of its nuclear-fuel production facilities, which are believed to be much more numerous than Iran’s. Nor is it clear whether the North would have to give up its missiles. North Korea is also believed to possess large stores of germ weapons and nerve gas, like the kind used to assassinate Kim’s half-brother in an attack last year in Malaysia. But it is the sprawling nuclear complex that poses the largest problem. Inspectors at the I.A.E.A. are not trained to recognize or handle nuclear weapons; they are basically forensic accountants, keeping track of uranium and plutonium flows through factories and of equipment that can be used to produce nuclear fuel. Ridding the North of its warheads would require military specialists from the Western nuclear states — including “render safe” teams trained to prevent arms from detonating — as well as possible agreements with China or Russia to take the weapons. Even so, the agency would probably be overwhelmed. Last year, Tero Varjoranta, the chief inspector of the Vienna-based agency, told nuclear experts that piercing North Korea’s secretive maze would “require novel and modified monitoring and verification approaches to be developed, and probably implemented, at short notice in a very challenging environment.” The agency now monitors the nuclear activities of 180 nations with a corps of some 300 inspectors, including the 80 assigned to its Iran Task Force. Western experts put the North’s total number of nuclear sites — including its main atomic center at Yongbyon, its mountain testing complex and a number of clandestine labs and facilities — at 40 to 100, according to the RAND report. Iran, by contrast, has about a dozen significant sites and never developed nuclear weapons. Nor did Iraq. That is just one metric to explain why the denuclearization of North Korea
The leaders of China and North Korea met for the second time in two months, staying overnight in Dalian as China worked to regain control in the fast-moving diplomacy over the North’s nuclear program. Kim Jong-un flew to Dalian yesterday, where he held long rounds of discussions with Chinese officials, attended a formal banquet, and took a stroll on a beachfront sidewalk with China’s president, Xi Jinping. The pageantry was shown at length on China’s state-run evening television news, with the two men looking like friends, if rather stiff ones. The Chinese leader appeared intent on showing that the frayed relationship with North Korea was now repaired, and that China was as important to resolving the problems of North Korea’s nuclear weapons as the United States. A Chinese statement, issued on behalf of both leaders after Kim left, showed the differences between the Trump administration on the one hand, and China and North Korea on the other, over the question of how to rid the North of its nuclear weapons. It envisioned a far more drawn-out process for the denuclearization of North Korea than the demands of the Trump administration, which has talked about dismantling the North’s arsenal in six months to a year. Kim wanted “phased and synchronous measures in a responsible manner” and hoped to “eventually achieve denuclearization and lasting peace on the peninsula,” the Chinese statement said. The statement said Kim expressed his “gratitude to China for its longstanding and significant contribution in realizing denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula,” phrasing that seemed to extol China’s role in hosting talks among six countries on North Korea’s nuclear weapons in the mid-2000s. Those talks fell apart, and the Trump administration has been scathing about them. Kim told the Chinese that he wanted to develop his economy, a move that China said it supported. Chinese analysts speculated that Kim asked Xi for relief from the rounds of tough sanctions for which China grudgingly voted last year, at the urging of the United States. Those sanctions have drained the North’s foreign-exchange reserves. Xi was joined in the talks by Wang Huning, one of his close aides, as well as others from the Communist Party hierarchy, and Kim brought a large retinue of officials, including his foreign minister, Ri Yong-ho. Xi was expected to wait to go to the North Korean capital until after Trump’s summit with Kim. But under that schedule, Xi would have not seen Kim again until the end of June or July. It is without modern precedent for a leader to come to China on back-to-back visits as Kim has done, Cheng Xiaohe said. “This second meeting demonstrated that North Korea wanted China to play a larger role in the denuclearization process,” said Cheng, a professor at Renmin University. “When Kim enters the meeting with
Trump, he will feel more confident, simply his positions on a variety of issues were consulted and sanctioned by the Chinese leader.” But some Chinese analysts said the warmth between the two leaders on display in Dalian — they sat for a while in wicker arm chairs on a bucolic outdoor terrace — should not be overstated. “North Korea was never a vassal state,” said Shi Yinhong, also a professor at Renmin University. It is even less of one now that the United States has agreed to deal with Kim, he said. Like Kim’s visit to Beijing in March, his visit to Dalian was kept under wraps. But early this afternoon, Kyodo reported that a plane from the North Korean carrier Air Koryo was at Dalian’s airport. Security at the airport was tight, with flights canceled between 1:30 p.m. and 4 p.m. Chinese officials will be heading to Tokyo for meetings tomorrow with South Korean and Japanese counterparts as part of the recent burst of diplomacy over North Korea. Japan, the host of the talks, has been pushing the United States to continue a tough line against Pyongyang. North Korean state news media today criticized Japan for continuing to support tough sanctions against the North, with Rodong Sinmun, calling it “tantamount to throwing cold water over easing tensions on the Korean Peninsula.” But President Moon jae-in urged Japan to consider normalizing ties with North Korea. “I think dialogue between Japan and North Korea should be resumed,” Moon said in an interview with Yomiuri Shimbun. “If Japan-North Korea relations are normalized, that would greatly contribute to peace and security in Northeast Asia beyond the Korean Peninsula,” he said in written answers to questions submitted by the newspaper. (Jane Perlez, “Ignoring Protocol, Kim Travels to China Again,” New York Times, May 9, 2018, p. A-6)

KCNA: “Kim Jong Un, chairman of the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK) and chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, visited Dalian City of China from May 7 to 8 to meet again Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and president of the People’s Republic of China. The meaningful meeting and talks between the supreme leaders of the two countries took place in Dalian City, Liaoning Province, China. Kim Jong Un left Pyongyang by plane for his personal use on the morning of May 7. He was accompanied by Ri Su Yong and Kim Yong Chol, members of the Political Bureau of the C.C., WPK and vice-chairmen of the C.C., WPK, Ri Yong Ho, member of the Political Bureau of the C.C., WPK and foreign minister, Kim Yo Jong, alternate member of the Political Bureau of the C.C., WPK and first vice department director of the C.C., WPK, Choe Son Hui, vice-minister of Foreign Affairs; and members of the C.C., WPK and the State Affairs Commission of the DPRK. Wang Huning, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the C.C., CPC and member of the Secretariat of the C.C., CPC, Wang Yi, state councilor and foreign minister, Song Tao, head of the International Liaison Department of the C.C., CPC, Chen Qifan, secretary of the Liaooning Provincial Committee of the CPC, and Tan Zuojun, secretary of the Dalian City Committee of the CPC, were present at Dalian International Airport to greet him. At noon of local time the plane landed at the airport. Kim Jong Un alighted from the plane to shake hands with those officials and exchanged kind greetings. A woman presented a bunch of flowers to him and offered him greetings. He expressed thanks and got on his car to head for Bangchuidao Guesthouse. When he arrived at the guesthouse, its employees warmly greeted him. There took place a meeting and talks between Kim Jong Un and Xi Jinping in the afternoon. Xi Jinping came to Dalian and kindly greeted Kim Jong Un. Kim Jong Un had a warm and emotional meeting with Xi Jinping and had a souvenir photo taken with him. The top leaders of the two countries exchanged warm salute, pleased to meet again after the lapse of over one month. Then there took place talks between Kim Jong Un and Xi Jinping. Present at the talks from the DPRK side were Ri Su Yong and Kim Yong Chol, members of the Political Bureau of the WPK Central Committee and vice-chairmen of the C.C., WPK, and Ri Yong Ho, member of the Political Bureau of the C.C., WPK and foreign minister. Present from the Chinese side were Wang Huning, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and member of the CPC Central Committee Secretariat, Ding Xuexiang, member of the Political Bureau of the C.C., CPC, member of the Secretariat of the C.C., CPC and director of the General Office of the C.C., CPC, Yang Jiechi, member of the Political Bureau of the C.C., CPC and director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the C.C., CPC, Wang Yi, state councilor and foreign minister, and Song Tao, head of the International Liaison Department of the C.C., CPC. At the talks the two sides informed each other of the assessment and views on the recent trend and the development of the situation on the Korean peninsula on which
global highlights are focused, and of the political and economic conditions of each country and stressed the need to more wonderfully promote the DPRK-China friendly and cooperative relations. And they had an in-depth exchange of views on the way to tackle the crucial issues of mutual concern. Kim Jong Un expressed his thanks to Xi Jinping for sparing time to come to Dalian and warmly greet him and providing the best convenience with utmost sincerity despite his tight political schedule. He said he was very pleased that the DPRK-China relations have recently greeted a fresh heyday and are undergoing further development. He, in particular, highly appreciated that the close high-level visits between the two parties and the two countries and the strategic communication between the supreme leaderships of the DPRK and China are underway on an unprecedented level. In those days the DPRK and China have become all the more close and inseparable in their inner feelings, he said, hoping to expand the friendly visits between the two countries and keep the close contacts in a flexible and diverse manner in the future, too. He analyzed and estimated the development of the situation around the Korean peninsula undergoing profound changes and mentioned the ways to more actively and closely boost the tactical cooperation between the DPRK and China by using the strategic opportunity. He expressed gratitude to the Chinese comrades, saying that their firm support and encouragement and comradely cooperation greatly encourage the party and people of the DPRK. Xi Jinping said that Kim Jong Un's visit showed the sincere willingness to set much store by the relations between the two parties and the two countries, trust him and the Chinese party and put into practice the consensus reached between them, and spoke highly of it. Expressing his pleasure over the positive developments being made in the China-DPRK relations and in the situation of the Korean peninsula after Kim Jong Un's first visit to China in March last, he expressed thanks once again to Kim Jong Un for personally visiting China again to promote and coordinate the mutual understanding of the two parties and the two countries. Saying that the two countries of China and the DPRK are the community of the same destiny and their relations are the invariable ones of lips and teeth, he said that it is the firm stand and the only correct option for the two parties and governments to consolidate and develop the China-DPRK relations no matter how frequently the situation changes. Hailing the new strategic line set forth by the Workers' Party of Korea on channeling all efforts on the socialist economic construction at the Third Plenary Meeting of the 7th WPK Central Committee, he expressed the conviction that the cause of socialist construction in the DPRK would surely emerge victorious under the leadership of Kim Jong Un. He highly appreciated the crucial decision and measures recently taken by Kim Jong Un and reiterated full support for them, saying that China, as a friendly neighbor, is making consistent efforts for regional peace and stability, paying deep attention to the development and change in the situation of the Korean peninsula. The talks proceeded in a frank, trusty and friendly atmosphere. Xi Jinping hosted a grand banquet in welcome of Kim Jong Un's visit to China. Present there on invitation were Ri Su Yong and Kim Yong Chol, members of the Political Bureau and vice-chairmen of the WPK Central Committee, Ri Yong Ho, member of the Political Bureau of the WPK Central Committee and foreign minister, Kim Yo Jong, alternate member of the Political Bureau and first vice department director of the WPK Central Committee, and other senior officials and suite members. Present were Wang Huning, member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau and member of the CPC Central Committee Secretariat, Ding Xuexiang, member of the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau, member of the CPC Central Committee Secretariat and director of the CPC Central Committee General Office, Yang Jiechi, member of the Political Bureau of the C.C., CPC and director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the C.C., CPC, Wang Yi, state councilor and foreign minister, Song Tao, head of the International Liaison Department of the CPC Central Committee, and other senior officials of the Chinese party and government. When Kim Jong Un and Xi Jinping entered the banquet hall, all the participants enthusiastically welcomed them, extending the highest tribute to the top leaders of the two parties and the two countries opening up a new phase of the great DPRK-China friendship. Xi Jinping made a congratulatory speech first. He warmly welcomed Kim Jong Un who visited China again in a beautiful time enlivened with fresh and stirring spirit on behalf of the Chinese party, government and people and on his own behalf. The visit paid by Kim Jong Un fully showed the fact that he and the Korean Party Central Committee highly value the China-DPRK relations, the strategic communication between the two parties, in particular, and the firm will to implement the important joint agreement reached between the two sides, he
said, stressing that this demonstrated once again the traditional and solid China-DPRK friendship to the whole world and will certainly have important impact on the China-DPRK relations and the situation of the Korean peninsula. Xi Jinping said that he, together with the Korean comrades, would continue to implement well the important agreement between the two sides, strengthen the strategic communication, expand exchanges and cooperation, give full play to the tradition of friendship and thus promote the fresh and greater development of the China-DPRK relations, provide happiness to the two countries and the two peoples and make active contributions to the regional peace, stability and prosperity. He continued to say that he is convinced that the Korean party and people would steadily achieve fresh and greater successes in the great course of socialist construction under the wise guidance of Chairman Kim Jong Un, and wishes for it. Kim Jong Un made a reply speech. Expressing great pleasure over the fact that he again had a significant meeting with Xi Jinping and the friendly Chinese comrades in a little more than 40 days and exchanged their inmost feelings, he expressed his most heartfelt thanks to the warm and cordial hospitality and warm-hearted concern shown by the Chinese Party Central Committee. Dalian is where President Kim Il Sung and leader Kim Jong Il left their historic footprints that would remain forever in the annals of the DPRK-China friendship, he said, adding that the deep comradely confidence and obligation between the leaders of the two countries have been invariably carried forward century after century and generation after generation as the roots of bloody bonds that have linked the peoples of the two countries by the inseparable destiny. Noting that he feels again the pride and self-confidence of having such a great neighbor as China and such dependable and true friends as Chinese comrades, he said that he would advance hand in hand with the close Chinese comrades in the long historic course of achieving peace and prosperity in the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia and building a fair and just new world in the future.

Kim Jong Un sincerely hoped that the Chinese people would certainly bring into a brilliant reality the dream of China unfolded by Xi Jinping and thus fully demonstrate the might and stamina of the Chinese nation all over the world. Amicable atmosphere pervaded the banquet hall where officials of the two countries shared with each other warm and sincere feelings and the pleasure of meeting just like the same family members, beyond the diplomatic etiquette and ceremony. On Tuesday morning Kim Jong Un again met with Xi Jinping and talked without reserve while strolling the seaside. Then Kim Jong Un was invited to a luncheon hosted by Xi Jinping at Qingdao Pavilion of Bangchuidao Guesthouse. Before the luncheon Kim Jong Un and Xi Jinping appreciated the skills showing the tea culture and had an important talk. The luncheon helped further deepen the particular comradely intimacy between the top leaders of the two parties and the two countries. After the luncheon, Kim Jong Un expressed once again the gratitude to Xi Jinping for according particular hospitality with utmost sincerity during his stay in China and for expressing sincere and valuable opinions on the crucial work, and shook hands with him before parting. Some suite members visited Dalian Donggang Downtown and Hualu Group of China that day. Kim Jong Un wound up his schedule on Tuesday afternoon and left Dalian by his plane. He was seen off at Dalian International Airport by Wang Huning, member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau and member of the CPC Central Committee Secretariat, Song Tao, head of the International Liaison Department of the CPC Central Committee, Chen Qiufa, secretary of the Liaoning Provincial Committee of the CPC, and Tan Zuojun, secretary of the Dalian City Committee of the CPC. Kim Jong Un sent a letter of thanks to Xi Jinping on his way home.” (KCNA, “Kim Jong Un Meets Xi Jinping Again,” May 8, 2018)

Xinhua: “Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and Chinese president, met Kim Jong Un, chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) and chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), in Dalian, northeast China's Liaoning Province, on May 7-8. Wang Huning, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and member of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee, attended related activities. Dalian sees lush mountains, blue seas and drifting clouds in May. Xi held talks with Kim and hosted a welcome banquet for him. Together, they also took a stroll and attended a luncheon. In a cordial and friendly atmosphere, the top leaders of the two parties and the two countries had an all-round and in-depth exchange of views on China-DPRK relations and major issues of common concern.

Comrade Chairman made a special trip to China to meet me again just after 40-odd days, Xi said, at a
crucial time when the Korean Peninsula situation is undergoing profound and complex changes. This embodies the great importance that Comrade Chairman and the WPK Central Committee have attached to the relations between the two parties and the two countries, and to their strategic communication. "I speak highly of it," Xi said. "After the first meeting between me and Comrade Chairman, both China-DPRK relations and the Korean Peninsula situation have made positive progress. I feel happy about it," he said. Xi said he was willing to meet Kim again to make joint efforts to push the healthy and stable development of China-DPRK relations, realize long-lasting peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, and promote regional peace, stability and prosperity. For his part, Kim said both the DPRK-China friendship and the Korean Peninsula situation have undergone meaningful progress since March this year. "These are the positive outcomes of the historic meeting between me and Comrade General Secretary," he said. At a crucial time when the regional situation is developing rapidly, Kim said he came to China again to meet with General Secretary and inform him of the situation, hoping to strengthen strategic communication and cooperation with China, deepen DPRK-China friendship, and promote regional peace and stability. Xi stressed that he and Kim held their historic first meeting in Beijing in March this year, during which they had a long and in-depth communication, and reached principled consensus in four aspects on developing China-DPRK relations in the new era. Firstly, the China-DPRK traditional friendship has been a treasure of both countries. It is an unserving principle and the only correct choice for both countries to develop the friendly and cooperative China-DPRK relations. Secondly, both China and the DPRK are socialist countries, and their bilateral relations are of major strategic significance. Both sides need to enhance unity, cooperation, exchanges and mutual learning. Thirdly, high-level exchanges between the two parties play an irreplaceably significant role in guiding bilateral relations, Xi said. The two sides should maintain frequent exchanges, strengthen strategic communication, deepen understanding and mutual trust, and safeguard common interests. Fourthly, cementing the people-to-people friendship foundation is an important channel to advance the development of China-DPRK relations, Xi said. The two sides should, by multiple means, enhance people-to-people communication and exchanges to create a sound foundation of popular will for the advancement of China-DPRK relations. Xi said that with concerted efforts of both sides, all of these consensuses are being well implemented. Within a period of more than one month, he and Kim met twice and they have been keeping in close contact, Xi said. He said that he is willing to work together with Kim to continue to guide relevant departments of the two sides to soundly implement the consensuses they have reached, promote the continuous advancement of China-DPRK relations, benefit the two countries and two peoples, and make positive contributions to the peace and stability of the region. Xi also extended sincere gratitude to Kim for his great attention and earnest attitude demonstrated after a major road accident in the DPRK which resulted in casualties of the two countries' citizens.” (Xinhua, “Xi Jinping, Kim Jong Un Hold Talks in Dalian,” March 8, 2018)

KCNA: “Kim Jong Un, chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea and chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Wednesday met Mike Pompeo, secretary of State of the United States of America who is on a visit to the DPRK. The respected Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un warmly greeted Mike Pompeo and sincerely congratulated him on his recent official assumption as secretary of State. He welcomed the U.S. state secretary's visit to the DPRK and had a photo session with him. Mike Pompeo expressed thanks to Kim Jong Un for sparing time to meet him, saying that he came to the DPRK to personally convey the verbal message of the U.S. president and prepare the DPRK-U.S. summit. Then he conveyed Kim Jong Un the verbal message of Donald Trump, president of the U.S.A. After hearing the verbal message, Kim Jong Un expressed thanks, highly appreciating that the U.S. president has shown deep interest in settling the issue through dialogue. He exchanged with Mike Pompeo the appraisal and view on the acute situation of the Korean peninsula, which is now a pressing matter of the whole world's concern, and the stance and opinions of the supreme leaderships of the DPRK and the U.S. on their summit. He said that the coming DPRK-U.S. summit would be a historic meeting for the excellent first step toward promotion of the positive situation development in the Korean peninsula and building of a good future. At the meeting, an in-depth discussion was made on the practical matters for holding the DPRK-U.S. summit and its procedure and ways. Kim Jong Un reached a satisfactory consensus on the issues discussed with
the U.S. state secretary. He accepted an official suggestion of the U.S. president for the release of Americans who have been detained in the DPRK for their anti-DPRK hostilities, and gave an order of the chairman of the DPRK State Affairs Commission on granting amnesty to them for their repatriation. He gave a high appreciation of the talks with Mike Pompeo that produced satisfactory results. Mike Pompeo expressed thanks to Kim Jong Un, saying that they are heartily grateful to him for the cordial hospitality accorded to them during their visit to Pyongyang and for the very beneficial talks which reached a full agreement. And he showed his resolution and will to strive for the successful DPRK-U.S. summit as the U.S. secretary of State. The respected Supreme Leader exchanged parting words with Mike Pompeo and saw him off, promising to meet again. (KCNA, “Kim Jong Un Meets U.S. Secretary of State,” May 10, 2018)

If North Korea gives up its nuclear weapons, the country can “have all the opportunities your people so richly deserve,” Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told senior North Korean officials upon his arrival in Pyongyang Wednesday. Pompeo is in the North Korean capital to discuss the details for the proposed summit between leader Kim Jong Un and President Trump and to try to secure the release of three American men detained here for more than a year. “For decades, we have been adversaries,” Pompeo told Kim Yong Chol, a man sanctioned by the United States for his involvement with the North’s nuclear program but who has emerged as one of the regime’s key interlocutors to the outside world. “Now we are hopeful that we can work together to resolve this conflict, take away threats to the world and make your country have all the opportunities your people so richly deserve,” Pompeo said before lunch at the Koryo Hotel, a large, double-towered building in central Pyongyang. “There are many challenges along the way. But you have been a great partner in working to make sure our two leaders will have a summit that is successful,” the new secretary of state said. When Pompeo touched down in Pyongyang shortly before 8 a.m. local time, he was greeted by Kim Yong Chol, a former North Korean intelligence chief, and Ri Su Yong, the influential former foreign minister. Ri is close to Kim Jong Un, having served as ambassador to Switzerland while the young leader attended school there. Kim Yong Chol, who is in charge of relations with South Korea, and Ri, responsible for international relations, had just returned from the northeastern Chinese city of Dalian, where Kim Jong Un held talks with Chinese president Xi Jinping, their second meeting in to China in only 40 days. Both also attended the inter-Korean summit with South Korean president Moon Jae-in late last month. On the way to North Korea, Pompeo said he did not know if he would see Kim Jong Un, whom he met several times during a secret trip to Pyongyang over Easter weekend to start preparing for the proposed summit. If it takes place, it will be the first time a sitting American president and a leader of North Korea have met. Pompeo and Kim Jong Chol met behind closed doors at the Koryo Hotel for about an hour this morning, before lunch in a 39th floor function complete with poached fish and duck, and red wine. Kim Yong Chol was in an effusive mood, telling Pompeo and the dozen or so staffers traveling with him that this was a good time to be in Pyongyang because it was spring time and a good atmosphere had been established between North and South. This echoed remarks that both Korean leaders had been making about a new spring arriving on the peninsula. “So everything is going well in Pyongyang now,” he said, adding that from now on, North Korea would be concentrating all its efforts “into the economic progress of our country.” “This is not a result of sanctions that have been imposed from outside,” Kim Yong Chol told Pompeo, contradicting the administration’s line that Trump’s “maximum pressure” approach had brought North Korea to the negotiating table. “I hope the United States also will be happy with our success. I have high expectations the U.S. will play a very big role in establishing peace on the Korean Peninsula,” he said. Then he toasted Pompeo. Pompeo stood and said the American delegation was “equally committed to working with you to achieve exactly” that. Before the summit, a South Korean official said that the presidential Blue House expected Pompeo to finalize the date and location for the summit between Kim Jong Un and Trump, expected to be held within the next month or so. Pompeo was also expected to secure the release of the three Americans detained in North Korea. “We expect him to bring the date, time and the captives,” a South Korean official told reporters in Tokyo. All three have been treated as “prisoners of war” and have not been seen since June, when a State Department official was allowed a brief visit with them while collecting Otto Warmbier, the detained college student who fell into a coma in North Korea and died shortly after his return to the United States. (Carol Morello, David Nakamura and Anna
Fifield, “In His Second Week, Pompeo Again Slips into North Korea,” Washington Post, May 9, 2018, p. A-14) Three American men who had been imprisoned by North Korea are on their way to the United States, President Trump announced after they were released to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo during his visit to Pyongyang. They were freed after Pompeo met for 90 minutes with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on his second trip to Pyongyang ahead of a planned summit between Trump and Kim that could happen by next month. Trump hailed their release in a tweet after Pompeo had left the country with the three Americans aboard his U.S. government plane. The secretary is “in the air and on his way back from North Korea with the 3 wonderful gentlemen that everyone is looking so forward to meeting,” Trump wrote. “They seem to be in good health.” White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said in a statement that Trump “appreciates leaders Kim Jong Un’s action” and views it as “a positive gesture of goodwill.” She said all three Americans, Kim Dong-chul, Tony Kim and Kim Hak-song, boarded the plane without assistance. Pompeo told reporters traveling with him that the three were given a quick medical exam by a physician who was accompanying the secretary and that their health “is as good as could be, given what they’ve been through.” He said they would be transferred to another plane, apparently at Yokota Air Base in Japan that is better equipped to handle medical needs. Trump indicated in another tweet that Pompeo and the three Americans are expected to land at Joint Base Andrews outside Washington at 2 a.m. Thursday Eastern time, although it was not clear if they would be coming in separate planes. Trump said he would be on hand to greet them, calling it: “Very exciting!” The three men were turned over to U.S. custody after Pompeo’s meeting with Kim. According to a U.S. official who briefed reporters in Pyongyang, a North Korean official came to the Koryo Hotel to inform Pompeo that Kim had granted the three men “amnesty” on charges of espionage and hostile acts against the government — charges that U.S. officials have said were bogus. Carl Risch, assistant secretary of state for consular affairs, and a U.S. doctor then went to another hotel to pick them up and brought them to the airport, according to a senior U.S. official present for the exchange. “We’re granting amnesty to the three detained Americans,” the official quoted the North Korean emissary as telling Pompeo. “We issued the order to grant immediate amnesty to the detainees.” “You should make care that they do not make the same mistakes again,” the North Korean added, according to the U.S. official. “This was a hard decision.” The two American reporters traveling with Pompeo, including one from the Washington Post, spotted the three released Americans walking from a van onto Pompeo’s plane, where they were seated near medical personnel. The release of the men coincided with additional discussions between the Trump administration and the Kim regime in preparation for the historic summit, which would be the first between a sitting U.S. president and a North Korean leader. Trump had been criticized by some foreign policy analysts for agreeing to the meeting without publicly demanding the release of the Americans as a prerequisite. But their freedom has offered Trump new momentum in his high-stakes diplomatic gambit aimed at curtailing North Korea’s nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs. An administration official said the two sides made “substantial progress” on summit planning and agreed to meet again before the leaders’ meeting. Trump has said officials have worked out a time and location for the meeting, but he has not disclosed details. The longest-held prisoner was Kim Dong-chul, a 64-year-old who once lived in Fairfax, Va., and was arrested in October 2015. He had been based in the Chinese city of Yanji, near the border with North Korea, and traveled back and forth to the special economic zone of Rajin-Sonbong, where he managed a hotel business. But on his last visit, he was accused of spying for South Korea’s intelligence agencies, seeking to obtain details of the North’s military programs and trying to spread “religious” ideas — a serious crime in the North. He was sentenced in April 2016 to 10 years in prison after a sham trial. Then, a year ago, two men associated with the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology, or PUST, a private institution run by Korean American Christians, were detained. Tony Kim, a 59-year-old accountant, had made at least seven trips to Pyongyang, usually for a month at a time, to teach international finance and management to students at PUST, his son Sol Kim said in an interview. He was stopped at Pyongyang’s airport in April 2017 and arrested for “committing criminal acts of hostility aimed to overturn” North Korea. Two weeks later, Kim Hak-song, an agricultural consultant who was also living in Yanji and working at PUST, was detained. He was also arrested on suspicion of “hostile acts” against North Korea, the official Korean Central News Agency said. Kim Dong-chul and Tony Kim were both born in South Korea, while Kim Hak-song is believed to have been born in China.

Pompeo: “So we had a good day in the sense that I had a good and lengthy conversation with Chairman Kim in preparation for the President’s summit. The – we are locked in on the date. We are locked in on the time. We’re not quite ready to announce either of those just yet, but in relatively short order – we hope in the next handful of days – we’ll be able to announce the location and the date and time. But now that part is behind us for sure, and we had a chance to talk substantively about what we intend to be on the agenda, and also how we’re going to begin to coordinate in the days ahead between now and the summit in a way that we – both sides are confident that we will set the conditions for a successful meeting between the two leaders. We have the three Americans on the plane, which is incredibly exciting. They seem to be in good health. The doctors are with them now, but all indications are at this point that their health is as good as could be given that they’ve been held. They all walked up the stairs themselves, with their own power, so good enough to do that. And we’ll have a – hopefully in the next couple of hours a more complete readout of their complete conditions. … Q: Can you say what you think in terms – pushed Kim towards making this decision on the Americans? POMPEO: Yeah, I don’t know. I think – I think that Chairman Kim is trying to set good conditions for the summit, right. I think we’re – I think we are having good conversations, productive conversations. And so I think the work that President Trump has done to put us in this place made this possible.” (DoS, Remarks by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Plane at Yokota Air Base, Japan, May 9, 2018)

The leaders of Japan, China and South Korea agreed to work together toward the complete denuclearization of North Korea as the world looks ahead to the first-ever U.S.-North Korea summit in the coming weeks. "We have to build on the momentum toward the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and peace and stability in Northeast Asia, and ensure North Korea takes concrete actions," Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo said in a press conference after the trilateral summit. The talks involving Abe, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and South Korean President Moon Jae In were held in Tokyo's Akasaka Palace state guesthouse. Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Nishimura Yasutoshi told reporters the three countries agreed to further cooperate so that the North will abandon its weapons of mass destruction, including its nuclear arsenal, and ballistic missiles in a “complete, verifiable and irreversible” manner in accordance with U.N. Security Council resolutions. But it is unclear whether the three neighbors are completely on the same page due to their differing approaches toward the shared goal. (Kyodo, “Japan, China, South Korea Agree to Cooperate toward Nuke-Free North Korea,” May 9, 2018)

U.S. abandons JCPOA

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has reached a “satisfactory consensus” with a top US official, North Korean media reported. According to KCNA, Kim and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo discussed “the acute situation of the Korean Peninsula,” and reached a satisfactory consensus on the issues discussed, without elaborating on the details. With the “acute situation” taken as reference to North Korea’s nuclear program, experts believe the US has agreed to accept a large portion of North Korea’s phased approach toward denuclearization. The KCNA announcement marks the first time the North officially announced the US-North Korea summit to its citizens, with Kim saying his meeting with President Donald Trump would be “the excellent first step toward promotion of the positive situation development in the Korean peninsula.” (Jung Min-kyung, “N. Korea Says ‘Satisfactory Consensus’ Reached with the U.S.” Korea Herald, May 10, 2018)

President Donald Trump will meet with North Korea’s Kim Jong Un in Singapore on June 12, Trump announced, hours after suggesting that the release of three Americans held in the North heralded a potential breakthrough toward denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula. “We will both try to make it a very special moment for World Peace!” Trump said in a tweet. Earlier today, with the American former detainees by his side on a dark air base tarmac, Trump said during a made-for-
TV ceremony that it was a “great honor” to welcome the men back to the U.S., but he added that “the true honor is going to be if we have a victory in getting rid of nuclear weapons.” Vice President Mike Pence, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, other top officials and first lady Melania joined the president in the celebration in the wee hours of Thursday morning at Joint Base Andrews near Washington. The former detainees — Kim Dong Chul, Kim Hak Song and Tony Kim — had been released yesterday amid the warming of relations between longtime adversaries. They appeared tired but in excellent spirits, flashing peace signs and waving their arms as they emerged from the aircraft. When asked by reporters how it felt to be home, one of the men answered through a translator, “It’s like a dream; we are very, very happy.” They later gave the president a round of applause. Suggesting that recovery from their ordeals would take time, Pence recounted this morning that Pompeo told him that at the refueling stop in Anchorage, “one of the detainees asked to go outside the plane because he hadn’t seen daylight in a very long time.”

Trump thanked North Korean leader Kim for releasing the Americans and said he believes Kim wants to reach an agreement on denuclearization at their upcoming summit. “I really think he wants to do something,” the president said. Pence said Thursday on NBC News, “In this moment the regime in North Korea has been dealing, as far as we can see, in good faith.” (Associated Press, “Summit Is Set: Trump-Kim to Meet June 12 in Singapore,” Associated Press, May 10, 2018)

In preliminary negotiations before their upcoming summit, the United States is demanding that North Korea relocate its nuclear engineers to other countries and discard data from its nuclear development program. However, North Korea is resisting the relocation of up to several thousand nuclear engineers and is taking a vague stance on the abandonment of data on its six nuclear experiments and nuclear-related facilities in Yongbyon, they added. According to the sources, the United States also wants North Korea to abandon all its weapons of mass destruction, including biological and chemical weapons. In addition, the United States is asserting that it will not allow North Korea to launch a satellite-carrying rocket, which has the same capabilities as long-range ballistic missiles. The difference of opinions has yet to be resolved between the two countries on the “period” and “method” for dismantlement of nuclear bombs and nuclear-related facilities. The United States wants North Korea to carry out complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement in a short period, such as several months or up to two years. However, North Korea prefers to carry it out step by step, spreading the process out over a long period. As for returns to be made in exchange for dismantlement, the United States is assuming that it will give them after all the measures for dismantlement are complete. But North Korea is seeking to be rewarded each time one of the measures is taken. Meanwhile, the United States is seeking the relocation of North Korean nuclear engineers and elimination of nuclear development data as part of the “method” for dismantlement. In the ongoing preliminary negotiations, North Korea has shown a stance that it will accept dismantlement of its nuclear bombs and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM). However, the United States fears that even if North Korea scrap its nuclear bombs and ICBMs, it can resume nuclear development in the future if it retains its nuclear engineers and data. (Makino Yoshihiro, “U.S. Seeks the Relocation of N. Korean Nuclear Engineers,” Asahi Shimbun, May 10, 2018)

Trump: “Hopefully everything is going to work out at the highest level. We want to thank Kim Jong-un, who really was excellent to these three incredible people. They are really three incredible people. And the fact that we were able to get them out so soon was really a tribute to a lot of things, including a certain process that's taking place right now. And that process is very important. So we will see what happens. We have a meeting scheduled in a very short period of time. You’ll be hearing about it soon. We have the location set. And we will see if we can do something that people did not think was going to happen for many, many years, and a lot of bad things could have happened in between. … Q Mr. President, is this your proudest achievement? THE PRESIDENT: My proudest achievement will be -- this is a part of it -- but will be when we denuclearize that entire peninsula. This is what people have been waiting for a long time. Nobody thought we could be on this track in terms of speed. … Q Does tonight change how you will approach your meeting with Kim Jong-un? THE PRESIDENT: No, not at
South Korea and the United States will begin massive combined air force drills this week, officials here said, in an apparent move to strengthen their hand ahead of denuclearization talks with North Korea. The two-week Max Thunder exercise will begin on Friday, involving some 100 warplanes, including eight F-22 radar-evading fighters as well as an unspecified number of B-52 bombers and F-15K jets, the officials said. It is the first time that the allies have decided to deploy eight F-22 jets to a combined exercise. Observers said the planned show of formidable air power appears aimed at further pressuring the North to give up its nuclear ambitions. The B-52 aircraft is expected to be deployed from the U.S. strategic military base in Guam and may join South Korea's F-15Ks to stage tactical air maneuvers. (Yonhap, “S. Korea, U.S. to Begin Large-Scale Air Drills Friday,” May 10, 2018)

Yonho Kim: “Since Kim Jong Un came to power in late 2011, North Korea’s unofficial markets have been experiencing rapid changes to the extent that they may be called ‘the logistics revolution.’ Along with the expansion of state-run mobile telecommunications and spontaneously formed private transport services, unprecedented market activities have been emerging. North Korea’s mobile telecommunications service provider is now estimated to count more than 4 million subscribers, close to 20% of its entire population, facilitating timely communication of market trend information. This allowed the merchants to determine quantities and prices of products to trade, as well as shipping and delivery methods over the phone. The merchants can no longer compete in the markets without a cell phone. In addition, Kim Jong Un’s tolerance of private enterprise within North Korea, and creation of a de facto public-private collaborative operation have helped to foster private transport services enterprise, also known as “servi-cha.” Railways were long North Korea’s principle mode of transport. However, beset by economic difficulties and poor electricity supply, the system became unreliable, leaving a fleet of vehicles to rise as the main mode of commercial transport and professionalizing these privately run servi-cha. Marketization under Kim Jong Un era has even made possible North Korean style parcel delivery services. Gradually disappearing “door-to-door” merchants who used to travel long distance to make profitable trade, the ability to operate a chain supply through a phone call, connecting traders, drivers, and even checkpoints, has opened up a new business era of stay-at-home “sedentary merchants”. As such, the combination between mobile telecommunications and private transport services has created a synergy effect, complementing one another to greatly increase the efficiency of unofficial markets in North Korea. However, there is very little research done on this
“combination” phenomenon. In studying North Korean marketization, most researches show limitation by separating mobile telecommunications and private transport services as individual subjects. Even if there is a mention of ‘the logistics revolution,’ which is a result of the combination phenomenon, there is no further analysis other than relating it back to marketization.2 Considering North Korea’s reality of great increase in mobility of people and products off of the regime’s radar, and rapid expansion of market information dissemination through mobile telecommunications, the aforementioned “combination” is a core element in determining the changing direction of North Korean marketization. This research intends to explore how cell phones are being utilized in communicating and exchanging information between actors associated with private transport services (servi-cha), and the resulting ramifications on markets. First, I assessed the cell phone communication method between the main actors, such as the owner of servi-cha, driver, client (merchant), broker, fuel trader, and checkpoint. Then, I examined the changing content and quality of private transport services through the new communication method, and by extension, the trade method, scale, and how credibility plays into changing the relationship between the main actors of North Korea’s unofficial markets. This report is primarily based on interviews with 19 North Korean defectors (between September 2016 and February 2018) who are now resettled in South Korea. The interviewees all have experience as merchants using both cell phones and private transport services after Kim Jong Un came to power. Two of the defectors also have experience operating servi-cha. The defectors, with age distribution between 20s and 50s, are from Pyongyang the capital, Hyesan, Samjiyon, and Baekam (Ryanggang Province), Hamheung (South Hamgyong Province), Chongjin (North Hamgyong Province), and Wonsan (Gangwon Province). The interviewees defected from North Korea in relatively recent years of 2012 to 2016. Detailed information of the defectors is not revealed to protect their identities and safety of their remaining family members in North Korea. I also interviewed defectors who currently maintain contacts in North Korea for updated information. North Korea’s commercial mobile telecommunications service began in November 2002 by Thailand’s Loxley Pacific in Pyongyang and the Rajin-Sonbong (now referred to as Rason) Special Economic Zone (SEZ). North-East Asia Telephone and Telecommunications Co., Ltd. (NEAT&T), a joint venture between Loxley Pacific and North Korea Post and Telecommunications Corporation, provided 2G GSM service with the obtainment of a 30-year business license. NEAT&T expanded coverage area to Nampo, Kaesong, provincial capitals, and major highways. By the end of 2003, the number of subscribers were estimated to have reached around 20,000. However, in April 2004, following a massive explosion at Yongchon Station in North Pyongan Province, North Korea shut down mobile telecommunications service. Along with the rumor that the bomb terror targeting Kim Jong Il was remotely controlled by a wireless handset, all cell phones were banned across the country and North Korea began confiscating devices. However, in December 2008, four years after the incident, North Korea lifted the ban on cell phones and resumed service. This time, they changed their business partner to an Egyptian telecommunications firm, Orascom, established CHEO, and began servicing 3G W-CDMA under the name Koryolink. Owning 75% of shareholding, Orascom was granted a 25-year business license and secured a four-year franchise. North Korean leadership at the time was politically desperate for mobile telecommunications service and needed to attract extensive foreign investment. In order to demonstrate that North Korea had reached its goals of becoming a “Strong and Prosperous Nation” by the 100th birthday of Kim Il Sung on April 15th of 2012, such economic achievements were necessary. In this sense, it is difficult to see as just a coincidence that the phone number early Koryolink subscribers received was 1912, known as the birth year of Kim Il Sung. By the end of the third quarter of 2011, after three years of its service launching, Koryolink had established 453 base stations. As such, Koryolink expanded its network coverage including the capital Pyongyang, 15 major cities, 86 smaller cities, 22 major roads, and highways. Though this only covers 14% of North Korea’s territory, excluding the sparsely populated mountains and uplands which cover most of North Korea’s land area, the network covers 94% of the entire population. According to the defectors, at the beginning stage of the mobile telecommunications service, calls were only stable in Pyongyang and surrounding major cities. Calls were often disrupted in Sinuiju, Hyesan, Musan, Hoeryeong, and Chungjin due to weak network connection. However, as service expanded, poor call quality is said to have greatly improved. At the time when Koryolink launched their 3G service, it was widely expected that the
service would only be provided to a few privileged individuals. However, breaking this expectation, Koryolink network rapidly expanded its number of subscribers in a short period of time. When the service was first launched in late 2008, the number of subscribers stood at about 2,000. However, that number reached one million by February 2012, after three years of its service launching. In May 2013, 15 months after reaching such record-breaking number, the subscriber count yet again presented a remarkable growth totaling around two million. 8 Thereafter, reaching a stagnant phase of growth, the number hit three million in November 2015 after another two years and six months. 9 Some institutions speculate that the number of subscribers reached 3.7 million in late 2016, but as Orascom has been reporting the number of its new subscribers intermittently, the exact count is difficult to verify. North Korea has transitioned from a monopoly mobile telecommunications service market dominated by Koryolink to an oligopoly market structure. Since the early 2010s, with Ministry of Post and Telecommunications in North Korea as the sole investor, North Korea began to build a second mobile telecommunications network called “Gangseong Net.” It is known to have started providing service to the North Koreans in October 2013 under the name Byol It is estimated that Byol has obtained up to one million subscribers by early 2016. The estimation made August in 2017 of 4.7 million cell phones in use in North Korea appears to be combining numbers of subscribers of both Koryolink and Byol. In terms of service contents, there is not much difference between Byol and Koryolink. However, due to its cheaper prices in comparison, Byol has attracted many customers. For instance, the basic plan with 200 free minutes per month is the same as Koryolink. The difference is that after the free minutes, Koryolink requires a purchase of an expensive foreign currency prepaid card while Byol charges additional 30 cents per minute, making it a more affordable option. Furthermore, along with the differentiation of communication charges, by deliberately worsening the call quality of Koryolink, North Korea is shifting its subscribers to Gangseong Net. In the early years of Koryolink service, due to the limited cell phone supply and eligibility requirements for subscription, main customers were high-ranking officials representing Party, government, military, and merchants who were able to bribe them. However, as the North Korean government relaxed some regulations, unless a specific problem was to be found during background check, anyone with financial ability could use cell phones. As such, the use of cell phone between the merchants proliferated and this made cell phones not only an evidence of financial and business capability, but also a means of survival. Though the North Korean government had blocked Internet and international calls, and even transmission of data by the end of 2011, the merchants had no problem checking jangmadang prices, exchange rates, and such market information real time. Already in the 1990s, during North Korean famine, among cross-border traders who were using illegal Chinese cell phones to communicate, there was a saying that “As long as there is a cell phone, you can survive.” Such was the situation that the determinant factor of business success or failure market information. Under such circumstances, the construction of North Korean wireless network signifies an opening of nationwide business opportunity for merchants. Wholesale and retail merchants of jangmadang are now able to collect market trend across the state to promptly respond to the changes. Trade negotiations now conveniently take place over a phone call instead of meeting at the market, also allowing decisions over price, quantity, shipping, and delivery method to be made over the phone. On this account, cell phones became an essential tool for merchants, making it impossible to survive in jangmadang without a phone. According to the defectors, long gone is the term “runner merchant,” long distance trader who would carry his goods to the market, as now only with a couple of phone numbers of wholesale and retail merchants, and truck or bus drivers, one can operate a business as a stay-at-home “sedentary merchant.” As such, with the rapid transmission of market information, and improvement of distribution speed and range through cell phones, commodity prices have been stabilized, and the trade method of profiting from price differences between regions is no longer valid. North Korea’s transportation system traditionally centered around the railway. However, with the economic crisis in the 1990s, the railway system was no longer able to function due to energy crisis and deterioration of locomotives and railroad tracks. As the nation’s transportation service dwindled, North Koreans who were struggling to overcome the economic crisis began marketization as a survival tactic, which in turn increased the demand of people and products movement. As a result, private road transportation system began to develop and business vehicles called “servi-chá” were introduced. As a matter of fact, “pay-to-operate” vehicles were available even before the economic crisis. Vehicles owned by the military,
impossible for servi-cha to operate without a permit. In order to operate servi-cha, people must register their cars to factories, enterprises, military bases, or such state institutions because principally the ownership of a private vehicle is banned in North Korea. State institutions allow the owners of the vehicle to operate servi-cha in exchange for vehicle registration fees and partial claim to monthly profits from operating servi-cha. Through this symbiotic relationship, the officials secure operational funds of state institutions, accumulate private wealth, and allow the owners to operate servi-cha “legally.” Once the vehicle is registered, General Bureau of Transportation of Ministry of People’s Security which oversees the Department of Motor Vehicle, issues a permit for long-distance operation. The drivers must present this permit at checkpoints. North Koreans need to carry a travel certificate issued by their provincial office of Ministry of People’s Security to go outside their residential district. However, as servi-cha is classified as a business vehicle, the drivers and users of servi-cha are able to move without the certificate. A license plate is distinguished by the institution it is registered with, and therefore, vehicles registered with such institution as State Security Department, an institution of enormous authority excluded from inspection and enforcement, has higher servi-cha operation cost. On the other hand, operating servi-cha with license plates from food industries, People’s Committees, and organizations in the agricultural sector is relatively cheap. Other than North Korean won, US dollar and Chinese yuan are also accepted as a payment for servi-cha. Although expansion of private transport services in North Korea has caused dramatic increases in gas demand, limited public distribution system failed to satisfy the demand. Satellite images taken in 2016 identified 82 official gas stations, and it is speculated that the number has increased steadily since then. The gas stations are mainly concentrated in downtown and suburbs of Pyongyang and scattered through provincial capitals and main highways.25 Aside from this, the illegal fuel distribution system operated by individuals is dispersed throughout the nation, and the drivers of servi-cha are primarily using this system. …The fuel traders either smuggle fuel oil from China and Russia, or buy illegal outflow of fuel oil from military bases, oil reservoir, factories, enterprises, etc. The military bases appropriate fuel oil by fabricating training time, and enterprises sell fuel oil received from the state to the market and buy back from the market when needed. Such illegal distribution of fuel oil is rampant throughout the country, and because of deep rooted corruption, it is very difficult to completely eradicate the illegal practices. North Korea has governed vehicle movements through checkpoints under either Ministry of People’s Security or State Security Department. They check the validity of the permit, possession of driver’s license, whether the vehicle is registered, and crack down on transportation of drugs and contraband. The checkpoints are established in province, city, and county boundaries and border areas, and sometimes temporary checkpoints are established at random. …Despite abiding by all regulations, it is impossible for servi-cha to pass through the checkpoints without offering bribes. If the vehicle
gets pulled over, transporting passengers and products on time becomes impossible; therefore, the owners and drivers of servi-cha have no choice but to “cooperate” with the checkpoint guards and officials in charge with the checkpoints. They periodically bribe the guards and officials according to service frequency and comply with extra bribe request. …In North Korea, people call the bribe “homework.” If the drivers of servi-cha “don’t do the homework,” it is considered that you have “low morals” at checkpoints. The guards at checkpoints then begin “staying and finishing homework” (extorting cargo). On the other hand, if the drivers offer a proper bribe to the guards, they can easily pass even if caught doing illegal activity at checkpoints. Because the collusion between servi-cha and checkpoints is deeply rooted, crackdown on servi-cha at national level is not likely to be effective. In the case of extensive rigid enforcement of regulations, private transport services may be paralyzed, and also face strong opposition from low- and middle-ranking officials who have been receiving bribes. With the dispersion of illegal fuel traders throughout the nation and the wide provision of cell phones, there has been a change in servi-cha owners and drivers’ fuel purchase behavior. In the past, the drivers often carried barrels of fuel oil needed for the whole round trip long-distance journey in the vehicle. Therefore, there was the inconvenience of not being able to maximize total cargo load. After cell phones came into wide use, vehicle owners were able to call fuel traders near the point of departure, travel stops, and destination to easily compare gas prices. Operators of servi-cha are deciding whether to load fuel onto the car for the journey or purchase gas en route from the fuel traders after comparing the prices. Of no less importance than the gas price is how much gas the fuel traders have in their current possession. A long-distance journey requires a large amount of fuel, and it is of great importance that the drivers secure a fuel trader with enough gas in stock for the trip, and this can now be done efficiently using cell phones. State institutions’ fuel oil smuggling has also become less risky and more convenient. …According to the defector, before cell phones came into wide use, military vehicles delivered the fuel oil barrels to private houses at dawn, and they always had to fear getting caught by the surveillance security officials. Even in the case of having it delivered to another place other than a private home, there was also a chance of being caught by the security officials while waiting for the delivery. Thereafter, as cell phone calls became enabled, the arrangement of time and place to meet could instantly be determined, and changes made just as easily as needed. It was said that the exchange usually took place in the wood or fields where surveillance could not reach. The defector also testified that cell phones served to be useful in delivering fuel oil to a place without an address saying that a driver out of gas had called him for delivery out on the road. (2) Brokers and Forwarders After distribution of cell phones, “gugahn” (brokers) who connect the shippers and servi-cha for a handling charge have been active throughout all the regions. …When a shipper approaches the owner of servi-cha directly, the owner may also contact brokers to run a background check to verify whether the shipper is trustworthy or not. With regular shippers, the owners of servi-cha often arrange cargo pick-up through a direct phone call, and if a third-party delivers the cargo, the servi-cha owners call the shippers to double-check the content of the cargo before departure. On the other hand, a broker is contacted if the shipper is in need of a servi-cha immediately. The handling charge is paid either by the shipper or the servi-cha owner, usually by the one who contacted the broker first. A broker can make easy profit once a good network of shippers and servi-cha owners is secured. However, as the broker is responsible for any damages if something goes amiss in the introduction of the two parties, he also bears risks. Brokers form a group by districts to exchange information. In each area, there is a “gugahnjang” or a commander of the brokers who manage the group. Any broker who swindle is “dealt with” by the commander and expelled from the market. According to the defectors, after the wide circulation of cell phones, verification of information has become speedy and easy that it has become very difficult for brokers to cheat. Brokers may also create a network with those from other districts to connect servi-cha owners and shippers. For example, let’s say that there is a servi-cha departing from Pyongyang to Hamheung, South Hamgyong Province, after being introduced to a shipper by a local broker. The servi-cha owner or driver would contact Pyongyang broker to communicate with Hamheung broker to seek shippers so that he may load his vehicle with cargos when returning from Hamheung. Then, Pyongyang broker would contact a Hamheung broker from his network to ask to find a shipper who has cargo for this servi-cha. Hamheung broker would then look for shippers who need a servi-cha using his cell phone, and connect them to the owner or the driver of servi-cha. No matter whether or not they have actually
met in person, the Pyongyang broker and Hamheung broker can maintain their business relationship using cell phones. The brokers also share information regarding where to send what type of cargo to maximize profits. Those who were not able to secure a network of shippers and servi-cha, and go around train stations, bus terminals, jangmadang, and inns looking for servi-cha passengers are called “forwarders.” Their targets are often out-of-towners from other regions who are not familiar with local servi-cha. The forwarders connect the out-of-towners to a servi-cha that goes to their destination by asking around using a cell phone, and earn handling charge from servi-cha drivers or owners. Cell phones are also playing an important role in forming and invigorating a cooperative network of owners and drivers. Although social networks such as Facebook and Twitter are banned in North Korea where the Internet is blocked, enough information exchange is actively taking place using cell phones among drivers and owners of servi-cha. For instance, if a servi-cha breaks down or is at a repair shop, but the owner receives a call from a broker or shipper, then he directs the call to another servi-cha driver or owner he is regularly in contact with. In addition, cooperative network created using cell phones also benefit when it comes to repairing vehicles and supplying components. If an unexpected event occurs at checkpoints, phone calls are made to notify the servi-cha owners and drivers who are operating on the same route to pass on the information of the situation. In the case that a servi-cha is caught by security officials or checkpoint guards, someone from the network may come to the rescue, and this, too, is quickly done through communication using cell phones. If a triviality occurs at checkpoints while operating servi-cha, then offering a bribe is the fastest way to resolve the problem. If a guard at a checkpoint asks for more “generosity” for dolsang (a Korean traditional special feast table laid in celebration of a baby’s first birthday), it is wiser to just bribe more and be let go in peace even if it means suffering a loss. The refusal to comply would first disturb the delivery schedule, possibly have the cargos confiscated, and create future conflicts by aggravating the relation with the checkpoint guards. However, when illegal cargos are discovered or an order of rigid enforcement of regulations is passed down from the top, it may become complicated to use just a bribe as a means to reach a deal. In such cases, even long-term relationship guards who have taken many bribes throughout the years may change their attitude. The worst-case scenario would be having cargos confiscated, and under such circumstances, the servi-cha owner or driver immediately contacts the shipper to explain the situation. Then, the shipper calls the recipient of the delivery to discuss countermeasure. If the owner of servi-cha has connections with high-level officials of Ministry of People’s Security, then he can contact them directly to explain the situation, which would then lead to a high-level official calling a mid-level official to order immediate release of the servi-cha caught at the checkpoint. The State Security Department checkpoints are even more difficult to pass through. A defector disclosed that once, he passed through the checkpoint by calling a broker to find out the name of a high-level official of State Security Department in order to lie to the guard that he is the nephew of the official. For the users of servi-cha, the greatest benefit from the widespread use of cell phones is the ability to compare freight charges in real time to select the best suited servi-cha for themselves. …The users of servi-cha make a direct phone call to the owners, drivers, or brokers to ask such details as departure time and date, freight charges or fares, vehicle types (in the case of passengers, a freight car is cheaper than a bus), and seat availabilities (if no actual seats are available, one must sit on the truck beds or the aisle floor on the bus). Using cell phones, the users also share information between one another related to freight charges, fares, and the matter of which servi-cha owners and drivers are trustworthy. Under such circumstances, comparison and resulting complaints such as how there was a difference in quality of the cars for the same cost, and how someone paid more and someone paid less for the same route were made. Correspondingly, the active exchange of information naturally created a “fair and reasonable price” in the servi-cha market. … In the case of a freight truck, depending on details such as operation distance, vehicle type, and cargo type, there is a fair and reasonable price per one metric ton or the market price is segmented accordingly. When there is rigid enforcement of regulations, a premium is expected on top of the standard cost. As the number of providers and consumers of servi-cha has greatly increased and information circulation has become more active, fair and reasonable freight charge is being determined in the market. At the same time, the owners and drivers of servi-cha have been fixing the price in collusion over cell phones calls. …If a servi-cha lowers the freight charge and the news is spread that many shippers are flocking to do business there, other servi-cha owners may call this servi-cha owner to ask about the situation. If it
is for some unavoidable reason, then the others may agree to lower their freight charge. However, if they cannot reach an understanding, then threats and sometimes violence may be used to raise the price again. Among the owners, there is a tacit agreement on freight charges, service frequency, and routes taken. For example, if the information is received via cell phone calls that someone new has entered an already existing route and is causing competitions, then physical violence and even intense pressure and punishment may follow. Unexpected situations may occur during long-distance operation of servi-cha. There is a possible delay from break down of the vehicle, flat tire, or detainment at checkpoints. Before the extensive circulation of cell phones, in the occurrence of such delays, both the sender and the recipient had to wait indefinitely without any information. However, today, if there is an interruption in transport time, the driver has to call both the shipper and the recipient immediately to explain the situation. If the driver irresponsibly fails to communicate, then the servi-cha will lose its credibility not only with that one client, but with the whole community of servi-cha users. The users, when informed of the changes in transport schedule through cell phones, can quickly take responsive measures to minimize the negative impact. In order to gain credibility and reassure the shippers, it is necessary to make a phone call from time to time (every hour or once every few hours) and inform of the current location and estimated arrival time. For long-distance transport, the drivers may take a break to have a meal at privately run restaurants, and it is also better to notify the shipper of the stopover and current status. However, sometimes there are some drivers who abuse this. …As servi-cha expanded, the number of restaurants serving as resting areas on the roadside increased. The restaurants not only sell food, but also make profit by buying gas from drivers and selling it back to the other drivers at a more expensive price. Servi-cha drivers usually choose familiar restaurants, but if they need to make a stop at an unfamiliar place, they call people who know the area to find a suitable restaurant. The combination of servi-cha and cell phones has completely changed the concept of logistics for the North Korean merchants. The method where the shipper travels long-distance to deliver the products has long lost market competitive power, and “sedentary business” has taken place as the new mode of transaction. One defector even used the expression “a change in paradigm.” … If the merchant himself delivered or picked up the products to and from a client using servi-cha, then it often meant days’ worth of time wasted on the road, physical exhaustion, and dangers of loss and theft. Besides the freight charge, the passenger fare for the merchant himself and spending for his own meals were part of the expenditures that reduced the total profit. There is also a limit on the amount and weight of goods a merchant can carry. North Korean post office also provides package delivery services. However, not only does the delivery take a long time, but also the package is often damaged and prone to mishaps. There is a pervading distrust toward the services offered by the post office. Servi-cha owners who have taken notice of this deficiency have opened up active parcel delivery businesses. The way this delivery system works is that the sender tells the recipient the information of the vehicle and the driver’s cell phone number, and to the driver, tells the recipient’s cell phone number. Upon arrival near the destination area, the driver calls the recipient and they communicate directions to the meeting point to successfully complete parcel delivery. Though this entrepreneurial parcel business is not on a par with modern parcel delivery service, considering the inadequate distribution conditions in North Korea, it is taking place as a relatively quick and accurate delivery service. As such parcel delivery business advances, the number of “joonggae-cha” (meaning derives from the word mediation, as the vehicle by successfully delivering goods from A to B completes the business deal), or trucks specialized in delivery services for cargo, are also on the rise. Especially if a shipper is sending expensive goods, he will not allow any passengers on the flatbed or trunk due to the risk of theft. If the cargo disappears or is damaged en route to its destination, the shipper or the driver must take responsibility. Even if the truck is empty, if it is on its way to pick up a cargo, a joonggae-cha will not pick up a passenger no matter whether he or she is willing to pay the fare. The earning of a small sum of passenger fares is not worth risking the possibilities of the vehicle getting pulled over at a checkpoint, or experiencing delays while trying to drop people off at their destinations. Especially in the case of joonggae-cha specialized for expensive cargo, timely arrival at the appointed time is crucial in maintaining credibility with the shippers. Cell phones have made revolutionary changes in North Korea’s private money transfer system. Donju (“money masters”), who have made a large fortune trading in outdoor markets known as jangmadang, are facilitating efficient money transfers through their financial
networks and cell phones. Depositing money in the official banking system of North Korea makes it almost impossible to withdraw money, and as a consequence, North Koreans are hiding money in their home and making transfers as needed through private networks. Let's take an example of when A, a wholesale merchant in the border city of Hyesan, sends smuggled Chinese goods through servi-cha to B, the other wholesale merchant in Hamheung, South Hamgyong Province. B sells the smuggled goods to the traders at jangmadang, and then settles the deferred payment to A for the goods purchased. The money does not actually move from Hamheung to Hyesan, but a “ikwan-jib”, a “transfer house” (unofficial financial transfer services) operated by a donju, functions as a bank between Hamheung and Hyesan. If B goes to a nearby ikwan-jib to transfer money to A, the ikwanjib of Hamheung contacts a known ikwan-jib in Hyesan to give money to A. Then, after receiving money from the ikwan-jib in Hyesan, A calls B to confirm the receipt of payment. Between ikwan-jib, they have a separate clearing system and also perform money transfer services without the trade of goods. As the combination of servi-cha and cell phones has expanded “sedentary business,” there has been widespread use of methods of transfer such as sending settlement cost in cash through servi-cha drivers (ikwanon or transfer money) or purchasing and sending products requested by a client. The drivers in return can take “transfer fees.” Due to the relatively large cargos of “sedentary business,” resulting settlement costs are also high. In the past, it was difficult to imagine entrusting the delivery of a large amount of money to another person. Fundamentally, as credit transactions were not established, only direct cash transactions were made, and there was even a running joke that “anyone who gets back money that was lent is a hero of the People’s Republic.” However, today, the sender, recipient, and driver can communicate with each other using cell phones to verify accurate money delivery, and this also gives more incentive to the drivers to accurately deliver the money so as not to lose credibility. In the case of settling a small sum, the method of transferring call minutes is used. The person who needs to send money charges call minutes on his phone and sends the minutes to the person to whom he owes money. The maximum of one million North Korean won worth of minutes can be transferred, which is equivalent to about 130 dollars at black market rate. This method has often been used when sending money to a child entered in military or to relatives as a wedding gift, and now is also commonly used to make small payments among the merchants. The recipient of minutes can transfer the minutes to other people or to professional minutes traders once again for money excluding fees for the exchange. This signifies that some sort of call minutes secondary market is in operation. The monthly price for a basic plan including 200 minutes in Koryolink is only about 10 cents in US dollars, but the price for a rechargeable prepaid card for call minutes is more than 10 times more expensive. Therefore, minutes in the aforementioned secondary market are treated like a prepaid card and are traded at equally expensive rates. However, the market price is open to negotiation and is largely dependent on one’s ability to haggle. Consumers are also benefiting from the innovation in logistics that resulted from the combination of servi-cha and cell phones. As the merchants are responding quickly to changes in market conditions, product supply to jangmadang has been smooth, and regional price differences and sharp increase in prices have been greatly reduced. In particular, the prices of Chinese industrial products have been significantly reduced to the extent that their Pyongyang general market prices are almost the same as their actual prices in China. As a result, sales strategy aimed at regional price differences no longer lead to a big profit, and this has led to “small profits and quick returns” policy emerging as the new sales strategy. …The reason bulk sale has become possible is because the distribution of cargo trucks in North Korea has begun with the development of servi-cha market. While Chinese Dongfeng trucks of load limit 5-10 metric tons were heavily smuggled in the 2010s, trucks of load limit 20 metric tons have been preferred in recent years. The operation cost of a truck of 20 metric tons is cheaper than that of two truck of 10 metric tons. Therefore, the drivers of servi-cha are responding to rising fuel oil costs due to enlargement of load limit. However, trucks over 20 metric tons are hard to operate in poor road conditions of North Korea. According to a defector who frequently communicates with a North Korean source, Chinese trucks of 20 metric tons are traded at $45,000 for a new one and $35,000 for a used one with mileage of about 100,000 miles. After the economic crisis in the mid-1990s, jangmadang rapidly expanded and this has also led to uncontrolled flourishing of various fraudulent activities. Jangmadang was a hotbed of business activities that would use even unconventional methods if it meant survival. Selling adulterated food and giving short weight were common in jangmadang, and it often led to a brawl. The will to
provide a satisfactory service to clients in order to create a stable long-term relationship was a rare sight among the merchants in jangmadang. However, as marketization continues to progress, the importance of credibility has also increased in North Korea. The combination of servi-cha and cell phones has made it almost impossible to survive in markets without credibility. As the rapid exchange of information became possible through cell phones, the actors related to the servi-cha chain were able to easily check whether the counterpart is a “trustworthy person.” The emergence of servi-cha has led to an increase in transaction volume, and this in turn created a greater business risk. Therefore, such credibility check is essential. Moreover, as is the custom to negotiate the terms of the transaction verbally rather than write a legally binding contract, although more and more traders prefer to sign contracts in recent years, it is out of the question to make a deal with a person not trustworthy. Particularly for servi-cha brokers who live off of networking, maintaining credibility is the key to their marketing strategy. If a loss occurs to either the shipper or the servi-cha owner, due to the broker’s mistake in the introduction process, then the broker must compensate for the loss. The client with bad credit is placed on a blacklist, and the brokers’ network will self-regulate and “purify” the “non-credible brokers.” The credibility of servi-cha is first and foremost dependent on accurate timely delivery. As such, it is fundamental that the driver keeps both the shipper and recipient informed of the current location frequently, and to immediately notify them when an emergency situation occurs. If a driver neglects such duties, he will earn a reputation as an irresponsible and untrustworthy driver. This is also the reason why empty joonggae-cha, specialized for expensive cargo, never picks up a passenger on the way to pick up cargos; it is to maintain credibility with VIP shippers by keeping the appointed time. Also in the case of money transfer, “sedentary merchant” would not be able to entrust large amount of payments to a servi-cha driver if the premise of credibility is not guaranteed. In the past, North Koreans called money lender or people who repay the loan as “morons.” The tendency was that no matter the reason, other’s money that came into my possession was considered mine. Now, however, this way of thinking and behavior can no longer operate servi-cha. A driver without credibility has no more footing in the market. As the driver, sender, and recipient can all verify accurate money delivery using cell phones, swindling has also become difficult for drivers. On the contrary, among the owners of servi-cha, some even offer loans at low interest rates to shippers in order to strengthen credit relationships.” (Yonho Kim, *North Korea’s Mobile Telecommunications and Private Transport Services in the Kim Jong Un Era*, Johns Hopkins U.S.-Korea Institute, May 2018)

5/10/18

The choice of Singapore, a tidy, prosperous city-state with ties to both the United States and North Korea, is a small victory for Trump’s advisers, who talked him out of meeting Kim in the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea — a far more symbolic, but politically problematic, location. Last week, Trump expressed his preference for the Demilitarized Zone but that symbolism troubled some officials, who argued that the Demilitarized Zone, because of its connection to the Korean War, would put a greater spotlight on the prospects for peace on the Korean Peninsula than on ridding the North of its nuclear weapons. They also worried about the optics of Trump traveling to Kim’s doorstep. Singapore, by contrast, is neutral ground, nearly 3,000 miles from Pyongyang, and not a treaty ally of the United States, like South Korea, Japan or the Philippines. Both countries have embassies there, United States Navy warships call at Singapore’s port and North Korea has operated trading companies there, though they have been shut down because of sanctions against Pyongyang. A large C.I.A. station is also in Singapore, another former official said, and American spies meet regularly with their North Korean counterparts as part of an intelligence channel between the two countries. Negotiations for the meeting between Trump and Kim have largely been carried out through this intelligence channel. (Isabel Kershner and David M. Halbfinger, “Trump to Meet Kim for Talks in Singapore,” *New York Times*, May 11, 2018, p. A-1)

5/11/18

Yun: “AUDIE CORNISH, HOST: I want to tackle a question we just heard from our reporter. The U.S. wants North Korea to completely denuclearize. Do we have any idea what North Korea thinks that means? What's the sort of disconnect maybe that might be coming up? YUN: Well, I think disconnect is a good word. I think there is a gap between what North Korea is prepared to do
and what United States wants them to. We must remember that this is a beginning of a process. This is really the first time that the two countries are engaging for many, many years. So I think to expect big results, immediate results - for example, immediate or quick denuclearization - is really setting the bar too high. I would hope that when the two leaders meet in Singapore on June 12, they will come out with some broad agreement and few concrete steps and a process and perhaps an agreement, for example, to get together again in six months or so to review the progress. So let's not have undue expectations, and - you know, because if you have too big expectations, that really is setting it for failure. CORNISH: Now, former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice spoke at Stanford today, and she had this advice for President Trump. RICE: Mr. President, don't try to make the deal at the table yourself. I know you're a great deal-maker, but don't make a deal with Kim Jong Un. Let Mike Pompeo and the experts make the deal. Have the photo-op. Declare peace, and then let somebody else negotiate it. CORNISH: Ambassador, is that the right approach? YUN: Well, I would agree with that. I mean, of course I would - I do know that President Trump has followed this issue very closely, and so it's not a surprise to me or many of us who worked in the administration that he wants a deal. More than that, I think he wants to meet with Kim Jong Un and really talk this out. So I wouldn't go as far as former Secretary Condi Rice because he knows the contours of a deal. But again, let's not rush into it because the other side also might react badly. And from what I've seen, for example, the other side is certainly giving signals that they want something like synchronized actions and that it should be a step-by-step process. CORNISH: So synchronized action meaning we make one step towards denuclearization, and then maybe the U.S. has to do something in the way of sanctions. YUN: Yeah, exactly, something like that. I know that is repeating what we have done in the past, and - but some things, you know, you have to repeat. We may have failed. They may have failed in the past. But that's not a reason in itself not to try a similar process again. CORNISH: What do you make of critics who say that North Korea could be using this essentially to stall while they covertly continue with their nuclear program? YUN: That's an interesting question. There are really, I would say, two opposing views on why North Korea's doing this. One is that what you have stated precisely. The other one is that they are looking for a change. And to some extent, that could be true. They have tried, and they have actually reached the point where they do have nuclear weapons, and they do have delivery mechanisms. So to that extent, they have gotten what they want. They feel more confident. And now they feel they can look for something else, which may be, as Kim Jong Un has said, better economy, better standard of living. And that is a hypothesis worth testing. But is he ultimately prepared to give up all nuclear weapons permanently? I don't know, and I don't think anyone knows. And I don't think he would do that until he feels he's ready and he's comfortable. And I don't think he's there yet. CORNISH: Just a short time left - any effects from the Iran deal and the U.S. backing out of that? Some people have talked about it being a shadow over the North Korea talks. YUN: I don't agree with that. I mean, certainly when I have talked with North Koreans, they have never mentioned Iran deal. I mean, let's take an example. Iran deal contained - JCPOA contained over thousand pages. The last major agreement we reached with North Korea - and that was - what? - 2005-6 party talks - was a page and a half. So we're not going to get into the level of details that involved Iran deal JCPOA. So we're not there yet by any means.” (NPR All Things Considered, “Ambassador Joseph Yun Weighs in on Upcoming U.S.-North Korea Meeting,” May 11, 2018)

Pompeo: “The United States and the Republic of Korea remain committed to achieving the permanent, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. If Chairman Kim chooses the right path, there is a future brimming with peace and prosperity for the North Korea – North Korean people. America’s track record of support for the Korean people is second to none. If North Korea takes bold action to quickly denuclearize, the United States is prepared to work with North Korea to achieve prosperity on the par with our South Korean friends....

MS NAUERT: Thank you. And we have time for two questions total. The first goes to Rich Edson from Fox News Channel. Rich. Q: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. You just mentioned and have mentioned before, as have the South Koreans, that you are looking for permanent, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization. How does the United States specifically define that? Is it inspections, full facility dismantling? Is it more than that, less than that? And also, you have had more substantive conversations with Kim Jong-un than arguably any other Westerner. What is your
impression of him? Do you think he’s rational? And simply, what’s it like to talk to him? ...

**POMPEO:** So I have spent more time with Chairman Kim other than perhaps President Moon working on this incredibly important challenge that lays before the world. President Trump and the world have set the conditions for a successful outcome from June 12th and the activities that are necessary to follow there from. You asked about my conversations with Chairman Kim. This question is sort of undignified, “Is he rational?” Yes, we had good conversations, substantive conversations, conversations that involve deep, complex problems, challenges the strategic decision that Chairman Kim has before him about how it is he wishes to proceed and if he is prepared in exchange for the assurances that we’re ready to provide to him if he is prepared to fully denuclearize. And I’m not sure how to define it fully. It’s pretty clear what that means. It would be an activity that undertook to ensure that we didn’t end up in the same place that we’d ended up before, or multiple passes at trying to solve this conundrum for the world, how to ensure that North Korea doesn’t possess the capacity to threaten not only the United States but the world with nuclear weapons. And so in order to achieve that, it will require a robust verification program and one that we will undertake with partners around the world, which will achieve that outcome in a way that frankly no agreement before it has ever set forth. A big undertaking for sure, but one that Chairman Kim and I had the opportunity to have a good, sound discussion on so that I think we have a pretty good understanding between our two countries about what the shared objectives are. 

**Q:** What’s he like? ...

**POMPEO:** We had good conversations. There – it was – there’s some videos that have been released. You can see our conversations were warm. We were each representing our two countries, trying our best to make sure that we were communicating clearly, that we had a shared understanding about what our mutual objectives were. But we had good conversations about the histories of our two nations, the challenges that we’ve had between us.

**We talked about the fact that America has often in history had adversaries who we are now close partners with, and our hope that we could achieve the same with respect to North Korea.**

**MS NAUERT:** All right, thank you, Rich. Our next question goes to Lee Seungwoo of Yonhap News Agency. **FOREIGN MINISTER KANG:** Could I just -- **MS NAUERT:** Oh, pardon me. **FOREIGN MINISTER KANG:** -- answer that -- I think your question about sanctions relief, I think we were very clear that the sanctions remain in place until and unless we see visible, meaningful action taken by North Korea on the denuclearization track. The North Korean leader has committed to denuclearization, and formally so through the Panmunjom Declaration. We very much hope to see further steps, more concrete steps towards denuclearization being produced at the U.S.-North Korea summit. So we’re not talking about sanctions relief at this point. .... 

**Q:** (Via interpreter) Recently, there was a talk that possibly USFK can be reduced. Was it discussed in your bilateral talks today? And when President Moon visits Washington D.C. before the Pyongyang and Washington, D.C. talks, what kind of coordination did you make in the run-up to this upcoming discussion between Pyongyang and Washington, D.C.? (In English) (Inaudible) Pyongyang and (inaudible) Kim Jong-un, and our historic summit between President Trump and Kim is fully set up. However, the key issue is dismantling North Korea’s WMD. And I guess there’s a pretty big gap between U.S. and north standpoint. So did you actually discuss the issue with Kim, with – this issue with Kim? And have you two narrowed the differences? And do you think he’s willing to give up his WMD? Thank you. **KANG:** (Via interpreter) So there was no talk about reducing USFK at all. If there was any talk about USFK, it was only about how solid our alliance is, and any issue, any discussion about USFK or alliance should be discussed as such, between our two nations which are in alliance, and not in North Korea and U.S. talks, which was confirmed by Secretary Pompeo. .... **POMPEO:** Your question was about details discussed. We had quite a conversation about it. I’m not going to share that here; we’re not going to negotiate the details of the agreement in this setting. We’ll do it in conversations between our leaders and our working teams that are hard at preparing for the summit. I am confident that we have a shared understanding of the outcome that the leaders want – certainly Presidents Trump and – President Trump and Chairman Kim, but I think President Moon as well. I think we have a shared vision for what we hope, when this process is completed, the Korean Peninsula looks like. I think we have a good understanding, and I think there is complete agreement about what the ultimate objectives are. **We began to work through the modalities,** how we would achieve that, but I’ll leave conversations about that to another time. So thank you for your question.” (DoS, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Remarks with Republic of Korea
South Korea’s blocking of North Korean Internet sites has been lifted since Wednesday evening, drawing attention to what caused the removal of the blockade. Based on Dong-A Ilbo’s checking, Internet sites that the North opened overseas have been accessible from South Korea through mobile phones and laptop computers since this evening. There are at least 30 known North Korean websites opened overseas. The blocking of access to those websites from South Korea has been lifted at once. (Sung-Ha Joo, “Bans on Access to N. Korean Websites Lifted All at Once,” Dong-A Ilbo, May 11, 2018)

5/12/18 DPRK FoMin press release: “In accordance with the decision of the Third Plenary Meeting of the Seventh Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, the Nuclear Weapon Institute and other concerned institutions are taking technical measures for dismantling the northern nuclear test ground of the DPRK in order to ensure transparency of discontinuance of the nuclear test. A ceremony for dismantling the nuclear test ground is now scheduled between May 23 and 25, depending on weather condition. Dismantlement of the nuclear test ground will be done in the following sequence-making all tunnels of the test ground collapse by explosion; completely blocking entries; removing all observation facilities, research institutes and structures of guard units on the ground. In parallel with dismantlement of the nuclear test ground, guards and researchers will be withdrawn and the surrounding area of the test ground be completely closed. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK is authorized, in this regard, to release the following decisions. First, it has intention to allow not only the local press but also journalists of other countries to conduct on-the-spot coverage in order to show in a transparent manner the dismantlement of the northern nuclear test ground to be carried out in accordance with the decision of the Third Plenary Meeting of the Seventh Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea. In due consideration of small space of the test ground, journalists from other countries will be confined to those from China, Russia, United States, United Kingdom and south Korea [Japan?]. Second, the following steps will be taken for providing convenience of visit and coverage to international journalists. 1) All international journalists will be provided with charter flight from Beijing to Wonsan, and other related steps such as opening territorial air space will be taken. 2) Special accommodation will be arranged in Wonsan for stay of the international journalists, and press center be set up for their use. 3) Special charter train will be arranged from Wonsan to the northern nuclear test ground for the international journalists. 4) In consideration of the fact that the test ground is located in the uninhabited deep mountain area, the international journalists will be accommodated in the special charter train and be provided with appropriate conveniences. 5) Necessary conditions and cooperation will be provided to the international journalists so that they can transmit at the press center about dismantlement of the test ground which they have covered on the spot. The DPRK will, also in the future, promote close contacts and dialogue with the neighboring countries and the international society so as to safeguard peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and over the globe.” (KCNA, “Press Release of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” May 12, 2018)

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un appears to be leaving some wriggle room on the longstanding abduction issue, possibly to strengthen his diplomatic hand in negotiations with Japan. For more than a decade, Pyongyang has insisted that the issue of Japanese abducted in the 1970s and ‘80s to train North Korean spies in Japanese language, culture and customs, is settled. But Kim strayed from that position when he met with South Korean President Moon Jae-in on April 27 in the border village of Panmunjom. Moon explained the Japanese government position of resolving the issues of North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles as well as the abductions, and to make a final accounting of past problems, as part of the process of normalizing relations with North Korea. Kim Jong Un replied that he was prepared to hold dialogue with Japan at any time, the source said. The fact that he did not say the matter was already resolved may have been intended to give himself more negotiating room if and when a summit meeting is held with Japan and the abduction issue is raised. "Why doesn't Japan present the issue directly to me?" Kim Jong
Un was quoted as asking Moon. (Makino Yoshihiro, “Kim Seems to Be Leaving the Door Open on Thorny Abduction Issue,” Asahi Shimbun, May 12, 2018)

The head of the UN's World Food Program said it appeared North Korea was "turning a new page in history", following a four-day visit to the country. David Beasley, former governor of South Carolina, said he had enjoyed unprecedented access to the secretive state, spending two days in the capital Pyongyang and two in the countryside, accompanied by government minders. He said there was undoubtedly a hunger problem in North Korea but it was not on the scale of the 1990s famine. Beasley told BBC radio that North Korea's leaders had a "sense of optimism." He described the farming he witnessed outside the capital, in a country where only around a fifth of the land is arable. "One of the most powerful things that I saw was out in the countryside -- it's spring, they're planting -- there's not mechanization. You've got oxen pulling ploughs, men and women in the fields," said Beasley. "It's very structured, very organized, every foot and inch of dirt is being toiled with rakes and hoes and shovels, and they're literally planting crops up to the edge of the road, down embankments, using every available space because it is a land that's mostly mountainous." Beasley said: "I didn't see starvation like you had in the famine back in the 1990s, that's the good news. But is there a hunger issue, is there under-nutrition? There's no question about it." A United Nations-led report in March said chronic food shortages and malnutrition were widespread. Around 41 percent -- 10.5 million people -- were undernourished, it said. Around 18 million North Koreans, or 70 percent of the population including 1.3 million children aged under five, depend on the government-run Public Distribution System for rations of cereal and potatoes. But most people do not consume a sufficiently diverse diet for healthy development, the report said. (AFP, “WFP Chief Senses North Korea ‘Turning a New Page,’” May 12, 2018)

5/13/18
KCNA: “After hearing President Trump's verbal message, the respected and beloved Comrade Supreme Leader expressed great appreciation and thanks for the President's deep interest in resolving the issue through dialogue and new alternatives, and his active posture regarding the North Korea-US summit meeting.” (KCNA-TV, May 13, 2018)

5/14/18
A delegation of North Korean officials visited China in what appears to be a trip aimed at discussing follow-up measures to a recent summit between their leaders and cooperation on the upcoming US-North Korea summit talks, sources said. A group of officials, including Ryu Myong-son, department director of the Central Committee of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea, and Kim Nung-o, head of the party's North Pyongan Central Committee, were seen visiting Beijing, according to the sources. China's foreign ministry refused to confirm the visit by the North Korean officials. "As for the exchanges between North Korea and China, there has been normal contact between the two sides," ministry spokesperson Lu Kang said in response to a question posed by Yonhap. "There is nothing concrete that I know about the visit," he added. The Pyongyang officials arrived at a Beijing airport earlier in the day and got into vehicles prepared for them by China before leaving for the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse. The airport was said to have been blocked when they arrived. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Officials Visit China ahead of Summit with U.S.,” Korea Herald, May 14, 2018)

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Thornton: “Gerry Seib: So in the midst of all that, one of the areas where there is going to have to be cooperation is obviously North Korea. So let's talk about that for a minute, let's start with what you heard in Beijing. What is the Chinese view right now of the coming conversation between President Trump and Kim Jong Un? Do they think this is moving in a direction that they're pleased about or are they a little uncomfortable that maybe they're being left out of the action all of a sudden? A/AS Thornton: Well I would say that the Chinese are very supportive of the advent of this meeting in Singapore. They do realize that it's a historic opportunity to try to make a change in the dynamic on the Peninsula. They really want it to be successful. They wished us success with it. That said, I think they do feel that they have a very direct interest in the solution to the issues on the Korean Peninsula and they want to contribute. I don't think they feel like they're left out because we do coordinate, we consult with them very closely. They've had their own number of meetings now with Kim Jong Un. So I think that they want to be involved and they want to know
what's going on. I [think] they are fairly comfortable at the moment. Seib: So what is a reasonable expectation for the Singapore summit, what's a likely outcome? And it's the beginning of a process not the end of one, what follows after Singapore? A/AS Thornton: Well obviously I mean you've heard the Secretary, you've the National Security Adviser, and the President. I mean we are very hopeful that Kim Jong Un represents some kind of a new face, some kind of a change, a willingness to make a strategic change in North Korea for its national situation. I think the Secretary, having met now with Kim Jong Un twice, feels that there is a prospect there. That Kim Jong Un is a different kind of leader, that he wants something different for his country. I think that augurs well for the prospect of success at the summit. Of course we're going to be putting a lot on the table. There's an expectation as he's already committed to complete denuclearization. And in his conversations with the South Koreans that there will be a big down payment, a big upfront demonstration of his intention, to do that. Not just words and statements but also actions. But I think there is a feeling that he does realize what that entails and that he is willing to at least entertain serious conversation and possible actions toward that end. And I think it will be the beginning of a process but we hope will be a kind of a front-loaded process. We will be able to get into some serious actions soon and then and then we'll see where that leads. Seib: You know if you were to be a skeptic, and there are a lot of skeptics out there, you would say look - the North Koreans agreed in 1994 in the Agreed Framework to drop their nuclear program. They agreed in 2005 in the context of the Six Party talks to drop their nuclear program. We're in 2018 having a conversation about denuclearization why should anyone think that this is different than those previous episodes? A/AS Thornton: Well there's a lot of skepticism out there. Not a small amount of it resides inside the State Department because a lot of us... Seib: You've lived this! A/AS Thornton: Have been working on North Korea for a long time have lived it. But I think there are a few things that are different this time. First of all we're dealing with Kim Jong Un, not his father or his grandfather. Most of us dealt with his father for a long period of time. He does seem to be a different kind of leader. He's very young so he presumably wants to be around for a long time and maybe wants to have some kind of different future for his country. He's lived outside of North Korea in the West so he knows what that looks like. He's aware of the differences between South Korea and North Korea. And he's feeling tremendous pressure. I think we have to take that into account for sure from the international kind of coalition that's put all this pressure through sanctions. Seib: Is he also feeling internal pressure in the sense that there is a generational change? That there is a great, perhaps, a greater realization in North Korea of what the country doesn't have. Is that part of the calculus here? A/AS Thornton: I think that's probably part of it. I mean certainly younger people and others in North Korea are getting more information from the outside coming in. Seib: I mean they have cell phones coming in from China. A/AS Thornton: Or they see soap operas from South Korea and so there's just a greater awareness of the differences, the disparities, I think. Seib: You know in Japan there is a concern, I think it's pretty palpable right now, that the U.S. be aware this is not just about intercontinental ballistic missiles carrying nuclear warheads that can hit the U.S. There are threats in the region, there are threats to Japan, and in particular their short range missiles, there are medium range missiles, there are chemical weapons, there are biological weapons, that those things not be lost in the conversation. Can you assure the Japanese, have you assured the Japanese that those issues are going to be on the table as well as the uniquely American ones? A/AS Thornton: I think we've been quite clear in what would denuclearization mean - which means all of these weapons of mass destruction that threaten the international community, that threaten the region - would be on the table. Certainly the international sanctions regime and the UN Security Council resolutions talk about not only the nuclear program, but also the missile programs and it's any missile that uses ballistic technology of any range. So it's not limited to that. But the clear intention of the administration is to take care of the basket of problems covered by the UN Security Council resolutions. And chemical and biological weapons are also covered, of course. Seib: And in that basket do you also find Japanese abductions? A/AS Thornton: Well I think this President's been very clear with Prime Minister Abe that he's, you know, committed to raising this issue. I think what I would say is that there's certainly going to be prioritization on the first, in the first instance, on denuclearization because that's the goal that we've set. But all of these issues in the course of a discussion with North Korea would have to be on the table and have to eventually be addressed. Seib: It seems that the potential disconnect in this conversation between President Trump and Kim Jong Un is
conceivably the question of synchronization. Even if there's an agreement that denuclearization is something that the North Koreans can do and that economic rewards are the prize that they seek, that the Trump administration's view is we have to have denuclearization first then the economic rewards. And I think it's pretty clear already that the North Koreans are going to want to see this move forward in a more of a synchronized, incremental fashion. Is that possible or is there a potential fallout from that disconnect that stops this whole process? A/AS Thornton: Well it's going to be very complicated and the devil's going to be in the details so getting into a specific kind of description of what might happen is going to be difficult. I think it's obvious that there will be multiple steps to any denuclearization. And one thing that's true about verification with inspectors - and everyone's talked about that this would have to be verified denuclearization - that the more effective verifications are the ones that last longer. A short verification doesn't get you very much verified. So I think the question is what could be front-loaded in a process that's inevitably going to go on for some time. Then what would be acceptable to the North Korean side in return for that front-loading, whatever it is. And so that's really what the conversations that we're going to have between now and the summit and at the summit have to get at is - what is the exchange there? But I don't think economic sanctions lifting is the only thing on the table because, of course what Kim Jong Un and other North Korean leaders going back have always talked about is the need for some kind of security assurances and other kinds of assurances, legitimacy, respect from the international community that kind of thing. So there may be other things that would also be valuable. Seib: Those things are all possible in this environment? A/AS Thornton: We'll see! As the President likes to say. Seib: He does like to say that. A/AS Thornton: We hope so. Seib: Is there a feeling in China, where you just were, that the conversations between Kim Jong Un and President Xi moved this ball forward? In other words they've had the conversation that is about to occur with President Trump, how do they evaluate the tenor of that conversation and the intention of the North Korean leader at this point. A/AS Thornton: Well they have said that they also detect that there is a change on the part of the attitude of the leadership in North Korea with respect to denuclearization. They are hopeful that this can be a new opportunity to move forward. They haven't had, it was my sense, they haven't had a lot of detailed discussions of denuclearization with the North Korean regime, but they have certainly talked about their relationship, what kinds of desires the North Koreans would have in the process that would go forward with a number of different countries in the region, etc. So they seemed positive. They certainly seem to want to contribute. They think that the role they've played has been helpful. That they have always continued to say that they will abide by the UN Security Council resolutions. That they understand that those need to be continued, to be implemented, but that they hope that we can kind of turn a page here. And let the North Koreans know that there are incentives and other things that would make up the bright future for North Korea that the president talks about, that are out there, available in the context of this conversation. Seib: Are you an optimist? I'm just going to open this up to question. A/AS Thornton: I am very optimistic. Yeah I wouldn't be in this business if I wasn't an optimistic but yeah I feel... Seib: But you spoke to a few minutes ago about the skepticism. You know it's very hard to sort it out at this point. A/AS Thornton: Well I mean you have to be optimistic but I think it does feel a little bit different. We've seen the North Koreans, and I've dealt with them and they don't give things away without making you pay for them, usually up front and usually several times, and usually then you still don't get it in the end. And this does feel a little different. Seib: A little like negotiating with the Iranians. A/AS Thornton: Yeah yeah yeah exactly. Seib: Last chance for the day for some questions from the audience. If not there's plenty more to talk about that I have. Anybody want to jump in here? And I'm sorry having a hard time seeing is there a hand back there. There you go. Sophie Richardson: Hi Susan, its Sophie Richardson, Human Rights Watch. A/AS Thornton: Hi. How are you? Sophie Richardson: I wanted to ask a question about an issue related to North Korea that really hasn't come up earlier today. It really didn't come up in the discussions with the ambassadors earlier today. Which is that I think we can all probably reasonably agree that North Korea has one of the most appalling human rights records in the world. And it's been, I think, very jarring to hear people talk about Kim Jong Un as if he has not presided over a regime that enforces collective punishment, torture, summary executions. And you know we're certainly aware that obviously denuclearization is a positive human rights step, but
there is no discussion it seems now about things like whether there should be, for example, a
referral to the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity. So I'd like to hear you
talk about where that issue fits in as we sort of hurdle toward Singapore. Thanks A/AS Thornton:
Well certainly, human rights in North Korea has been a focus of not just this administration but
previous administrations. We had North Korea Human Rights Week last week. We've had
numerous discussions with defectors and I think defectors even met with the President in the Oval
Office earlier this year. There's a great awareness of all of the problems. I think for the purposes of
approaching the current summit and the set of problems that we have on the table, the priority and
the place where I think the international community and the UN Security Council resolutions with
regard to the weapons programs in North Korea give us the greatest amount of pressuring coalition
is on denuclearization. So I think all of the principals in the administration have talked about
denuclearization, complete verifiable and irreversible denuclearization, as the goal but that all of
the other issues would have to come up in the context of the discussion with the North Koreans
over time as we progress through. If we get to denuclearization—great and then we will be
raising a number of other issues. I mean they're the issues of chemical and biological
weapons, there's the issue of cyberattacks. There's the issue of human rights, so I think, you
know, Japan's abductees, there are also a number of detainees from other countries
potentially, so there are a number of issues out there on the table. But we have to focus on
denuclearization as the primary threat that's out there, that's destabilizing the region.”
(DoS, Susan A. Thornton, Acting Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs,
Remarks at Wall Street Journal’s CEO Council’s Meeting, Palace Hotel Tokyo, May 15, 2018)

KCNA report: “The south Korean authorities, together with the U.S., has been staging the largest-
ever "2018 Max Thunder" joint air drill throughout south Korea since May 11 in a bid to make a
preemptive air strike at the DPRK and win the air. Involved in the drill are over 100 fighters of
various missions including B-52 strategic nuclear bombers and F-22 Raptor stealth fighters
under the supervision of the U.S. imperialist aggressor forces in south Korea and the south Korean
air force. It is to last till May 25. Public opinions at home and abroad comment that the maneuver
is the largest-ever and a reflection of the invariable stand of the U.S. and south Korea to persist in
the "maximum pressure and sanctions" against the DPRK. The DPRK-targeted drill across south
Korea is an undisguised challenge to the Panmunjom Declaration and a deliberate military
provocation to the trend of the favorably developing situation on the Korean Peninsula. The north
and the south solemnly declared in the declaration that a new peace era was ushered in and
reached an agreement on making joint efforts to defuse the acute military tensions on the
peninsula and substantially ease the danger of war and the U.S. also fully supported it. However,
even before the ink of the historic April 27 Declaration got dry, the south Korean authorities and
the U.S. started such a drill against the DPRK, reacting to all the peace-loving efforts and good
intentions which the DPRK has shown with rude and wicked provocation and arousing serious
concern and disappointment among all the fellow countrymen and the international community
wanting the declaration to be implemented. If the U.S. and the south Korean authorities regard the
phase of improving inter-Korean ties and the DPRK-U.S. dialogue provided by the proactive and
broadminded efforts and measures of the DPRK as something allowed any time and any hour,
then they are sadly mistaken. The south Korean authorities, in particular, resorted to such
improper acts quite contrary to the promise to make efforts for the peace, prosperity and
reunification on the peninsula together with the north and are allowing even human scum to
brazenly hurl mud at the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK and its system and play
down the Panmunjom Declaration in front of the building of the "National Assembly." There is a
limit in showing goodwill and offering opportunity. The historic Panmunjom Declaration cannot
be implemented by the unilateral efforts of a single party but can result in a good fruition only
when the two parties create favorable conditions and climate by pooling their efforts. We cannot
but take a step of suspending the north-south high-level talks scheduled on May 16 under the
prevailing seriously awful situation that a mad-cap north-targeted war and confrontation racket are
being kicked up in south Korea. The south Korean authorities, lost to all senses, should be held
wholly accountable for the scuttled north-south high-level talks and the difficulties and obstacles
in the way of the north-south relations. The U.S. will have to think twice about the fate of the
DPRK-U.S. summit now on high agenda before a provocative military racket against the DPRK in
league with the south Korean authorities. We will closely watch the ensuing behavior of the U.S. and the south Korean authorities.” (KCNA, “KCNA Blast U.S. and S. Korea for Staging Large-Scale Drill against DPRK,” May 16, 2018)

Kim Gye Gwan, first vice-minister of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK, press statement: “Kim Jong Un, chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, made a strategic decision to put an end to the unpleasant history of the DPRK-U.S. relations and met Pompeo, U.S. secretary of state, for two times during his visit to our country and took very important and broad-minded steps for peace and stability in the Korean peninsula and the world. In response to the noble intention of Chairman Kim Jong Un, President Trump stated his position for terminating the historically deep-rooted hostility and improving the relations between the DPRK and the U.S. I appreciated the position positively with an expectation that upcoming DPRK-U.S. summit would be a big step forward for catalyzing détente on the Korean peninsula and building a great future. But now prior to the DPRK-U.S. summit, unbridled remarks provoking the other side of dialogue are recklessly made in the U.S. and I am totally disappointed as these constitute extremely unjust behavior. High-ranking officials of the White House and the Department of State including Bolton, White House national security adviser, are letting loose the assertions of so-called Libya mode of nuclear abandonment, "complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization", "total decommissioning of nuclear weapons, missiles, biochemical weapons," etc, while talking about formula of "abandoning nuclear weapons first, compensating afterwards." This is not an expression of intention to address the issue through dialogue. It is essentially a manifestation of awfully sinister move to impose on our dignified state the destiny of Libya or Iraq which had been collapsed due to yielding the whole of their countries to big powers. I cannot suppress indignation at such moves of the U.S., and harbor doubt about the U.S. sincerity for improved DPRK-U.S. relations through sound dialogue and negotiations. World knows too well that our country is neither Libya nor Iraq which have met miserable fate. It is absolutely absurd to dare compare the DPRK, a nuclear weapon state, to Libya which had been at the initial stage of nuclear development. We shed light on the quality of Bolton already in the past, and we do not hide our feeling of repugnance towards him. If the Trump administration fails to recall the lessons learned from the past when the DPRK-U.S. talks had to undergo twists and setbacks owing to the likes of Bolton and turns its ear to the advice of quasi-“patriots” who insist on Libya mode and the like, prospects of upcoming DPRK-U.S. summit and overall DPRK-U.S. relations will be crystal clear. We have already stated our intention for denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and made clear on several occasions that precondition for denuclearization is to put an end to anti-DPRK hostile policy and nuclear threats and blackmail of the United States. But now, the U.S. is miscalculating the magnanimity and broad-minded initiatives of the DPRK as signs of weakness and trying to embellish and advertise as if these are the product of its sanctions and pressure. The U.S. is trumpeting as if it would offer economic compensation and benefit in case we abandon nuke. But we have never had any expectation of U.S. support in carrying out our economic construction and will not at all make such a deal in future, either. It is a ridiculous comedy to see that the Trump administration, claiming to take a different road from the previous administrations, still clings to the outdated policy on the DPRK - a policy pursued by previous administrations at the time when the DPRK was at the stage of nuclear development. If President Trump follows in the footsteps of his predecessors, he will be recorded as more tragic and unsuccessful president than his predecessors, far from his initial ambition to make unprecedented success. If the Trump administration takes an approach to the DPRK-U.S. summit with sincerity for improved DPRK-U.S. relations, it will receive a deserved response from us. However, if the U.S. is trying to drive us into a corner to force our unilateral nuclear abandonment, we will no longer be interested in such dialogue and cannot but reconsider our proceeding to the DPRK-U.S. summit.” (KCNA, “Press Statement by First Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of DPRK,” May 16, 2018)

Joint exercises between the United States and South Korea will move forward but the B-52 strategic bomber and eight F-22 Raptors will not be deployed during drills. The decision to
President Donald Trump said he will still insist on the denuclearization of North Korea following Pyongyang’s threat to cancel a planned bilateral summit with Washington. "We haven't been notified at all," he said at the White House, in response to reporters' questions about the North Korean threat to cancel his talks with Kim Jong Un. "We haven't seen anything. We haven't heard anything. We'll have to see what happens," he said. Asked whether he will still insist on denuclearizing North Korea, Trump said, "Yeah." Earlier in the day, White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said the United States is prepared for "tough negotiations" with North Korea even while it remains hopeful for the anticipated summit. "We're still hopeful that the meeting will take place and we'll continue down that path, but at the same time we've been prepared that these could be tough negotiations," she said in an interview with Fox News. "The president is ready if the meeting takes place. If it doesn't, we'll continue the maximum pressure campaign that's been ongoing." (Kyodo, “Trump to Still Insist on North Korea Denuclearization,” Kyodo, May 17, 2018)

The White House said that the Libya model advocated by National Security Advisor John Bolton was not applicable to denuclearizing North Korea, apparently reacting to North Korea’s threat to pull out of a summit scheduled for next month. Asked if the Libya model was the denuclearization framework it was pursuing, White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders walked back comments by Bolton last month, saying she hadn’t “seen that as part of any discussions.” “I am not aware that that’s a model that we are using,” she said. “I know that that comment was made,” she continued, referring to Bolton’s remark on “Face the Nation” that Washington was looking at the Libya model to be applied to North Korea. “There’s not a cookie-cutter model on how this would work.” (Kang Jin-kyu, “White House Shoots down Libya Model,” JoongAng Ilbo, May 18, 2018)

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Trump: “Q Mr. President, on North Korea — can I ask you a question about North Korea? TRUMP: Well, nothing has changed on North Korea that we know of. We have not been told anything. And if it does, that’s fine. If it doesn’t, I think we’ll probably have a very successful meeting. But we have not been told anything. We’re just reading stories like you are. We’ve heard certain things from South Korea. But we’ll see what happens. If the meeting happens, it happens. And if it doesn’t, we go on to the next step. Q Is this just a typical thing that North Korea does? Did you expect this? PRESIDENT TRUMP: I don’t know. I really don’t know. No, I want to give everybody the benefit of a doubt. I think that — I can only say our people are literally dealing with them right now, in terms of making arrangements for the meeting. So that’s a lot different than what you read. But oftentimes what you read, if it’s not fake news, is true. So we’ll see what happens. We are dealing with them now. We may have the meeting; we may not have the meeting. If we don’t have it, that will be very interesting. We’ll see what happens. The border is still quite strong. I think things changed a little bit when they met with China. They met the second time. As you know, Kim Jong-un had a second meeting with China, which was a little bit of a surprise meeting. ...Q Would you consider a personal outreach to Kim to get him moving toward — keep him moving toward — TRUMP: No, we’ll see what happens. Look, you have to want to do it. With deals — that’s what I do, is deals. And with deals you have to have two parties that want to do it. He absolutely wanted to do it. Perhaps he doesn’t want to do it. Perhaps they spoke with China — that could be right — President Xi, a friend of mine, great guy. But he’s for China, and I’m for the United States. And that’s the way it is, and I suspect it’s never going to change. But I will say this: We are continuing to negotiate in terms of location — the location as to where to meet, how to meet, rooms, everything else. And they’ve been negotiating
like nothing happened. But if you read the newspapers, maybe it won’t happen. I can’t tell you yet. I will tell you very shortly. We’re going to know very soon. ...Yeah, Steve? Q They seemed to get annoyed by a comment that Ambassador Bolton made about the Libya model of denuclearization. THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. Well, the Libyan model isn’t a model that we have at all, when we’re thinking of North Korea. In Libya, we decimated that country. That country was decimated. There was no deal to keep Qaddafi. The Libyan model that was mentioned was a much different deal. This would be with Kim Jong-un — something where he’d be there, he’d be in his country, he’d be running his country. His country would be very rich. His people are tremendously industrious. If you look at South Korea, this would be, really, a South Korean model in terms of their industry, in terms of what they do. They’re hardworking, incredible people. But the Libyan model was a much different model. We decimated that country. We never said to Qaddafi, “Oh, we’re going to give you protection. We’re going to give you military strength. We’re going to give you all of these things.” We went in and decimated him. And we did the same thing with Iraq. Now, whether or not we should have, I could tell you I was against it from the beginning because look what we have right now: We’ve spent $7 trillion — can you believe that — $7 trillion in the Middle East. Right out the window. You might as well throw the money right out the window. And we’ve done a lot of infrastructure. We just had airports approved. You saw that. A lot of things are happening. But we spent $7 trillion in the Middle East, and look where we are right now. It’s pretty sad. But the model, if you look at that model with Qaddafi, that was a total decimation. We went in there to beat him. Now that model would take place if we don’t make a deal, most likely. But if we make a deal, I think Kim Jong-un is going to be very, very happy. I really believe he’s going to be very happy. But this is just the opposite. And I think when John Bolton made that statement, he was talking about if we’re going to be having a problem because we cannot let that country have nukes. We just can’t do it. So that’s the way it meant. It’s really just the opposite. Because if you — if you look at — again, you look at Syria, that was a total decimation. Yes, John. Q Well, what security guarantees are you willing to give to North Korea, in terms of keeping — PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, I’m willing to do — we’re willing to do a lot. And he’s willing to, I think, do a lot also. And I think we’ll actually have a good relationship, assuming we have the meeting, and assuming something comes of it. And he’ll get protections that would be very strong. Syria had never had protections. If you look at Syria, if you look at — or if you look anywhere around the Middle East — you look at Iraq, you look at Libya — with Libya, certainly they didn’t have protection; they had the exact opposite. That was — that was absolute decimation. And that’s what we planned to do, and that’s what we did. Q Reduce U.S. troop level is a possibility in South Korea? PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, I’m not going to talk about that. We’re going to say that he will have very adequate protection, and we’ll see how it all turns out. I think this: The best thing he could ever do is to make a deal.” (White House Office of the Press, Remarks by President Trump and Secretary General Stoltenberg of NATO before Bilateral Meeting,” Oval Office, May 17, 2018)

Sigal: “North Korea has just delivered a brushback pitch, warning the United States and South Korea that inclusion of nuclear assets like the B-52s in joint military exercises—not the exercises themselves—is inconsistent with President Trump’s pledge at President Moon’s urging to move toward peace in Korea. And peace is a critical part of Pyongyang’s aim in its diplomatic give-and-take with Washington and Seoul. That’s why U.S. and South Korean military authorities were right to cancel the B-52 flights. Washington resumed B-52 flights after a long hiatus after Pyongyang conducted its first nuclear test in 2006. When North Korea suspended nuclear and missile testing, it expected the United States and South Korea to exclude nuclear assets from their joint military exercises on the Korean Peninsula. That was the crux of Kim Jong Un’s 2018 New Year’s Day address, calling on the South to “discontinue all the nuclear war drills they stage with outside forces.” The Party newspaper Rodong Sinmun confirmed that interpretation ten days later, “If the South Korean authorities really want detente and peace, they should first stop all the efforts to bringing in U.S. nuclear equipment and conducts exercise for nuclear warfare with foreign forces.” To the North, the resumption of B-52 flights now were a sign that President Trump may be tempted to heed the advice of John Bolton and other hardliners to confront Kim Jong Un at the summit with an ultimatum to disarm or else in the mistaken belief that brandishing sanctions and
threatening war gives Washington leverage. But Kim retains far greater leverage by resuming nuclear and missile tests and making more weapons. Washington believes that pressure brought Kim to the negotiating table. Yet Pyongyang signaled its current course more than three years ago in informal contacts, long before tougher sanctions took effect. U.S. demands that Pyongyang suspend nuclear and missile tests as a precondition to talks without getting anything in return had only delayed diplomatic give-and-take for five years, enabling it to add to its nuclear capacity and boost its bargaining leverage in the meantime. Trump, by dropping those preconditions, opened the way to the summit, evidence that honey works better than vinegar. Kim is not about to commit to denuclearize completely, Trump’s ultimate goal, without a reciprocal commitment from Trump to end enmity and move to peace in Korea. Such reciprocal pledges will serve as the basis of a Trump-Kim summit communique, as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo hinted after his last meeting with Kim. An end to U.S. enmity has been the Kims’ aim for thirty years. Throughout the Cold War, Kim Jong Un’s grandfather, Kim Il Sung, had played China off against the Soviet Union to maintain his freedom of maneuver. In 1988, anticipating the Soviet Union’s collapse, he reached out to reconcile with the United States, South Korea and Japan to serve as counterweights to China. The North’s need only intensified as China’s power grew. From Pyongyang’s vantage point, that aim was the basis of the 1994 Agreed Framework, which committed Washington to “move toward full normalization of political and economic relations,” or, in plain English, end enmity. That was also the essence of the September 2005 Six Party Joint Statement which bound Washington and Pyongyang to “respect each other’s sovereignty, exist peacefully together, and take steps to normalize their relations subject to their respective bilateral policies” as well as to “negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.” For Washington, the point of these agreements was the end of Pyongyang’s nuclear and missile programs—with some success. For nearly a decade under the Agreed Framework, when the North had no nuclear weapons, it shuttered its production of fissile material and conducted just two test-launches of medium and longer-range missiles. It did so again from 2007 to 2009. Both agreements collapsed, however, when Washington did little to implement its commitment to reconcile and Pyongyang reneged on denuclearization. On Wednesday [May 16], Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye Gwan made it clear that reconciliation, not aid or investment, remains Pyongyang’s aim: “We have already stated our intention for denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and made clear on several occasions that precondition for denuclearization is to put an end to anti-DPRK hostile policy and nuclear threats and blackmail of the United States.” He concluded, “If the Trump administration takes an approach to the DPRK-U.S. summit with sincerity for improved DPRK-U.S. relations, it will receive a deserved response from us. However, if the U.S. is trying to drive us into a corner to force our unilateral nuclear abandonment, we will no longer be interested in such dialogue and cannot but reconsider our proceeding to the DPRK-U.S. summit.” His denunciation of the Libya model prompted the White House to deny it had that model in mind. Trump and Kim both want a successful summit. Whether Kim means to keep his pledge to disarm is idle speculation. Sustained diplomatic give-and-take with concrete proposals for reciprocal steps is the only way to find out.” (Leon V. Sigal, “Pyongyang’s Brushback Pitch,” 38North, May 18, 2018)

He was, according to the South Korean press, the “scene stealer” at the latest meeting in Pyongyang between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Who was that white-haired Korean American man sitting at the table with Pompeo and Kim on May 9? The one smiling and laughing with Kim and Pompeo, the one featured on the front page of Rodong Sinmun and on the state television channel. The mystery man was the subject of intense speculation in the South Korean media. It turns out he is Andrew Kim, the head of the CIA’s Korea Mission Center, and he is central to planning the summit between President Trump and Kim Jong Un, scheduled to take place in Singapore on June 12. As a result of his central role in the summit preparations, Andrew Kim is now making his — almost certainly unwelcome — international debut thanks to a deluge of stories about him, many of which also note the color of his hair, a novelty in a country where men routinely have suspiciously black dos well into their 80s. “Korean-origin 007,” blared a headline on the broadcaster Channel A’s website. “The veiled Korean American who delivers Trump’s North Korea briefing every morning,” trumpeted Dong-A Ilbo. The CIA set up the Korea Mission Center last May “to harness the full resources, capabilities, and authorities of the Agency in addressing the nuclear and ballistic missile threat
posed by North Korea,” according to a news release at the time. “A veteran CIA operations officer has been selected as the new Assistant Director for Korea and presides over the Mission Center,” the statement said. However, it did not name the officer. And the CIA declined to comment for this article. South Korean government officials this week confirmed media speculation that the mystery man in the photos of Pompeo’s meeting with Kim Jong Un is indeed Andrew Kim, who was born and raised in South Korea and forged important networks here. Then known by his Korean name, Kim Sung-hyun, he went to the prestigious Seoul High School, whose alumni include Suh Hoon, now the head of South Korea’s intelligence agency, and Chung Eui-yong, South Korea’s national security adviser. He is also Chung’s cousin and calls him “ajosshi” — the familiar Korean term for middle-aged man — in casual settings, rather than calling him by his title, a former intelligence official told Chosun Ilbo. “Andrew Kim is a U.S. national, but he has familial and school-related ties in South Korea, and I personally think his affection for South Korea is quite deep,” a presidential adviser who has met with Andrew Kim on several occasions told reporters here, on the condition of anonymity to discuss their private conversation. South Korea is a place that thrives on personal networks, especially those forged at school. For that reason, Andrew Kim’s connections would help in the preparation of next month’s summit, said Jung H. Pak, who worked as a Korea analyst at the CIA until last year and knows Andrew Kim. Pak, who is now at the Brookings Institution, declined to talk about Andrew Kim specifically but said that having someone with such strong links to South Korean officials “suggests there’s probably a high level of coordination going on, which is a good thing.” Cha Du-hyeong, a former South Korean intelligence adviser, agreed. “Such personal ties can be used to help keep in step with each other in these types of situations,” he said. Andrew Kim moved to the United States with his parents during his high school freshman year, according to multiple local reports. He spent most, if not all, of his professional life at the CIA, serving in Moscow, Beijing and Bangkok, then as station chief in Seoul until he retired from the agency. However, he was brought back to head the Korea Mission Center when it opened last year, when the CIA was led by Pompeo. Andrew Kim is widely viewed as a hawk on North Korea, so much so that the South Korean and Japanese press have been referring to him as a “grim reaper on North Korea” or the “messenger from hell.” He was involved in planning strikes on North Korea last year, said the South Korean presidential adviser. “When I met with him, I realized the U.S. was seriously preparing military options, that these weren’t mere bluffs from the North Korea hawks,” he told local reporters. “They were drawing about some 20 scenarios for specific action plans, depending on different moves from North Korea.” But in an abrupt about-turn from planning strikes, this year Andrew Kim is at the center of the sudden burst of diplomacy that led to last month’s inter-Korean summit and the announcement of next month’s planned meeting between Trump and Kim Jong Un. Andrew Kim came to South Korea in February, at the same time that Vice President Pence was there for the opening of the Winter Olympics, another South Korean government official told reporters, also on the customary condition of anonymity. Meetings he had on that visit, the official said, paved the way for Pompeo’s first visit to Pyongyang, over Easter weekend. (Anna Fifield, “South Korea Asks: Who’s That Man with Pompeo in Pyongyang?” Washington Post, May 18, 2018, p. A-12)
The administration’s concerns is that although the Kim regime promised to destroy its nuclear test site, North Korea has not sanctioned any foreign inspectors or journalists to enter the country to confirm that such a process is underway. “The North’s attitude is a pretty long distance away from what it appeared to be as Moon portrayed,” the U.S. official said. “It’s looking pretty different from that. It’s looking more like the old playbook.” Moon is scheduled to visit Trump at the White House on May 22 to coordinate strategy ahead of the Singapore summit. “Since the China visit, they’ve moved pretty dramatically, shifted in the last several weeks to North Korea’s old position,” the U.S. official said. Inside the West Wing, aides said Trump was upset by Kim’s first visit to China in March, ahead of which Beijing did not notify the White House. The president reacted angrily in a national security meeting, according to an administration official, and Xi later wrote a letter assuaging Trump. Trump’s concerns about China’s influence on the summit with Kim were reflected in the president’s tweet last week in which he declared that his administration was looking at ways of potentially assisting ZTE, a Chinese phone maker that has struggled in the wake of U.S. economic sanctions. Trump’s public pronouncement was aimed, in part, at trying to keep the Chinese pressure on North Korea, said the administration official, who also spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations. (David Nakamura and Carol D. Leonnig, “Trump Commiserates with South Korea over Summit,” Washington Post, May 21, 2018 p. A-12)
families without delay and thus show the will to improve the north-south ties. We will prudently watch their future attitude.” (KCNA, “Red Cross Society of the DPRK Demands Repatriation of Abducted Women Citizens, May 19, 2018)

President Trump, increasingly concerned that his summit meeting in Singapore next month with North Korea’s leader could turn into a political embarrassment, has begun pressing his aides and allies about whether he should take the risk of proceeding with a historic meeting that he had leapt into accepting, according to administration and foreign officials. Trump was both surprised and angered by a statement issued by the North’s chief nuclear negotiator, who declared that the country would never trade away its nuclear weapons capability in exchange for economic aid, administration officials said. The statement, while a highly familiar tactic by the North, represented a jarring shift in tone after weeks of conciliatory gestures. On May 17 and 18 Trump peppered aides with questions about the wisdom of proceeding, and last night he called President Moon Jae-in of South Korea to ask why the North’s public statement seemed to contradict the private assurances that Moon had conveyed after he met Kim Jong-un in late April. It was a sign of Trump’s discomfort, some officials speculated, that he could not wait to discuss the issue until Moon arrived for his meetings here, though there is no indication that the president is considering pulling out of the North Korea talks. Trump’s aides have grown concerned that the president — who has said that “everyone thinks” he deserves a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts — has signaled that he wants the summit meeting too much. The aides also worry that Kim, sensing the president’s eagerness, is prepared to offer assurances that will fade over time. Moreover, Trump’s decision this month to withdraw from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal raises the stakes for the North Korea negotiation. If he emerges with anything less than what President Barack Obama got, which in Iran included the verified shipment of 97 percent of all nuclear material out of the country, it will be hard for Trump to convince anyone other than his base that the negotiation was a success. The aides are also concerned about what kind of grasp Trump has on the details of the North Korea program, and what he must insist upon as the key components of denuclearization. Moon and his aides reported that. Kim seemed highly conversant with all elements of the program when the two men met, and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has made similar comments about Kim, based on his two meetings with him in Pyongyang, the North’s capital. But aides who have recently left the administration say Trump has resisted the kind of detailed briefings about enrichment capabilities, plutonium reprocessing, nuclear weapons production and missile programs that Obama and George W. Bush regularly sat through. Bolton has been clear that in his view the president should use the Singapore meeting to declare that the North must give up its entire arsenal and nuclear infrastructure before crippling economic sanctions are eased. The South has been advocating a more traditional confidence-building approach, in which concessions by the North result in a gradual lifting of sanctions. But Trump has said he will not repeat that technique, because it led to failure by his four immediate predecessors. Until now, administration officials have been saying they expect Kim to agree to denuclearization at the Singapore summit meeting and to set a schedule for a fast down payment over the next six months, which would involve turning over some number of nuclear weapons, closing production facilities and allowing inspectors to range the country. Those who have dealt with North Korea most intensively say that expectation will have to be scaled back if Trump expects success. “If Trump is truly expecting to see a handover of nuclear weapons in six months, without anything in return, that is very unrealistic,” said Joseph Yun, the State Department’s North Korea coordinator until he retired a few months ago. He predicted that. Trump would be forced into the kind of step-by-step measures that his predecessors attempted, “because there is no other way.” (David E. Sanger, “Trump Weighs the Risk of Talks after a North Korean Reversal,” New York Times, May 21, 2018, p. A-1)

Wit: “What exactly do the North Koreans mean when they say they’re willing to denuclearize? And how exactly would they do so? These are the key mysteries at the heart of the upcoming Trump-Kim summit—and indeed they threatened to derail the whole thing this week when Kim Jong Un objected to National-Security Adviser John Bolton’s vision for it. In a statement attributed to Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye Gwan, North Korea chastised Bolton for his invocation of the “Libya model” of unilateral denuclearization as a template, noting that the
“world knows too well that our country is neither Libya nor Iraq which have met miserable [fates].” The White House quickly walked back Bolton’s remarks. The exchange did little to clarify how the U.S. plans to achieve denuclearization. But for a group of former U.S. government officials who have been meeting with North Korean officials over the past decade, North Korea’s own plans are anything but hidden. A series of meetings with North Korean officials in 2013, which I attended along with other former U.S. officials, holds valuable clues—and they show that the North Koreans have given a great deal of thought to denuclearization and almost certainly have a concrete plan of action for the upcoming summit, whether the White House does or not. Those meetings happened five years ago, but they took place at the very beginning stages of the nuclear strategy Kim is executing to such dramatic effect now. At the time, Kim Jong Un had just enshrined his byungjin policy, stating that the North intended to develop a nuclear arsenal as a shield behind which it could modernize its economy. North Korean officials explained in these private sessions that Kim had issued the new policy after concluding that his country needed more nuclear weapons to deter the United States. It wasn’t just that the North Koreans were concerned about escalating tensions in late 2012 and early 2013, as well as continuing flights of nuclear-capable U.S. bombers over the Korean Peninsula. The North Koreans also felt Washington and Seoul thought they could bully the North during the leadership transition that had begun with the death of Kim Jong II in December 2011. One North Korean official I spoke to then said “nuclear” equaled “survival.” But other officials said that was only under “present circumstances,” and their approach could change if the tense relationship between the United States and North Korea improved. That might explain a puzzling move by the North in June 2013, when the National Defense Commission—the top government body in Pyongyang chaired by Kim—issued an important new pronouncement that it was open to negotiations on denuclearization. The Obama administration dismissed it at the time as propaganda. But a senior North Korean diplomat told a member of the American delegation that he himself was surprised Pyongyang was speaking of denuclearization again—especially after it had taken the issue off the table not long before. At the meetings I attended, North Korean officials were emphatic that the pronouncement came from Kim Jong Un himself, and that it reflected his commitment to improving relations with the United States. They emphasized repeatedly that denuclearization could be on the agenda of bilateral talks with the United States, or even multilateral discussions such as the Six Party Talks that had been adjourned in 2008. That position showed a welcome flexibility—it seemed to mean the denuclearization offer wasn’t just a ploy to divide the Americans from their allies by getting them alone in the negotiating room. But it was also a reflection of North Korean self-interest; a more sympathetic China in the room could counter-balance the Americans. The North Korean officials only had one condition: The United States should not set preconditions, such as requiring the North to stop nuclear and missile tests, for negotiations to take place. They said they were, however, willing to take such steps once talks resumed. Nevertheless, the North Korean proposal was difficult for the United States government to swallow. The Obama administration felt burned by the collapse of the February 2012 “Leap Day Deal,” which Washington had hoped would stop nuclear and missile testing, but which was soon followed by a North Korean launch of a satellite into space with a long-range rocket. Throughout 2013, the Obama administration, with the help of President Xi Jinping of China, tried to quietly revive talks, but only if North Korea met preconditions that demonstrated it was, as administration officials often stated publicly, “sincere” about denuclearization. Because Pyongyang would not meet them, Chinese shuttle diplomacy failed. And Pyongyang’s view was never fully explored. Of course, talk is cheap. Maybe the North Korean government pronouncement on denuclearization was just a ploy, although any seasoned analyst of Pyongyang’s policies would note that its government statements are not issued lightly. And indeed, in the private meetings, the North Korean officials actually laid out a concrete plan to achieve denuclearization. Not surprisingly, for the North Koreans the key to denuclearization was that the United States had to end its “hostile policy.” That demand sounds vague to many Americans, but in fact, the North Koreans have made it quite clear on a number of occasions what ending a “hostile policy” would entail: stopping political, security, and economic confrontation in return for eliminating their nuclear weapons. The “political” part means U.S. recognition of North Korea as a sovereign state through establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries. (As the North Koreans pointed out, theirs is one of the few states in the international community that the U.S. has never recognized, which they see as a clear sign of its true intention to overthrow...
The security part would involve ending the state of war that has existed on the Korean Peninsula since the 1950s by replacing the temporary armistice agreement ending the Korean War with a permanent peace treaty. Finally, the economic part would consist of lifting trade restrictions and sanctions imposed on the North over the decades since the Korean War. The North Koreans saw all these elements being integrated into a phased approach. In each phase, the two sides would take simultaneous steps leading to the final outcome: the end of hostility and denuclearization. The North Koreans visualized a straightforward three-stage process for their own side of the equation—freezing their nuclear program, disabling key facilities, and finally dismantling not only those facilities but their nuclear weapons as well. The North Korean plan was encouraging but there were potential problems. First, to get the process rolling, the North Koreans wanted the United States to declare up front all the steps it was willing to take during each phase of denuclearization to show its intention to remove its “hostile policy.” In return, the North would initially freeze its nuclear program. However, when the American delegation explained that such a declaration would be problematic, since it would require that the United States lay out all the steps it was willing to take without the North doing the same, the North Koreans indicated they would be willing to consider a bilateral declaration of reciprocal commitments. (In fact, that sounds like an ideal outcome for the upcoming Trump-Kim summit.) Second, North Korean willingness to consider an initial freeze on all of its nuclear capabilities—not just testing but also production of bomb-making material—was intriguing but raised other problems. Such a freeze would be a big step forward, since it would prevent the North from producing more weapons-grade material and help set the stage for dismantling its weapons. But it would also require extensive on-site measures to verify that the North wasn’t hiding any facilities that could help produce new bombs. When the American team raised verification requirements, the North Koreans acknowledged that this would be a big problem, and noted “we are going to need a creative approach, because just saying it’s a problem isn’t going to be helpful.” Indeed, previous negotiations during the Bush administration had floundered over Pyongyang’s unwillingness to accept such measures. During the 2013 meetings, the North Korean officials also insisted that denuclearization should require the U.S. to end its nuclear umbrella protecting South Korea and withdraw American troops from the peninsula once a peace treaty was concluded. But the North Koreans seemed to grasp the reality that such a demand would be completely unacceptable to both the United States and South Korea and would halt talks in their tracks. Indeed, the North has on more than one occasion, including very recently, seemed to back off this demand. True, this glimpse of Pyongyang’s denuclearization game plan is now five years old—and the North’s nuclear capabilities have advanced significantly in the meantime. More recent efforts to discuss that plan again in private with them have failed, perhaps because the North Koreans were anticipating discussions with the Trump administration and did not want to tip their negotiating hand. The 2013 plan may have been subject to some revision. In fact, the North Koreans have already deviated from it, albeit in a positive direction from the U.S. perspective: They have taken unilateral steps—halting nuclear and missile testing as well as pledging to dismantle their nuclear test site—that seemed implausible five years ago. In any case, the proposal the North Koreans offered then still gives the clearest picture we have to date of what they might want from the upcoming negotiations. And what they outlined was a step-by-step process of denuclearization accompanied in each phase by U.S. measures of their own. It is entirely different from the “Libya model” espoused by John Bolton, which involves giving up its program first and only then getting benefits in return. Indeed, the Trump administration doesn’t necessarily endorse Bolton’s view. Susan Thornton, the acting assistant secretary of state in charge of Asia, said last week that it was obvious there would be multiple steps in a long process of denuclearization, and the key issue was what happened first. How those differences over denuclearization are resolved inside the Trump administration, and whether common ground can be found with the North Koreans, will determine the future of the Korean Peninsula. The stakes are nothing less than the success or failure of the world’s best current chance to disarm North Korea. The Thornton approach could mean, over the long term, that it really happens. The Bolton approach would assure that it won’t.” (Joel S. Wit, “What the North Koreans Told Me about Their Plans,” The Atlantic, May 21, 2018)
President made clear, this will only end like the Libyan model ended if Kim Jong Un doesn't make a deal,” Pence said. “As the President made clear, this will only end like the Libyan model ended if Kim Jong Un doesn’t make a deal,” Pence told Fox News. Asked whether that could be interpreted as a threat, Pence said: “Well, I think it’s more of a fact.” (Anna Fifield, “N. Korea Threatens to Quit Summit, Calls Pence a ‘Dummy,’” Washington Post, May 24, 2018, p. A-12)

Bolton: “Kim’s chief of staff did not arrive in Singapore as scheduled on May 17. Preparations for the North’s paranoid leader were formidable, even if dwarfed by what it took for a US President to make such a journey. Delay in laying the groundwork could ultimately postpone or even cancel the meeting itself. By Monday, May 21, no North Korean advance team had arrived, hence there were no meetings with our team in Singapore. Trump began to wonder what was up, telling me, “I want to get out [of Singapore] before they do,” which sounded promising. He recounted how with the women he had dated, he never liked to have them break up with him; he always wanted to be the one doing the breaking up. (“Very revealing,” said Kelly when I told him later.) One question was whether to cancel Singapore just as Moon Jae-in came to town or wait until he departed. I urged Trump to act now, because doing so after Moon left would seem like an explicit rebuff of Moon, which was unnecessary. Trump agreed, saying, “I may tweet tonight.” At Trump’s request, I spoke with Pence and Kelly, who both agreed he should tweet away. I reported this back to Trump, and Trump started dictating what his tweet might say. After several drafts ... it (or they) emerged as: "Based on the fact that dialogue has changed pertaining to North Korea and its denuclearization, I have respectfully asked my representatives to inform North Korea to terminate the June 12th meeting in Singapore. While I very much look forward to meeting and negotiating with Kim Jong Un, perhaps we will get another chance in the future. In the meantime, I greatly appreciate the release of the 3 Americans who are now at home with their families. A follow-up tweet would say: I am disappointed that China has been unable to do what is necessary, primarily at the border [meaning sanctions enforcement], to help us obtain peace. .... But when Trump said he would probably tweet after dinner at “eight or nine o’clock.” I returned to my office to brief Pompeo, and he said, “I get it, let’s go with the strategy.” I walked to Pence’s office to tell him about the tweets; both of us were very confident Trump would cancel Singapore that evening. But when we awoke the next morning, no tweets had emerged. Trump explained to Kelly later that his cell phone had not been working the night before, but he told me he wanted to let Moon have his say before canceling.” (Bolton, The Room Where It Happened, pp. 78-79)

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Trump: “...It's a great honor to have President Moon of South Korea with us. We've become great friends over the years. And it's now -- we've now known each other for quite some time. We're working on many things. Obviously, North Korea is the big one. No matter how big trade is, North Korea, in this case, is the big one. And we'll be discussing that. We'll also be discussing trade. We have a very big trade arrangement that we're renegotiating right now with South Korea. They've been excellent people to work with for the Trump administration. And we will have some pretty good news, I think, on trade. And we'll be discussing other things. But the big topic will be Singapore and the meeting. See what happens, whether or not it happens. If it does, that will be great. It will be a great thing for North Korea. And if it doesn't, that's okay too.

Whatever it is, it is. ...PRESIDENT MOON: (As interpreted.) ...Thanks to your vision of achieving peace through strength, as well as your strong leadership, we're looking forward to the first-ever U.S.-North Korea summit. And we find ourselves standing one step closer to the dream of achieving complete denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula and world peace. All this was possible because of you, Mr. President. And I have no doubt that you will be able to complete -- accomplish a historic feat that no one had been able to achieve in the decades past. I have to say that the fate and the future of the Korean Peninsula hinge on this. And as such, I'll spare no effort to the end to support the success of the upcoming U.S.-North Korea summit, and stand with you all along the way, Mr. President. ...Q Mr. President, do you think President Kim is serious about denuclearization? PRESIDENT TRUMP: I do think he's serious. I think he would like to see
that happen. At the same time, he's going into a future that's different from what they've had. But I think he's absolutely very serious. Yes. ...Q  Can you give us an update, sir, just on where things stand with the summit? President Moon's national security advisor, on the way here, seemed to think that things are on track and that this will indeed happen. PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, we're moving along. And we'll see what happens. There are certain conditions that we want, and I think we'll get those conditions. And if we don't, we don't have the meeting. And frankly, it has a chance to be a great, great meeting for North Korea and a great meeting for the world. If it doesn't happen, maybe it will happen later. Maybe it will happen at a different time. But we will see. But we are talking. The meeting is scheduled, as you know, on June 12th in Singapore. And whether or not it happens, you'll be knowing pretty soon. But we're talking right now. Q  Do you have an idea of how denuclearization would take place? Would it be all at once? PRESIDENT TRUMP: I do. I have a very strong idea how it takes place. And it must take place. That's what we're talking about. It must take place. But I have a very strong idea, and I have very strong opinions on the subject. I also have very strong opinions that North Korea has a chance to be a great country, and it can't be a great country under the circumstances that they're living right now. But North Korea has a chance, really, to be a great country. And I think they should seize the opportunity. And we'll soon find out whether or not they want to do that. Q  Mr. President, have you spoken to Kim Jong-un? PRESIDENT TRUMP: I don't want to say that. I don't want -- Q  Do you trust Kim Jong-un, going into these meetings? PRESIDENT TRUMP: There's no reason to discuss that. I can say this: That for a short period of time, we've been dealing with North Korea, and it's been a, you know, good experience. We have three hostages back. They're home. They're living with their families. They're very, very happy. And so I can only speak for a very short period of time. But it's been a relationship that seems to be working, and we'll see how long it continues to work. Hopefully it's going to work for a long time. ...Q  President Trump, I'm a reporter from South Korea. How much confidence and trust do you have in my President in playing the mediator role in resolving this North Korea issue and the denuclearization process? PRESIDENT TRUMP: I have great confidence in your President. I think that he's brought a different perspective to the talks with North Korea. He wants to be able to make a deal. Now, you've had some very hardline administrations, and you have President Moon, and you've had others before President Moon, who also had more or less this attitude. I think he's a very capable person. I think he's an extremely competent man. I think he's a very good person. And I think he wants to have what's good for the Korean Peninsula, not just North or South -- for the entire Korean Peninsula. So I have tremendous confidence in President Moon. And I think that his way -- the way he is -- really is helping us to potentially make a deal. Whether the deal gets made or not, who knows. It's a deal. Who knows. You never know about deals. If you go into deals that are 100 percent certain, it doesn't happen. If you go into deals that have no chance, and it happens, and sometimes happens easily. I've made a lot of deals. I know deals, I think, better than anybody knows deals. You never really know. And that's why I say to you. But I will tell you, this is a good man and he is a very capable man. And I think South Korea is very lucky to have him. Do you want to interpret that for him, so he can hear? Because, you know, he's not hearing what we're doing here. ...Q  Mr. President, what are your conditions for meeting with Kim Jong-un? You said you had -- PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, I'd rather not say. But we are working on something. And, you know, there's a chance that it will work out. There's a chance; there's a very substantial chance it won't work out. I don't want to waste a lot of time, and I'm sure he doesn't want to waste a lot of time. So there's a very substantial chance that it won't work out, and that's okay. That doesn't mean it won't work out over a period of time. But it may not work out for June 12th. But there's a good chance that we'll have the meeting. Q  Mr. President, if I could ask you and President Moon this question. In terms of denuclearization, should it be an all-in-one? Or could it be incremental, with incentives along the way for Kim Jong-un to denuclearize? PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, all in one would be nice, I can tell you. I'm not going to go beyond that. It would certainly be better if it were all in one. Does it have to be? I don't think I want to totally commit myself. But all in one would be a lot better. Or at least for physical reasons, over a very short period of time. You know, you do have some physical reasons that it may not be able to do exactly that. So for physical reasons, over a very short period of time. Essentially, that would be all in one. Q  President Trump, I'm a reporter from South Korea. If North Korea and
Kim Jong-un decide CVID, will you literally guarantee the safety of the regime of North Korea?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: I will guarantee his safety. Yes, we will guarantee his safety. And we've talked about that from the beginning. He will be safe. He will be happy. His country will be rich. His country will be hardworking and very prosperous. They're very great people. They're hardworking, great people. Look at what happened with South Korea. Don't forget, we helped South Korea. We have spent trillions of dollars -- not billions -- trillions of dollars over many years. We helped South Korea. And South Korea is one of the most incredible countries in terms of what they do. You know that. That's what you are. That's where you're from. Same people. Same people. So, yeah, I think that he will be extremely happy if something works out. And if it doesn't work out, honestly, he can't be happy. But he has a chance to do something that maybe has never been done before. And I think it would be -- if you look 25 years into the future, 50 years into the future, he will be able to look back and be very proud of what he did for North Korea and, actually, for the world. But he will be very proud of what he did for North Korea. And just to finish that, because it's a very important question, South Korea, China, and Japan -- and I've spoken to all three -- one I happen to have right here -- they will be willing to help and, I believe, invest very, very large sums of money into helping to make North Korea great. Q Is there is anything you want to ask him specifically that you can tell us?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Nothing. No. We speak a lot on the phone. This should not be that long a meeting, actually. Q You mean President Moon may have a meeting with Kim Jong-un? Q What can he tell you as you're preparing for the meeting in Singapore?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, that's what we're here for. He's going to tell me. He's got his own meetings that he's had. We're going to discuss that. He may have a meeting coming up; he may not. The word is that he may not. It may be directly with us. It may go directly to us in Singapore, or it may be at a later date. But that's one of the reasons that he's here, to talk about that. Q Mr. President, what do you want to hear from President Moon about his own summit with Kim Jong-un? Q Can he tell you as you're preparing for the meeting in Singapore?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, that's what we're here for. He's going to tell me. He's got his own meetings that he's had. We're going to discuss that. He may have a meeting coming up; he may not. The word is that he may not. It may be directly with us. It may go directly to us in Singapore, or it may be at a later date. But that's one of the reasons that he's here, to talk about that. Q Is there is anything you want to ask him specifically that you can tell us?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Nothing. No. We speak a lot on the phone. This should not be that long a meeting, actually. Q You mean President Moon may have a meeting with Kim Jong-un instead of yourself?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: He may or may not. He may or may not. Right now he doesn't know whether or not he has a meeting. But he may or may not have a meeting with Kim Jong-un. Q Mr. President, are you pleased with how the trade talks with China went?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: No, not really. ... And so we're looking to go quickly. I will say I'm a little disappointed, because when Kim Jong-un had the meeting with President Xi, in China, the second meeting -- the first meeting we knew about -- the second meeting -- I think there was a little change in attitude from Kim Jong-un. So I don't like that. I don't like that. I don't like it from the standpoint of China. Now, I hope that's not true, because we have -- I have a great relationship with President Xi. He's a friend of mine. He likes me. I like him. We have -- I mean, that was two of the great days of my life being in China. It was -- I don't think anybody has ever been treated better in China -- ever in their history. And I just think it was -- many of you were there -- it was an incredible thing to witness and see. And we built a very good relationship. We speak a lot. But there was a difference when Kim Jong-un left China the second time. And I think they were dedicating an aircraft carrier that the United States paid for. Okay? Because we paid for it. Q Do you think China had a role in that?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: That was built in China. Q Do you think China may be discouraged Kim from having the summit?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: No, but I think that President Xi is a world-class poker player. And I'd probably, maybe, doing the same thing that he would do. But I will say this: There was a somewhat different attitude after that meeting, and I'm a little surprised. Now, maybe nothing happened. I'm not blaming anybody, but I'm just saying, maybe nothing happened and maybe it did. But there was different attitude by the North Korean folks when -- after that meeting. So I don't think it was a great meeting. Nobody knew about the meeting, and all of a sudden it was reported that he was in China a second time. The first time everybody knew about the second time it was like a surprise. And I think things changed after that meeting. So I can't say that I'm happy about it. Okay? Now, President Moon may have a different opinion. I would like to have your opinion on that -- what you thought of the second meeting with President Xi. What is your feeling? You may have an opinion. And I don't want to get him in trouble. He lives right next to China. You know, he's not too far away. PRESIDENT MOON: (As interpreted.) Well, first of all, I am very much aware that there are many skeptical views within the United States about whether the upcoming U.S.-North Korea summit will truly be successful and whether the complete denuclearization of North Korea will be realized. But I don't think there will be positive developments in history if we just assume that because it all failed in the past, it will fail
again. There have been many agreements between the United States and North Korea previously, but this will be the first time that there will be an agreement between the leaders. And, moreover, the person who is in charge is President Trump. And President Trump has been able to achieve this dramatic and positive change that you see right now. And I have every confidence that President Trump will be able to achieve a historic feat of making the upcoming U.S.-North Korea summit successful and end the Korean War that had been lasting for the past 65 years, and also, along the way, achieve complete denuclearization of North Korea, establish a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, and also normalize relations between the United States and North Korea. I have every confidence that he will be able to make a historic turnaround in this sense. And I will spare no effort to provide all necessary support. And I believe that all of this will lead to a great thing, that it will also guarantee the security of the North Korean regime, and also promise peace and prosperity for North Korea as well.

Q  Mr. President, do you believe that President Xi is committed to peace and committed to North Korea's denuclearization?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: I would like to think so. I hope so. I mean, we're dealing mostly on trade. But you see, when I'm dealing on trade, I have many other things in mind also. Every time I talk to China about trade, I'm thinking about the border. Because that border is a very important element in what we're doing. It has been cut off largely, but it's been opened up a little bit lately. I don't like that. I don't like that. So we have a very powerful hand on trade. And when I'm thinking about trade -- you know, I read you folks, and you say, "Well, why doesn't he" -- there's a much bigger picture that I have in mind. Trade has always been a very important element in my life, in talking about other countries ripping off the United States. I've been watching them do it for 35 years. I've been watching them do that for so many years. And nothing has changed, other than over the last 15, 20 years it's gotten worse. And it's not just China. But when I think of trade with China, I'm also thinking about what they're doing to help us with peace with North Korea. That's a very important element. So we'll see how it all works out. But in the end, it will work out. Can't tell you exactly how or why, but it always does. It's going to work out. Okay?...John, you have one more? Go ahead. Q  One more, sir. I'm just wondering, what is your vision for the long game with North Korea? Is it two Koreas peacefully coexisting? Or would you like to see reunification at some point down the road?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, I think what's going to happen is you'll start off, certainly, with two Koreas. And then it's going to be largely up to them as to whether or not they get together. You know, that border was artificially imposed many, many years ago -- and imposed, to a certain extent and to a very large extent, by us. It's an artificial border, but it's a border that nevertheless, it took seed, and that's what you have. I would say that we are looking, certainly, right now, at two Koreas. Two very successful Koreas. You're going to have a very, very successful North Korea, and you're going to have a very successful -- and you already do -- South Korea. I mean, South Korea was in condition that was as bad as North Korea many years ago, when they started this great experiment that worked out so well for them. Now, you look at Samsung and LG, and the ships that they're building, and what they're doing. It's incredible. When I was over there, I flew over plants that are incredible. What they have done is incredible. So I see two Koreas, and then ultimately, maybe someday in the future -- it wouldn't be now -- but someday in the future, maybe they'll get together and you'll go back to one Korea. And that would be okay with me, too, as long as they both wanted that.”

(White Office of the Press Secretary, Remarks by President Trump and President Moon of South Korea before Their Bilateral Meeting, May 22, 2018)
enthusiasm for the meeting, saying he believed it could usher in a new era of prosperity for North Korea and safety for Kim. But he acknowledged that after North Korea’s shift in tone, the meeting could be delayed. “There’s a very substantial chance that it won’t work out, and that’s O.K.,” Trump told reporters, as Moon listened. “That doesn’t mean it won’t work over a period of time. But it may not work out for June 12.” “There are certain conditions we want to happen,” he added. “I think we’ll get those conditions. And if we don’t, we won’t have the meeting.” Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who has met twice with Kim to make arrangements for the meeting, expressed optimism that it would still take place. But he warned that there would likely be more twists and turns before the two leaders shook hands in Singapore. (Mark Landler, “Trump Backs off Demand That Kim Disarm Instantly,” New York Times, May 23, 2018, p. A-1)

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo eased off U.S. demands that North Korea give up its nuclear weapons immediately in exchange for sanctions relief, saying instead that the administration wants Kim Jong Un’s regime to take “credible steps” toward that goal. Pompeo’s testimony to the House Foreign Affairs Committee marked a significant walking back from rhetoric that North Korea has scorned, raising doubts about the meeting between Kim and President Donald Trump have planned for Singapore on June 12. Trump told reporters Wednesday that “we will know next week about Singapore.” North Korea has insisted it won’t give up its nuclear weapons program without major concessions from the U.S. Presenting the latest formulation of U.S. policy, Pompeo told the House panel, “Our posture will not change until we see credible steps taken toward the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. It’s time to solve this once and for all.” The U.S. wants a “rapid” process in which North Korea’s abandonment of its nuclear program is “total and complete, that won’t be extended over time,” Pompeo said of the agenda for the planned summit. “If we can get the two to agree that that’s the end state we’re working for, we will have a good day.” Pompeo didn’t define what “credible steps” by North Korea might look like, giving the administration leeway to make that decision later -- and possibly to declare victory from a summit without an unambiguous timetable from North Korea. Pompeo’s reformulation of the U.S. demands was presaged by Trump yesterday, when a reporter asked if Kim could be expected to give up his nuclear capabilities all at once. “All-in-one would be nice, I can tell you,” Trump said. “I’m not going to go beyond that. It would certainly be better if it were all-in-one. Does it have to be? I don’t think I want to totally commit myself.” (Nick Wadhams, “Pompeo Eases Demand That North Korea Give up Nukes ‘Immediately,’” Bloomberg, May 23, 2018)

South Korean President Moon Jae-in held a summit at the White House with U.S. President Donald Trump, their fourth summit since taking office. After their one-and-one and extended meetings, the two leaders “agreed to do their best to ensure the North Korea-US summit goes ahead as scheduled on June 12,” the Blue House reported. “The two leaders assessed the attitude recently shown toward South Korea and the U.S. by North Korea and discussed means of removing regime insecurity now that North Korea has declared plans for complete denuclearization for the first time,” Blue House Senior Secretary to the President for Public Relations Yoon Young-chan said in a briefing. “President Moon said there was no cause for questioning North Korea’s commitment to holding the summit with the US, and stressed the need for discussions between North Korea and the US on real and concrete denuclearization and regime security,” Yoon added. Yoon also reported President Moon as predicting high-level inter-Korean talks and other dialogue would “resume after May 25, which is the ending date for the Max Thunder joint South Korea-US military exercises that North Korea has scorned.” “The two leaders also exchanged opinions on the matter of the three countries jointly declaring an end to the [Korean] War after the North Korea-U.S. summit, as agreed upon by South and North in the Panmunjom Declaration [following their Apr. 27 inter-Korean summit],” he continued. A Blue House senior official said, “The South Korea-U.S. summit ahead of the North Korea-US summit was very successful, and the North Korea-U.S. summit is far more likely to go ahead as scheduled than to be postponed.” In a press conference at the US State Department that afternoon, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo pledged to do his best for the success of the North Korea summit scheduled for June 12. His remarks went some way toward battling skepticism from some quarters in Washington in the wake of North Korea’s recent hardline comments on South Korea and US and
threat to boycott the summit. Meeting with President Moon that morning at the guest house that morning, Pompeo said he had been cooperating well with South Korean National Intelligence Service director Suh Hoon, adding the two were cooperating on and discussing North Korea-related issues. (Kim Bo-hyeop, “Moon and Trump Agree to Do Their Best for June 12 Summit,” Hankyore, May 23, 2018)

North Korea at the 11th hours permitted South Korean reporters to cover the dismantling of its nuclear test site in Punggye-ri from May 23 to 25. The North in a fit of pique last week booted them off the roster of invited foreign reporters and refused to give them visas. (Ahn Jun-yong, “South Korea Reporters Get to Cover Nuke Shutdown Site after All,” Chosun Ilbo, May 23, 2018)

Pabian, Bermudez and Liu: “As North Korea continues to prepare for the imminent closure of its Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Site, some media reports continue to misrepresent certain aspects of this act, claiming that by dismantling buildings and closing the tunnels, these unilateral actions are tantamount to destruction of evidence and site sanitization. However, despite whatever actions may be taken in the next couple of days at the nuclear test site, the forensic evidence will outlast any explosions that may be used to collapse or seal the test tunnels. Organizations like the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), if ever granted the opportunity to conduct onsite investigations in the future, have the tools to conduct drill back operations into the various test cavities to determine the composition of the materials used in each device that was tested. Those cavities and the melt puddles do not disappear simply if mixed with rubble. Moreover, the instrumentation data was likely already transferred, archived and analyzed offsite after each test. This data, if not destroyed as part of nuclear negotiations with the US (as some reports have suggested), presumably could be shared (to some degree) with CTBTO experts if site investigations were to ever take place. It is also unlikely that the North Koreans would leave behind any valuable test-related equipment, cabling or other materials for observers to see or examine, but rather would salvage them. This is consistent with the North’s public statement that it would be “removing all observation facilities, research buildings” as part of the closing of Punggye-ri. Another problem with characterizing the closing operations as destruction of evidence is that it presumes Pyongyang is under some kind of obligation to open its doors to foreign investigators looking into its nuclear program. Unfortunately, it is not. North Korea is not party to either the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) or the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and no agreement currently is in place under which such an investigation could take place. North Korea has publicly announced that it will be using the event as a means to showcase that it is acting in good faith to “ensure transparency of discontinuance of the nuclear test.” While the technical value of closing the test tunnels to the overall denuclearization process is debatable (for instance, the US intelligence community reportedly estimated that it would only take a few weeks or more to reopen the site depending on how the site closure is conducted) it is, nonetheless, a first positive step in a larger diplomatic process. It is true that despite an initial announcement that media and experts would be allowed to observe the site closure, only media personnel will be present at the official proceedings. And while it would have been ideal for international experts on nuclear weapons testing to gain access to Punggye-ri, North Korea never suggested that they would have been allowed to do onsite inspections or investigations anyway, only to observe from a distance with the rest of the delegation. In fact, it may be better in the long run that experts are not part of the delegation, thereby preventing claims from the North in the future that the site had been visited by outside experts.” (Frank V. Pabian, Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. and Jack Liu, “Grandstanding All Around as North Korea’s Nuclear Test Site Is about to Close,” 38North, May 23, 2018)

5/24/18

Choe Son Hui, DPRK vice-minister of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK, press statement: “At an interview with Fox News on May 21, U.S. Vice-President Pence made unbridled and impudent remarks that north Korea might end like Libya, military option for north Korea never came off the table, the U.S. needs complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization, and so on. As a person involved in the U.S. affairs, I cannot suppress my surprise at such ignorant and stupid remarks gushing out from the mouth of the U.S. vice-president. If he is vice-president of "single
superpower” as is in name, it will be proper for him to know even a little bit about the current state of global affairs and to sense to a certain degree the trends in dialogue and the climate of détente. We could surmise more than enough what a political dummy he is as he is trying to compare the DPRK, a nuclear weapon state, to Libya that had simply installed a few items of equipment and fiddled around with them. Soon after the White House National Security Adviser Bolton made the reckless remarks, Vice-President Pence has again spat out nonsense that the DPRK would follow in Libya's footsteps. It is to be underlined, however, that in order not to follow in Libya's footsteps, we paid a heavy price to build up our powerful and reliable strength that can defend ourselves and safeguard peace and security in the Korean peninsula and the region. In view of the remarks of the U.S. high-ranking politicians who have not yet woken up to this stark reality and compare the DPRK to Libya that met a tragic fate, I come to think that they know too little about us. To borrow their words, we can also make the U.S. taste an appalling tragedy it has neither experienced nor even imagined up to now. Before making such reckless threatening remarks without knowing exactly who he is facing, Pence should have seriously considered the terrible consequences of his words. It is the U.S. who has asked for dialogue, but now it is misleading the public opinion as if we have invited them to sit with us. I only wonder what is the ulterior motive behind its move and what is it the U.S. has calculated to gain from that. **We will neither beg the U.S. for dialogue nor take the trouble to persuade them if they do not want to sit together with us. Whether the U.S. will meet us at a meeting room or encounter us at nuclear-to-nuclear showdown is entirely dependent upon the decision and behavior of the United States.** In case the U.S. offends against our goodwill and clings to unlawful and outrageous acts, I will put forward a suggestion to our supreme leadership for reconsidering the DPRK-U.S. summit.” (KCNA, “Press Statement by Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs,” May 24, 2018)

Bolton: “Nick Ayers, the VP’s Chief of Staff, phoned in the late evening to say North Korea’s Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui had issued a stinging attack on Pence, calling him a “political dummy” and basically threatening nuclear war because of Pence’s remarks in a recent interview with Fox’s Martha MacCallum. Pence came on the line to suggest I tell Trump, which I set out to do immediately. After quickly obtaining and reviewing Pyongyang’s full screed, I reached Trump at ten p.m. I explained the situation and suggested we demand an apology, at least implying Singapore would be canceled without one. Trump wanted to sleep on it, which I relayed back to Pence (and which Trump also did himself). I called Pompeo at 10:25 to brief him, suggesting he join us early the next morning. … I went in even earlier than usual the next day, surveying the extensive Asian press coverage of the North Korean blast but noting little US coverage, probably because of the hour the statement was released. I told Kelly what had happened and said we had an eight a.m. call with Trump in the Residence. Ayers entered to say both he and Pence thought Singapore should be canceled; Kelly agreed, as did Pompeo, who had come over. We were all around the speakerphone to call Trump, and I gave a full description of the North’s attack on Pence, and the international and US press coverage. Trump asked me to read the full text of Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui’s remarks, which I did. “Jesus,” said Trump, “that’s strong.” We all agreed that so vitriolic a statement could have come only with Kim Jong Un’s express approval; this was not just some rogue official sounding off. Our critics would likely accuse us of overreacting, because, after all, North Korea frequently spoke in vitriolic terms. That was true, but it was also true prior US Administrations had simply accepted North Korea’s rhetoric without imposing consequences. That had to stop, and this was the time to do it. Trump didn’t hesitate to cancel the Singapore meeting. He dictated a letter, which we took through several iterations but which emerged as truly Trump’s. The final version, edited for small corrections, went public about nine forty-five a.m., followed by two presidential tweets. We also drafted a statement he could read at an already-scheduled bill-signing ceremony that morning, emphasizing that “maximum pressure” on North Korea would continue. … Chung called me in the late morning to say our cancellation was a big political embarrassment to Moon, coming right after his return from Washington, a trip that had raised big expectations in South Korea. I told Chung to read carefully what Choe Son Hui had said about America’s Vice President, but he was not mollified, nor was Moon, who issued a watered-down version of Chung’s remarks to me. Japan’s Yachi, by contrast, said they were greatly relieved Singapore had been canceled.” (Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened*, pp. 81-82)
Trump Letter: “Dear Mr. Chairman, We greatly appreciate your time, patience, and effort with respect to our recent negotiations and discussions relative to a summit long sought by both parties, which was scheduled to take place on June 12 in Singapore. We were informed that the meeting was requested by North Korea, but that to us is totally irrelevant. I was very much looking forward to being there with you. Sadly, based on the tremendous anger and open hostility displayed in your most recent statement, I feel it is inappropriate, at this time, to have this long-planned meeting. Therefore, please let this letter serve to represent that the Singapore summit, for the good of both parties, but to the detriment of the world, will not take place. You talk about your nuclear capabilities, but ours are so massive and powerful that I pray to God they will never have to be used. I felt a wonderful dialogue was building between you and me, and ultimately, it is only that dialogue that matters. Some day, I look very much forward to meeting you. In the meantime, I want to thank you for the release of the hostages who are now home with their families. That was a beautiful gesture and was very much appreciated. If you change your mind having to do with this most important summit, please do not hesitate to call me or write. The world, and North Korea in particular, has lost a great opportunity for lasting peace and great prosperity and wealth. That missed opportunity is a truly sad moment in history. Sincerely yours, [Signed] Donald J. Trump President of the United States of America” (text of Letter released by the White House, May 24, 2018)

President Trump canceled a summit next month with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, citing “tremendous anger and open hostility” from the rogue nation in a letter explaining his abrupt decision. “I feel it is inappropriate, at this time, to have this long-planned meeting,” Trump wrote to Kim in a letter the White House released this morning. Speaking later at the White House, Trump sounded a bellicose note, relaying that the U.S. military is “ready if necessary” to take action against North Korea if it engages in a “foolish or reckless act” and that South Korea and Japan are willing to shoulder the costs. At the same time, Trump held open the possibility that he and Kim could meet at a later date to discuss denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, which Trump has been pushing. “While many things can happen and a great opportunity lies ahead potentially, I believe that this is a tremendous setback for North Korea and indeed a setback for the world,” Trump said, adding that the United States will continue to impose tough economic sanctions against the nation. After an emergency meeting at midnight with his top aides, South Korean President Moon Jae-in said he was “very perplexed and sorry” that the summit had been canceled. “The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and ensuring a permanent peace are historic tasks that cannot be delayed or forsaken,” he said, adding that he did not believe that the “sincerity” of Kim or Trump had changed. “It is difficult to deal with these sensitive and difficult diplomatic problems with this current way of communicating,” Moon said, urging the two leaders to have direct dialogue. Trump’s decision came amid hostile warnings from North Korea in recent days that it was reconsidering its participation, including a statement that the United States must “take back for North Korea and indeed a setback for the world,” Trump said, adding that the United States will continue to impose tough economic sanctions against the nation. After an emergency meeting at midnight with his top aides, South Korean President Moon Jae-in said he was “very perplexed and sorry” that the summit had been canceled. “The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and ensuring a permanent peace are historic tasks that cannot be delayed or forsaken,” he said, adding that he did not believe that the “sincerity” of Kim or Trump had changed. “It is difficult to deal with these sensitive and difficult diplomatic problems with this current way of communicating,” Moon said, urging the two leaders to have direct dialogue. Trump’s decision came amid hostile warnings from North Korea in recent days that it was reconsidering its participation, including a statement that the United States must decide whether to “meet us in a meeting room or encounter us at [a] nuclear-to-nuclear showdown.” White House aides had grown concerned because North Korea had not responded to summit planning requests and had canceled a logistics meeting, said a senior White House official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to be candid about the sensitive issue. Many details needed to be settled within days for the summit to happen, this official said, adding that the White House did not want an embarrassing situation of “losing the upper hand.” U.S. officials had begun signaling to other countries late last week that the summit could be postponed, and they appeared concerned that the meeting would not yield a clear result, said a foreign diplomat familiar with preparations. A former senior U.S. official familiar with aspects of the planning said the two sides had not yet agreed on a draft communique, the usually bland statement issued at the close of diplomatic summits. The statement is typically worked out far in advance, and the absence of that draft had been a red flag to diplomats over the past week, the official said. Chun Yung-woo, a former South Korean nuclear negotiator with the North, said that it was better to have no summit than a disastrous summit. “It is true that Trump overreacted to the petty game North Korea was playing to improve its hand,” Chun said. “But if North Korea is not serious about denuclearization as understood generally, it would have been dangerous to hold the summit as scheduled.” The announcement immediately reverberated on Capitol Hill. At the outset of a budget hearing of the
Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo read Trump’s letter. In reaction to the cancellation, Sen. Robert Menendez (N.J.), the ranking Democrat on the panel, admonished the Trump administration for a “lack of deep preparation.” “It’s pretty amazing that the administration might be shocked that North Korea is acting as North Korea might normally act,” he said. Menendez questioned why U.S. officials repeatedly raised the prospect of the “Libya model” as a road map for denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. “I’m not sure that constantly quoting the Libya model is the diplomatic way to try to get to the results that we try to seek in North Korea,” he said. In recent weeks, State Department and South Korean officials have privately bristled at the mention of the Libya model — first made by national security adviser John Bolton — aware of how sensitive Pyongyang is to such comments. Pompeo objected to Menendez’s characterization of a lack of planning, saying the U.S. negotiating team was “fully prepared.” “We were fully engaged over the past weeks to prepare for this meeting,” he said. In explaining the summit’s demise, Pompeo said there was a breakdown in communication in recent days between the two preparation teams that he attributed to the North Korean side. “We got a lot of dial tones,” Pompeo said. Two days ago, the Washington Post reported that the North Koreans missed a meeting in Singapore last week between the teams. Pompeo said he hopes to restart conversations with the North Koreans and get the talks “back on track.” He expressed hope that Congress and the executive branch would work together to increase economic pressure on the isolated regime. Republicans on the committee defended the Trump administration’s decision to cancel. Trump had his “eyes wide open throughout the process,” said Sen. Cory Gardner (Colo.), adding: “He made the right choice” because Kim walked away from his commitment to denuclearize.” Trump’s letter to Kim brought a sharp rebuke from House Minority Whip Steny H. Hoyer (D-Md.), who in a statement called it “a sad example of the petulance and shallowness of the foreign policy being pursued by this President.” “From the beginning to the present, the dealings with North Korea have been sophomoric and without strategic or tactical merit,” he said. (John Wagner, John Hudson and Anna Fifield, “Trump Calls off Summit with Kim,” Washington Post, May 25, 2018, p. A-1)

Trump said later that the meeting could still happen, and North Korea issued a strikingly conciliatory response, saying it hoped Trump would reconsider. The president emphasized that conciliatory tone with a tweet early May 25, saying “the warm and productive statement from North Korea” could lead “hopefully to long and enduring prosperity and peace.” North Korean officials failed to show up for a planning meeting last week in Singapore, snubbing a White House advance team led by the deputy chief of staff, Joe Hagin. “I believe that this is a tremendous setback for North Korea and, indeed, for the world,” a resigned-sounding president said at a bill-signing ceremony. But he added, “If and when Kim Jong-un chooses to engage in constructive dialogue and actions, I am waiting.” “They want to do what’s right,” he said. “I really think that they want to do — and it was only recently that this has been taking place.” North Korea appeared to reciprocate, declaring that it was willing to give Trump the “time and opportunity” to reconsider his decision. “The unilateral cancellation of the summit was unexpected and very regrettable,” said Kim Gye Gwan, a vice foreign minister of North Korea. But he said the North remained “willing to sit down with the United States any time, in any format, to resolve the problems.” Later in the day, Kang Kyung-wha, the South Korean foreign minister, and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo spoke via telephone and agreed to continue working toward creating the right conditions for the United States and North Korea to talk, South Korea’s Foreign Ministry said in a statement. The statement said that Pompeo had stressed a willingness to continue dialogue with North Korea. Hours before Trump’s announcement, North Korea had blown up an underground nuclear testing site before foreign journalists gathered to witness the demolition. It was the latest in a series of gestures by the North meant to smooth the way for a summit meeting. While White House officials said a summit meeting with Kim was still a possibility, keeping the existing date was all but impossible, given the fact that, one senior official said, “June 12 is in 10 minutes.” While the president continued to speak of the possibility of a meeting, a senior official briefed reporters about the “trail of broken promises” that led to its cancellation. “I think Xi told Kim to slow down,” said Joseph Y. Yun, who was until recently the State Department’s senior diplomat on North Korea. “Also, I think Kim was getting pushback from his own folks, as Trump was.” (Mark Landler, “Trump Cancels North Korea Meeting,” New York Times, May 25, 2018, p. A-1)
called off a planned summit with Kim Jong-un but said the same day he was “waiting” for the North Korean leader to give a cue for dialogue, leaving open the possibility that a meeting could still be held. “A lot of things can happen, including the fact that, perhaps - and would wait - it’s possible that the existing summit could take place or a summit at some later date,” Trump said in Washington. “Nobody should be anxious. We have to get it right.” Trump lobbed the ball in Kim’s court, saying, “If and when Kim Jong-un chooses to engage in constructive dialogue and actions, I am waiting.” In the meantime, “very strong sanctions - by far the strongest sanctions ever imposed” will be carried out in the maximum pressure campaign against the North, Trump stressed. Moon convened an emergency meeting at the National Security Council at midnight, saying he was “perplexed” and felt “much regret” that the summit was called off. Denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula is a “historic task” that cannot be delayed, Moon said. “It’s hard to resolve sensitive and difficult diplomatic issues with the current way of communications. I hope [Trump and Kim] resolve [their issues] through direct and close dialogue.” A senior Blue House official said Seoul wasn’t informed about Trump’s decision to call off the summit in advance. Trump was said to have told the South Korean ambassador in Washington through a White House official to “quickly tell President Moon” about his letter to Kim almost simultaneously as it was made public. Trump’s letter was issued to Kim seven minutes earlier than it was revealed to the public, NBC News reported, citing multiple officials, and no congressional leaders or key allies were given prior notice. Trump reportedly wanted to be the first to cancel the summit, and was determined less than three hours before the letter was out that he was definitely walking away from the planned meeting. Discussions to call it off began late last night between Trump, Vice President Pence, Secretary of State Pompeo, chief of staff John Kelly and National Security Adviser John Bolton. (Lee Sung-eun, “Pyongyang ‘Greatly Regrets’ Trump’s Cancellation,” JoongAng Ilbo, May 26, 2018) Though Trump is hardly the first president to have sensitive diplomatic entreaties fall short, his played out in full public view, like a soap opera narrated daily from the Oval Office. Tony Schwartz, who co-authored “The Art of the Deal” with Trump, said the president scotched the summit to save his ego. “Trump has a morbid fear of being humiliated and shamed,” Schwartz said. “This is showing who’s the biggest and the strongest, so he is exquisitely sensitive to the possibility that he would end up looking weak and small. There is nothing more unacceptable to Trump than that.” U.S. officials had grown concerned that Kim’s deputies had gone silent on preparations for the summit. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo — who traveled twice to North Korea and was regarded inside the Trump administration as the good cop to Bolton’s enforcer — blamed Pyongyang for the breakdown in communication in recent days. The United States “received no response to our inquiries from them,” Pompeo told a Senate panel Thursday. “We got a lot of dial tones.” U.S. officials were further frustrated last week when a senior North Korean delegation failed to show up for a planning meeting in Singapore, leaving a team led by Deputy Chief of Staff Joe Hagin in the island country with little to do. “They waited, and they waited,” a senior White House official said. “The North Koreans didn’t tell us anything. They simply stood us up.” As dawn broke today, senior U.S. officials congregated in the West Wing, and by 7 a.m., they were discussing options over the phone with Trump, who was still in his private chambers. The president arrived at a swift decision to cancel the summit. A cadre of advisers — including Bolton, Chief of Staff John F. Kelly, press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders, vice presidential Chief of Staff Nick Ayers, Hagin and deputy national security adviser Mira Ricardel — scurried between Ayers’s, Kelly’s and Bolton’s offices, finalizing their plan to break Trump’s news. This behind-the-scenes account of Trump’s decision to cancel the Singapore summit is based on interviews with seven administration officials. Trump’s move caught South Korea and other allies off guard — in part by design, aides said. The president feared the news would leak out if foreign counterparts were alerted, though some in the White House were concerned about insulting allies. Foreign diplomats got word that the summit was off at the same time as the general public, shortly before 10 a.m., when the White House sent a copy of Trump’s letter to reporters. At South Korea’s presidential Blue House, officials were blindsided. President Moon Jae-in had just returned home from Washington, where he met with Trump on Tuesday, and Moon’s national security adviser recently put the chance of the summit happening at 99.9 percent. Reached shortly after Trump’s letter was released, Blue House spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom said, “We are attempting to make sense of what, precisely, President Trump means.” (Philip Rucker, Ashley Parker and Josh Dawsey, “‘A Lot of Dial Tones’: The
Inside Story of How Trump’s North Korea Summit Fell apart,” Washington Post, May 25, 2018

Kim needs money, investment and technology, for sure. But more than that, he needs to convince North Korea’s elites that he has not traded away the only form of security in his sole control — the nuclear patrimony of his father and his grandfather. “For them, ‘getting rich’ is a secondary consideration,” said William Perry, the former secretary of defense and one of the last people to negotiate with the North over peace treaties, nuclear disarmament and missiles — in 1999, when he was sent out as President Bill Clinton’s special envoy. “If I learned anything dealing with them, it’s that their security is pre-eminent. They know we have the capability to defeat them, and they believe we have the intent to do so.” “And the only way to address that,” Perry said this week in Palo Alto, Calif., as the North Koreans were issuing their latest threats, “is with a step-by-step process, exactly the approach Trump said he did not want to take.” When Trump sent one of his deputy national security advisers to Singapore a week ago for a prearranged meeting to work out meeting logistics, the North Koreans stood him up. In the past week, they did not answer the phone, a senior administration official told reporters on this afternoon. He inherited a North Korea that had exploited the United States’ distraction during Iraq, Afghanistan and the Iran negotiations, and managed to build 20 to 60 nuclear weapons. The North had paid almost no price. So Trump did what he learned to do in the New York real estate market: Make maximalist demands, inflict pain and then begin a negotiation. But his “fire and fury” approach resulted in reactions he had never seen in the private market. President Moon became so concerned that a new, famously volatile American president could trip into a war on the Korean Peninsula that he raced to wrap Trump into a negotiation that would make it difficult for the United States to launch the kind of pre-emptive attack Bolton had advocated. “Moon’s role is what is entirely new this time,” Perry noted, hours before the meeting planning fell apart. The South Korean president saw himself as the essential go-between, the central player in coaxing both sides back on track when moments of crisis — like this one — arise. Now comes the test of his peacemaking skills. “The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and building a permanent peace on the peninsula is a task we cannot give up or delay,” Moon said in Seoul, calling the cancellation of the summit meeting “disconcerting and very regrettable.” He urged Trump and Kim to talk directly. (David E. Sanger, “President’s Gamble Hits a Reality Check,” New York Times, May 25, 2018, p. A1)

President Donald Trump’s summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un will probably still end up happening eventually, says an academic who has studied the country for decades. Leon Sigal, the director of the Northeast Asia Cooperative Security Project at the Social Science Research Council, says Trump’s letter today informing Kim that he is canceling their scheduled June 12 face-to-face meeting should not be taken as the end of the two countries’ negotiations for a summit. “If you read his letter carefully, it says things like, ‘I feel it is inappropriate at this time to have the summit’ or ‘We had a wonderful dialogue,’” he told TIME. “There are like six sentences like that. What’s happening is the critics are saying Trump was too eager for the meeting. Now he’s playing hard to get.” Sigal has studied past negotiations between North Korea and the U.S., including the last time North Korea promised to denuclearize in the 1990s. He sees what’s happened as a pause in the difficult diplomatic process — a chance for both sides to move past the public diplomacy and hash out the details behind the scenes. “I don’t think of this as catastrophic or anything like that,” Sigal said. “There’s a lot of gamesmanship going on at this point.” Sigal noted North Korea has already taken some concrete steps, including releasing three American hostages, stopping the testing of missiles and nuclear weapons and having Kim cross into South Korea during talks with South Korean President Moon Jae-in last month. The U.S. needs North Korea to shut down its nuclear reprocessing plants and reactor, disclose the location of the country’s secret enrichment site and stop developing nuclear-capable missiles. North Korea also has a supply of plutonium, highly enriched uranium and other supplies that the U.S. wants to know more about. Although both sides have attempted to scale down their demands, there is very little trust between the countries. “Neither side knows that the other side means what they say,” Sigal said. Ultimately Trump must be genuine when dealing with North Korea. If he takes an “approach of sincerity,” and understands that North Korea can’t be forced to give up their nuclear weapons without negotiation, the relationship between the two countries could change entirely. “I certainly thought the summit was going to happen and I still think the summit is going to happen,” Sigal
North Korea destroys tunnels at nuclear test site.

Hecker: “When President Trump abruptly canceled the summit with North Korea last week, it overshadowed the closing of North Korea’s nuclear test site just a few hours before. Although it is not irreversible, blowing up the site’s tunnels, sealing the entrances and removing test site facilities and equipment was nevertheless a serious step toward denuclearization. What possessed North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to take this step now? For one, Pyongyang may have been influenced by the Trump administration’s harsh rhetoric that it required concrete steps to denuclearization, and it wanted them early on. Another likely reason is that such a move will greatly benefit North Korea’s relationship with China, which had reached a low point in recent years. My Chinese colleagues have explained that North Korea’s nuclear program poses a number of serious risks for China. The greatest concern is that its expansion will bring U.S. military intervention and greatly set back any hopes for peace and stability in the broader region. North Korea’s expanding missile program has already brought the unwanted presence of U.S. ballistic missile defenses to South Korea. China claims the U.S. anti-ballistic missile defense system, Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system, deployed so close to its borders threatens the viability of its own missiles that are aimed to deter the United States. However, by far the most emotionally charged objection to North Korea’s nuclear program is the potential of nuclear accidents, especially the threat of radioactive contamination from the Punggye-ri nuclear test site blanketing China’s neighboring Jilin province, around 60 miles from the nuclear test site. Residents fear radiation leaking across the border and have reported that they are particularly concerned because they do not get reliable information from the Chinese government. The Jilin Daily published a full-page article explaining how Chinese citizens can protect themselves in the event of a nuclear weapons detonation. The influential Chinese state-backed Global Times, meanwhile, published an article that stated: “If war breaks out, it is not possible to rule out the Korean Peninsula producing nuclear contaminants, and countermeasures must be seriously researched and spoken openly about to let the common folk know. But at the same time, there is absolutely no reason to be alarmed.” That doesn’t seem to be an effective way of not alarming the public. All of this may have prompted Chinese President Xi Jinping to put these concerns near the top of the list of issues he discussed with Kim during his two visits this spring. It is quite conceivable that Xi encouraged Kim to permanently close the test site to stop the danger — or even just the nerve-wracking perceived threat — of radiation, and to do so as quickly as possible. Pyongyang is clearly sensitive to these issues, no doubt reacting to Chinese concerns, because it has repeatedly stressed the fact that its nuclear tests were carried out in a safe manner. Even the announcement of the tunnel destruction stated: “It has been confirmed that there were neither leakage of radioactive materials nor any adverse impact on the ecological environment.” Some analysts have criticized North Korea’s decision to disinvite technical experts to the test site closure. They lament the loss of nuclear weapons information that could have been gained from a closer examination of the tunnel interiors before they were collapsed. It would have been a good trust-building measure for North Korea to give outside technical experts access to verify the degree of demolition, but what is most important is that the test site is destroyed. Some called it a public relations stunt, much like the demolition of North Korea’s Yongbyon reactor’s cooling tower in 2008. Such a comparison is not appropriate. The loss of the test site is a much greater one for North Korea than the cooling tower and would take much more time and money to reestablish. By closing the nuclear test site, Pyongyang took a step considerably beyond a nuclear testing moratorium. Although North Korea could surely excavate and prepare new tunnels, having to start over or complete an existing tunnel complex for testing would cost time and money. North Korea has successfully contained its nuclear tests deep in the mountains at Punggye-ri, which indicates a suitable geologic site, meticulous tunnel design and construction, and strong containment practices. It would need the same for any new site. Moreover, dismantlement of the test site will be reinforced through other interlocking political, economic and security measures that will make breaking out of the agreement very costly for Pyongyang. Although Kim Jong Un has said that
the state’s nuclear force is complete, I believe that North Korea does not yet have sufficient missile or nuclear test experience to reach the U.S. mainland with a nuclear-tipped missile. More nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) tests are required. Moreover, for North Korea to increase the sophistication, safety and diversity of its nuclear arsenal, more nuclear testing is required. North Korea has claimed to be developing nuclear warheads for submarine-launched ballistic missiles and hinted at an interest in tactical nuclear weapons and electromagnetic pulse weapons but adding those to its nuclear arsenal requires additional tests. All of these various tests will now not take place, at least not in the immediate future. Some have suggested that the September 3 test last year left the test site unusable, so it was no big concession. It appears that the large explosion did damage the test tunnel in which it was carried out, but there is evidence that two other tunnels in the same complex could still support future tests. That is also Pyongyang’s official claim. Whatever the real reason for Kim’s decision to destroy the test site, it is a serious step in what will have to be a phased “halt, roll back and eliminate” process toward denuclearization. It represents one of the roll-back steps. The next steps, which most likely will have to wait until the summit meeting, if that ever occurs, are to have North Korea halt and then decommission its plutonium production reactor, agree not to start up the light water reactor that’s currently under construction and agree to halt its uranium enrichment facilities. Finally, a pledge not to export nuclear weapons, materials or technologies is necessary to round out the most important initial actions.” (Siegfried S. Hecker, “Why Did Kim Jong Un Blow up His Nuclear Test Site?” Washington Post, May 30, 2018)

DPRK First Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Kim Gye Gwan’s “statement upon authorization: The historic summit is now high on the agenda between the DPRK and the U.S., and the preparations for it are being pushed forward at the final stage amid the remarkably great concern of the world. The sincere pursuit and active efforts made by the DPRK to end the relations of hostility and distrust that have lasted for decades and build a new landmark for the improvement of the DPRK-U.S. relations have commanded unanimous sympathy and support from the public at home and abroad. But suddenly President of the United States of America Trump made public his official stand on May 24 to cancel the DPRK-U.S. summit that had already been made a fait accompli. Explaining the reason for it, he said that the statement made by Vice Foreign Minister of the DPRK Choe Son Hui carried “tremendous anger and open hostility” and that it is not appropriate to hold the meeting at present, a precious one that has long been planned. I would like to take this expression of his stand on the DPRK-U.S. summit as a decision not consistent with the desire of humankind for peace and stability in the world, to say nothing of those in the Korean peninsula. As for the “tremendous anger and open hostility” referred to by President Trump, it is just a reaction to the unbridled remarks made by the U.S. side which has long pressed the DPRK unilaterally to scrap nuclear program ahead of the DPRK-U.S. summit. The inglorious situation today is a vivid expression of the severity of the present status of the hostile DPRK-U.S. relations of long historical roots and the urgent necessity for the summit meeting for the improvement of the ties. As far as the historic DPRK-U.S. summit is concerned, we have inwardly highly appreciated President Trump for having made the bold decision, which any other U.S. presidents dared not, and made efforts for such a crucial event as the summit. His sudden and unilateral announcement to cancel the summit is something unexpected to us and we cannot but feel great regret for it. It is hard to guess the reasons. It could be that he lacked the will for the summit or he might not have felt confident. But for our part, we have exerted sincere efforts, raising hope that the historic DPRK-U.S. summit meeting and talks themselves would mark a meaningful starting point for peace and security in the region and the world and the improvement of the bilateral relations as the first step forward to settling the issue through dialogue. We even inwardly hoped that what is called “Trump formula” would help clear both sides of their worries and comply with the requirements of our side and would be a wise way of substantial effect for settling the issue. The chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the DPRK has also exerted all efforts for the preparations for the summit, saying that the meeting with President Trump could help make a good start. The U.S. side’s unilateral announcement of the cancellation of the summit makes us think over if we were truly right to have made efforts for it and to have opted for the new path. But we remain unchanged in our goal and will to do everything we could for peace and stability of the Korean peninsula and humankind, and we, broad-minded and open all the time,
have the willingness to offer the U.S. side time and opportunity. The first meeting would not solve all, but solving even one at a time in a phased way would make the relations get better rather than making them get worse. The U.S. should ponder over it. We would like to make known to the U.S. side once again that we have the intent to sit with the U.S. side to solve problem regardless of ways at any time.” (KCNA, “Statement of First Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs,” May 25, 2018)

Bolton: “That very evening, less than twelve hours after announcing Singapore’s cancellation, the roof fell in. Trump seized on a slightly less belligerent statement by a different North Korean foreign ministry official to order us to get the June 12 meeting back on schedule. This was a clear mistake in my view, an open admission Trump was desperate to have the meeting at any price, which produced media reports of ‘head-snapping diplomacy’ that unnerved our friends worldwide. Of course, the media had no clue we had also almost canceled Singapore on Monday before Trump backed away. In resurrecting the meeting, Pompeo talked to Kim Yong Chol, his counterpart in the US–North Korea negotiations when he was CIA Director, and decided this Kim would come to New York for further preparations. Pompeo, Kelly, and I agreed we should insist on a public statement by Kim Jong Un himself, rather than relying on statements by foreign ministry officials, and that we should postpone Singapore for a month as insurance. We called Trump at about 8:50 a.m. to make these recommendations, but he wasn’t having any. Instead, he rhapsodized about what an ‘extremely warm letter’ (meaning North Korea’s statement) we had received. He didn’t want to ‘risk the momentum’ we now had. I was tempted to respond, ‘What momentum?’ but I stifled it. On he went: ‘This is a big win here. If we make a deal, it will be one of the greatest deals in history. I want to make him [Kim] and North Korea very successful.” (Bolton, The Room Where It Happened, pp. 82-83)

Trump sounded an optimistic note about future negotiations, saying it is even possible that a meeting could take place on June 12 as originally planned. “We’ll see what happens. We are talking to them now,” Trump told reporters as he left the White House this morning. “They very much want to do it. We’d like to do it.” “It could even be the 12th,” he added, referring to the date next month that had been set for him to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore. Asked if North Korea is playing games, Trump said: “Everybody plays games. You know that better than anybody.” In one of his tweets today, the president characterized a new statement coming out of North Korea — saying it remained open to talks with Trump — as “warm and productive” and “very good news.” “We will soon see where it will lead, hopefully to long and enduring prosperity and peace,” Trump wrote. “Only time (and talent) will tell!” Trump also took to Twitter to knock Democrats, whom he said are “so obviously rooting against us in our negotiations with North Korea.” (Anne Gearan, John Wagner, and John Hudson, “Trump Shifts on Kim Summit,” Washington Post, May 26, 2018, p. A-1)

Lawrence: “As we scramble to make sense of the on-again/off-again prospect of diplomacy with North Korea, it is important to look at the record and see what previous efforts have yielded and what we can learn from them. On the one hand, commentators have been quick to point out “years of failed agreements,” backed by a “judicious mix of sanctions and bribes.” They warn that past administrations offered concessions too early in the process, only for North Korea to pocket the rewards and cheat anyway. But this formulation of engagement, which frames US diplomacy in terms of “carrots and sticks,” misses the key issues at stake in engaging with North Korea. If the regime ever agrees to give up nuclear weapons, it will not be for fleeting rewards or written security guarantees, but for a long-term, completely different political relationship with the United States going forward. For this reason, US concessions will only be meaningful if they speak credibly about the political future—and physical, real-world manifestations of a changing relationship, such as shared infrastructure investments, often speak more credibly than written words. This is the ultimate take-away from the 1994 Agreed Framework, which to date represents the primary episode of engagement between the United States and North Korea. In that accord, North Korea agreed to dismantle its plutonium-production reactors in exchange for civilian power reactors from the West, and for a normalized political relationship with the United States. As
construction of those civilian reactors fell behind schedule, however, North Korea embarked on a secret uranium enrichment program and the deal fell apart. Today, we look back at the civilian reactors of the Agreed Framework as a carrot—as in “we offered the carrot, and they cheated anyway.” But when we consider the unique technical attributes of civilian nuclear energy, and how reactor construction was to be situated in a diplomatic track to normalization, they appear to function more as a way to signal US commitment than as a carrot to bribe the regime. In this light, chronic construction delays, and the inability of the United States to foot any of the bill, can be interpreted as candid signals about America’s non-commitment to normalization with North Korea. And without a credible path toward normalization, North Korea would have little reason to disarm. To understand why the credibility of written US commitments to long-term political change would be difficult to establish in a denuclearization pact, we must acknowledge that a nuclear weapons capability has always been North Korea’s primary source of bargaining leverage. The United States has had few other reasons to engage with a regime it didn’t like. So if the regime were to trade that leverage away for written commitments from Washington, why would it expect the United States to follow through on those commitments going forward, once the North had given up its only bargaining chip? This credibility issue severely complicated the US-North Korean nuclear negotiations in the early 1990s. Throughout those negotiations, diplomats on both sides agreed that the end goal was normalization and denuclearization. (While the definition of denuclearization is more fuzzy today, the Clinton and Bush Administrations were working from the definition articulated in the 1992 Joint North-South Declaration on Denuclearization.)

But that envisioned future was not credible without an alternate source of North Korean leverage to replace the threat of nuclear proliferation. This is where the civilian reactor project comes in—as a way to express a US commitment to normalization in the form of shared energy infrastructure. In other words, building large Western reactors in North Korea, it was believed, could effectively “hardwire” the United States and North Korea into a more peaceful relationship going forward and make way for the regime to renounce nuclear weapons. The regime first proposed to trade away its plutonium-production reactors for Western power reactors in high-level meetings in 1993, and this became the basis of a path toward normalization that was articulated in the 1994 Agreed Framework. North Korea agreed to freeze and slowly dismantle its own reactors, and in return a US-led consortium would build two 1,000-megawatt civilian reactors, of American design, in North Korea. That consortium was called the Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO), and the main players were US allies South Korea and Japan. But what does civilian nuclear energy have to do with political normalization, and why not just build cheaper conventional power plants? The answer is technological inertia and mutual leverage. Civilian nuclear power reactors require a massive up-front capital investment and a more drawn-out construction process than conventional power plants. This would mean a larger shared investment in North Korea’s energy future on the part of the US and its allies, and all sides would be embedded in a cooperative infrastructure project for a longer duration. Once these large investments are made, it would much more costly for either side to back out, because the new reactors could then produce financial returns for all parties involved, but only with further cooperative engagement. Since nuclear energy is one of the most global technologies in existence—dependent on raw materials, equipment, and expertise from around the world—civilian reactors inevitably draw the states that operate them into international collaboration networks associated with things like fuel supply, safety and liability, and reactor core management. And due to the long life of a civilian power reactor—40 years or more—the political relationships associated with its operation tend to stick longer than those associated with other energy technologies. So if the idea behind the Agreed Framework was to change North Korea’s relationships with the United States and its regional allies, then the KEDO project was a form of “diplomacy by other means,” because Western civilian reactors on the ground in North Korea would have amounted to a de facto change in those relationships. If the carrot of energy generation were the real stake for North Korea in signing the Agreed Framework, then conventional fossil fuel power would have been a much better technology than civilian nuclear energy. They would be quicker to build (if you want a carrot, why not get it sooner?); they’d be much cheaper, and hence easier to justify to US domestic audiences; and they could be sized to better fit North Korea’s aging energy grid. But for those very same reasons, building conventional power in North Korea would represent a much more limited commitment on the part of the West. The reactor supply agreement for the Agreed Framework further clarifies the role of...
civilian-reactor construction steps in making US commitments to normalization more credible. It called for North Korea’s most irreversible denuclearization steps to be spread out across time, and synchronized with the most costly and irreversible steps of the civilian reactor construction process. In this way, each pair of synchronized steps would constitute an exchange of costly gestures, indicating both sides’ willingness to continue down the path to normalization and denuclearization, and incrementally shifting the incentive structure in favor of taking the next step. By the time the Western reactors were operational, US allies would have invested upwards of $5 billion in 1994 dollars in North Korea’s energy future, and the physical destruction of North Korea’s plutonium-production complex would be complete. Had the KEDO reactors been fully constructed, however, they alone wouldn’t have been enough to ensure expanded relations between North Korea and the outside world. Rather, the KEDO reactor project was seen as setting the stage for further engagements. For instance, in order to upgrade its electrical grid and connect to the reactors, North Korea would need to obtain financing from the international community. This in turn would require changes in US laws that opposed international loans to North Korea, and further exposure of the regime to international finance norms and western-style construction practices. Critics saw these requirements as serious flaws of the Agreed Framework, but those who negotiated the deal saw them more as a positive feature than a bug. Opening up North Korea to the outside world was a primary goal of the KEDO process for all parties involved. And as the construction process began, the Japanese and South Koreans were behind the scenes, planning billions of dollars of further infrastructure development in North Korea. Conventional power plants sized to fit the existing grid would not have given them the financial incentive to pursue any of these further investments. North Korea and KEDO achieved significant progress along this physical path toward denuclearization and normalization before the Agreed Framework fell apart in 2003. KEDO built approximately two-thirds of the first reactor (you can see it on Google Earth), which constituted close to a $2 billion investment, and North Korea effectively divested upwards of 90 percent of its plutonium-production capacity. To date, the Agreed Framework is the only US policy that has had any real success at physically rolling back North Korea’s nuclear weapons capability. Unfortunately, the story of the Agreed Framework does not have a happy ending. In 2001, US intelligence suggested that North Korea began expanding its secret enrichment program. This prompted the Bush Administration to accuse North Korea of cheating on the Agreed Framework, and to halt the US contribution to KEDO in early 2003. North Korea responded by restarting what was left of its plutonium-production complex. Most Americans interpret North Korea’s centrifuge program as “cheating” on the Agreed Framework and write off the utility of future agreements. But this leaves out a crucial part of the story, which is that the US had been sending some pretty clear signals that it wasn’t committed to the path toward normalization with North Korea. There are at least three good examples of these unintentional signals from the United States. First, implementation of the KEDO reactor project was somewhat poorly planned. By the admission of the US negotiators themselves, they negotiated an extremely ambitious, unprecedented construction project—building massive Western reactors north of the demilitarized zone—without sufficient appreciation for the technical and logistic difficulties of such a project. This led to unexpected challenges later, resulting in construction delays that from North Korea’s perspective implied that the United States might not have been serious about actually following through on the project. Second, shortly after the Agreed Framework was signed, a skeptical US Congress mandated that none of the funding for the reactors could come from the United States, leaving South Korea and Japan to pick up the bill. Due to these two factors, the KEDO reactor project didn’t even get off the ground until 1999, a full five years after the initial agreement. Finally, the small financial contribution that Washington had committed to provide—negotiators had agreed to fund regular shipments of heavy fuel oil to North Korea while the new reactors were being constructed—quickly proved problematic. Within the first year of its existence, KEDO was operating on deficit financing due to shortfalls in US funding. By 1998, KEDO was $50 million in debt, and was expected to become financially insolvent that year. At that time, North Korea indicated its skepticism about US commitment, prompting Congress to approve enough funding to sustain heavy fuel oil shipments and slowly reduce KEDO’s debts. If KEDO’s activities are simply carrots to bribe the regime, these issues seem minor—North Korea was still getting its heavy fuel oil, and even if the reactor project was delayed, Japan and South Korea had already committed the funding to carry it out. So why would North Korea care who
pays for the carrots, as long the carrots arrive? But if KEDO’s steps were to function as signals to support the credibility of a political future of normalization, in which the United States is the primary player, then an unwillingness to pay for those steps implies that Washington may not be very committed to that future. Indeed, when asked about the delays in reactor construction, some Washington analysts at the time suggested that the reactors would never be built because the North Korean regime didn’t have a future. If analysts in Washington were interpreting KEDO’s financial struggles that way, we can imagine that the North Koreans are reading them that way as well. Now when we look at the timing of North Korea’s centrifuge procurements, they start to look like a hedge in response to these negative signals. US intelligence dates North Korea’s first procurement of centrifuge parts to around 1997-1998. This falls right at the height of KEDO’s financial insolvency, and in the midst of the regime’s expressed skepticism about US commitment to the Agreed Framework. The shipment itself contained enough centrifuge parts for a small-scale R&D effort—exactly the kind of steps you would expect as a hedge, and not the large-scale effort you would expect from a country committed to building the bomb. And the enrichment program doesn’t appear to have been scaled up until 2001, just after the inauguration of the George W. Bush administration—which had already expressed hostility to the Agreed Framework during the election. Other aspects of North Korea’s behavior follow a similar trajectory. Its first long-range rocket test occurred in 1998, around the same time as their centrifuge procurements. But as KEDO’s financial status improved and the reactor construction finally took off, North Korea suspended its missile tests and presented a detailed plan to end its entire missile program. Some of the brightest moments of engagement with South Korea during Kim Dae-jung’s Sunshine Policy also coincided with the height of reactor construction. While these developments probably had multiple causes, it is hard to dismiss a connection between the KEDO process and North Korea’s major nuclear choices throughout the Agreed Framework era. The primary lesson we can learn from the history of engagement with North Korea is that the regime’s nuclear choices have been most in response to US moves that speak credibly about North Korea’s place in a political future, and that the regime is relatively immune to sanctions and transient rewards. Physical steps in the KEDO reactor construction process around the turn of the millennium, for instance, constituted shared investments in North Korea’s energy future, and these in turn coincided with the most positive steps on the missile track. Our current paradigm of diplomacy with the regime centers around a contrast between coercion and isolation on one hand, and written promises and transient rewards on the other. Consequently, it fails to capture questions about the credibility of the political future enshrined in those promises, and about what happens when the fleeting rewards have been consumed. A future-oriented theory of engagement offers very different policy prescriptions than the carrot-and-stick framework. For instance, if we think of US concessions as “carrots” to reward denuclearization, then clearly they must only come after North Korea unilaterally dismantles its nuclear program. But if North Korean denuclearization is a step toward a different relationship with the United States, then the regime will want to see Washington taking concurrent steps toward that same goal. This is why a phased process of reciprocal steps is the only realistic path toward denuclearization in North Korea. Throughout that process, US concessions should be designed not simply to “reward” North Korea, but also to demonstrate a US commitment to improve the relationship by placing some American skin in the game. Shared investments in energy or transportation infrastructure can constitute that skin in the game, because these shared vested interests are also de facto changes in the political relationship. Simple aid packages and sanctions relief would not, so while they may “reward” North Korea in the present, they don’t say much about the political future. And finally, any path to denuclearization will likely include a hedge for North Korea, as an insurance plan in case the other aspects of the promised political future never materialize. The goal of a nonproliferation diplomacy should not be to snuff out all forms of nuclear hedging in North Korea, but to build a new political reality that renders them irrelevant. (Christopher Lawrence, “The United States Has Learned the Wrong Lessons from Previous Diplomacy with North Korea,” Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, May 25, 2018)
Joe Hagin, still plans to travel to Singapore to make arrangements for the summit between Trump and Kim. “The White House pre-advance team for Singapore will leave as scheduled in order to prepare should the summit take place,” Sanders said in a statement. Moon and Kim met on the northern side of the line at Panmunjom. The two leaders also discussed a successful implementation of the inter-Korean “Panmunjom Declaration. Moon is scheduled to announce more details of the meeting tomorrow. Moon was blindsided by Trump’s decision to abruptly announce he was canceling the summit, less a day after returning from meeting in the Oval Office designed to keep the momentum in the diplomatic effort. But the South Korean president seems to be tackling the latest difficulties with new resolve. The North Korean leader’s sister Kim Yo Jong awaited Moon’s motorcade on the north side of the demilitarized zone, according to video clips of Moon’s arrival released by the Blue House. Once he arrived, he shook hands with Kim Yo Jong and walked down a red carpet as members of the North Korean military saluted. Moon then walked inside and shook hands with Kim Jong Un and posed for a photo in front of a large landscape painting, video clips show. Moon and Kim were joined by South Korean intelligence chief Suh Hoon and Kim Yong Chol, senior North Korean official in charge of relations with South Korea, video clips show. Kim and Moon ended the meeting in an embrace. (Michelle Ye Hee Lee, “North and South Korean Leaders Meet to ‘Frankly’ Discuss How to Make Trump-Kim Summit a Success, Seoul Says,” Washington Post, May 26, 2018) "President Moon Jae-in held a second summit with Chairman Kim Jong-un at Tongil-gak on the North Korean side of Panmunjom from 3 p.m. through 5 p.m. on (May) 26," Moon's chief press secretary Yoon Young-chan said in a released statement. "The two leaders exchanged their candid views on the implementation of the April 27 Panmunjom Declaration and successful opening of the North-U.S. summit," the statement said. (Yonhap, “Leaders of Divided Koreas Hold Surprise Meeting over U.S.-N.K. Summit,” May 26, 2018)

Bolton “On Saturday, we learned to our collective surprise that Moon and Kim had met for two hours earlier that day at the DMZ. Foreign Minister Kang told Pompeo that Kim had requested the meeting, and Moon, predictably, had immediately agreed. Chung also debriefed me, saying he had not been at the DMZ but all had gone well, with the two leaders reaffirming agreement on complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization and other matters. Kim told Moon he expected to reach a “comprehensive deal” at Singapore, for which the North was making extensive preparations. Kim had been a bit surprised by Trump’s decision to “suspend” the meeting and was very relieved the US had changed its position. Moon stressed that the US wouldn’t accept ‘action for action,’ although he then turned around and essentially implied there could be US political compensation if the North made substantial progress on our concept of denuclearization, thus demonstrating, in my view, why we needed to get Moon out of the business of negotiating the issue. At the same time, my concern grew that some State working-level types would revert predictably and quickly into the failed Six-Party Talks approach without even noticing the change from our present approach. Meanwhile, Trump was busy tweeting there was no division on his team:

Unlike what the Failing and Corrupt New York Times would like people to believe, there is ZERO disagreement within the Trump Administration as to how to deal with North Korea... and if there was, it wouldn’t matter. The @nytimes has called me wrong right from the beginning!

The next day at the DMZ, North Korea, led by the ever-pleasant Choe Son Hui, refused in bilateral talks with the US even to use the word “denuclearization” on the agenda for the Trump-Kim meeting. This was unhappily familiar territory and why I worried it was only a matter of time before State began to buckle, not to mention Trump, who was so eager for ‘success’ in Singapore.” (Bolton, The Room Where It Happened, p. 83)

Prime Minister Abe Shinzo and Russian President Vladimir Putin reaffirmed they will make efforts to conclude a postwar peace treaty and accelerate bilateral economic cooperation. At a news conference after their summit talks at the Kremlin in Moscow, Putin said: “What is important is to seek a solution (to the peace treaty issue) that meets (the) national interests of both sides and is mutually acceptable.” Abe said he and Putin confirmed the two countries will work closely together toward North Korea’s denuclearization, adding, “This is the stance shared by
Japan and Russia.” In their 21st face-to-face meeting, Abe and Putin discussed how to foster joint economic activities in five areas on four disputed islands held by Moscow and claimed by Japan, as agreed to last September. The two leaders agreed to accelerate talks to create businesses in the areas, and dispatch business missions to the islands in the summer. Japan hopes such activities will pave the way to settling a decades-long territorial row over the islands, and ultimately to the signing of a postwar peace treaty. For its part, Russia aims to attract Japanese investment to its underdeveloped Far East region. Abe is banking on Putin, who secured another six-year term in a presidential election in March, to make a landmark decision on the contested isles, which lie off Hokkaido. In a joint interview with Kyodo News and other news agencies in St. Petersburg yesterday, Putin said a peace treaty is possible if bilateral relations deepen through planned joint economic activities. But when it comes to the disputed islands, it is still unclear whether the two countries will be able to come up with a “special framework” that does not compromise either side’s legal position on their sovereignty. Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and the Habomai islet group were seized by the former Soviet Union at the end of the war. As part of humanitarian measures, Abe and Putin agreed to allow former Japanese residents of the isles to visit the graves of relatives this year. A similar visit took place for the first time last year. Abe and Putin also confirmed how far the eight-point economic cooperation package, which Abe proposed two years ago, has advanced. On North Korea, Abe underlined that Tokyo and Moscow will closely cooperate so that Pyongyang will “head in the right direction.” Putin said the North Korean issue should be addressed “in a political and diplomatic manner,” as opposed to Japan’s stance of keeping “maximum pressure” on the regime with help from the United States. Abe said he believes Putin understood Japan’s stance of comprehensively settling the nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles and abduction issues regarding North Korea. Japan has been performing a delicate balancing act in pursuing improved relations with Moscow, which has been watching its ties with Western countries, particularly Japan ally the United States, deteriorate. Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Nogami Kotaro, who briefed reporters, said Abe and Putin confirmed they will provide support for the success of what would be the first-ever U.S.-North Korean summit. Trump, after abruptly canceling the talks, quickly signaled they could take place as initially planned anyway on June 12 in Singapore. Nogami also said the two leaders did not bring up the surprise inter-Korean summit held earlier in the day. In an attempt to boost security cooperation, the two leaders agreed on the next round of so-called two-plus-two talks involving the two countries' foreign and defense ministers later this year following a session in March 2017 in Tokyo. Abe and Putin did not take questions from reporters despite an initial arrangement to do so during the news conference after the summit, which started around 40 minutes behind schedule. (Kyodo. “Abe and Putin Reconfirm Peace Treaty, Economic Cooperation Goals While Taking United Stance on Denuclearizing North Korea,” Japan Times, May 27, 2018)
He also said that the meeting came at a time when “small difficulties” in North Korea-U.S. relations needed to be addressed, Moon said that he was working to improve inter-Korean relations as well as U.S.-North Korea relations. “I conveyed President Trump’s firm resolve to end hostile relations and provide economic cooperation if Kim Jong-un has “firm will” for denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. He also said that he hopes to follow up the U.S.-North Korea summit with a Seoul-Pyongyang-Washington summit to discuss declaring the end of the Korean War. “Following up from the Panmunjom Declaration, Chairman Kim again stated his will for complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” Moon said at a press conference on his meeting with Kim. “(Kim Jong-un) stated his intention to end the history of confrontation and war through a successful U.S.-North Korea summit, and to cooperate for peace and prosperity,” Moon said. The South Korean president also revealed that the two sides agreed to hold stalled high-level inter-Korean talks on June 1, and to hold military and Red Cross talks in succession. Highlighting that the meeting came at a time when “small difficulties” in preparing for the U.S.-North Korea summit needed to be addressed, Moon said that he was working to improve inter-Korean relations as well as U.S.-North Korea relations. “I conveyed President Trump’s firm resolve to end hostile relations and provide economic cooperation if Kim Jong-un has “firm will” for denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” Moon said, adding that he briefed Kim Jong-un on his meeting with Trump. “As both Kim and Trump wish for (a) successful U.S.-North Korea summit, I stressed the need to dispel misunderstandings through direct communications, and for sufficient working-level talks on the agenda of the summit,” Moon said, adding that Kim expressed his agreement during their meeting. At the press conference, Moon said that the success of the US-North Korea summit hinges on working-level talks between the two countries, and that he has high hopes that the meeting will go as planned on June 12. Moon, however, said that the process of drawing up a roadmap for denuclearization will not be easy. “Just as each step becomes harder when the peak of the mountain is in sight, the road to complete denuclearization and peace on the Korean Peninsula will not be smooth,” Moon said, adding that Korean Peninsula issues face “a completely new beginning.” “As the president, with all the authority and duties given to me by the people, I will walk this path, and succeed.” Moon also said that he urged the U.S. and North Korea to hold direct talks, adding that for Kim, uncertainties lie in whether the U.S. will guarantee his regime. “In contrast (to Kim’s concerns) President Trump stated clearly not only that hostile relations will end, but the intent to help (North Korea’s) economic development if North Korea denuclearizes,” Moon said. “I am urging (North Korea and the US) to exchange such intentions, and to confirm the counterpart’s will through direct communications.” The South Korean leader declined to comment on how denuclearization will be achieved, saying that a roadmap has to be worked out by the US and North Korea. (Choi He-suk, “Moon Reiterates N.K. Leader Has ‘Firm Will’ for Denuclearization,” Korea Herald, May 27, 2018)
with President Moon Jae In of South Korea. Panmunjom, the historic land which had once come under global spotlights as a symbol of peace for making a new start of the north-south relations and opening up a new era of reconciliation and unity, witnessed another significant meeting between the top leaders of the north and the south of Korea in 29 days. Honor guards of the Korean People's Army lined up at the Thongil House, the venue of the talks, to receive President Moon Jae In. Kim Jong Un, Supreme Leader of the party, state and army of the DPRK, warmly greeted President Moon Jae In and exchanged greetings with him who arrived at the Thongil House after crossing the demarcation line at Panmunjom. The two top leaders were so pleased to have a historic meeting once again at the historic place after the lapse of one month, and warmly shook their hands with each other. Prior to the talks, President Moon Jae In made an entry in the visitors' book of the Thongil House in memory of his visit to the north side area, which reads: "Peace and Prosperity of the Korean Peninsula, together with Chairman Kim Jong Un of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea! May 26, 2018. President of the Republic of Korea Moon Jae In." Kim Jong Un and Moon Jae In, their hands firmly held with each other, had a souvenir photo taken to commemorate the historic fourth north-south summit. Kim Jong Un shook hands one by one with the personages of the south side who accompanied Moon Jae In, sharing pleasure of meeting with them. Then, there were talks between Kim Jong Un and Moon Jae In. Present at the talks from the north side was Kim Yong Chol, vice-chairman of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, and from the south side was So Hun, director of the National Intelligence Service. At the talks there were in-depth exchanges of opinions to tackle the matters that should be resolved to quickly implement the Panmunjom Declaration agreed upon at the third north-south summit and to realize the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and achieve regional peace, stability and prosperity, and the matters the north and the south are now faced with, and the one of successfully holding the DPRK-U.S. summit. Kim Jong Un and Moon Jae In shared the view that the two sides should trust and take care of each other and exert joint efforts to make sure that the Panmunjom Declaration reflecting the unanimous desire of all Koreans is implemented at an early date. They agreed to hold the north-south high-level talks on coming June 1 and further accelerate the talks of various fields including the ones of military authorities and Red Cross. They shared the opinion that they would meet frequently in the future to invigorate dialogue and pool wisdom and efforts, expressing their stand to make joint efforts for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Kim Jong Un thanked Moon Jae In for much effort made by him for the DPRK-U.S. summit scheduled for June 12, and expressed his fixed will on the historic DPRK-U.S. summit talks. Kim Jong Un asked Moon Jae In to positively cooperate with each other as ever to improve the DPRK-U.S. relations and establish mechanism for permanent and durable peace. They reached a satisfactory consensus on the matters discussed at the talks. Kim Jong Un warmly embraced Moon Jae In and exchanged good-byes with him, promising to meet again one day. The top leaders of the north and the south open-heartedly listened to each other's opinions on the crucial pending matters without formality, and had a candid dialogue. The meeting offers another historic occasion in opening up a new chapter in the development of the north-south relations. The fourth north-south summit held at Panmunjom, recorded in history as a symbol of national reconciliation and unity, peace and prosperity, will provide all Koreans with a new hope and vitality."

(KCNA, "Kim Jong Un Meets Moon Jae In Again," May 27, 2018)

A team of U.S. officials crossed into North Korea today for talks to prepare for a summit between President Trump and Kim Jong Un, as both sides press ahead with arrangements despite the question marks hanging over the meeting. Sung Kim, a former U.S. ambassador to South Korea and former nuclear negotiator with the North, has been called in from his post as envoy to the Philippines to lead the preparations, according to a person familiar with the arrangements. He crossed the line that separates the two Koreas to meet with Choe Son Hui, the North Korean vice foreign minister, who said last week that Pyongyang was “reconsidering” the talks. Sung Kim and Choe know each other well — both were part of their respective delegations that negotiated the 2005 denuclearization agreement through the six-party framework. Sung Kim is also joined by Allison Hooker, the Korea specialist on the National Security Council, and an official from the Defense Department. Randall Schriver, the assistant secretary of defense for East Asia and one of the officials who accompanied Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to Pyongyang earlier this month,
also is in Seoul at the moment. However, it could not be immediately confirmed whether he was the Pentagon official involved in today’s talks. The meetings are expected to continue the next two
days at Tongilgak, or “Unification House,” the building in the northern part of the demilitarized
zone where Kim Jong Un met South Korean President Moon Jae-in yesterday. The delegations
are focused on the substance of any summit between Trump and Kim — the issue of North
Korea’s nuclear weapons program. Sung Kim, who was born in South Korea, was a key diplomat
in the 2005 six-party talks. He served as ambassador to South Korea from 2011 to 2014, then
became special representative for North Korea policy, a position that Yun later took over and that
is now vacant. His North Korean counterpart, Choe, also has years of experience working on these
issues and is well connected within the North Korean hierarchy. She has also served as a nuclear
negotiator and led the U.S. affairs division in the North Korean Foreign Ministry until being
promoted to vice foreign minister this year. The daughter of a former premier, she is also thought
to have direct access to Kim. “We are having very productive talks with North Korea about
reinstating the Summit which, if it does happen, will likely remain in Singapore on the same date,
June 12, and, if necessary, will be extended beyond that date,” Trump tweeted two nights ago. The
White House has said that preparations will continue while the final decision on whether to
proceed with the summit is made. Trump confirmed yesterday that working-level meetings were
continuing. “As you know, there are meetings going on as we speak in a certain location, which I
won't name, but you'd like the location,” he told reporters in Washington. A separate U.S. team
led by Joe Hagin, deputy chief of staff in the White House, is organizing logistics with Kim Chang
Son, who is effectively the North Korean leader’s chief of staff. Kim Chang Son was in Beijing
from Thursday to Saturday, according to Japanese and South Korean media reports, although it
was not clear whether his trip was related to the summit preparations. (Anna Fifield and Joby

Rodong Sinmun commentary: “Fox News TV, CBS and CNN of the U.S. recently let U.S. high-
ranking officials appear in their programs and quoted them as saying about the DPRK-U.S. talks.
And they were as impudent as to make rubbish that if the DPRK meets the requirements of the
U.S., it can get "large-scale non-governmental economic aid" and that it should show that the
denuclearization goes in a verifiable and irreversible way. This is nonsense of hack media on the
payroll of power, ignorant of who is the rival. Now that U.S. media are still building up public
opinion that the DPRK comes to the negotiating table with the U.S. in a hope to get "economic
aid" from it, we cannot but make the fact clear. It is the U.S. that asked for DPRK-U.S. talks first.
The U.S. has recently come to realize that the military strength, it regards as almighty, and the
anti-DPRK sanctions, it pinned hope on, were all doomed to failure. After all, there could be no
other way out for the U.S. The international community contends that the world-startling dramatic
change in the DPRK-U.S. ties was entirely thanks to the DPRK's efforts for peace and stability of
the Korean Peninsula and the world. As far as the "economic aid" advertised by the U.S. is
concerned, the DPRK has never expected it. U.S. media would be well advised to stop talking
nonsense as hack media and deeply study what the strategic line advanced at the historic April
Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea Means.” (Rodong

5/28/18

Bolton: “Abe told Trump on Memorial Day that the way he handled the summit was completely
different from the way other US presidents had handled them, and that Kim never expected he
would dare to cancel the meeting. Trump, said Abe, was now in a position of strength, obviously
hoping Trump wouldn’t make his predecessors’ errors. Abe pressed Trump to advocate not just
our concept of denuclearization but, reflecting Japan’s long-standing positions, also dismantling
Pyongyang’s biological and chemical-weapons programs, as well as all their ballistic missiles,
whatever the ranges.” (Bolton, The Room Where It Happened, pp. 83-84)

Von Hippel and Hayes: “Following his early May 2018 visit to the DPRK, Secretary of State
Pompeo acknowledged the need to provide the DPRK with energy assistance in return for
denuclearization stating that “…private sector Americans coming in to help build out the energy
grid — they need enormous amounts of electricity in North Korea; to work with them to develop
infrastructure, all the things that the North Korean people need…” This essay provides a summary description of an array of possible energy sector assistance projects that might be implemented as part of an overarching agreement with the DPRK to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. Most of these options have elements that can be implemented in the short-term (for example, capacity-building and humanitarian aid), and medium-term (for example, demonstration projects), and can be implemented in a manner that matches the need for energy assistance calibrated to the denuclearization process that may be set in motion by a US-DPRK summit. All these options require a concerted program of assistance over many years. Notably, many are also of keen interest to the DPRK. Most of these cooperation approaches could involve both the United States and other nations, most notably the ROK, and could be configured for deployment by a combination of public- and private-sector actors. Such energy engagement options in addition should be “robust”—applicable and useful—under a wide range of engagement outcomes (both positive and negative, ranging from smooth and accelerating positive engagement, stop-start, regress, and even military conflict). Energy assistance should be resistant to military diversion, and should be monitored and verified in course of implementation and energy end-use. Most important, unlike past energy assistance approaches, both bilateral and multilateral, the primary approaches adopted in future energy assistance should be driven by measures that support the creation of regional energy security that benefits all six parties, not just the DPRK. In some instances, for example kick-starting the implementation of a breakthrough denuclearization agreement, exceptions to this rule might be allowable. For example, it is possible to insulate about 10 percent of Pyongyang’s apartments in about six months with an affordable crash program relying on an armada of ships carrying insulation materials to the DPRK and could build confidence, increase access and transparency, and provide potent symbolic evidence of US and allied good faith and intention in a denuclearization deal. But for the most part, energy assistance should focus on creation of regional energy security that embeds the DPRK in regional energy inter-dependence with the other five parties. As will be evident in following sections of this essay, there is no shortage of immediate, medium-term, and long-term options for energy assistance that meet this standard. The following summarizes key energy sector needs and related potential cooperation approaches. 1. Electricity Transmission and Distribution (T&D) Systems. The DPRK T&D system is fragmented, antiquated, and in poor repair, and needs substantial refurbishment and/or rebuilding. The most cost-effective approach for international and ROK assistance in this area will be to start by working with DPRK engineers to identify and prioritize a list of T&D sector improvements and investments, and to provide limited funding for pilot installations in a limited area—perhaps in the Tumen River area in counties where key industries for earning foreign exchange (such as mines) are located, or in the Kaesong area. 2. Rehabilitation of Power Plants and Other Coal-Using Infrastructure: Rehabilitating existing thermal power plants, industrial boilers, and institutional/residential boilers will result in improved efficiency so the coal that is available goes further, will reduce pollutant emissions, and will improve reliability so that the lights and heat stay on longer. Accomplishing these upgrades will require a combination of training, materials (especially control systems), and perhaps assistance to set up and finance manufacturing concerns to mass-produce small boilers and heat-exchange components, particularly, in the short-term, for humanitarian applications, accompanied by a program of “weatherization” of buildings to be heated. 3. Rehabilitation of Coal Supply and Coal Transport Systems: Strengthening of the coal supply and transport systems must go hand in hand with boiler rehabilitation if the amount of useful energy available in the DPRK is to increase. Foreign coal industries—in the United States and Australia, for instance, as well as China and Russia—have significant expertise to assist with evaluating and upgrading coal mines in the DPRK, including improvements in mining technologies and equipment, in evaluation of coal resources, in mine ventilation systems, and in mine safety. The substantial rehabilitation of the coal sector will not happen quickly, however, and should be accompanied by rehabilitation of the coal transport network. 4. Development of Alternative Sources of Small-scale Energy and Implementation of Energy-efficiency Measures. North Koreans frequently express a keen interest in renewable energy and energy-efficiency technologies. This interest is completely consistent with both the overall DPRK philosophy of self-sufficiency and the practical necessities of providing power and energy services to local areas when national-level energy supply systems are unreliable at best. Such projects should be fast, small and cheap. Some of the key areas where the United States and
partners could provide assistance is small hydro turbine-generator manufacturing, wind power, solar power, agricultural equipment efficiency measures, building envelope improvement and other measures for improving building energy efficiency, residential lighting improvements, industrial and irrigation motors, and humanitarian measures. 5. Rehabilitation of Rural Infrastructure and Biomass Energy. The goal of a rural energy rehabilitation program would be to provide the modern energy inputs necessary to allow DPRK agriculture to recover a sustainable production level, and for the basic needs of the rural population to be met. A comprehensive rehabilitation program for rural areas would feature a combination of short to medium-term energy supplies from imports and medium to long-term capital construction and rehabilitation projects. Improvements in consumable crop production per unit energy input is a key goal, accomplished by measures that reduce post-harvest losses and early crop consumption, and improve the timing of agricultural activities and inputs. Postharvest crop losses and early crop consumption alone have been estimated to reduce usable crop production by 20 percent in the DPRK. As a substantial fraction (~ one third) of the DPRK’s primary energy supply is wood and charcoal, leading to increased deforestation, there are many possible projects focused on reforestation and biomass fuels that could increase productivity and welfare. The Simpo Reactor Deal as an Engagement Value Baseline. Completion of one or both of the Simpo light water nuclear reactors was for many years an important issue of national pride to the DPRK, as part of the 1994 US-DPRK Agreed Framework. A recent news story suggested that the DPRK was investigating the completion of these reactors, although the North Korean leadership has to some extent tacitly acknowledged that these reactors may never be completed—hence the DPRK’s independent work over the last decade on an experimental small LWR at Yongbyon. Still, the net value to the DPRK of the Simpo light-water reactors (LWRs) remains a marker against which future international energy assistance offers may be judged and may drive North Korean perceptions and demands. One possible two-LWR-equivalent “package” (albeit out of a practically infinite number of possible combinations of options), could include, over 7 years (probably the minimum to construct a commercial-sized reactor in the DPRK) 1500 MWe (Megawatts of electricity) of hydroelectric plant rehabilitation, 1400 MWe of thermal power and heating plant reconstruction, 210 MWe of local wind power plus pumped-storage hydro, $0.5 billion in energy efficiency investments, 123 MW of diesels for humanitarian applications, and a small LPG terminal. This combination of elements offers the same net value in terms of inputs from abroad to the DPRK—a total of about $1300 million in discounted 2010 dollars—as would two LWR units, but is significantly more valuable in terms of the provision of energy for the DPRK economy. This benchmark also points to an important aspect of possible energy assistance packages with the DPRK. The DPRK has limited absorptive capacity and until its energy-economic institutions are largely reconstituted with substantial management and workforce training, it is likely that spending more than $1-2 billion a year on energy development projects in the DPRK, even as part of regional energy security strategies, may be wasteful and undesirable. Regional Cooperation Options in the Energy Sector Engagement options that require regional cooperation have the potential to engage the DPRK and its neighbors, as well as U.S. public and private entities, in long-term projects that foster both energy security and international economic co-dependence. Options in the energy sector range from very large infrastructure projects linking many of the countries of the region, to more modest arrangements on technology sharing and capacity-building. Some of these possibilities, in brief, include: 1. Regional oil pipelines, carrying oil from Siberia, the Russian Far East, and even Central Asia to consumers in Chinas, Japan, and possibly the ROK and DPRK. It is possible that such pipelines could be routed through DPRK territory, providing some oil to DPRK refineries on the way to the major refineries in the southern ROK. 2. Regional natural gas pipelines have long been of interest to both Russia and the ROK, with China and Japan also seen as possible consumers. Such pipelines would carry gas from the Russian Far East, Siberia, and East Asia to the ROK. Some gas could be used by the DPRK, perhaps initially in a few gas-fired power plants, and later by end-use sectors as DPRK distribution networks develop, with the remainder shipped to the ROK. 3. Electricity grid interconnections, designed mostly to allow power produced from hydro, coal, and possibly nuclear plants in the Russian Far East to be shipped to the ROK, have been contemplated for well over a decade. The DPRK could obtain “rent” from hosting the line. 4. The development of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies have been of keen interest to the DPRK and in many countries of Northeast Asia. Climate change, local and regional environmental
concerns, and the desire for economic development all contribute to the attractiveness of these options. 5. Sharing of excess oil refining capacity to avoid the need to build additional capacity elsewhere in the region. 6. Cooperation on transportation infrastructure to improve access by all of the nations to markets for their goods and to reduce the time and energy required to deliver raw materials and finished goods to market. 7. Co-development of liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) import capacity by the DPRK and ROK. 8. Cooperation on regional emergency fuel storage, including, potentially, agreements on sharing fuel storage facilities, tapping shared storage resources in the event of a supply crisis, and rules for the amount of fuel to be stored (similar to those in force in OECD countries) are all possibilities. Engagement on Nuclear Energy with the DPRK. North Korea’s current and planned use of nuclear technologies may present severe problems with regard to nuclear security and safety. Of most concern is possible loss of control of nuclear materials and/or nuclear weapons due to instability in the DPRK itself associated with a leadership transition or occurring during a conflict. Short of such disorder in the DPRK itself, the DPRK’s “routine” nuclear security on fuel cycle sites and its nuclear material- and weapons-related sites is likely to be very stringent. Nonetheless, it may be important to engage the DPRK to ensure that its domestic legislation is fully developed with respect to the obligations that all states must observe with regard to UN Security Council resolution 1540 (passed in 2004). Measures related to 1540 compliance, and training in same, may be useful confidence-building activities in the early stages of engagement of the DPRK to denuclearize its nuclear weapons program. With regard to nuclear safety, it is understood that the DPRK electric power system in general operates with very low standards for technical performance and maintenance, in large part due to the DPRK’s many decades of isolation from the international community, and also due to the related lack of spare parts and materials, leading to remarkable improvisation but also to a system prone to constant breakdown. Similar practices were observed at Yongbyon nuclear sites during the period of US and IAEA monitoring in the 1990s, and there is little reason to think that this proclivity to take short cuts, conduct speed campaigns, and proceed with regard for worker health and safety that is typically lower than international norms has changed. There is certainly reason to be concerned about the DPRK’s construction practices in its construction of the experimental LWR (ELWR) at Yongbyon that has been in process for most of the last decade. The experimental LWR core could also be disabled accidentally due to poor design, operator error, or hardware failure, but it is too small a thermal mass to lead to a fuel meltdown as occurred at Fukushima, Chernobyl or Three Mile Island. If some other accident or attack disabled the reactor, however, it could release a relatively small amount of radioactive material, but the plume will affect mostly local areas close by Yongbyon. There are many ways to engage the DPRK with regard to safety and nuclear fuel security, once a realistic framework for denuclearizing the DPRK’s weapons program is agreed to and being implemented. Such an engagement could entail some or all of the following steps: 1. Helping the DPRK to make or contribute to production of low-enriched uranium (LEU) to convert and fuel the DPRK’s IRT research reactor (possible, for example, for use in medical isotope production), and/or, in the future, to supply LEU for small stationary or barge-based LWRs; 2. Jointly designing with North Korea a made-in-DPRK small “reunification” reactor based on the ROK’s indigenous SMART LWR design that meets international safety and manufacturing standards, possibly in a joint project with ROK LWR manufacturing firms. Such a replacement for the DPRK’s own “experimental” small LWR might cost $1 billion to build in the DPRK; and it would need to be matched by a similar commitment to build the requisite supporting stable power grid that would be needed for it to operate safely. Another small reactor option is to design and deploy (or possibly import) a small barge-mounted reactor (possibly Russian) to provide power in a coastal North Korean town, though recent Russian experience suggests that such deployment will take time and may face significant obstacles; 3. Undertaking power system planning for the rational development of a national grid capable of supporting a fleet of small LWRs over a decade, likely the bottom-up cumulation of smart and minigrids to support commercially and economically justified power use rather than a grand scheme to build one national grid; 4. Creating a multilateral financing scheme (possibly linked to a regional grid connecting the ROK with the Chinese and Russian Far East grids) for the manufacturing and construction of small LWRs in the DPRK over time, starting with a survey of DPRK manufacturing capabilities capable of contributing to or being upgraded to international standards required for safe, reliable LWR production; 5. Creating a regional enrichment consortium involving Japan, the ROK and the
DPRK (among other possible partners) whereby DPRK enrichment capacities are either incorporated into a safeguarded scheme, possibly operated as part of a multinational facility, in return for which the DPRK would reveal all its enrichment acquisition history; 6. Development of a small reactor export program as part of an inter-Korean nuclear export push; 7. Provision of a program of training and institutional development needed to support each of the above activities, which is likely currently almost completely missing in the DPRK today. 8. Development of alternative functions and missions—ranging from nuclear safety, nuclear facilities dismantlement and cleanup, and nuclear materials disposal and/or packaging for transfer to the US or its allies, to environmental monitoring and other productive activities—to redeploy and employ scientists and technicians currently working at Yongbyon. Providing such opportunities as a part of cooperative threat reductions can help to minimize opportunities for leakage of nuclear weapons expertise to other nations as DPRK denuclearization proceeds. An engagement on nuclear energy issues including the types of activities described above cannot occur in a vacuum. LWR engagement should be accompanied by engagement on a host of other policy, economic, and humanitarian issues, but most importantly it must be accompanied by engagement on a wide range of other DPRK and regional energy sector issues such as those described above. (David Von Hippel and Peter Hayes, “Energy Engagement Options to Support a Korean Peninsula Denuclearization Deal,” NAPSnet, May 28, 2018)

Trump is continuing to pursue a nuclear summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un even though the CIA analysis, which is consistent with other expert opinion, casts doubt on the viability of Trump's stated goal for the negotiations, the elimination of North Korea's nuclear weapons stockpile. "Everybody knows they are not going to denuclearize," said one intelligence official who read the report, which was circulated earlier this month, days before Trump canceled the originally scheduled summit. In an odd twist, a list of potential concessions by North Korea in the CIA analysis included the possibility that Kim Jong Un may consider offering to open a Western hamburger franchise in Pyongyang as a show of goodwill, according to three national security officials. It suggests Kim is interested in a peaceful gesture to an American president whose love of fast-food burgers is well known — and who, during the 2016 campaign, had said he wanted to talk nukes over a burger with the North Korean leader. On the nuclear question, the analysis suggests that a more realistic immediate objective would be convincing Kim to walk back recent progress on the country's nuclear weapons program, the officials said. (Courtney Kube, Ken Dilanian, and Carol E. Lee, “CIA Report Says North Korea Won’t Denuclearize, But Might Open a Burger Joint,” NBC News, May.30.2018)

Rodong Sinmun commentary: “The positive measures taken by the DPRK for the dismantlement of the nuclear test ground have evoked a tremendous response from the world. The DPRK's active and bold measures are, in a nutshell, part of the efforts for implementing the decision of the Third Plenary Meeting of the Seventh Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea. The DPRK permitted on-site coverage by the international press corps, to say nothing of domestic media, to show the transparency of the dismantlement of the nuclear test ground, and took technical measures for it. The world, stunned by the DPRK's declaration on dismantling the nuclear test ground, calling it a bold decision, is now admiring its practice in which the transparency was fully shown. The DPRK is advancing along the path taken by itself according to its timetable no matter what others may say and wherever wind may blow from in order to implement the decision of the Third Plenary Meeting of the Seventh Central Committee of the WPK. The whole course of dismantling the northern nuclear test ground eloquently proves the DPRK government's unshakable peace-loving stand to join the aspiration and efforts of the international community for a total stop to nuclear tests. The DPRK's steadfast will to join hands with the world peace-loving people in building a nuclear-free, peaceful world, a new independent world where the dream and ideal of humankind have come true, will remain unchanged in the future, too. (Rodong Sinmun, “DPRK Will Continue to Advance According to Own Timetable,” May 29, 2018)
Bolton: “I discussed the state of play with Trump the day after Memorial Day, and, unpredictably, Trump said, ‘We can’t have a bunch of doves take over the delegation. Tell Pompeo. I’ll have to take this deal over. We’ve got to discuss denuclearization [in the Singapore communiqué], got to have it.’ Then he said, ‘Get the leader of the delegation on the phone,’ which we did quickly, speaking to a very surprised American Foreign Service officer in Seoul. After initial pleasantries, Trump said, ‘I’m the one to sell the deal… you shouldn’t negotiate denuclearization, and you should tell them that. You have to say ‘denuclearization,’ with no wiggle room.’ Trump allowed as how he didn’t want a ‘‘big, formal agenda’ and wanted ‘no great formality.’ That was that. A few minutes later, Pompeo called, upset Trump had spoken directly with the delegation. I explained what had happened, including my concern about weak language in the draft communiqué. ‘I’m right with you on that,’ said Pompeo, meaning we had to discuss ‘denuclearization,’ but it was not clear he realized State’s negotiators were not ‘right with’ us on holding the line in the negotiations. Pompeo then told me Trump wanted to bring Kim Yong Chol to meet in the Oval Office, which Trump thought was ‘genius.’ We both thought it was a mistake, as did Kelly when I briefed him, although Pompeo seemed resigned to it.” (Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened*, p. 84)

5/30/18

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and a senior North Korean official met in New York as both sides push to salvage a highly anticipated summit between their leaders. The two had a 90-minute working dinner at the Manhattan residence of the U.S. deputy representative to the United Nations. Kim Yong Chol, a vice chairman of the ruling Workers’ Party’s Central Committee, arrived at JFK International Airport earlier in the day, becoming the highest-ranking North Korean to visit the U.S. since 2000. "Good working dinner with Kim Yong Chol in New York tonight," Pompeo tweeted after the dinner, along with photos of them shaking hands and clinking glasses over the table. "Steak, corn, and cheese on the menu." The two officials plan to have a day full of meetings tomorrow, White House press secretary Sarah Sanders told reporters in Washington. Pompeo is also scheduled to hold a press conference at the Palace Hotel at 2:15 p.m., according to the State Department. Officials from both sides have been scrambling to make the summit happen, with separate teams dispatched to the inter-Korean border and Singapore to discuss the substance of any denuclearization agreement and logistical issues, respectively. "I think we are looking for something historic," a senior State Department official said in a background briefing with reporters in New York. "I think we’re looking for something that has never (been) done before."

What the North Koreans want is security, the official said, referencing the regime’s long-held belief that nuclear weapons shield the country from a hostile United States. "What we have to convince them is that, on the contrary, their nuclear program has made them less secure, that there’s a better path forward," the official added. "We're willing to work with them to provide them the security guarantees they feel they need, and in fact, we're willing to go beyond that to help them have greater economic prosperity. But they have to denuclearize." (Yonhap, “Pompeo, North Korea Official, Meet in New York, Prepare for Summit,” May 31, 2018)

Pabian, Bermudez, and Liu: “Commercial satellite imagery of the Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center from May 6 indicates activity around the Radiochemical Laboratory’s Thermal Plant that could be early signs of a possible reprocessing campaign. However, it remains unclear if that is the case since there is no sign of the specialized railcars that are usually associated with this process. Additionally, work related to the secondary cooling system of the 5 MWe Reactor continues, and the engineering office building at the Experimental Light Water Reactor (ELWR) nears completion. On May 6, there was a light smoke plume emanating from the stack at the Radiochemical Laboratory Thermal Plant. Additionally, coal bins had been partially filled and groomed since April 17. Such activity has, in the past, signaled initial preparations for a reprocessing campaign. However, we would also expect to see specialized railcars used to transfer radioactive waste or materials, which are not currently present.” (Frank V. Pabian, Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., and Jack Liu, “North Korea’s Yongbyon Nuclear Research Center: Possible Preparations for Reprocessing Campaign in Early May?” *38North*, May 30, 2018)
Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that progress had been made toward salvaging a historic summit between President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, calling it a “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to change the course for the world.” After more than two hours of formal talks with Kim’s right-hand aide, Vice Chairman Kim Yong Chol, Pompeo spoke as though the summit Trump canceled last week was likely to be reinstated, though he still framed it as an “expected” first meeting. “Our two countries face a pivotal moment,” Pompeo told reporters after the unusual sit-down sessions with an official banned from traveling to the United States without a special waiver. It would “be nothing short of tragic to let this opportunity go to waste.” Kim Yong Chol will travel to Washington on Friday to deliver a “personal letter” from the North Korean leader, Pompeo said, adding that he does not know whether that means a formal announcement is likely that the summit is back on. “We’ve made real progress in the last 72 hours toward setting the conditions” for a productive summit in Singapore, Pompeo said. But when asked whether a meeting will happen June 12 as originally planned, Pompeo acknowledged succinctly, “Don’t know.” Despite the signs of progress in New York, and in separate talks in the demilitarized zone and Singapore, Pompeo struck a note of caution. “This is going to be a process that will take days and weeks to work our way through,” he said. “This is a difficult, difficult challenge, make no mistake about it. There remains a great deal of work to do.” The State Department had said Pompeo and Kim Yong Chol concluded their meeting at 11:25 a.m., two hours earlier than expected. But Pompeo told reporters that the sessions ran as long as needed to make progress and dismissed the suggestion that the men had hit an impasse. A State Department official said the schedule change was not the result of a deadlock, but the official provided no details of what had been accomplished. Pompeo gave no indication of trouble with a short tweet after the talks broke up. “Substantive talks with the team from #NorthKorea. We discussed our priorities for the potential summit between our leaders,” he wrote. Pompeo was accompanied by two North Korea experts and an interpreter. Kim Yong Chol and his unidentified aides, two men and a woman, sat facing a curved window with a sweeping view of the East River and Lower Manhattan. As he departed for Texas today, Trump told reporters that the first day of meetings with the North Korean delegation in New York had gone “very well.” Asked whether a deal was taking shape, Trump said that he was not sure but that the negotiations “are in good hands.” “Hopefully we’ll have a meeting on the 12th,” he said. “It doesn’t mean it all gets done at one meeting,” Trump said, adding that a second or third might be necessary. Kim Yong Chol will need another U.S. travel exemption to visit Washington. The invitation, especially to the White House, is a symbolic diplomatic coup for Kim Jong Un and an indication that the United States thinks the summit can happen and be productive. Shortly after his plane arrived in New York, Pompeo tweeted that he was looking forward to meeting with Kim Yong Chol and added, “We are committed to the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” U.S. officials have repeated the four elements so frequently that they refer to it casually by the initials CVID. The State Department official said they were seeking a corresponding commitment and “action” from the North Koreans. “I think we are looking for something historic,” said the official. (Carol Morello and Anne Gearan, “Pompeo Touts Progress in Talks with N. Koreans,” Washington Post, June 1, 2018, p. A-1)

Pompeo: “Good afternoon, everyone. As you know, in addition to my meeting with Vice Chairman Kim Yong-chol, we have teams in Singapore and at the DMZ working with their North Korean counterparts to prepare for President Trump and Chairman Kim’s expected summit in Singapore. Through these series of meetings, I am confident we are moving in the right direction. Today, Vice Chairman Kim and I discussed how our countries could come together and take advantage of the unique opportunity that our two leaders have created through their visions of the future that they have so clearly articulated. Vice Chairman Kim Yong-chol is now planning to travel to Washington to deliver a personal letter from Chairman Kim Jong-un. The proposed summit offers a historic opening for President Trump and Chairman Kim to boldly lead the United States and the DPRK into a new era of peace, prosperity, and security. Our two countries face a pivotal moment in our relationship in which it could be nothing short of tragic to let this opportunity go to waste. In my conversations with Chairman Kim Jong-un in Pyongyang and today with Vice Chairman Kim Yong-chol, I have been very clear that President Trump and the United States objective is very consistent and well known: the complete, verifiable, and
irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. President Trump has also made it clear that if Kim Jong-un denuclearizes, there is a brighter path for North Korea. We envision a strong, connected, and secure, prosperous North Korea that maintains its cultural heritage but is integrated into the community of nations. We think that working together, the people of the United States and North Korea can create a future defined by friendship and collaboration, not by mistrust and fear and threats. We sincerely hope that Chairman Kim Jong-un shares this positive vision for the future. We expect both leaders to enter the summit in Singapore, if it proceeds, with their eyes wide open and with a clear understanding of the possibilities for the future. If these talks are successful, it will truly be historic. It will take bold leadership from Chairman Kim Jong-un if we are able to seize this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to change the course for the world. **President Trump and I believe Chairman Kim is the kind of leader who can make those kinds of decisions,** and that in the coming weeks and months we will have the opportunity to test whether or not this is the case. Happy to take a couple questions. **NAUERT:** Our first question – and one question each, please – goes to Nick Wadhams from Bloomberg. Nick, go ahead. **Q:** Thanks. Mr. Secretary, last night the State Department told us that the U.S. would be looking for a historic commitment from North Korea before the summit would go ahead. Today you ended talks with Kim Yong-chol early. Can you talk about why you did that? Did you get the commitment you sought and do the U.S. and North Korea now agree on what denuclearization would mean? **POMPEO:** So that’s a (inaudible) matter. **We didn’t end the talks early. We had a set series of items that we wanted to make sure we covered, topics which we made sure that we were clear on in terms of what our expectations were and their expectations in return of us. We achieved that.** This is a difficult, difficult challenge. Make no mistake about it. There remains a great deal of work to do. And we made progress here as well as at the same time made progress in the other venues that conversations were taking place. We had all the time we needed today to make the progress that was achievable during our time here in New York City. **NAUERT:** Our next question goes to Michael Gordon from The Wall Street Journal. **Q:** Sir, following up on that, a senior State Department official – same person who spoke to us last night – also indicated that the United States hopes to persuade North Korea that its security doesn’t depend on nuclear weapons. You’ve now had three meetings with them and spent some hours with them. Do you feel that you’ve been successful yet in doing that, or is the difficult in settling this issue the reason why President Trump is now talking about the possibility of having two or three summits and not just trying to break the back of these issues in a single meeting? **POMPEO:** Yeah, this is – look, make no mistake about it. President Trump, this administration completely understands how hard this problem is. There is a long history where North Korea has viewed its nuclear program as providing the security that it needed for the regime. The effort now is to come to a set of understandings which convince the North Koreans of what President Trump has said. If we’re able to achieve it, if the North Koreans are prepared in fact to denuclearize – this includes all elements of their nuclear program – if we convince them of that, that in fact their security is greater, that in fact the real threat to their security is the continued holding onto of that nuclear weapons program and not the converse. We’ve had lots of conversations around that. The true test, of course, comes when we actually achieve this, but many conversations have been had about how we might proceed, what the path might be forward so that we can achieve both the denuclearization that the world demands of North Korea and the security assurances that would be required for them to allow us to achieve that. **NAUERT:** Next one to Martha Raddatz from ABC News. **Q:** Secretary Pompeo, you call it a proposed summit. Will we find out whether it’s a go tomorrow? And also, you looked the vice chairman in the eyes. You have been with him in the room. What accounted for the progress? This has been such a roller coaster ride. The summit was off; we’ve gone from fire and fury to this. So talk about what accounted for the change, and do you worry that you could still change back? **POMPEO:** So Martha, I have had the chance to meet Chairman Kim Jong-un twice and now Kim Yong-chol three times. I’ve spent a great deal of time with each of them. I believe they are contemplating a path forward where they can make a strategic shift, one that their country has not been prepared to make before. This will obviously be their decision. They’ll have to make that. They’ll have to choose – as I just spoke about, they’ll have to choose a path that is fundamentally different than the one that their country has proceeded on for decades. It should not be to anyone’s surprise that there will be moments along the way that this won’t be straightforward, that **there’ll be things that look hard and times it appears there’s a roadblock**
and sometimes, perhaps, even perceived as insurmountable. Our mission is incredibly clear. It is to continue to push forward – the President has directed me to push forward to test the proposition that we can achieve that outcome. So I know everyone’s following this minute by minute and hour by hour. This is going to be a process that will take days and weeks to work our way through. There will be tough moments, there will be difficult times. I’ve had some difficult conversations with them as well. They’ve given it right back to me too. There is – we’re decades into this challenge, and so one not ought to be either surprised or frightened or deterred by moments where it looks like there are challenges and difficulties, things that can’t be bridged. Our mission is to bridge them so that we can achieve this historic outcome. Q: And on the proposed summit, will we know tomorrow whether there will actually be a summit? POMPEO: Don’t know. Don’t know the answer to that. NAUERT: And our final question goes to Adam Shapiro with Fox News. POMPEO: Let me just say, Martha, while we may not know tomorrow, I will tell you we’ve made real progress in the last 72 hours toward setting the conditions. Right – so your question really goes to what are the conditions. The conditions are putting President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong-un in a place where we think there could be real progress made by the two of them meeting. It does no good if we’re in a place where we don’t think there’s real opportunity to place them together. We’ve made real progress towards that in the last 72 hours. NAUERT: And Adam from Fox. Q: Secretary Pompeo, you talk about complete denuclearization of the peninsula, so my question is about this and the impact on our allies. What concern does the United States have about exposing South Korea and our Asian allies, like Japan, to greater, perhaps, Chinese influence if there is as part of a deal in the future a draw-down of U.S. military presence in South Korea? POMPEO: I’m not going to talk about today nor at any time during the negotiations about the elements of what the shape of the agreement looks like. That’s – those are things that ought to be held so that the leaders have all the freedom they need to make the right decision. So with respect to the draw-down, it’s obviously a DOD issue. I’m not going to speak to that today. What I can say is this: I’ve been the Secretary of State now for 30 odd days, I think. There is no daylight between the South Koreans, the Japanese, and the United States with respect to our approach to how we resolve this issue with respect to North Korea. I have spoken to my counterparts there, I’ve spoken to President Moon there. We understand their concerns. We understand the risks that can be posed to them. And an agreement that we reach will provide an outcome that each of those countries can sign on to as well. Q: But is there the potential for the creation, for lack of a better term, of a vacuum that the Chinese could then move in, whether it be economic, political, or militarily? POMPEO: The Chinese are moving all around the world today. Let’s be clear. The risk of that is real everywhere, not just in this particular space. We’re keenly aware of it, and I’m – I am confident that the things we’re talking about with respect to North Korea will not enhance the risk of that to any significant degree. We wouldn’t do that to the South Koreans or the Japanese, two of our most important allies in the region. NAUERT: Okay, everyone. Thank you. POMPEO: Thank you very much. NAUERT: Thank you so much. Good to see you. Q: Are we going to Singapore?” (DoS, Remarks, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Lotte Palace Hotel, New York, May 31, 2018)

Bolton: “Once we saw that Kim had left the Oval, Pence and I went in, and Kelly gave me the original and a rough translation of Kim Jong Un’s letter to Trump, saying, “This is the only copy.” The letter was pure puffery, written probably by some clerk in North Korea’s agitprop bureau, but Trump loved it. This was the beginning of the Trump-Kim bromance. The First Family was going to Camp David for the weekend, and they had all assembled to walk to Marine One, which had landed in the interim. Trump smiled and gave me a thumbs-up as he left the Oval again. The rest of us repaired to Pence’s office, where Kelly and Pompeo debriefed us. Kim Yong Chol had said nothing new or different about the North’s position. Clearly, what they wanted were political assurances before agreeing to any denuclearization, and Trump had seemed inclined to give them just that. Strikingly, as in earlier discussions with the North, economic sanctions seemed to be secondary. This probably meant that North Korea feared US military power more than it feared economic pressure, and also quite likely indicated that sanctions weren’t as effective as we thought. Kelly said the North could have come away with any impression they wanted regarding what Trump might do. Trump had said he was willing to reduce the US–South Korean military exercises and had gone off on a riff about how expensive and provocative they were. This may
have been the worst point, because North Korea had now just heard from America’s Commander in Chief that our military capabilities on the Peninsula were up for negotiation, despite our earlier denials.” (Bolton, The Room Where It Happened, p. 87)

As the Trump administration races to prepare for a possible nuclear summit, a central question looms over the diplomatic push: What does North Korea want in exchange for a promise to denuclearize, and what is the United States willing to give? The query underscores the challenge U.S. officials are facing in the two weeks before President Trump, if all goes as planned, will hold an unprecedented meeting with his North Korean counterpart, Kim Jong Un. Trump has boasted that North Korea already has made significant concessions, including the release of three American prisoners, without getting anything in return from the United States, although analysts said that having a chance to sit across from the U.S. president would reward Kim by elevating his global standing. But experts say the key to the North’s willingness to scale back its nuclear program will be the administration’s ability to provide the Kim regime a sense of security, in addition to economic and political incentives. Speaking to reporters last week, Trump vowed to “guarantee” Kim’s safety under a nuclear deal, saying: “His country will be rich, his country will be hard-working and very prosperous.” Former U.S. officials said Kim’s overarching objective is aimed at achieving what his father and grandfather were not able to do: break what the regime has called the United States’ “hostile policy” that has existed since the Korean War armistice in 1953. That goal has been elusive despite attempts over the past quarter-century to cement lasting deals to freeze or end North Korea’s nuclear program. Each of those initiatives, backed by Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama, foundered as U.S. officials accused North Korea of cheating and advancing its nuclear and missile programs. The efforts include a 1993 deal to keep North Korea in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; a 2000 agreement to freeze missile development in exchange for relaxed sanctions; the inconclusive “six-party talks” that ended in 2009; and a “Leap Day” deal in 2012 to freeze nuclear and missile testing. With that checkered history in mind, Kim declared in a New Year’s speech that North Korea had reached nuclear proficiency and said the regime would turn its attention to economic development. Foreign policy analysts interpreted that as a sign that Kim believed he had new leverage to win concessions from global powers. “The top-line ambition of North Korea is respect through diplomatic normalization, an end to the political pressure and economic pressure tactics to change their nation, and acceptance as they are into the international system,” said Frank Jannuzi, president of the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation, who made three trips to North Korea while working as a Democratic aide on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Experts said a summit might lead to an effort to forge a peace treaty formally ending the war and establish diplomatic relations in the form of a liaison office in the respective capitals. Kim is also likely to demand that the United States remove North Korea from its list of state sponsors of terrorism, a designation that was reimposed last fall. Such a move would be mostly symbolic, given the breadth of economic sanctions that would remain in place until the North took verifiable steps toward denuclearization. But former officials expressed frustration that such confidence-building measures have been met with disinterest from the North Koreans in the past. Christopher Hill, who led the U.S. delegation in talks during the George W. Bush administration, said the Bush White House, after initial skepticism, agreed to the concept of opening liaison offices. But when Hill proposed it, the North Korean side rejected the idea. “The trouble with things the North Koreans say they want, they want them until they get them, then they don’t care,” Hill said. Experts said coordinated international economic pressure on North Korea, key to Trump’s “maximum pressure” strategy, could already be weakening as Kim reaches out to Beijing and Seoul. Trump has contrasted a path toward prosperity for the North under a nuclear deal with the potential downfall of the regime if talks collapse. But Jean Lee, a Korea analyst at the Wilson Center in Washington, noted that South Korean President Moon Jae-in has been careful to frame talk of benefits to Pyongyang in terms of an “economic partnership.” “If we characterize it as a transactional deal where North Korea, as a poor country, stands to gain economically if it gives up its nuclear program, that’s not going to work,” Lee said. “Phrasing it that way, treating it like a business deal, . . . won’t give their leader much room to spin it.” Suggestions from Vice President Pence and national security adviser John Bolton that North Korea should not expect reciprocal economic benefits until it fully forfeits its nuclear program elicited a fierce response from Kim aides, who threatened to cancel the summit.
last week and warned of a potential nuclear showdown. Even more important than economic incentives for North Korea will be security guarantees assuring Kim, who is in his mid-30s, that his authoritarian regime can survive for decades. Although the U.S. force of about 28,000 troops in South Korea has long been a core North Korean complaint, experts said that its negotiators, aware of U.S. and South Korean officials’ insistence that removing U.S. troops is off-limits for now, were unlikely to push immediately for their removal and would focus instead on the peace treaty. “Once that is concluded, it will undermine the rationale for the troop presence,” said Sue Mi Terry, who tracked Korea at the CIA. “Why do we need to be there if the war has ended?” An eventual withdrawal might even suit Trump, who has suggested that he might remove U.S. troops from bases in allied nations, including South Korea and Japan, that he says do not shoulder enough of the cost. The military exercises the United States conducts with South Korean officials depict them as rehearsals for an invasion or regime change. Pyongyang objects particularly to the participation of advanced and nuclear-capable weaponry in any exercise, such as the F22 stealth fighter and nuclear-capable naval assets. Adjustments to training and exercises probably would pose no serious threat to the U.S. military posture, analysts said, while rewarding Kim with a political win at home. “It would be helpful to consider ways to modify those missions,” said Frank Aum, a former Defense Department official. The Pentagon might, for example, alter training missions it conducts for B-52 bombers located in Guam and B-2 stealth bombers, which occasionally have flown over the Korean Peninsula, and reconsider sending carrier strike groups to waters off the Korean Peninsula. The risk, however, is that a deal that reduces the American military footprint in the region could leave the United States less prepared for future conflicts in Asia while increasing South Korea’s vulnerability to conventional attacks from North Korea, said Abigail Grace, who worked on Asia policy at the White House until earlier this spring. “The biggest danger is that the U.S. will be tempted to trade conventional force posture for nukes,” said Grace, who is now at the Center for a New American Security. But all of these potential trade-offs probably would come down the road. Daniel Russel, a top Asia policy aide in the Obama administration, said the rushed summit preparations meant that the two sides probably would try to reach broad, mostly symbolic agreements on denuclearization and peace and leave it to aides to work out the details. “They will announce they have looked into each other’s eyes and found each other trustworthy,” said Russel, now at the Asia Society. “And they’ll announce they have decided to direct their deputies to begin a negotiating process. But when you scrape the gold paint off, lo and behold, there’s not much there.” (Missy Ryan, David Nakamura and Karen DeYoung, “What Will U.S. Give North Korea in Exchange for Nukes? Question Looms Ahead of Summit,” Washington Post, May 31, 2018)

Russian President Vladimir Putin has invited North Korean leader Kim Jong-un to join a global forum to be held in Vladivostok in September, RIA Novosti reported June 4, citing a Russian lawmaker. The invitation was made in a letter delivered by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who met with Kim in Pyongyang today. The Russian leader reportedly expressed "best wishes" for the success of the recent diplomacy set in motion to resolve issues related to the Korean Peninsula. TASS earlier reported that Lavrov invited Kim to visit Russia during the meeting. It was not clear whether Kim has accepted the invitation. (Yonhap, “Putin Invites N.K. Leader Kim to Visit Vladivostok in September,” June 4, 2018)

The United States has deployed 14 F-22 Raptor stealth jets to an air base in Japan in an apparent move to increase diplomatic pressure on North Korea before the planned summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and the North's leader Kim Jong-un, Japanese media reported. According to the Sankei Shimbun, U.S. armed forces will station the 14 F-22 jets at the air base on Okinawa for a month. The newspaper said the decision reflects that Washington aims to intensify pressure on Pyongyang and grab the upper hand before the planned leadership meeting slated for June 12. Two days ago, the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan left the naval base in Japan’s eastern port city of Yokosuka for a patrol mission in the western Pacific Ocean. (Lee Min-hyung, “Fourteen F-22 Raptor Fighter Jets Deployed in Japan,” Korea Times, May 31, 2018)
Trump: “The meeting went very well. We’ll be meeting on June 12th in Singapore. It went very well. It’s really a get-to-know-you kind of a situation. Mike has spent two days doing this. We've gotten to know their people very well. And we will -- you people are going to have to travel because you'll be in Singapore on June 12th. And I think it'll be a process. It's not -- I never said it goes in one meeting. I think it's going to be a process. But the relationships are building, and that's a very positive thing.

Q. Mr. President, what's your sense of what the North Koreans are willing to do on the issue of denuclearization? Are they looking at it all at once?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think they want to do that. I know they want to do that. They want other things along the line. They want to develop as a country. That's going to happen. I have no doubt. Japan is involved, as you know. And South Korea is very much involved. We're involved in terms of getting everything. Everybody wants the United States. So we're going to help in the process very much. Without us, it wouldn't happen. But I think that you see a lot of very positive things, including with China. I think you see a lot of very positive things happening with President Xi, who has helped me quite a bit with this. So we'll see where it leads. But we're going to be -- June 12th, we'll be in Singapore. It will be a beginning. I don't say and I've never said it happens in one meeting. You're talking about years of hostility; years of problems; years of, really, hatred between so many different nations. But I think you're going to have a very positive result in the end. Not from one meeting, but you're going to have a very positive -- Q. You appeared to question their sincerity in your letter to Kim Jong Un last week. Have they gone far enough now? Do you believe they're sincere?

THE PRESIDENT: My letter was a response to their letter. The media forgot that. You know, the media said, “Oh, you had a meeting, then you cancelled.” I didn't cancel the meeting. I cancelled it in response to a very tough statement. And I think we're over that -- totally over that. And now we're going to talk, and we're going to really start a process. We're meeting with the Chairman on June 12th. And I think it's probably going to be a very successful -- ultimately, a successful process. We'll see. Remember what I said: We will see what we will see. But I think it's going to be a process that we deserve to have. I mean, we really deserve -- they want it. We think it's important. And I think we would be making a big mistake if we didn't have it. I think we're going to have a relationship, and it will start on June 12th. Q. What can you get done in one meeting? What can you get done on June 12th? And why do you think they're open to denuclearization?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, this was a very good meeting. Don't forget, this was a meeting where a letter was given to me by Kim Jong Un, and that letter was a very nice letter. Oh, would you like to see what was in that letter? Would you like it? Q. Can you tell us?

THE PRESIDENT: How much? How much? How much? Q. Can you just give us a flavor of what the letter said? THE PRESIDENT: Ah, it was a very interesting letter. And at some point I may be -- it may be appropriate, and maybe I'll be able to give it to you. Maybe you'll be able to see it, and maybe fairly soon. But really, this was a letter presentation that ended up being a two-hour conversation. Q. Why did it end up going so long, sir? THE PRESIDENT: Because we found the whole subject matter very interesting. And because I really think they want to do something. And if it's possible, so do we. Q. What did he ask you (inaudible)?

THE PRESIDENT: I think all we're going to do is be there on June 12th, and we're going to see what happens. Mike has been dealing very well. They have a very good relationship with Mike Pompeo, our Secretary of State. It was actually very interesting because this was literally going to be the delivery of a letter, and it ended up being a two-hour conversation with the second most powerful man in North Korea. Q. Did he ask you anything about troop levels in South Korea?

THE PRESIDENT: We talked about almost everything. We talked about a lot. And we talked about sanctions. Q. (Inaudible) with Kim Jong Un yet? THE PRESIDENT: I don't want to say that. Q. Did they agree to CVID, sir? THE PRESIDENT: We talked about a lot of things. We really did. But the big deal will be on June 12th. And again, it's a process. It doesn't go -- we're not going to sign a -- we're not going to go in and sign something on June 12th and we never were. We're going to start a process. And I told them today, “Take your time. We can go fast. We can go slowly.” But I think they'd like to see something happen. And if we can work that out, that will be good. But the process will begin on June 12th in Singapore. Q. Do you believe Kim is committed to denuclearization?

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah, I do think so. He'd like to see it happen. He wants to be careful. He wants to be, you know -- he's not going to run and do things. But I told him, to be honest with you, look, we have sanctions on; they're very powerful
sanctions. **We would not take sanctions off unless they did that.** But the sanctions are very powerful. You've seen how powerful in other ways. You're going to see how powerful sanctions are when it comes to Iran. You see what that's doing to Iran. So we have sanctions on. **And at a certain point, I'll tell you what,** I look forward to the day when I can take the sanctions off of North Korea. Q Did you talk about human rights today? And do you expect to talk about it on -- THE PRESIDENT: **We did not talk about human rights, no.** Q Do you expect to talk about it on June 12th? THE PRESIDENT: **Could be.** Yeah. Could be. **I think we probably will, and maybe in great detail.** We did not talk about human rights. Q Did you talk about sanctions? Did they ask you to make any changes? THE PRESIDENT: Yeah, we did. We talked about it. Yes, they asked about sanctions. Q **Is maximum pressure over, sir?** THE PRESIDENT: Excuse me? Q **Is maximum pressure over, sir?** THE PRESIDENT: **It's going to remain what it is now.** I don't even want to use the term "maximum pressure" anymore because I don't want to use that term because we're getting along. You see the relationship. We're getting along. So it's not a question of maximum pressure. **It's staying essentially the way it is.** At some point, hopefully, a deal -- for the good of millions of people, a deal will be worked out. Q Mr. President, how would you describe the state of relations now between the United States and North Korea after your meetings today? THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think they're okay. I mean, I think they're good. Is it like the relationships we have with a couple of other countries? Probably not. Right? But I think the relationship we have right now with North Korea is as good as it's been in a long time. **They had no relationship under the previous administration. There was nothing. It was nothing. They were explaining, it was just a "nothing." Nothing was done.** Hey, folks, this should not be up to me. This should have been handled a long time ago. This got to a very critical point. This should have been handled many years ago -- not only by President Obama, but by other Presidents that preceded me. This shouldn't be done now, this should have been done years ago. Q **Do you plan to offer the North Koreans economic aid at the June 12th summit?** THE PRESIDENT: Well, **what's going to happen is South Korea will do that.** No, I don't think the United States is going to have to spend. I think South Korea will do it. I think China -- I think, frankly, China will help out. I think that Japan will help out. No, I don't see the United States spending a lot of money. You know, we have three hostages. How much money did I spend for the hostages? And, look, we're very far away. We are very far away. Those places are very close. It's their neighborhood. We're thousands -- we're 6,000 miles away. So I've already told South Korea, I said, "You know, you're going to have to get ready." And Japan, also. And I think they really want to see something great happen. Japan does, South Korea does, and I think China does. But that's their neighborhood; it's not our neighborhood. Q Mr. President, yesterday you were concerned about the meeting that Lavrov was having with Kim Jong Un. THE PRESIDENT: Yeah, I didn't like it. Q **Where are you on that today?** THE PRESIDENT: I didn't like it, but it could be very positive, too. I didn't like the Russian meeting yesterday. I said, "What's the purpose of that?" But, **it could be a positive meeting. If it's a positive meeting, I love it. If it's a negative meeting, I'm not happy. And it could very well be a positive meeting.** Q Are you willing to end the South Korean War on June 12th, during the summit? THE PRESIDENT: Well, **we could -- that could happen. That could happen. We talked about it.** Q **Tell us more.** THE PRESIDENT: **We talked about ending the war.** And you know, this war has been going on -- it's got to be the longest war -- almost 70 years, right? And there is a possibility of something like that. That's more of a signing of a document that it's very important in one way. Historically, it's very important. But we'll see. And we did discuss that -- the ending of the Korean War. Can you believe that we're talking about the ending of the Korean War? You're talking about 70 years. Q **Has that document been prepared? Or is it being prepared?** THE PRESIDENT: Well, we're going to discuss it prior to the meeting. That's something that could come out of the meeting. I think, really, there's something that maybe could come out of the meeting. Q **Where's China on that?** THE PRESIDENT: I think China would like to see a very positive result. I have a lot of good relations with, as you know, Chairman Xi. He's a great -- he's really a very wonderful guy. He's a man that loves China. However, he wants to do what's best for China. I think China and President Xi would love to see something happen here. Q **When you say you're going to guarantee Kim's security, and the North Korean regime's security, how will you do that? How would the United States do that?** THE PRESIDENT: Well, we're going to make sure it's
The two Koreas agreed to hold general-level military talks on June 14 at the truce village of Panmunjom as part of efforts to ease tensions between the two countries. They also agreed to hold a Red Cross meeting on June 22 at the North’s Mount Kumgang resort to discuss holding a reunion of families separated by the 1950-53 Korean War. The agreements were made during high-level talks held at the border truce village to discuss steps to implement agreements reached during a April 27 summit between President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. “South and North Korea agreed to take substantive steps to advance inter-Korean relations in a proactive and significant manner and to usher in a new era for reconciliation, peace and prosperity,” they said in a joint press statement. The two sides also agreed to open a liaison office in the North's border town of Kaesong at an early date. They will have working-level contacts for that matter. To arrange meaningful events to celebrate the anniversary of their first-ever summit held on June 15, 2000, they promised to keep holding discussions through exchanges of documents. Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon, who led South Korea's delegation, however, told reporters later that an official event for the anniversary will not likely be held due in part to time restraints, though he said that a final decision has not been made. The two also agreed to hold talks on June 18 to discuss sports cooperation, including fielding a joint team to the upcoming Asian Games. They pledged to have further discussion on possible reconnection of railways and roads between the two countries, cooperation in the forestry area and a decision on the date for working-level talks to prepare for performances planned by the North's art troupe in the South this fall. They did not set the date for their next round of high-level talks, saying that the schedule will be determined in consideration of other working-level discussions. Today's talks were the third high-level meeting between the two Koreas since January, when Kim extended an olive branch after years of provocations expressing intent to join the February Winter Olympics. Cho led South Korea's five-member delegation, which included Vice Transport Minister Kim Jeong-ryeol and Vice Culture Minister Roh Tae-kang. The North's five-member team was headed by Ri Son-gwon, chairman of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country. It also included Vice Railroad
Minister Kim Yun-hyok and Vice Sports Minister Won Kil-u. The high-level talks were originally scheduled for May 16, but the North called them off at the last minute, taking issue with joint military drills between South Korea and the United States. "Looking back on the inter-Korean relationship, it can be compared to a cart that runs toward peace, prosperity and unification,“ North Korea’s chief delegate Ri said at the start of the talks. "We can think of North and South Korea as the wheels that move the cart forward.” Ri blamed South Korea for the cancellation of the meeting scheduled for last month, while providing no specific reasons. He, however, called it a "thing of the past," saying that mutual "trust and respect" is the driving force behind the inter-Korean relations. Cho did not directly respond to the accusation but agreed that trust of and respect for each other is important. "I believe that there is no problem that we cannot solve together if we deal with it based on trust, respect and understanding of the other side, which is the basic mindset that South and North Korea both agree to,” the South’s chief delegate said. The two sides discussed the release of six South Korean citizens detained in the North, Minister Cho said, adding that the North said that the relevant agencies are reviewing the matter. He added the issue of joint military drills between South Korea and the U.S. was not mentioned during the talks. (Joint Press Corps-Yonhap, “Koreas Agree to Hold Military Dialogue, Family Reunion Talks This Month,” June 2, 2018)

KCNA: “The north-south high-level talks were held at the ”House of Peace” in the south side portion of Panmunjom on Friday to implement the historic Panmunjom Declaration. Present at the talks were a delegation of the north side led by Ri Son Gwon, chairman of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country of the DPRK, and a delegation of the south side with Minister of Unification Jo Myong Gyun as chief delegate. At the talks both sides confirmed the principled stand for the implementation of the Panmunjom Declaration, sincerely discussed problems for taking practical measures and adopted a joint press release. The joint press release says that a north-south joint liaison office shall be set up at the Kaesong Industrial Zone, and ways for significantly commemorating the 18th anniversary of the publication of the June 15 Joint Declaration be found and discussed by way of exchanging documents. It also clarifies the times and venues of north-south general-level military talks, sports talks and Red Cross talks. And it says that the times and venues of the subcommittee meeting for discussing the issue of connecting and modernizing the east and west coast railways and roads agreed at the October 4 declaration, the working-level talks for the DPRK’s art troupe’s performance in the south side area and other talks shall be agreed by way of exchanging documents and the north-south high-level talks for promoting the implementation of the Panmunjom Declaration shall be held on a regular basis.” (KCNA, “North-South High-Level Talks Held,” June 1, 2018)

Speaking at the Shangri-la Dialogue security forum in Singapore, Defense Minister Onodera Itsunori said that it is important not to reward North Korea for only agreeing to dialogue and that it must take concrete action to dismantle all of its nuclear and ballistic missile programs — including shorter-range weapons that threaten Japan. “In light of how North Korea behaved in the past, it is important not to reward it for agreeing to have dialogue,” Onodera said. The only way to bring peace is to ensure North Korea takes concrete action to end all nuclear programs and the development of ballistic missiles “of all flight ranges,” he said. Tokyo has repeatedly said that in addition to its long-range missiles, the North’s large arsenal of shorter-range weapons capable of striking Japan must also be eliminated. South Korean Defense Minister Song Young-moo said he recognizes there is debate about how much nuclear disarmament Kim should be made to agree to, but feels that if the focus is on disagreement and not on the way forward, dialogue will never make any progress. Asked if this means that North Korea retaining shorter-range ballistic missiles is acceptable, Song dodged the question, but said such threats will disappear if the North joins the international community. “As North Korea forms diplomatic ties with the free world, such threats will dissipate over time,” he said. He urged support for dialogue to help North Korea join the international community, saying its leader, Kim Jong Un, must be given the benefit of the doubt. The apparent divergence of views between the U.S. allies comes ahead of the denuclearization summit planned between Kim and U.S. President Donald Trump on June 12 in Singapore. Still, Song did voice support for the “complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement” of the
North’s nuclear arsenal. “But there must be CVID, and it must be enforced, and I believe Kim Jong Un will embrace it,” Song told the forum. “If you continue to doubt Kim Jong Un’s motives, that will only come as an obstacle to dialogue and progress.” (Reuters, JIJI, “South Korean and Japanese Defense Ministers Divided over Future of North’s Shorter-Range Missiles,” Japan Times, June 2, 2018) After Trump said yesterday he does not want to use the term “maximum pressure” anymore because the United States and North Korea are now “getting along,” Defense Minister Onodera amended the speech he delivered today at a session of the Asia Security Summit, known as the Shangri-La Dialogue. According to a speech draft obtained last week, Onodera was supposed to say that it is necessary to “maintain maximum pressure” on North Korea. In the actual speech, Onodera said it is necessary to “maintain maximum pressure that has been currently imposed on North Korea,” apparently trying to give the impression that Japan is not considering putting more pressure on Pyongyang. “We had to change some expressions in the speech, immediately after we knew President Trump made the comments,” a Japanese Defense Ministry official said. Nevertheless, Onodera was lambasted at the session by South Korean Defense Minister Song Young-moo, who has emphasized the importance of talks with the North to achieve denuclearization on the divided peninsula. Japan has “hurt” dialogue with North Korea, Song said. Later today, Onodera shied away from using the word “pressure” with regard to North Korea at a news conference following a trilateral meeting with his U.S. and Australian counterparts, Jim Mattis and Marise Payne. On June 3, Onodera held trilateral talks with Mattis and Song. At their previous meeting in October last year, the three defense chiefs agreed to continue putting maximum pressure on North Korea to resolve Pyongyang’s nuclear crisis. After the latest trilateral gathering, Onodera said only, “Japan, the United States and South Korea have so far basically agreed to maintain pressure.” The word “pressure” was not incorporated in a joint statement released after their talks. Instead, the significance of dialogue with North Korea was stressed. “The three ministers welcomed the results of the two recent Inter-Korean summits” in April and May, the statement said, adding they “noted the positive changes that have been brought about are setting favorable conditions for the U.S.-North Korea summit.” Onodera indicated Japan has made minor adjustments to its policy, telling reporters, “Pressure and dialogue will go together.” As expectations are rife that Kim will meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in the not-too-distant future, Abe is likely to become the only leader who is not able to communicate with North Korea among member countries of the long-stalled six-party talks on North Korea’s nuclear program. “Prime Minister Abe may have been left at the altar,” Tamaki Yuichiro, co-head of the opposition Democratic Party for the People, told reporters. (Tachikawa Tomoyuki, “Japan Finds Itself at Crossroads over ‘Pressure’ Policy toward North Korea,” Kyodo, Japan Times, June 3, 2018)

Pyongyang has replaced its defense minister with a moderate in an apparent attempt to stave off potential opposition ahead of a historic summit with the United States on June 12. No Kwang Chol, first vice minister of the Ministry of People’s Armed Forces, has succeeded Pak Yong Sik as defense chief, according to a source well-informed about North Korean affairs. The opposition is expected in North Korea’s military ranks to a possible dramatic change in the country’s nuclear policy. There is also an unconfirmed report that Ri Myong Su, chief of the General Staff of North Korea’s military, has been replaced. If the two personnel changes are confirmed, they would mark the replacement of all three of the nation’s top military officials in six months. Kim Su Gil, who was mayor of Pyongyang, replaced Kim Jong Gak as director of the General Political Bureau of the military in May. Kim Jong Gak’s appointment to the post had been confirmed only in February. No and Kim Su Gil have been widely seen as moderates in the military. No had reportedly served as the chair of the Second Economy Commission, which oversees the financial issues of the military. He was elevated to the first vice minister of what is now the Ministry of People’s Armed Forces in July 2015. No was picked as a candidate for the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea in the party’s general assembly in May 2016. Pak assumed the post of defense minister in May 2015. Pak and Ri accompanied Kim Jong Un when the North Korean leader met with South Korean President Moon Jae-in on April 27, the first summit between the North and South in more than a decade. Experts say North Korea could be forced to scale back its military of about 1.1 million members, including the section handling nuclear weapons and missiles, if it reached an agreement with the United States over nuclear
disarmament. Bringing moderates on board is apparently intended to rein in the possible opposition in the military as a result of the dismantling of North Korea’s nuclear weapons. Pyongyang prevents the Korean People's Army from enjoying a concentration of power by dividing it into three divisions. The General Political Bureau is responsible for giving political guidance to the military, while the General Staff oversees combat operations. The Ministry of People's Armed Forces is tasked with logistical coordination and personnel administration. (Makino Yoshihiro, “Source: N. Korea Brings Moderate on Board as Defense Minister,” Asahi Shimbun, June 3, 2018)

Prime Minister Abe Shinzo will urge President Donald Trump to dismiss Pyongyang’s assertion that the issue of Japanese nationals abducted decades ago has been resolved when the president meets with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, government sources said Monday. Abe will meet with Trump in Washington on June 7, before the U.S. leader’s unprecedented summit with the North Korean leader scheduled for June 12 in Singapore. The prime minister is also planning to ask Trump to convey to Kim that Japan would consider negotiating the normalization of ties and the extension of economic cooperation based on a 2002 bilateral declaration, if progress is made on the long-standing abduction issue, the sources said. In 2002, then-Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and the late North Korean leader Kim Jong II signed a joint declaration in which both sides agreed that Japan would provide economic cooperation after the normalization of diplomatic ties. Abe will also seek to confirm the importance of maintaining international sanctions on North Korea, after Trump said he did not want to use the term “maximum pressure,” the sources said. KCNA hammered home Pyongyang’s stance, blasting Japan in a commentary for stressing the abduction issue. “Japan is bound to be ridiculed by the international community and driven out of history if it persists in escalating confrontation with the DPRK under the pretext of the already resolved ‘abduction issue,’ failing to acclimatize itself to the new situation,” it said. Abe, who views the issue as a government priority, will call on Trump to reject that assertion and try to persuade Kim to understand the necessity of Japan-North Korean consultations on the abduction issue, the sources said. (Kyodo, “Abe to Urge Trump to Reject Pyongyang’s Position on Abductions When He Meets with Kim: Sources,” Japan Times, June 5, 2018)

Bolton: “On Tuesday, June 5, Pompeo and I had lunch with Trump, one important topic of which was Moon’s continuing desire to be present in Singapore, which was a topic that had already broken out into the Asian press because of leaks in South Korea. Both Pompeo and I explained to our counterparts in Seoul what our thinking was. The bad news at lunch was Trump’s fascination with the prospect he could say he had ended the Korean War. I didn’t mind selling that concession to the North at some point, but I thought we certainly shouldn’t give it away for free, which Trump was ready to do. It simply didn’t matter to him. He thought it was just a gesture, a huge media score, and didn’t see any international consequences. After lunch Pompeo and I walked to my office. We decided we had to develop something to offer as an alternative, but no good ideas popped up. I knew that Japan would be particularly disturbed that we might make this concession, so I couldn’t wait to hear what Yachi would say to me during yet another Washington visit that afternoon. ... When Pompeo and I had breakfast in the Ward Room the next morning (Mattis being out of the country yet again), we discussed what to extract from North Korea in return for an “end of war” communiqué, including perhaps a baseline declaration of their nuclear-weapons and ballistic-missile programs. I doubted the North would agree, or agree on any of our other ideas, but it might at least prevent a gratuitous US concession “ending” the Korean War.” (Bolton, The Room Where It Happened, pp. 89-90)

Working-level officials of the United States and North Korea met for the fifth time at the inter-Korean border village of Panmunjom to discuss the agenda for the historic summit between the leaders of the two countries next week. Sung Kim, U.S. ambassador to the Philippines and former nuclear envoy, and Pyongyang's Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui began the talks at a North Korean building in the village at 10 a.m., according to Seoul officials. (Yonhap, “U.S., North Korea Hold New Prep Talks for Historic Summit,” June 6, 2018)
Bermudez: “New commercial satellite imagery indicates that North Korea is razing the missile test stand at the Iha-ri Driver Training and Test Facility north of the city of Kusong in the wake of Kim Jong Un’s April statement announcing a unilateral suspension of ballistic missile and nuclear tests. The stand is the only known facility used for land-based, canister-launched ballistic missile ejection tests critical for developing the solid-propellant Pukguksong-2 (KN-15) medium-range ballistic missile and its follow-on systems. The stand could also have been used for testing larger canister-based ballistic missiles such as the intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) displayed during the April 2017 military parade in Pyongyang. It is unclear whether the destruction of the stand is an indication that the North is suspending this portion of its missile program or that Pyongyang plans to erect other similar facilities in the future. The Iha-ri test stand was the only known facility for land-based, canister-launched ballistic missile ejection tests and represented a critical component in the test and development infrastructure for the solid-propellant Pukguksong-2 (KN-15) medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM) and its follow-on systems (e.g., Pukguksong-3, etc.). It could have potentially also been used for testing larger canister-based ballistic missiles such as the TEL and MEL intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) systems displayed during the April 2017 military parade. The development of canister-based ballistic missiles is important for North Korea’s Strategic Force as it enhances their abilities to more securely transport missiles over greater distances, protect systems from environmental conditions and reduce launch preparation times. This, in turn, has the potential to reduce maintenance requirements, provide for greater tactical flexibility and improve wartime survivability. The design of the Pukguksong-2’s launch canister and ejection system is based upon that developed for the Pukguksong-1 (KN-11) submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) program and data acquired from the ejection tests conducted from the test stand at the Sinpo South Shipyard. The new tracked TEL for the Pukguksong-2 is built at the No. 95 Factory—one of North Korea’s oldest tank and armored fighting vehicle production facilities. It was therefore not unexpected that decisions were made to use the factory’s Iha-ri Driver Training and Test Facility—5 km to the south—to both conduct the first Pukguksong-2 test launch on February 13, 2017 and to construct a test stand to support ongoing systems development and—just as importantly—conduct crew training for Pukguksong-2 units and follow-on programs.” (Joseph S. Bermudez, Jr., “North Korea Razing Key Missile Test Stand,” 38North, June 6, 2018)

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Trump: “Q President Trump, what are you doing to prepare for the summit with North Korea? What are you doing to prepare for the summit with North Korea, President Trump? PRESIDENT TRUMP: I’m very well prepared. I don’t think I have to prepare very much. It’s about attitude. It’s about willingness to get things done. But I think I’ve been preparing for this summit for a long time, as has the other side. They’ve been preparing for a long time, also. So this isn’t a question of preparation. It’s a question of whether or not people want it to happen. And we’ll know that very quickly. Q If the critics say it’s just a photo op, what do you tell them? PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, it’s going to be much more than a photo op. I think it’s a process; I’ve told you that many times before. I think it’s not a one meeting deal. It will be wonderful if it were. You know, they’ve been doing this for a long time. There’s been a lot of enemies out there. A lot of dislike, a lot of hatred between countries. This will not be just a photo op. This will be — at a minimum, we’ll start with, perhaps, a good relationship. And that’s something that’s very important toward the ultimate making of a deal. I’d love to say it could happen in one deal, and maybe it can. They have to denucle. If they don’t denucle, that will not be acceptable. We cannot take sanctions off; the sanctions are extraordinarily powerful. We cannot — and I could add a lot more, but I don’t — I’ve chosen not to do that at this time. But that may happen. ... I think it’s going to be a very fruitful meeting. I think it’s going to be an exciting meeting. I think we’re going to get to know a lot of people that our country never got to know. This is something that should have been handled many years ago by other Presidents. It shouldn’t be handled now. It should have been handled years ago. But it is being handled now, and I’ll take care of it.” (White House Office of the Press, Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Abe Before Their Bilateral Meeting, June 7, 2018)
Donald Trump: “...Well, the letter was just a greeting. It was really very nice. Perhaps I can get approval to put it out. It was really a very warm letter, a very nice letter. I appreciated it very much. And nothing other than: We look forward to seeing you, and we look forward to the summit, and hopefully some wonderful things will work out. So it was really very warm, very nice. We appreciated it. I think, John, that we are going to — we’re going to have a great success. I don’t think it will be in one meeting. I think it will take longer than that. This has been going on for many, many decades. This is something that should have been solved by other Presidents, as I’ve said often before, long before this point. They waited until the last second. And they shouldn’t have waited. This should have been solved by many others. I’m not just saying President Obama; I’m saying other Presidents. A long time ago, this could have been solved in a lot easier manner and a lot less dangerous manner. But it wasn’t. So I’ll solve it, and we’ll get it done. As far as the Prime Minister is concerned, we will agree and we have agreed that we’re going to be helping — if the deal is done, we’re going to be helping North Korea. We’re going to be working with China. We’re going to be working with South Korea. ... And I really believe that Kim Jong Un wants to do something. I think he wants to see something incredible happen for the people of North Korea. So we have a lot of great opportunities right now. Shouldn’t have waited to this point, but we have a lot of great opportunity. John, please. Q Again, Mr. President, would you be willing to go so far as to normalize relations with North Korea? And what about the idea of signing some sort of an agreement on the 12th to end the war? TRUMP: Well, it could be. We could sign an agreement. As you know, that would be a first step. It’s what happens after the agreement that really is the big point. But, yes, we could absolutely sign an agreement. We’re looking at it. We’re talking about it with them. We’re talking about it with a lot of other people. But that could happen. But that’s really the beginning. Sounds a little bit strange, but that’s probably the easy part; the hard part remains after that. Q And normalizing relations? PRESIDENT TRUMP: Normalizing relations is something that I would expect to do, I would hope to do, when everything is complete. We would certainly hope to do that. I know that Prime Minister Abe and President Moon have told me, very strongly, that they are going to go and they will help them economically, tremendously. Japan has a tremendous stake and so do they. We, on the other hand, are very far away. We’re very, very far away. But Japan will be helping. I believe China will be helping economically, also. And I think China wants to see something very good happen, very positive happen. And certainly, South Korea has already stated their intentions. They will be very helpful. So there are lot of good factors lined up for North Korea. A lot of tremendous factors that give it tremendous potential. It has tremendous potential because the people are great. And we would certainly like to see normalization, yes. Q And, Prime Minister Abe, if I could address you as well. We know how important an issue the abductees is for you. President Trump said at Mar-a-Lago during your last meeting that it’s a very important issue for him as well. We know about the medium-range ballistic missiles. Did you get an assurance from President Trump that he would address both of those in his first meeting with Kim? PRIME MINISTER ABE: (As interpreted.) Today, we had long hours of discussion with President Trump. Good amount of discussion. On the issue of abduction, I was able to have a detailed discussion, and I think President Trump fully understands the situation. He supports the position of Japan. Last year, President Trump visited Japan. On that occasion, he met with the families of abductees. I told you about the 13-year-old girl abducted. The mother of this girl met with President Trump, and very seriously he intently listened to the voices and views of the family members. So President Trump, amongst the world leaders, I think he is one of the leaders who understands the issue the most — greatest. So at the upcoming summit, the importance of abduction would be explained to Mr. Kim Jong Un. What about the medium-range missiles? As I said earlier on in my statement, the Security Council’s resolution must be implemented. All weapons of mass destruction and all ballistic missiles — these are the words used in the resolution of the Security Council. In other words, the Security Council resolution must be completely implemented. On this point, between Japan and U.S. and international community share the same view. I am convinced about it. Thank you. Mr. Katsumi of TBS, please. Next question, please. Q (As interpreted.) Thank you. My name is Yusa from TBS Television. I have question for both President Trump, as well as Prime Minister Abe. You have not used the language of applying the largest pressure on North Korea, but are you continuing with a deal with the sanction? And the denuclearization, you will be asking for that? And what is the
deadline for the denuclearization? And my question to Prime Minister is how to apply pressure to North Korea and the tone of the language. Are you in full agreement, complete agreement with the United States? ABE: (As interpreted.) President Trump has stated that we are implementing sanctions, and those sanctions are very strong sanctions. He also stated that until North Korea takes the action, the sanctions will not be lifted. And Japan is in full agreement and Japan’s position is perfectly in alignment with the United States. And in our summit meeting this time, we had in-depth discussion with President Trump as to how we should respond to the North Korea and ask for the future policy on North Korea. Inclusive of the U.S.-North Korean summit meeting, we have detailed coordination aligning our positions. As I have already mentioned, Japan and the United States are always together. Japan and United States will be in full alignment to seek success for the historic U.S.-North Korea summit meeting in Singapore. PRESIDENT TRUMP: Yes. Thank you very much. **Maximum pressure is absolutely in effect. We don’t use the term anymore because we’re going into a friendly negotiation. Perhaps after that negotiation I will be using it again. You’ll know how well we do in the negotiation. If you hear me saying we’re going to use “maximum pressure,” you’ll know the negotiation did not do well, frankly.** There’s no reason to say it. We, in the meantime, haven’t removed any sanctions. We have a list of over 300 massive, in some cases, sanctions to put on North Korea. And I’ve decided to hold that until we can make a deal, because I really believe there’s a potential to make a deal. And I just don’t think it’s nice going in under those circumstances. But, yes, the campaign hasn’t changed. China has continued to hold the border. We, again, would like them to do more in that sense. But they’ve been really good, and the President has been very good. But maximum sanction is there. We are leaving all of the existing sanctions on. We have many, many sanctions to go, but I don’t want to use them unless it’s necessary. And I don’t think it will be necessary, but we will soon know. Okay? Thank you. ...Mr. Hayashi? Q (As interpreted. Thank you, Prime Minister Abe. I have question to Prime Minister as well as President Trump. Starting with Prime Minister, you have already mentioned to a certain degree on the abduction issue. In order to hold Japan-North Korea summit, the premise is that you need to obtain results for the abduction issue. What kind of concrete pathway are you envisaging to hold the summit meeting? In your meeting with President Trump today, have you asked President Trump to raise the question of abduction at the U.S.-North Korea summit meeting in Singapore? Next is my question to President Trump. You have — Kim Jong Un has maintained this position that the abduction issue is something that already had been resolved. So what kind of explanation has been given to the United States on the abduction issue in the North Korea to U.S. via consultations? And how should we approach North Korea in order to seek solution for the abduction? And what did you convey to Prime Minister Abe today in this regard? PRESIDENT TRUMP: You know, I can speak first because I will tell you, on the Prime Minister’s behalf, that he very much talked about abduction. It was preeminent in our conversations. He talked about it long and hard and passionately. And I will follow his wishes, and we will be discussion that with North Korea, absolutely.” (White House Office of the Press, Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Abe in Joint Press Conference, June 7, 2018)

Counting telephone conversations, today’s meeting is the 30th time, Abe and Trump have talked in a little more than 18 months. (Robin Harding, “Inflexible Abe Forced to Rely on Unpredictable Trump over N. Korea,” *Financial Times*, June 7, 2018)

Pompeo: “**Q:** So first of all, in principle, what’s your hope for the U.S.-North Korean foreign summit, and how confident are you that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un will accept the same definition of denuclearization of the U.S., which is CVID? SECRETARY POMPEO: So I’ve had the chance to meet with Chairman Kim Jong-un, and I have also been working on this for a long time, as have many members of the United States Government. Our objective for the summit is very clear: **We want to achieve a fundamentally different strategic relationship between our two countries.** We are – we believe it’s important to (inaudible) completely denuclearize North Korea. In exchange for that, we’re prepared to do things that provide them the security assurances that they need and the warmer political relationship that they need as well. We’re hoping to make just as much progress on that as we can during the summit, and we
believe that the two leaders sitting down together offers the world a great opportunity. **Q:** What kind of actions for denuclearization will you have to see that Mr. Kim will commit at the summit? 

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Well, we’ll have to see. We don’t know how far the two leaders will be able to get. We are optimistic, though, having had a chance to work – we’ve had teams working in Panmunjom. We’ve had teams working in Singapore. We’ve been in communications back and forth between our two governments for many, many months now. So we’ve been working to lay a foundation so that the two leaders can get as far as they can in the time that they have together. **Q:** What’s your vision for the timeline of the denuclearization? **POMPEO:** Yes, I don’t want to talk about timelines. The two leaders will certainly discuss that. There have been discussions around this very issue already. We need to see how far we can get, how much progress can be made, in the hours that we have together in Singapore. **Q:** But do you think that Mr. Kim has already made a strategic decision to abandon all nuclear weapons? **POMPEO:** Well, this is why the two leaders are meeting, right? **Chairman Kim told me directly that he was prepared to sit with President Trump and talk about how that denuclearization would take place.** The two of them will have a chance to have an extensive conversation surrounding that. So we’ll leave plenty of space for the two leaders to move forward and for them each to make decisions about how their country (inaudible). Chairman Kim’s got to make a big strategic decision. **He has historically believed that his nuclear program provided security for his country, and to shift that to believe that security will come from a good relationship with the United States and the world is a big shift.** We’re very hopeful that he’ll see it the way our President does. Our President is firmly prepared to make sure that Chairman Kim and the North Korean people will live in (inaudible) and with the security assurances that they are demanding. **Q:** So what kind of security assurances will you be prepared to offer Kim Jong-un? Are you making a peace deal? **POMPEO:** So the presidents – the two leaders are going to talk. We’re not going to talk about the details of the negotiating. We’re not going to negotiate in advance of it. We’ll let the two leaders get together, and they’ll begin to flesh out what both the security assurances will look like, what we can do together politically to provide better relations between our two countries, and then talk about denuclearizations. **Q:** How about the economic assistance? President Trump made a statement that it will be China – Japan, China, South Korea will provide economic assistance. How is it important for denuclearization, having the Japanese economic assistance? **POMPEO:** So it’s very important, and these concepts are incredibly linked. For North Korea to have the security assurances it needs, it needs to know that it has an economic – economically viable path forward. It has to know that its people can eat and that they can have the wealth that the North Korean people so richly deserve. So these are very closely linked issues; it’s difficult to separate them out. And so not only Japan, but South Korea, China – I imagine many nations will want to participate in the North Korean economy if we are successful in Singapore. **Q:** But Japanese Government is saying that they are not ready to provide economic assistance until all issues are resolved, such as the abductee issue. At what point do you expect Japan to provide economic assistance? **POMPEO:** So, much like the economic opening that will take place, it will only take place at such time as we have completed the denuclearization. So there are other things that can go along in parallel, but the economic relief, the sanctions relief that President Trump spoke about earlier today, can’t take place until we see real action, real change, on the part of North Korea. And the Japanese economic support wouldn’t come until that was – that had occurred as well.’ (DoS, Secretary State Mike Pompeo, Interview with Yui Hideki of NHK, June 7, 2018)

Pompeo: “…Early in his presidency, President Trump made a commitment to address the threat of North Korea, which has been a threat to our nation for far too long. …Back on March 8th, Chairman Kim Jong Un expressed his desire to meet with President Trump as soon as possible. And then on May 9th, I met with Chairman Kim Jong Un in Pyongyang and explained America's expectations for denuclearization. At that time, we also secured the release of three Americans: Kim Dong-chul, Tony Kim, and Kim Hak-song. We view this as a sign of goodwill from Chairman Kim Jong Un. The United States and North Korea have been holding direct talks in preparation for a summit, and **North Korea has confirmed to us its willingness to denuclearize.** A comprehensive whole-of-government effort in support of President Trump's upcoming summit is under way. White House- and State Department-led advance teams are finalizing logistical preparations and will remain in place in Singapore until the summit begins. **The President**
continues to follow every development closely, and is getting daily briefings from his national security team. The fact that our two leaders are coming to the table shows that the two sides are very serious. The diplomatic model we've used to date is different from past efforts. Our efforts give us hope that we can find real success where past efforts have fallen short. President Trump is hopeful, but he's also going into the summit with his eyes wide open. We've seen how many inadequate agreements have been struck in the past. And you can be sure that President Trump will not stand for a bad deal. The United States has been clear, time and time again, that complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is the only outcome that we will find acceptable. The President recognizes that North Korea has great potential, and he looks forward to a day when sanctions on the DPRK can begin to be removed. However, that cannot happen until the DPRK completely and verifiably eliminates its weapons of mass destruction programs. President Trump and Chairman Kim will certainly also discuss security assurances for the DPRK, establishing a peace regime, and improving relations between our two countries. Until we achieve our goals, the measures that the world, alongside the United States, has put on the regime will remain. In the event diplomacy does not move in the right direction, these measures will increase. Throughout the entire process, the United States has been unified with Japan and South Korea in response to the threats from North Korea. …President Trump recognizes North Korea's desire for security and is prepared to ensure a DPRK free of its weapons of mass destruction is also a secure North Korea. President Trump has made it clear that if Kim Jong Un denuclearizes, there is a brighter path for North Korea and its people. We envision a strong, connected, secure, and prosperous North Korea that is integrated into the community of nations. We think that the people of the United States and North Korea can create a future defined by friendship and collaboration, and not by mistrust and fear. We believe that Chairman Kim Jong Un shares this positive vision for the future, and we are committed to finding a path forward. And we assume and hope that that belief is sincere. We're looking forward to being in Singapore in just a few days. MS. SANDERS: As a reminder, we'll take just a few questions before the Secretary has to depart. Roberta. Q Thank you. What progress have you made in narrowing the gap in your understanding of denuclearization and North Korea's definition of denuclearization? Has there been progress in bringing that definition closer together? SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes. Q Can you describe that a little bit? SECRETARY POMPEO: No. (Laughter.) MS. SANDERS: That was quick. Jon Decker. Q … As you mentioned in your remarks, North Korea, in the past, has reneged on prior agreements that it's made with the U.S. government. So I have two questions for you. The first question has to do with your experience meeting with Kim Jong Un. Do you trust him? And my second question has to do with the negotiations that are upcoming with North Korea. Who, in your opinion, has the upper hand in the negotiations, and why? POMPEO: So with respect to your first question, I've had the chance to meet with Chairman Kim Jong Un twice now. I can tell you he is very capable of articulating the things that he is prepared to do, present clearly the challenges that we all have to overcome. It's why the two leaders are meeting. It's the opportunity to lay those out clearly between the two leaders so that we can see if we can find a path forward together that achieves the outcomes that both countries want. And your second question? Q Who has the upper hand in the negotiations? POMPEO: Yeah. We don't think about it in terms of who has the upper hand. We know this has been a long, intractable challenge. It's gone on for decades. The President has said repeatedly: Previous administrations weren't prepared to do what we've done already. It's not about who has the upper hand. It's about trying to find a way where the two sides can come to an understanding, where we can get concrete steps, not just words, that resolve this challenge. Pamela. Q Mr. Secretary, first of all, the President said that he doesn't believe he needs to prepare very much ahead of this summit. Do you think that's a prudent approach? And also, I want to get your reaction to Rudy Giuliani’s comments that "Kim Jong Un got back on his hands and knees and begged" for the summit to go back on -- whether you think he should be weighing in on these international affairs and whether you agree with that assessment. POMPEO: So back to your second question. I took him as it being a small room and not being serious about the comments. I think it was a bit in jest, and -- Q Do you think it could jeopardize the summit or -- POMPEO: We're moving forward. We're focused on the important things. I know Rudy. Rudy doesn't speak for the administration when it comes to this negotiation and this set of issues. With respect to your first question, you know, progress -- we're making progress, inch by inch. And we're going to travel there. This is
different. The approach that President Trump is taking is fundamentally different. In the past, there have been months and months of detailed negotiations, and it got nowhere. This has already driven us to a place we've not been able to achieve before. MS. SANDERS: Dave Boyer.

Q Thank you, Mr. Secretary. The President said today that if the Singapore meeting goes well, he'd like to bring Kim Jong Un to Washington, possibly, for further meetings. Has Kim Jong Un invited the President to come to North Korea? POMPEO: So I don't want to talk to you about the conversations that have been had between the North Korean side and the United States. I’ll leave that for the President to talk to. But I do want to get to -- and this comes back to the other question that you asked about the President's preparation. So in my previous role -- and I've said this before; you can look it up -- there were few days that I left the Oval Office after having briefed the President that we didn't talk about North Korea. So over months and months, days and days, President Trump has been receiving briefings on this issue about the military aspects of it; the commercial, economic aspects of it; the history of the relationship. And in the past few months, there have been near-daily briefings, including today, where we have been providing the President all the information that he needs. And I am very confident that the President will be fully prepared when he meets with his North Korean counterpart. Q Just having met the man twice now, what can you tell us about what opinions you've formed of Kim Jong Un as a person? POMPEO: Yeah. So I haven't spent that much time with him. What I have said publicly is he has indicated to me, personally, that he is prepared to denuclearize; that he understands that the current model doesn't work, that he's prepared to denuclearize. And that, too, he understands that we can't do it the way we've done it before -- that this has to be big and bold, and we have to agree to making major changes. We can't step through this over years, but rather need to acknowledge it will take some amount of time, that this doesn't happen instantaneously. But that the model for succeeding -- security assurance; and political normalization; and denuclearization completely, verifiably, and irreversibly -- for that to take place, we've got to make bold decisions. And I'm hopeful that Chairman Kim Jong Un is prepared to make that decision for his country. A big shift in his strategic understanding of his security. MS. SANDERS: Ayesha. Q Thank you. So you said that you -- that the President is prepared to talk about security guarantees for North Korea. We have seen in this administration that you can -- that when new administrations come in, they can undo things that prior administrations have done. How can President Trump guarantee long-term security for North Korea and for Kim, in particular? POMPEO: Well, look, we're going to have to do things that convince Chairman Kim that that's the case. All right? That's what we'll have to do. So let me give you an example. We are hopeful that we will put ourselves in a position where we can do something the previous administration didn't do. Right? They signed a flimsy piece of paper, and we're hoping to submit a document that Congress would also have a say in -- that would give currency and strength and elongation to the process, so that when administrations do change, as they inevitably do, and this one will -- six and half years from now -- when that takes place, that Chairman Kim will have comfort that American policy will continue down the same path, on the course that we hope we're able to set in Singapore. MS. SANDERS: We'll take one last question. Zeke. Q Thank you, Mr. Secretary. At the top of your remarks -- first, to follow up briefly on your comments just about Asia. When you say a "document" that Congress would sign off on, are you referring to a treaty? Then second, at the top of your remarks, you said that there's also this threat to the United States and its allies from the North Koreans' WMDs, as well as ballistic missiles. Is that a condition for the President in any negotiation agreement with Chairman Kim, that its ballistic missile program and chemical weapons also be part of that? And third, finally, can you discuss the format of the meeting between the President and Chairman Kim? What will it look like? Who will be there? POMPEO: So I'll leave it to the White House to talk about the format of the meetings when the time is right. With respect to proliferation risk, it's very real. There is a history of that, with respect to North Korea and some of our other difficult challenges in the world today. They are connected. The reason you want complete, verifiable, and irreversible is precisely that. To the extent there remain stockpiles, knowledge bases, warehouses, systems, infrastructure, fissile material production facilities -- I could go on -- to the extent those remain, the risk of proliferation continues. And it's our aim, through the CVID process and providing the security assurances that Chairman Kim will want, that we can greatly reduce the risk that proliferation ever happens as a result of North Korean actions. … Q Mr. Secretary, can you explain the President's
shift -- when he's gone from talking about defining success for this meeting as denuclearization of the Peninsula, to now talking about the need for more meetings? Can you explain what happened there and why this shift? And can you also describe your disagreements over North Korea internally with the national security advisor? POMPEO: Yeah, with respect to the second one, I've read a little bit about this. And I love good fiction as next as -- as much as the next person, but it is without foundation, so much so that -- I'll be polite, since I'm a diplomat now. Suffice to say, those articles are unfounded and a complete joke. Q Surely, there had to be -- must have been some -- POMPEO: Oh, sure. Ambassador Bolton and I will disagree with great, great consistency over time, I'm confident. Right? We're two individuals. We're each going to present our views. I'm confident that will happen on issues from how long this press conference ought to go -- (laughs) -- to issues that really matter to the world. So it's absolutely the case that Ambassador Bolton and I won't always agree, and I think the President demands that we each give him our own views. Q (Inaudible.) POMPEO: Yeah. So you had a first -- your first question, I'll try to answer. I'll try to answer your first question, too. I don't see the shift as disjunctive as you do. The President has always understood that this was a process. It's been very clear that there would -- that it would always take a great deal of work to do this. So I think your -- you can interpret it how you will, but I think your characterization of that also doesn't reflect the President's understanding. I think his understanding about this process has been pretty consistent since I've been working with him now, almost a year and a half ago.” (White House Office of the Press Secretary, Press Briefing by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Brady Briefing Room, June 7, 2018)

6/8/18

A group of South Korean officials and civilians returned from North Korea after visiting the border town of Kaesong to prepare for the opening of a liaison office, the unification ministry said. The 14-member team headed by Vice Unification Minister Chun Hae-sung traveled to Kaesong earlier in the day and checked necessary facilities that could be used for the operation of the liaison office, according to the ministry. The ministry said in a press release that most of the facilities the team checked appeared to be in good shape. But it noted that some of them, including the basement of a lodging building, were underwater and had some machines and equipment that were not operating or needed repairs. "Based on the results of the inspection today and through consultations with relevant agencies and experts, (we) will draw up and enforce necessary measures, such as making repairs or planning more checks in order to launch the liaison office as soon as possible," the ministry said. The on-site inspection came after the two Koreas agreed in a high-level officials' meeting last week to open the liaison office "at an early date" in anticipation of increased cross-border exchanges following the leaders' summit meetings in April and May. Today's visit marked the first time South Koreans had visited Kaesong since February 2016, when Seoul shut the inter-Korean joint industrial. The team also included officials from KT, a telecom carrier, and Hyundai Asan, which played a key role in past inter-Korean economic cooperation projects, including the now-suspended factory park. (Joint Press Corps-Yonhap, “S. Korean Team Visits N. Korea to Prepare Launch of Liaison Office,” June 8, 2018)

6/9/18

Trump: “...In just a few minutes, I’ll be leaving for Singapore. I’ll be on a mission of peace, and we will carry in, really — in my heart, we’re going to be carrying the hearts of millions of people, people from all over the world. We have to get denuclearization. We have to get something going. We really think that North Korea will be a tremendous place in a very short period of time. And we appreciate everything that’s going on. We appreciate the working together with North Korea. They’re really working very well with us. So I say — so far, so good. We’re going to have to see what happens. And we’re going to know very soon. So I’ll be leaving — as soon as we’re finished with this conference, I’ll be leaving. And I very much look forward to it. I think it’s very important for North Korea and South Korea and Japan, and the world, and the United States. It’s a great thing. And we’ll see what happens. Okay. Any questions? Yes, yes. Q Mr. President, you are about to embark on what may be the most important meeting you’ve ever had in your life. What’s in your gut? Steel nerves or butterflies? Can you describe how you feel? THE PRESIDENT: Well, there’s always everything. It’s really — you know, this has probably rarely been done. It’s unknown territory, in the truest sense. But I really feel confident. I feel that Kim Jong Un wants to
do something great for his people, and he has that opportunity. And he won’t have that opportunity again. It’s never going to be there again. So I really believe that he’s going to do something very positive for his people, for himself, his family. He’s got an opportunity, the likes of which I think almost — if you look into history — very few people have ever had. He can take that nation, with those great people, and truly make it great. So it’s a one-time — it’s a one-time shot. And I think it’s going to work out very well. That’s why I feel positive, because it makes so much sense. And we will watch over, and we’ll protect, and we’ll do a lot of things. I can say that South Korea, Japan, China, many countries want to see it happen. And they’ll help. They’ll all help. So there’s a great — there’s really — this is a great time. This has not happened in all of the years that they’ve been separated by a very artificial boundary. This is a great opportunity for peace, and lasting peace, and prosperity. ... 

Q As you were heading into these G7 talks, there was a sense that America’s closest allies were frustrated with you and angry with you, and that you were angry with them and that you were leaving here early to go meet for more friendlier talks with Kim Jong Un in Singapore. And I’m wondering if you — THE PRESIDENT: It’s well put, I think. Q — if you view it the same way. And do you view the U.S. alliance system shifting under your presidency, away — THE PRESIDENT: Who are you with, out of curiosity? Q CNN. THE PRESIDENT: I figured. Fake News CNN. The worst. But I could tell by the question. I had no idea you were CNN. After the question, I was just curious as to who you were with. You were CNN. ... 

Q Thanks, Mr. President. Eliana Johnson with Politico. THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Hi. Q Going into these talks with Kim Jong Un, do you have a clear objective of what you want to get out of them? THE PRESIDENT: I have a clear objective. But I have to say, Eliana, that it’s going to be something that will always be spurious of the moment. You don’t know. You know, this has not been done before at this level. This is a leader who really is an unknown personality. People don’t know much about him. I think that he’s going to surprise, on the upside, very much on the upside. We’ll see. But never been done. Never been tested. Many people — world leaders — I’m talking about world leaders that have been right next to him have never met him. So we’re going in with a very positive spirit. I think very well prepared. I think — and, by the way, we have worked very well with their people. They have many people right now in Shanghai; our people have been — in Singapore. Our people have been working very, very well with the representatives of North Korea. So we’re going in with a very positive attitude, and I think we’re going to come out fine. But I’ve said it many times: Who knows? Who knows? May not. May not work out. It’s a good chance it won’t work out. There’s probably an even better chance that it will take a period of time. It will be a process. Q Is there a particular outcome that you would look for from this initial talk to judge whether you think things are going well? THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think the minimum would be relationship. You’d start at least a dialogue. Because, you know, as a deal person, I’ve done very well with deals. What you want to do is start that. Now, I’d like to accomplish more than that. But at a minimum, I do believe, at least we’ll have met each other. We will have seen each other. Hopefully we will have liked each other and we’ll start that process. So I would say that would be the minimal. And the maximum, I think you know the answer to that. But I think that will take a little bit of time. Okay? Yeah. Q How long do you think that it will take you to figure out whether he’s serious about (inaudible)? THE PRESIDENT: That’s a good question. How long will it take? I think within the first minute I’ll know. Q How? THE PRESIDENT: Just my touch, my feel. That’s what I do. How long will it take to figure out whether or not they’re serious? I said maybe in the first minute. You know, the way — they say that you know if you’re going to like somebody in the first five seconds. You ever hear that one? Well, I think that very quickly I’ll know whether or not something good is going to happen. I also think I’ll know whether or not it will happen fast. It may not. But I think I’ll know pretty quickly whether or not, in my opinion, something positive will happen. And if I think it won’t happen, I’m not going to waste my time. I don’t want to waste his time. Yes, ma’am. Q Are you concerned about all that just like giving Kim the meeting, that he’s getting a win as a (inaudible)? THE PRESIDENT: No, no, no, no. That’s only — only the fake news says that. You know, this — look, we just three hostages back. We paid nothing. They came back. They’re happily in ensconced in their homes with their families. They’re the happiest people in the world right now. We have gotten — you know, we haven’t done anything. Everyone said — you know, the haters, they say, “Oh, you’re giving him a meeting.” Give me a break, okay? There’s nothing. I think if I didn’t do this, it would be — and it’s never been done before, you know. It’s never been done before. And obviously, what has been
Pompeo: “Q: So first of all, in principle, what’s your hope for the U.S.-North Korean foreign summit, and how confident are you that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un will accept the same definition of denuclearization of the U.S., which is CVID? SECRETARY POMPEO: So I’ve had the chance to meet with Chairman Kim Jong-un, and I have also been working on this for a long time, as have many members of the United States Government. Our objective for the summit is very clear: We want to achieve a fundamentally different strategic relationship between our two countries. We are – we believe it’s important to (inaudible) completely denuclearize North Korea. In exchange for that, we’re prepared to do things that provide them the security assurances that they need and the warmer political relationship that they need as well. We’re hoping to make just as much progress on that as we can during the summit, and we believe that the two leaders sitting down together offers the world a great opportunity. Q: What kind of actions for denuclearization will you expect that Mr. Kim will commit at the summit? SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, we’ll have to see. We don’t know how far the two leaders will be able to get. We are optimistic, though, having had a chance to work – we’ve had teams working in Panmunjom. We’ve had teams working in Singapore. We’ve been in communications back and forth between our two governments for many, many months now. So we’ve been working to lay a foundation so that the two leaders can get as far as they can in the time that they have together. Q: What’s your vision for the timeline of the denuclearization? POMPEO: Yes, I don’t want to talk about timelines. The two leaders will certainly discuss that. There have been discussions around this very issue already. We need to see how far we can get, how much progress can be made, in the hours that we have together in Singapore. Q: But do you think that Mr. Kim has already made a strategic decision to abandon all nuclear weapons? POMPEO: Well, this is why the two leaders are meeting, right? Chairman Kim told me directly that he was prepared to sit with President Trump and talk about how that denuclearization would take place. The two of them will have a chance to have an extensive conversation surrounding that. So we’ll leave plenty of space for the two leaders to move forward and for them each to make decisions about how their country (inaudible). Chairman Kim’s got to make a big strategic decision. He has historically believed that his nuclear program provided security for his country, and to shift that to believe that security will come from a good relationship with the United States and the world is a big shift. We’re very hopeful that he’ll see it the way our President does. Our President is firmly prepared to make sure that Chairman Kim and the North Korean people will live in (inaudible) and with the security assurances that they are demanding. Q: So what kind of security assurances will you be prepared to offer Kim Jong-un? Are you making a peace deal? POMPEO: So the presidents – the two leaders are going to talk. We’re not going to talk about the details of the negotiating. We’re not going to negotiate in advance of it. We’ll let the two leaders get together, and they’ll begin to flesh out what both the security assurances will look like, what we can do together politically to provide better relations between our two countries, and then talk about denuclearization. Q: How about the economic assistance? President Trump made a statement that it will be China – Japan, China, South Korea will provide economic assistance. How is it important for denuclearization, having the Japanese economic assistance? POMPEO: So it’s very
important, and these concepts are incredibly linked. For North Korea to have the security assurances it needs, it needs to know that it has an economic – economically viable path forward. It has to know that its people can eat and that they can have the wealth that the North Korean people so richly deserve. So these are very closely linked issues; it’s difficult to separate them out. And so not only Japan, but South Korea, China – I imagine many nations will want to participate in the North Korean economy if we are successful in Singapore. Q: But Japanese Government is saying that they are not ready to provide economic assistance until all issues are resolved, such as the abductee issue. At what point do you expect Japan to provide economic assistance?

POMPEO: So, much like the economic opening that will take place, it will only take place at such time as we have completed the denuclearization. So there are other things that can go along in parallel, but the economic relief, the sanctions relief that President Trump spoke about earlier today, can’t take place until we see real action, real change, on the part of North Korea. And the Japanese economic support wouldn’t come until that was – that had occurred as well.’ (DoS, Secretary State Mike Pompeo, Interview with Yui Hideki of NHK, June 7, 2018)
clearest indication to date of whether Chairman Kim Jong Un truly shares this vision. I’m happy to take a couple questions. **MS SANDERS:** Mark Landler, New York Times. **Q:** Mr. Secretary, you said a moment ago that what you’re aiming for is comprehensive, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula. And I wondered whether that represents a slight shift in what your position had been, because traditionally you’ve talked just about CVID, and now you’re actually adding the phrase “on the Korean Peninsula,” which reflects in part what the North Koreans seek, which is to denuclearize the Peninsula. Is that a shift in your position? **POMPEO:** There’s no shift in the policy. It is the case that we are prepared to make security assurances necessary for the North Koreans to engage in that denuclearization. That is, we’re prepared to take actions that will provide them sufficient certainty that they can be comfortable that denuclearization isn’t something that ends badly for them. Indeed, just the opposite: that it leads to a brighter, better future for the North Korean people. **MS SANDERS:** Major Garrett, CBS News. **Q:** Following up on that point, Mr. Secretary, under the umbrella of security assurances, would that include removing U.S. forces now in South Korea? Is that something you’re prepared to discuss with the North Koreans directly? **POMPEO:** I’m not going to get into any of the details of the discussions that we’ve had to date. I can only say this: We are prepared to take what will be security assurances that are different, unique than have been provided -- that America has been willing to provide previously. We think this is both necessary and appropriate. **Q:** Would it be erroneous to assume that that’s not on the table? **POMPEO:** You shouldn’t assume from the fact that I don’t give any detail here today that some question you posited has any merit. **Q:** But you know the sensitivity -- **POMPEO:** Yeah, you should -- you should just -- if you hypothesize something that’s in it, and I refuse to tell you what’s in it, you should assume that I’m simply refusing to tell you what’s in it, and not drawing any conclusions from the negative inference that I think you’re suggesting. You should -- you should know there’s going to be a lot of work left to do. There’s a lot of detail that’s got to be provided. We are not going to conduct these negotiations in the open with the media; we’re going to conduct them between the two parties so that we have an opportunity to have a real success here. **MS SANDERS:** Michael Gordon, Wall Street Journal. **Q:** Mr. Secretary, it’s clear what the U.S. expects from the North, in terms of denuclearization, but sometimes there’s been a suggestion from North Korean officials that their concept of denuclearization might preclude the deployment of dual-capable aircraft on the Korean Peninsula, or even movement of aircraft carriers -- U.S. aircraft carriers -- toward the Korean Peninsula. Is this something that the Trump administration would be willing to discuss? Or is it something you can rule out? And do you hope to have a framework tomorrow that does more than just repeat the formulations used, dating 12 or 13 years ago, about denuclearization, but commits each side to taking specific steps? **POMPEO:** So I think the first part of your question is the same question Major Garrett asked. It was a substantive question about what one side or the other may be prepared to do, and I’m simply not going to speak to that. With respect to the second question, the context for these discussions is radically different than ever before. **Q:** But you know the sensitivity -- **POMPEO:** Yeah, you should -- you should just -- if you hypothesize something that’s in it, and I refuse to tell you what’s in it, you should assume that I’m simply refusing to tell you what’s in it, and not drawing any conclusions from the negative inference that I think you’re suggesting. You should -- you should know there’s going to be a lot of work left to do. There’s a lot of detail that’s got to be provided. 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There was always this hypothesis that somewhere along the way, the Americans would take their foot off and allow those economic opportunities for the North, and thereby reduce the capacity to actually achieve the deal. We’re not going to do that. So these discussions that it will take place tomorrow between Chairman Kim and President Trump will set the framework for the hard work that will follow. And we’ll see how far we get, but I am very optimistic that we will have a successful outcome from tomorrow’s meeting between these two leaders. It’s the case, in each of those two countries, there are only two people that can make decisions of this magnitude. And those two people are going to be sitting in a room together tomorrow. .... **MS SANDERS:** Jon Decker with Fox Radio. **QUESTION:** Thank you, Secretary Pompeo. The last time that you took questions from us was in the White House press briefing room, and I had an opportunity at that time to ask you a question. The question I asked you is whether or not -- or how can you trust the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un. And I wasn’t necessarily satisfied with your answer. I’d like to get your answer this time. But I also want to flip the question, if I may, Mr. Secretary. How can Kim Jong Un trust the United States? And I say that after what happened at the G7 Summit, when many leaders of the G7 believe that the leadership of the United States cannot be trusted as it
relates to what happened with the communique. So perhaps you can answer both of those questions. Thank you. POMPEO: I’ll take your second question one first. I think the hypothesis is ludicrous. The United States has been fooled before -- there’s no doubt about it. Many Presidents previously have signed off on pieces of paper, only to find that the North Koreans either didn’t promise what we thought they had or actually reneged on their promises. The “V” matters. The “V” matters. We are going to ensure that we set up a system sufficiently robust that we’re able to verify these outcomes. And it’s only once the “V” happens that we’ll proceed apace. Right? That’s what’s been missed before. You know, we can go back to Reagan, “trust but verify.” At the end of the day, both countries are going to have to come to have sufficient trust in each other and to do the verification that each country needs that we’ve provided the things that are called for that we commit to in the various documents that we sign, both tomorrow, if we sign a document and if we sign subsequent documents. But we’ll each have to ensure that we do the things, we take the actions necessary to follow through on those commitments. And when we do, we’ll have a verified deal. And if we can get that far, we will have had a historic change here in Southeast Asia, North Asia, and all around the world.” (DoS, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Remarks at a Press Briefing, JW Marriott Singapore, Malaysia, June 11, 2018)

Bolton: “After lunch, back at our hotel, Pompeo briefed us on the state of negotiations with North Korea, where we were at an impasse. “This is an exercise in publicity,” said Trump, which is how he saw the entire summit. Kelly said to me while Trump did a meet-and-greet with the Singapore US embassy staff, “The psychology here is that Trump wants to walk out in order to preempt Kim Jong Un.” I agreed, and became somewhat hopeful we could avoid major concessions. After the meet-and-greet, Trump told Sanders, Kelly, and me he was prepared to sign a substance-free communique, have his press conference to declare victory, and then get out of town. Trump complained that Kim Jong Un had been meeting with China and Russia to put us at a disadvantage, but he said Singapore would “be a success no matter what,” saying, “We just need to put on more sanctions, including on China for opening up the border. Kim is full of shit, we have three hundred more sanctions we can impose on Friday. ... Negotiations with the North continued through the day, purportedly reaching near-agreement. I reviewed what was marked as the “six p.m. text” shortly thereafter with a group of State, Defense, and NSC officials. I told them flatly I would not recommend Trump sign it. Pompeo and other State people then arrived, and we met in the White House staff area to discuss the text. I explained again why I wouldn’t sign it, even if all the language still in dispute were resolved favorably to the US, which was unlikely. North Korea was refusing to agree to complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization, even though they had repeatedly done so before. They weren’t rejecting just “magic words” but the entire concept, which rendered the whole summit meaningless to me. I said we shouldn’t agree to any language about the end of the war without getting something concrete in return. Pompeo grew increasingly agitated, as he had over the phone to me in Mar-a-Lago in April discussing withdrawal from the Iran deal. I made the point that congressional Democrats would rip us to pieces on this text because that’s what they did, and congressional Republicans would rip us because they knew it was inconsistent with everything they and we believed. Pompeo didn’t defend the language I criticized, and he understood we were better off not signing any document rather than signing a bad one. All Pompeo knew was that Trump wanted to sign something. He couldn’t bring himself to admit, at least in front of the State staffers, what we both knew: that they had led us into a cul-de-sac, where we conceded one point after another and got nothing in return. Now here we were at the very last moment, with few options, none of them good. There was a second or two of silence, and then, as if by unspoken consent, everyone else exited, leaving just Pompeo and me in the room. After going back and forth for a while, we agreed we would insist on including references to our notion of denuclearization and Security Council Resolution 1718 (requiring North Korea not to conduct nuclear tests or ballistic-missile launches), adding new paragraphs on the Japanese abductee issue, and pledging the return of US Korean War remains. If this didn’t work, we would revert to a very brief statement, the principal virtue of which was that it would be short. Pompeo and I explained this to the State, Defense, and NSC officials, all knowing they were likely to go long into the night negotiating. ... NSC Asia Senior Director Matt Pottinger woke me at one a.m. to say the negotiations had stalled, no surprise, and that Pompeo and Kim Yong Chol would meet at seven a.m. at the Capella hotel, the venue for the later Trump-Kim meeting, to see what could be done. Trump finally emerged at eight a.m., and we left for the
Capella. Trump declared himself satisfied with the ‘short statement’ that we had come up with, which surprised me because it came nowhere near declaring an end to the Korean War. In fact, it didn’t say much of anything. We had dodged another bullet.” (Bolton, The Room Where It Happened, pp. 95-97)

Joint Statement of President Donald J. Trump of the United States of America and Chairman Kim Jong Un of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea at the Singapore Summit

Issued on: June 12, 2018

President Donald J. Trump of the United States of America and Chairman Kim Jong Un of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) held a first, historic summit in Singapore on June 12, 2018. President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong Un conducted a comprehensive, in-depth, and sincere exchange of opinions on the issues related to the establishment of new U.S.–DPRK relations and the building of a lasting and robust peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. **President Trump committed to provide security guarantees to the DPRK, and Chairman Kim Jong Un reaffirmed his firm and unwavering commitment to complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.**

Convinced that the establishment of new U.S.–DPRK relations will contribute to the peace and prosperity of the Korean Peninsula and of the world, and recognizing that mutual confidence building can promote the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong Un state the following:

1. The United States and the DPRK commit to establish **new U.S.–DPRK relations** in accordance with the desire of the peoples of the two countries for peace and prosperity.
2. The United States and the DPRK will join their efforts to **build a lasting and stable peace regime** on the Korean Peninsula.
3. Reaffirming the April 27, 2018 Panmunjom Declaration, the DPRK commits to **work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.**
4. The United States and the DPRK commit to **recovering POW/MIA remains**, including the immediate repatriation of those already identified.

Having acknowledged that the U.S.–DPRK summit—the first in history—was an epochal event of great significance in overcoming decades of tensions and hostilities between the two countries and for the opening up of a new future, President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong Un commit to **implement the stipulations in this joint statement fully and expeditiously**. The United States and the DPRK commit to hold **follow-on negotiations**, led by the U.S. Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, and a relevant high-level DPRK official, at the earliest possible date, to implement the outcomes of the U.S.–DPRK summit.

President Donald J. Trump of the United States of America and Chairman Kim Jong Un of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea have committed to cooperate for the development of new U.S.–DPRK relations and for the promotion of peace, prosperity, and security of the Korean Peninsula and of the world.

DONALD J. TRUMP
President of the United States of America

KIM JONG UN
Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

June 12, 2018, Sentosa Island, Singapore

President Trump said he “developed a very special bond” with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un during their historic summit here and proclaimed the start of a new era that could break a cycle of nuclear brinkmanship and stave off a military confrontation. “Yesterday’s conflict does not have to be tomorrow’s war,” Trump said at a news conference in Singapore following more than four hours of talks with Kim. Trump said Kim “reaffirmed” his commitment to denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and also agreed to destroy a missile site in the country. “We’re ready to write a new chapter between our nations,” the president said. “We will do it as fast as it can mechanically and physically be done,” he said of the process to rid North Korea of nuclear weapons. Trump announced that he will order an end to regular “war games” that the United States conducts with ally South Korea that are an irritant to North Korea. Trump called the exercises “very provocative”
and “inappropriate” in light of the optimistic opening he sees with North Korea. Ending the exercises would also save money, Trump said. Ending the games would be a significant political benefit for Kim, but Trump insisted he had not given up leverage. “I think the meeting was every bit as good for the United States as it was for North Korea,” Trump said, casting himself as a leader who can secure a deal that has eluded past presidents. The South Korean president’s office did not immediately respond to requests for comment about Trump’s announcement that he would cancel the military exercises. After the series of meetings at Singapore’s secluded and opulent Capella resort, the two leaders sat beside each other and signed what Trump called a “very comprehensive” agreement setting the path forward for negotiations. The document was not immediately released, but Trump held aloft a copy for news photographers. Images show that the agreement includes a pledge by Trump to “provide security guarantees” to North Korea, while “Chairman Kim Jong Un reaffirmed his firm and unwavering commitment to complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” When asked about Kim’s commitment to the process of getting rid of North Korea’s nuclear weapons, Trump said: “We are starting that process very quickly. Very, very quickly.” But the document is an outline, with no specifics or deadlines, and it eaves the details on key issues such as how the United States would verify that North Korea had given up its nuclear program for future talks. It commits the two leaders to follow-on meetings and a new relationship between the nations, but it does not say that diplomatic relations would be opened. “President Donald J. Trump of the United States of America and Chairman Kim Jong Un of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea have committed to cooperate for the development of new U.S.-DPRK relations and for the promotion of peace, prosperity, and security of the Korean Peninsula and of the world,” the agreement reads.

Throughout the day, Trump cast his meetings with Kim in the most positive light. “We are very proud of what took place today,” Trump said before he and Kim shook hands a final time. “I think our whole relationship with North Korea and the Korean Peninsula is going to be a very much different situation than it has in the past. We both want to do something; we both are going to do something. We have developed a very special bond.” Trump added: “We are going to take care of a very big and a very dangerous problem for the world.” Kim thanked Trump for making the summit happen. “Today we had a historic meeting and decided to leave the past behind,” Kim said through an interpreter. “The whole world will see a great change.” Neither leader was specific about what the next step would be, although Trump said he would “absolutely” invite Kim to the White House. “This is going to lead to more and more and more,” Trump said. But beneath the remarkable images from the Capella was the thornier reality that the two sides remained divided on crucial issues and on a denuclearization plan, which could take years to complete and would probably face significant stumbling blocks along the way. At 8:53 a.m., a black stretch Mercedes sedan bearing North Korean flags pulled up to the Capella. Kim stepped out in a traditional black Mao suit and quickly entered the building. Trump followed six minutes later, emerging from the presidential limousine in a dark suit and red power tie, and with an impassive stare. At 9:04 a.m., they strode toward each other and, as they shook hands, Trump patted Kim’s right shoulder with his left hand. It was the moment of truth for Trump, who last week boasted that he would use his “touch” and his “feel” as a seasoned dealmaker to size up the leader of the world’s most opaque regime and determine within the first minute whether he was serious about making a deal. The two leaders began meeting shortly after 9 a.m. local time, approaching one another from opposite wings on a stage with a red carpet and a row of alternating U.S. and North Korean flags. They shook hands and held their grip before turning to face a small group of journalists for images to be beamed rapidly around the world, both men maintaining serious expressions. The president motioned to Kim to leave the stage, and the two men retreated into a private chamber to meet one on one, joined only by their interpreters, with the aim of establishing a rapport before the more technical nuclear arms negotiations. Seated next to Kim ahead of the private meeting, Trump said: “It’s my honor, and we will have a terrific relationship, I have no doubt.” Kim spoke in Korean of “the old prejudices” that have hampered relations. “But we’ve overcome all of them, and we are here today,” he said. During an expanded meeting after their one-on-one session, Trump was flanked by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, national security adviser John Bolton and White House Chief of Staff John F. Kelly. Kim was joined by Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho and Kim Yong Chol, vice chairman of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party, who had visited Trump at the White House two weeks earlier. Later in the day, after a formal seated luncheon,
American people to deliver a message of hope and vision, and a message of peace. 

Trump continued to strike a positive tone. “It’s going great. We had a really fantastic meeting, lot of progress,” Trump told reporters as he and Kim walked together at the resort. “Really very positive. I think better than anybody could have expected, top of the line. Really good.” Trump then walked Kim over to his armored presidential limousine. A Secret Service agent held a door open so Kim could peer inside the vehicle dubbed “the Beast.” In the days before the meeting, with negotiators struggling to reach a basic agreement, Trump and his aides sought to lower expectations about how quickly the administration could persuade Pyongyang to begin dismantling its nuclear weapons arsenal. One major issue that appeared to remain unresolved following the summit was North Korea’s brutal human rights record. (David Nakamura, Philip Rucker, Anna Fifield and Anne Gearan, “Trump and Kim Promise a New Partnership,” Washington Post, June 12, 2018, p. A-1) When asked whether the North agreed to denuclearize, Trump replied, “We’re starting the process very quickly.” In forging the agreement, Kim said the two leaders had “decided to leave the past behind and sign a historic document.” “The world will see a major change,” he said before expressing gratitude to Trump for “making this meeting happen.” When they arrived, the two leaders greeted each other with a long handshake to begin the first talks between a sitting U.S. president and North Korean leader as they tackle the difficult, longstanding issue of denuclearization. The Swiss-educated Kim greeted Trump in English with, “Nice to meet you, Mr. President,” to indicate he was capable of holding a casual conversation without an interpreter. In their first photo op, Trump lightly placed his hand on Kim’s upper shoulder and back, and while they were not smiling for the picture, they were as they entered the meeting room. Before starting their one-on-one talks, Trump told reporters while seated next to Kim that he expected a “great discussion” and “tremendous success” from the summit. “I think it’s going to be really successful,” he said, “and I think we will have a terrific relationship, I have no doubt.” His remarks elicited an immediate smile and chuckle from Kim, followed by a short nod. “It wasn't easy for us to come here,” Kim said in Korean. “For us, there was a past that grabbed our ankles and wrong prejudices and practices that at times covered our eyes and ears. We overcame all that and we are here now.” “That’s true,” Trump replied before reaching out to shake hands again with Kim. He quickly gave a thumbs-up to the North Korean leader before reporters exited the room for their closed-door talks. The next meeting lasted 100 minutes and included key aides. Trump was joined by Mike Pompeo, the secretary of state; John Bolton, the national security adviser; and John Kelly, the White House chief of staff. Kim Jong-un was accompanied by Kim Yong-chol, vice chairman of the Workers’ Party’s Central Committee, who also oversees inter-Korean affairs; Ri Yong-ho, the foreign minister; and Ri Su-yong, director of the Central Committee’s International Department. The meeting ended a little before noon and was followed by a working lunch around a long banquet table decorated with white flower bouquets in a sunlit room. More officials joined for this part. On the U.S. side was Sung Kim, the ambassador to the Philippines and former negotiator in denuclearization talks with the North; Matthew Pottinger, the deputy assistant to the president on Asian affairs; and Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House press secretary. North Korean officials included No Kwang-chol, the defense minister; Choe Son-hui, the vice foreign minister; and Kim Yo-jong, the North Korean leader’s younger sister. (Sarah Kim, “Trump and Kim Sign Joint Agreement,” JoongAng Ilbo, June 12, 2018) While all summit meetings are a mix of pageantry and policy, this one was long on ceremony. Still, Kim was caught by one microphone saying that “many people in the world will think this is a scene from science fiction, from fantasy.” (David E. Sanger, “Major Gamble Rests on ‘Special Bond,’” New York Times, June 13, 2018, p. A-1)

Trump: “We had a tremendous 24 hours. We’ve had a tremendous three months, actually, because this has been going on for quite a while. That was a tape that we gave to Chairman Kim and his people, his representatives. And it captures a lot. It captures what could be done. And that's a great -- a great place. It has the potential to be an incredible place. Between South Korea -- if you think about it -- and China, it's got tremendous potential. And I think he understands that and he wants to do what's right. It's my honor today to address the people of the world, following this very historic summit with Chairman Kim Jong Un of North Korea. We spent very intensive hours together, and I think most of you have gotten the signed document, or you will very shortly. It's very comprehensive. It's going to happen. I stand before you as an emissary of the American people to deliver a message of hope and vision, and a message of peace. ...My meeting
with Chairman Kim was **honest, direct, and productive**. We got to know each other well in a very confined period of time, under very strong, strong circumstance. We're prepared to start a new history and we're ready to write a new chapter between our nations. Nearly 70 years ago -- think of that; 70 years ago -- an extremely bloody conflict ravaged the Korean Peninsula. Countless people died in the conflict, including tens of thousands of brave Americans. Yet, while the armistice was agreed to, the war never ended. To this day, never ended. But now we can all have hope that it will soon end. And it will. **It will soon end.** The past does not have to define the future. Yesterday's conflict does not have to be tomorrow's war. And as history has proven over and over again, adversaries can indeed become friends. We can honor the sacrifice of our forefathers by replacing the horrors of battle with the blessings of peace. And that's what we're doing and that's what we have done. There is no limit to what North Korea can achieve when it gives up its nuclear weapons and embraces commerce and engagement with the rest of the world - - that really wants to engage. Chairman Kim has before him an opportunity like no other: to be remembered as the leader who ushered in a glorious new era of security and prosperity for his people. Chairman Kim and I just signed a joint statement in which he reaffirmed his “unwavering commitment to complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” We also agreed to vigorous negotiations to implement the agreement as soon as possible. And he wants to do that. This isn't the past. This isn't another administration that never got it started and therefore never got it done. **Chairman Kim has told me that North Korea is already destroying a major missile engine testing site.** That's not in your signed document; we agreed to that after the agreement was signed. That's a big thing -- for the missiles that they were testing, the site is going to be destroyed very soon. **Today is the beginning of an arduous process.** Our eyes are wide open, but peace is always worth the effort, especially in this case. This should have been done years ago. This should have been resolved a long time ago, but we're resolving it now. Chairman Kim has the chance to seize an incredible future for his people. Anyone can make war, but only the most courageous can make peace. The current state of affairs cannot endure forever. The people of Korea -- North and South -- are profoundly talented, industrious, and gifted. These are truly gifted people. They share the same heritage, language, customs, culture, and destiny. But to realize their amazing destiny, to reunite their national family, the menace of nuclear weapons will now be removed. **In the meantime, the sanctions will remain in effect.** We dream of a future where all Koreans can live together in harmony, where families are reunited and hopes are reborn, and where the light of peace chases away the darkness of war. This bright future is within -- and this is what's happening. It is right there. It's within our reach. It's going to be there. It's going to happen. People thought this could never take place. It is now taking place. It's a very great day. It's a very great moment in the history of the world. And Chairman Kim is on his way back to North Korea. And I know for a fact, as soon as he arrives, he's going to start a process that's going to make a lot of people very happy and very safe. So it's an honor to be with everybody today. The media -- this is a big gathering of media, I will say. It makes me feel very uncomfortable. (Laughter.) But it is what it is. People understand that this is something very important to all of us, including yourselves and your families. So thank you very much for being here. We'll take some questions. Wow. That's a lot of questions. Go ahead. Sure, go ahead. NBC. **Q Thank you, Mr. President. Two questions for you, if you don’t mind. First, the man you met today, Kim Jong Un, as you know, has killed family members, has starved his own people, is responsible for the death of Otto Warmbier. Why are you so comfortable calling him "very talented"?** THE PRESIDENT: Well, he is very talented. Anybody that takes over a situation like he did, at 26 years of age, and is able to run it, and run it tough -- I don't say he was nice or I don't say anything about it -- he ran it. Very few people, at that age -- you can take one out of ten thousand, probably, couldn't do it. Otto Warmbier is a very special person, and he will be for a long time, in my life. His parents are good friends of mine. I think, without Otto, this would not have happened. Something happened, from that day. It was a terrible thing. It was brutal. But a lot of people started to focus on what was going on, including North Korea. I really think that Otto is someone who did not die in vain. I told this to his parents. Special young man. And I have to say, special parents, special people. Otto did not die in vain. He had a lot to do with us being here today. ... Okay? Thank you very much. Q **Mr. President, that second question for you, sir, was...on the security assurances you talked about in your statement. Can you be specific about what assurances you are willing to give to Kim Jong Un? Does that include reducing military
The remains will be coming back. To a large extent, in North Korea. Mothers, and all of the people that got caught into that really brutal war, which took place, to a some point, I hope it will be, but not right now. We will be stopping the war games, which will save us a tremendous amount of money, unless and until we see the future negotiation is not going along like it should. But we'll be saving a tremendous amount of money. Plus, I think it's very provocative. ... Mr. President, this joint statement does not talk about verifiable or irreversible denuclearization. THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. Q Was that a concession on the part of the United States? THE PRESIDENT: No, not at all. Because if you look at it, I mean, it said we are going to -- let's see here -- it will be gone. I don't think you can be anymore plain than what we're asking -- "issues related to the establishment of the new U.S. DPRK relations" -- the building. We talk about the guarantees, and we talk about "unwaverling commitment to the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula." This is the document that we just signed. Q Did you discuss with Chairman Kim methods to verify, either with the United States or international organizations, that very process? And do you have a timetable -- THE PRESIDENT: Yes, we did. Yes, we did. And we'll be verifying. Q Can you give that to us? THE PRESIDENT: Yeah, we'll be verifying. It will be verified. Q How is that going to be achieved, Mr. President? THE PRESIDENT: Well, it's going to be achieved by having a lot of people there, and as we develop a certain trust. And we think we have done that. Secretary Pompeo has been really doing a fantastic job -- his staff, everybody. As we do that, we're going to have a lot of people there, and we're going to be working with them on a lot of other things. But this is complete denuclearization of North Korea, and it will be verified. Q Will those people be Americans or international -- THE PRESIDENT: Uh, combinations of both. Combinations of both. And we have talked about it, yes. Yeah, go ahead. Be nice. Be respectful. Q I'll be very respectful, sir. What did Kim Jong Un say to you to give you the confidence that, for once in the history of North Korea, they are not cheating the system, and gaming the world, and gaming the people who will have to go in and make sure that they're actually giving up their nuclear arsenal? What did he say to you? THE PRESIDENT: Yeah, I mean, very fair question. He actually mentioned the fact that they proceeded down a path in the past, and, ultimately, as you know, nothing got done. In one case, they took billions of dollars -- during the Clinton regime -- took billions of dollars and nothing happened. That was a terrible thing, and he actually brought it up to me. And he said we have never gone this far. I don't think they've ever had the confidence, frankly, in a President that they have right now for getting things done and having the ability to get things done. And he was very firm in the fact that he wants to do this. I think he might want to do this as much or even more than me because they see a very bright future for North Korea. So you never know. Right? We never know. But I'll tell you what, we signed a very comprehensive document today, and I think most of you have been given that document. But we signed a very, very comprehensive document, and I believe he's going to live up to that document. In fact, when he lands -- which is going to be shortly -- I think that he will start that process right away. Q Do you trust him, Mr. President? THE PRESIDENT: I do. I do. I can only say that I know him for -- really well, it's been very rhetorical, as you know. I think, without the rhetoric, it wouldn't have happened. I think without other things going along -- I think the establishment of a new team was very important. We have a great team. But I do, I think he wants to get it done. I really feel that very strongly. Of course, the denuclearization -- nuclear weapons and biological weapons and whatnot -- is one problem in North Korea. Another huge problem is the horrible record that they have on human rights. Was that discussed at all? THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Q Is that something that you will tackle in the future? THE PRESIDENT: Yes, it was discussed. It will be discussed more in the future -- human rights. What was also discussed in great detail, John, was that fact that, you know, we have -- and I must have had just countless calls and letters and tweets, anything you can do -- they want the remains of their sons back. They want the remains of their fathers, and mothers, and all of the people that got caught into that really brutal war, which took place, to a large extent, in North Korea. And I asked for it today, and we got it. That was a very last minute. The remains will be coming back. They're going to start that process immediately. But so many
people, even during the campaign, they'd say, "Is there any way you can work with North Korea to get the remains of my son back or my father back?" So many people asked me this question. And, you know, I said, "Look, we don't get along too well with that particular group of people." But now we do. And he agreed to that so quickly and so nice -- it was really a very nice thing, and he understands it. He understands it. So for the thousands and thousands -- I guess way over 6,000 that we know of, in terms of the remains, they'll be brought back. Q The POW-MIA issue clearly is a very important one for thousands of Americans. THE PRESIDENT: Especially to a lot of people that are -- Q But what do you, President Trump, expect Kim Jong Un to do about the human rights record regarding the North Korean people? THE PRESIDENT: Right. It was discussed. It was discussed relatively briefly compared to denuclearization. Well, obviously, that's where we started and where we ended. But they will be doing things, and I think he wants to do things. I think he wants to -- you'd be very surprised. Very smart. Very good negotiator. Wants to do the right thing. You know, he brought up the fact that, in the past, they took dialogue far -- they never were like we are. There's never been anything like what's taken place now. But they went down the line. Billions of dollars were given, and you know, the following day the nuclear program continued. But this is a much different time, and this is a much different President, in all fairness. This is very important to me. This is one of the -- perhaps, one of the reasons that I -- one, I campaigned on this issue, as you know very well, John. ...Q Can you touch on the issue of a peace treaty? And also, will you travel to Pyongyang anytime soon? THE PRESIDENT: Well, at a certain time, I will. I said that will be a day that I look very much forward to, at the appropriate time. And I also will be inviting Chairman Kim, at the appropriate time, to the White House. I think it's really going to be something that will be very important. And he has accepted. I said, at the appropriate time. We want to go a little bit further down the road. But what we signed today was a lot of things included. And then you have things that weren't included that we got after the deal was signed. I've done that before in my life. We didn't put it in the agreement because we didn't have time. And I think most of you have been handed out the agreement or soon will. But I -- Q (Inaudible.) THE PRESIDENT: Oh, you have not? Okay. Well, if you could have those agreements passed out. We just finished them, just a little while ago. But if you could have the agreements passed out, we'll -- you'll see what we're talking about. ...Q Returning to the question of human rights, you spoke very powerfully on the issue during your State of the Union Address. You showed that -- you had the defector in the First Lady's box with the crutches, who escaped. And you, at that point, said that North Korea has more brutally oppressed its people than any other regime on Earth. Do you still believe that is the case having sat down with Kim Jong Un? And does he need to change that? THE PRESIDENT: Right. Jon, I believe it's a rough situation over there. There's no question about it. And we did discuss it today pretty strongly. I mean, knowing what the main purpose of what we were doing is: denuclearization. But discussed it at pretty good length. We'll be doing something on it. It's rough. It's rough in a lot of places, by the way. Not just there. But it's rough, and we will continue that. And I think, ultimately, we'll agree to something. But it was discussed at length outside of the nuclear situation, one of the primary topics. Q But do you think that needs to change to bring on this glorious new era you've talked about? Are they going to have to -- THE PRESIDENT: I think it will change. Yeah. I think it probably has to, but I think it will. ...Steve. That's you, Steve? Right there. Q Yes, sir. Thank you. What timetable do you envision for their denuclearization? And in the meantime, are you thinking about easing any sanctions? THE PRESIDENT: Well, you know, scientifically, I've been watching and reading a lot about this, and it does take a long time to pull off complete denuclearization. It takes a long time. Scientifically, you have to wait certain periods of time, and a lot of things happen. Steve? That's you, Steve? Right there. Q Yes, sir. Thank you. What timetable do you envision for their denuclearization? And in the meantime, are you thinking about easing any sanctions? THE PRESIDENT: Well, you know, scientifically, I've been watching and reading a lot about this, and it does take a long time to pull off complete denuclearization. It takes a long time. Scientifically, you have to wait certain periods of time, and a lot of things happen. But despite that, once you start the process, it means it's pretty much over; you can't use them. That's the good news. And that's going to start very -- very soon. I believe that's going to start very soon. We will do it as fast as it can mechanically and physically be done, Steve. Q And the sanctions? THE PRESIDENT: The sanctions will come off when we are sure that the nukes are no longer a
factor. Sanctions played a big role, but they'll come off at that point. I hope it's going to be soon, but they'll come off. As you know, and as I've said, the sanctions right now remain. But at a certain point, I actually look forward to taking them off. And they'll come off when we know we're down the road -- where it's not going to happen, nothing is going to happen. Okay. ...Q You signed a document with Kim Jong Un. It's essentially a piece of paper. Yesterday, we had a briefing from the Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. He said the following: "Many Presidents previously have signed off on pieces of paper only to find that the North Koreans either didn't promise what we thought they had, or actually reneged on those promises." What makes this time different, Mr. President? THE PRESIDENT: Well, you have a different administration. You have a different President. You have a different Secretary of State. You have people that are -- you know, it's very important to them. And we get it done. The other groups, maybe it wasn't a priority. I don't think they could have done it if it was a priority, frankly. I don't think they honestly could have done it even if it was a priority. And it would have been easier back then. It would have been -- for me, it would have been much easier if this were 10 years ago or 5 years ago. And I'm not just blaming President Obama. I mean, this goes back -- for 25 years, this should have happened. I was given a very tough hand. I was given this, I was given the Iran deal, and plenty of other problems. But we were -- we're doing really well. And the Iran deal, I have to be honest, I did it because nuclear is always number one to me. Nuclear is number one. But on the Iran deal, I think Iran is a different country now than it was three or four months ago. I don't think they're looking so much to the Mediterranean. I don't think they're looking so much at Syria, like they were, with total confidence. I don't think they're so confident right now. But I hope -- with that being said, I hope that, at the appropriate time, after these sanctions kick in -- and they are brutal, what we've put on Iran -- I hope that they're going to come back and negotiate a real deal, because I'd love to be able to do that. But right now, it's too soon for that. ...Q Mr. President, you also didn't talk about establishing diplomatic relations, exchanging ambassadors. How long before that happens? THE PRESIDENT: Good question. Hopefully soon. But we'll have to get things moving first. Very -- a little bit early for that. We have to get things moving. ...Q Can you clarify, when you said you were stopping "war games," so you are stopping the military exercises with South Korea? THE PRESIDENT: Yeah, we've done exercises for a long period of time, working with South Korea. And we call them "war games," and I call them "war games." And they're tremendously expensive. The amount of money that we spend on that is incredible. And South Korea contributes, but not 100 percent, which is certainly a subject that we have to talk to them about also. And that has to do with the military expense and also the trade. So we're doing that. We actually have a new deal with South Korea, in terms of the trade deal, but we have to talk to them. We have to talk to many countries about treating us fairly. But the war games are very expensive. We pay for a big majority of them. We fly in bombers from Guam. I said -- when I first started, I said, "Where do the bombers come from?" "Guam. Nearby." I said, "Oh, great, nearby. Where's nearby?" "Six and a half hours." Six and a half hours -- that's a long time for these big massive planes to be flying to South Korea to practice and then drop bombs all over the place, and then go back to Guam. I know a lot about airplanes; it's very expensive. And I didn't like it. And what I did say is -- and I think it's very provocative, I have to tell you, Jennifer, it's a very provocative situation when I see that, and you have a country right next door. So under the circumstances that we are negotiating a very comprehensive, complete deal, I think it's inappropriate to be having war games. So, number one, we save money -- a lot. And number two, it really is something that I think they very much appreciate it. Q Does North Korea give you something in return, though? THE PRESIDENT: Well, we've gotten -- you know, I've heard that. I mean, some of the people that -- I don't know, maybe they really mean it. I don't always want to go against the press because I just don't -- especially not today, this is too important. But I noticed that some of the people were saying that the President has agreed to meet, he has given up so much. I gave up nothing. I'm here. I haven't slept in 25 hours, but I thought it was appropriate to do -- because we have been negotiating for literally around the clock with them, and with us, and with John, and with Mike, and a whole team of very talented people. But we haven't given up anything, other than -- you're right, I agreed to meet. And I think the meeting was every bit as good for the United States as it was for North Korea. But I just wrote down some of the things we got. And they -- you know, they -- sure, they got a meeting. But only a person that dislikes Donald Trump would say that I've agreed to make a
big commitment. Sure, I've agreed to take a period of time and come here and meet, and that's good. But I think it's great for us, as a country, and I think it's good for them. **But what did they do to justify this meeting? Secured commitment for complete denuclearization; that's the big thing.** They secured the release of three American hostages. They already gave them to us two months ago. These people are now living happily back in their homes, with their families. And it was pretty rough for them, to put it mildly. Secure the commitment to recover the remains, including -- these are of fallen heroes. And they're giving a commitment, they're starting it immediately, to recover their remains. And I just went through how many people asked me about it. I was amazed, actually. So many people would ask me, "Is it possible? Is it possible?" At that time we had no relationship to Chairman Kim or to anybody else in North Korea. You know, it was a very closed society. So we're getting the remains back. **Secured the halt of all missile and nuclear tests for -- how long has it been? Seven months?** You haven't had a missile go up. For seven months, you haven't had a nuclear test; you haven't had a nuclear explosion. I remember a nuclear event took place -- 8.8 in the Richter scale. And they announced -- I heard it on the radio - - they announced that a massive -- you know, an earthquake took place somewhere in Asia. And then they said it was in North Korea. And then they found out it was a nuclear test. I said, "I never heard of a Richter scale in the high 8s." And if you look, there has been no missile launches. They've blown up their missile area. That's going to take place. That has not been written into the contract. We're going to give you the exact details on that. But they secured a halt of all missiles and of all nuclear tests. They secured the closure of their single primary nuclear test site. All three of them -- they're in an area that's common around each other -- they secured the closure. **They secured the commitment to destroy the missile engine testing site.** That was not in your agreement. I got that after we signed the agreement. I said, "Do me a favor. You've got this missile engine testing site. We know where it is because of the heat." It's incredible the equipment we have, to be honest with you. I said, "Can you close it up?" He's going to close it up. We maintained the ability to continue to apply sanctions. So we're applying sanctions. Now I had 300 sanctions that I was getting ready to put on last week. And I said, you know, I can't really put on sanctions when I'm meeting with -- I thought it would be very disrespectful. Three hundred very big ones, powerful ones. And I said it would be disrespectful. So, Jennifer, when you look at all of those things that we got -- and when we got our hostages back, I didn't pay $1.8 billion in cash like the hostages that came back from Iran, which was a disgraceful situation, what took place. So we've gotten a lot. So when I hear somebody in the media say that President Trump has agreed to meet -- like, it's not a big deal to meet. I think we should meet on a lot of different topics, not just this one. And I really believe a lot of great things can happen. **Q And can you why you didn't secure those details in this agreement? **THE PRESIDENT: Because there was no time. I'm here one day. We're together for many hours intensively, but the process is now going to take place. And I would be surprised, Mike, if they haven't even started already. **They have started; they blew up their sites. They blew up their testing site.** But I will say, he knew, prior to coming -- you know, this wasn't like a surprise. It wasn't like we've never discussed it. We discussed it. Mike discussed it very strongly with his counterpart in North Korea. They knew that this was -- let's say they didn't agree to that I couldn't sign any agreement. There was no agreement that could have been signed. So they understood that. And it wasn't a big point today because, really, this had been taken care of, more than any other thing. Because it was all about this. This has been taken care of before we got here. So when we brought that up today, you see the language. It's very strong. It's in the document. **Q Thank you, Mr. President. Could you talk about the military consequences for North Korea if they don't follow through on the commitments that you're talking about? Could there be military action? **THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't want to talk. Yeah, I know. That's a tough thing to talk about because I don't want to be threatening. I don't want to be threatening. They understood that. And you've seen what was, perhaps, going to happen. And you know, Seoul has 28 million people. We think we have big cities. You look at New York, where it has 8 million people. We think it's a big city. Seoul has 28 million people. Think of that. And it's right next to the border. It's right next to the DMZ. It's right there. I mean, if this would have happened, I think -- you know, I've heard, oh, a hundred-thousand people. I think you could have lost 20 million people, 30 million people. This is really an honor for me to be doing this because I think, you know, potentially, you could have lost, you know, 30-, 40-, 50 million people. The city of Seoul, one of the biggest cities in the world, is right
next to the border.  Q  You once spoke about fire and fury.  Is that no longer the case?  THE PRESIDENT:  Well, at that time we needed, perhaps, fire and fury.  Because we could not have allowed that kind of capability from the standpoint of the United States.  And certainly, Japan wasn't going to allow it either.  Japan is right next door.  ...Q  One more thing.  Mr. President, could you tell us about the video that you showed before this?  THE PRESIDENT:  Yeah.  Q  When did you show that to Kim?  What was the goal there?  THE PRESIDENT:  Today.  Yeah, we had it made up by some -- I hope you liked it.  I thought it was good.  I thought it was interesting enough to show.  One in English and one in Korean.  And we had it made up.  I showed it to him today.  Actually, during the meeting -- toward the end of the meeting.  And I think he loved it.  They were giving -- we didn't have a big screen like you have the luxury of having.  We didn't need it because we had it on a cassette and -- an iPad.  And they played it.  And about eight of their representatives were watching it, and I thought they were fascinated.  But I thought it was well done.  I showed it to you because that's the future.  I mean, that could very well be the future.  And the other alternative is just not a very good alternative.  It's just not good.  But I showed it because I really want him to do something.  Now, I don't think I had to show it because I really believe he wants to -- I think he wants to get it done.  ...Q  Thank you, Mr. President.  What was it about that first interaction with Chairman Kim this morning that that made you decide not to walk away after you said that you would know within the first minute if he was sincere or not?  THE PRESIDENT:  Yeah.  I've said that about relationships.  I've said that about people.  You know in the first second.  Now, I was generous.  I said five seconds.  But you know in the first second, in some cases.  Sometimes that doesn't work out.  But sometimes it does.  From the beginning, we got along.  But there's been a lot of groundwork.  This wasn't like we went and we started talking about -- as you know, right?  We didn't just come in and start talking about these very complex subjects that have been going on for 70 years.  We've been discussing this for months.  And, you know, once the rhetoric stopped, once they did a great thing --you know, North Korea did a great thing by going to the Olympics.  Because the Olympics -- and President Moon will tell you this -- the Olympics was not exactly doing great.  People didn't feel like being bombed out of the Opening Ceremonies.  You know, they weren't exactly selling tickets.  And as soon as the Chairman -- Chairman Kim -- said, "Let's participate in the Olympics," it sold like wildfire and was a great success as an Olympics.  It was a great success.  He did a great thing.  But since that time, pretty much since that time -- because, as you know, a delegation came from South Korea who had just met with North Korea.  They came to the White House.  They told me lots of things, including the fact that they'd be willing to denuke.  We have one of their great people here today.  That they were willing to denuke.  And once that started, we have been really talking about that from the end of the Olympics when the whole delegation came to say various things, including denuking.  Q  If I may, a second question.  In the document that you signed earlier today, North Korea agreed to commit to denuclearization.  To borrow a phrase that you have used to criticize your predecessors and political opponents, how do you ensure that North Korea is not all talk, no action going forward?  THE PRESIDENT:  Well, I think can you ensure anything?  Can I ensure that you're going to be able to sit down properly when you sit down?  I mean, you can't ensure anything.  All I can say is they want to make a deal.  That's what I do.  My whole life has been deals.  I've done great at it, and that's what I do.  And I know when somebody wants to deal, and I know when somebody doesn't.  A lot of politicians don't.  That's not their thing, but it is my thing.  I mean, again, this really could have been done, I think, easier a long time ago.  But I know for a -- I just feel very strongly -- my instinct, my ability, or talent -- they want to make a deal.  And making a deal is a great thing for the world.  It's also a great thing for China because I can't imagine that China has, you know, is happy with somebody having nuclear weapons so close.  So, you know, that's -- China was very helpful.  So I think he wants to make a deal.  Can anybody be certain?  But we're going to be certain soon because the negotiations continue.  ...Q  You mentioned that you have raised extensively the issue of human rights with Chairman Kim.  THE PRESIDENT:  Yes.  Q  I wonder what you would say to the group of people who have no ability whatsoever to hear or to see this press conference -- the 100,000 North Koreans kept in a network of gulags.  Have you betrayed them by legitimizing the regime in Pyongyang?  THE PRESIDENT:  No, I think I've helped them because I think things will change.  I think I've helped them.  There's nothing I can say.  All I can do is do what I can do.  We have to stop the nuclearization.  We have to do other things, and that's a very
important thing. So at a certain point, hopefully, you'll be able to ask me a much more positive question or make a statement. But not much I can do right now. At a certain point, I really believe he's going to do things about it. I think they are one of the great winners today, that large group of people that you're talking about. I think, ultimately, they're going to be one of the great winners as a group. Q Would you ever consider removing the sanctions without significant improvement in the human rights situation? THE PRESIDENT: No. I want significant improvement. I want to know that it won't be happening. And again, once you start that process, there will be a point at which, even though you won't be finished for a while because it can't happen scientifically or mechanically, but you're not going to be able to go back. You know, once we reach that point, I'll start to give that very serious thought. Q Mr. President, did you also discuss the cost of denuclearization and how North Korea is about to foot the bill while the crippling sanctions remain in place? I'm from (inaudible) News Agency Singapore. THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think that South Korea and I think that Japan will help them very greatly. I think they're prepared to help them. They know they're going to have to help them. I think they're going to help them very greatly. We won't have to help them. The United States has been paying a big price in a lot of different places. But South Korea, which obviously is next door, and Japan, which essentially is next door, they're going to be helping them. And I think they're going to be doing a very generous job and a terrific job. So they will be helping them. Q I'd like to follow up on Steve's question. He asked you how long it would take to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. You said a long time. What does that mean? THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't know, when you say a long time. I think we will do it as fast as it can be done scientifically, as fast as it can be done mechanically. I don't think -- I mean, I've read horror stories. It's a 15-year process. Okay? Assuming you wanted to do it quickly, I don't believe that. I think whoever wrote that is wrong. But there will be a point at which, when you're 20 percent through, you can't go back. I had an uncle who was a great professor for, I believe, 40 years at MIT. And I used to discuss nuclear with him all the time. He was a great expert. He was a great, brilliant genius. Dr. John Trump at MIT. I think he was there 40 years, I was told. In fact, the head of MIT sent me a book on my uncle. But we used to talk about nuclear. You're talking about a very complex subject. It's not just like, "Oh, gee. Let's get rid of the nukes." It takes a period of time. But the main period of time that I'm talking is that first period, when you hit a certain point you can't go back. It's very hard to go back. Q And how long will that take? THE PRESIDENT: We don't know, but it will go pretty quickly. ... Q Thanks, Mr. President. I wanted to ask again on the sanctions campaign. THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. Q You alluded at the very beginning that the Chinese are not doing as great a job securing the border as they were before. You expressed some doubts when Kim went to see President Xi. The Russian foreign minister was in Pyongyang and said there shouldn't be any sanctions while these negotiations are under way. And the South Koreans are now talking about restoring some form of trade. So with all of those players appearing to be moving toward eroding sanctions, how can you keep the sanctions regime in place? What leverage do you have on these countries? THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think we have a lot of leverage. I think we have tremendous leverage. I do believe that China, despite my relationship with President Xi -- a man who I told you I have great respect for and like, also, a lot. You know, we're having very tough talks on trade. And I think that probably affects China somewhat. But I have to do what I have to do. And I think, over the last two months, the border is more open than it was when we first started. But that is what it is. We have to do it. We have a tremendous deficit in trade, commonly known as a trade deficit. We have a tremendous deficit in trade with China, and we have to do something about it. We can't continue to let that happen. And I think that has had an impact on my relationship, in terms of the border. I don't think it has the relationship -- you know, I don't think it affects my feeling or my relationship to President Xi. But when we first started, we weren't ready to go that route. And as we started preparing and getting ready to do that, I think that's had an impact on, frankly, the border. Which is a shame. But I have to do it. I have no choice. For our country, I have to do it. South Korea will do whatever is necessary to get a deal done. And if that means we can't trade, then I'm not going to trade. They're definitely not going to trade. If they think -- and they would do this with our concurrence -- if they think that they can do some work because we're very far down the line -- we're actually very far. You know, that document, when you read it today, that's far down the line. That's not something that just happened to be put together. This was done over months. And again, the rhetoric was important,
and the sanctions were important. I don't even know which one was more important. They were both important. ...Q Mr. President, David Sanger for The New York Times. I was wondering if you could give us some sense of whether the Chairman Kim told you how many nuclear weapons he believes he's made, whether he's willing to turn those over first, and then whether, in your mind, you need to do more than was done in the Iran deal for actually dismantling the -- both the uranium and the plutonium processes. And whether or not you had a sense that Chairman Kim really understood what that involves and had a timetable in his own mind of shutting that. THE PRESIDENT: Well, David, I can tell you he understands. He understands it so well. He understands it better than the people that are doing the work for him. That is an easy one. As far as what he has, it's substantial. Very substantial. The timing will go quickly. I believe you'll see some good action. I mean, as an example, one of the things with the missile site, I think you're probably surprised to hear that -- that was a throw-in at the end, the missile site. But I really believe, David, that it's going to go very quickly. I really believe that it's going to go fast. And it is a very substantial arsenal. There's no question about it. You know, I used to say maybe it's all talk and no action. But we have pretty good intelligence into that. Although, probably less there than any other country. You understand that maybe better than anybody in the room. Probably less there than any other country. But we have enough intelligence to know that what they have is very substantial. This is why, David, I always say that this shouldn't have taken place so late into the process. Wouldn't this have been better if it was 5 years ago or 20 years ago or 15 years ago and we didn't have to worry about not having a successful meeting like today? So -- and I still love my first interview with you, David. I still have that interview, actually. ... Q (Inaudible) the second summit -- if there is a second summit with Chairman Kim Jong Un, would it be in Pyongyang or Washington? THE PRESIDENT: We haven't set that up. We'll probably need another summit. We'll probably need -- or meeting. We can use a different term. But we'll probably need another one. We'll probably -- I will say this, we're much further along than I would have thought. I did not think we'd be here. I thought -- and I've told people -- I didn't want to build up people's hopes too much. I told people I thought that this would be a successful meeting if we got along, we developed a relationship, and we could have maybe gotten to this point in three or four months from now. But it really happened very quickly. A lot of that was because of the foundation that was, you know, put down before we met. A lot of things happened very fast. We didn't have -- as an example, bringing back the remains. That was not one of the things that was on our agenda today. I brought that up at the very end because so many people have talked to me about it. And I brought it up at the very end. And he was really very gracious. Instead of saying, "Well, let's talk about it the next time." He said, "It makes sense. We will do it." And he knew -- you know, they know where many of those incredible people are. Where they're buried along roads, along highways, along paths, usually, because our soldiers were moving back and forth and they had to move rapidly. It's very sad. But he knew. And that was brought up at the very end. And you know, it was really great that he was able to do it. A lot of people are going to be very happy about that. Q Brian Bennett from Time Magazine. THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Hi, Brian. Am I on the cover again this week? Boy, have I -- so many covers. Q It's entirely possible. THE PRESIDENT: Huh? I know. That's okay. Q Do you now see Kim Jong Un as an equal? THE PRESIDENT: In what way? Q You just showed a video that showed you and Kim Jong Un on equal footing in discussing the future of -- THE PRESIDENT: No. I think that -- I don't view it that way. See, I don't view it that way. I'll do whatever it takes to make the world a safer place. If I have to say I'm sitting on a stage -- I mean, I understand what you're getting at. If I have to say I'm sitting on a stage with Chairman Kim and that's going to get us to save 30 million lives -- could be more than that -- I'm willing to sit on the stage. I'm willing to travel to Singapore very proudly, very gladly. Again, I -- you know, other than the fact that it is taking my time, they have given up a tremendous amount. They've given it up even before. And even add the Olympics to it. You know, you could add the Olympics to the question. They went to the Olympics. They took an Olympics that was going to be a massive failure that maybe wouldn't have even opened, and they made it a tremendous success by agreeing to participate. Add that to the list of things that they've done. So, Brian, if I can save millions of lives by coming here, sitting down, and establishing a relationship with someone who's a very powerful man, who's got firm control of a country, and that country has very powerful nuclear weapons, it's my honor to do it. Q Are you concerned that the video you just showed could be
used by Kim as propaganda to show him as an equal -- THE PRESIDENT: No, I'm not concerned at all. We can use that video for other countries. ...Q  Mr. President, in the year 2000, President Clinton got a request by Kim Jong Il. THE PRESIDENT: Got impressed? Q  Got a request -- THE PRESIDENT: Oh. Q  From Kim Jong Il to travel to Pyongyang and meet him. And Clinton refused. He sent Secretary of State Albright. THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. He did a great deal. And he spent $3 billion and got nothing. And he started making nuclear weapons a day later. Q  Mr. President, you, on the other hand, got the request and right away went here to meet him. And do you understand those people who say that you gave him the ultimate present -- the legitimacy to a regime who oppresses its people without an ongoing process before you, as the U.S. President, as the leader of the free world, meet and shake hands with this leader of North Korea who is perceived to be oppressing brutally his own people? THE PRESIDENT: Okay. Good. I think we just answered the question. Q  But do you understand those people? THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I understand them much better than you do. ...Q  Mr. President, Eliana Johnson with Politico. THE PRESIDENT: Sure. Hi. Q  Hi. You mentioned a couple specific concessions that you got from Kim: the return of remains and the destruction of the nuclear site. And I know you said that was an add-on -- THE PRESIDENT: And much more. And much more than that. Q  Yeah. I know you said the last thing was an add-on and it wasn't in the agreement, but that he gave you his word. If he doesn't follow through on these things, what are you prepared to do in response? And will you lose faith in this process? THE PRESIDENT: No. I think he'll do it. I really believe that. Otherwise, I wouldn't be doing this. I really believe it. And it was really the engine testing site, in addition to all of the other things that they've agreed to do. It was the -- they have a very powerful engine testing site that, again, we're able to see because of the heat that it emits. And, yeah, I'm able to -- I'm very happy. I'll tell you what -- I'm very happy with those two points -- the two points you mentioned. But I think you might be referring to the thing that's not in, which is the engine testing site. I think he's -- I think -- honestly, I think he's going to do these things. I may be wrong. I mean, I may stand before you in six months and say, "Hey, I was wrong." I don't know that I'll ever admit that, but I'll find some kind of an excuse. (Laughter.) ... Q  Thank you, Mr. President. THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Thank you. Q (Inaudible) with Xinhua Media Group China. I just would like to know, will you call Chinese President Xi when you come back to D.C. to discuss about achievements you made today with Chairman Kim? THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I will. Q  And what's your expectation about China's role to accelerate the process to establish a long-term peace mechanism? THE PRESIDENT: Well, my expectation about China is that China is a great country with a great leader, and a friend of mine. And I really believe that he's happy that we've made this kind of progress. And I've heard from him. But I will be calling him very shortly. Maybe even before I land. Okay? And I have to say, you know -- and the United States is a great country. And we have set records economically -- over $7 trillion in net worth addition to what we have. And we are almost twice the size, the economy of the United States. Nobody talks about this, because you do hear a lot about China, rightfully so. But the United States, now, is almost twice the size of the economy of China. We have a great country and we're on a correct path. ...Q  Mr. President, from South Korea. THE PRESIDENT: Oh, South Korea? Where's South Korea? I think you deserve -- go ahead. Go. You deserve one. Yes. You deserve one. Q  I've got two questions for you, Mr. President. First, you mentioned earlier that you're going to talk with South Korean President Moon Jae-in over the phone. THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Q  What do you plan to discuss with him? THE PRESIDENT: I just want to tell him about the meeting. Very successful. And he'll be very much involved in the final negotiation. He's a very, very fine gentleman. Also a friend of mine. And I look forward to speaking. He'll be very happy when he hears about -- I've already sent word to him about what happened. I sent the document to him, actually, and all of the details behind the document. So I'll be talking to him very shortly. Q  If I may ask another question. In signing the peace treaty, do you hope to -- do you plan to work this out with North Korea's Chairman Kim only, or what do you think about the involvement of South Korea and China as the signatories? THE PRESIDENT: I'd like to have them involved also. There's a question as to whether or not we're supposed to or whether or not we legally have to. I don't care. I think it would be great to have China involved and also, of course, South Korea. Okay? Q  Is there a transcript of (inaudible)? THE PRESIDENT: Mike, do they have a transcript? They probably have a rough transcript, which you can give us, if you have one. Q  So that was recorded? THE
Bolton: “Kim claimed strenuously that he was committed to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Even though he knew there were people who doubted his sincerity, those people were mistakenly judging him by the actions of his predecessors. He was different. Trump agreed that Kim had changed things totally. Following the decades-old, standard North Korean line, however, Kim blamed the troubled US–North Korea history on the hostile policies of past US Administrations. He said that as he and Trump met frequently, they could work to dispel mistrust and accelerate the pace of denuclearization. I had heard all this before, but Trump had not, and he agreed with Kim’s assessment, noting that there were some very militant people on the US side, especially with regard to Kim’s criticism of past US Administrations. Interestingly, Trump said he would seek Senate approval of any nuclear agreement with North Korea, contrasting his approach positively with Obama’s unwillingness to seek ratification of the Iran nuclear deal. At this point, Pompeo passed me his note pad, on which he had written, ‘he is so full of shit.’ I agreed. Kim promised there would be no further nuclear tests, and that their nuclear program would be dismantled in an irreversible manner. Then came the catch, perfected by Joseph Stalin in his wartime summits with Franklin Roosevelt, when ‘hardliners’ were first discovered in the Soviet Politburo. Kim ‘confessed’ that he had domestic political hurdles he could not easily overcome, because there were hardliners in North Korea as well as America. Kim needed a way to build public support in North Korea, he said, actually maintaining a straight face, and he bored in on the South Korean–US joint exercises, which, he said, got on people’s nerves. Kim wanted us to reduce the scope or eliminate the exercises altogether. He said he had raised the military exercises with Moon in their first Summit (which produced the Panmunjom Declaration), and Moon had said that only the US could make the decision. Trump answered exactly as I feared, reiterating to Kim his constant refrain that the exercises were provocative and a waste of time and money. He said he would override his generals, who could never make a deal, and decide that there would be no exercises as long as the two sides were negotiating in good faith. He said brightly that Kim had saved the United States a lot of money. Kim was smiling broadly, laughing from time to time, joined by Kim Yong Chol. You bet. We certainly were having fun. In later US press coverage, there were leaks, obviously from DoD, that Mattis was displeased he was not consulted before Trump made this concession. Of course, neither were Kelly, Pompeo, nor I, and we were sitting right there. Trump said he had known from his first day in office that, for him, deal-making or negotiating such as this summit would be easy. Trump asked Kelly and Pompeo if they agreed. Both said yes. Luckily, he didn’t ask me. Kim said the hardliners in North Korea would be impressed by Trump’s decision on the exercises, and that further steps could be taken in the next phase of the negotiations. He joked that there would be no more comparisons of the sizes of their respective nuclear buttons, because the US was no longer under threat from North Korea,
agreement, Kim congratulated himself and Trump for all that they had accomplished in just one hour, and Trump agreed that others couldn’t have done it. They both laughed. Trump then pointed to Kim, and said he was the only one that mattered. Kim agreed he was doing things his way, and that he and Trump would get along. Trump returned to the military exercises, again criticizing his generals, whom he was overruling to give the point to Kim at this meeting. Kim laughed again. Trump mused that six months earlier, he was calling Kim “little rocket man,” and asked if Kim knew who Elton John was. He thought “rocket man” was a compliment. Kim kept laughing. At this point, Trump asked that we play the Korean language version of the “recruitment” film, which the North Korean side watched very intently on the iPads we gave them. When it ended, Trump and Kim wanted to sign the joint statement as soon as possible, but it turned out that translation inconsistencies were holding it up, so the conversation continued. Kim repeated that they had had a good discussion, saying he was glad that he and Trump had agreed to follow the ‘action for action’ approach. Somehow, I had missed Trump making that concession, but those were indeed magic words, exactly the ones I wanted to avoid, but which Kim thought he was walking away with. Kim asked if UN sanctions would be the next step, and Trump said he was open to it and wanted to think about it, noting that we had literally hundreds of new sanctions poised to announce. Pompeo and I had no idea what he meant. Trump handed out mints to the North Koreans. Kim was optimistic about moving forward quickly, and wondered why their predecessors had been unable to do so. Trump answered quickly that they had been stupid. Kim agreed that it took a lot of time to realize. We’re now doing it the right way.” (Bolton, The Room Where It Happened, pp. 98-99)

KCNA: “Kim Jong Un, chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea, chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and supreme commander of the Korean People's Army, held the summit meeting and talks with Donald J. Trump, president of the United States of America, at Sentosa Island of Singapore on June 12, 2018 for the first time in the histories of the two countries. Thanks to the fixed decision and will of the top leaders of the two countries to put an end to the extreme hostile relations between the DPRK and the U.S., which lingered for the longest period on the earth on terms of acute confrontation and to open up a new future for the sake of the interests of the peoples of the two countries and global peace and security, the first DPRK-U.S. summit is to be held. Singapore, the country of the epoch-making meeting much awaited by the whole world, was awash with thousands of domestic and foreign journalists and a large crowd of masses to see this day’s moment which will remain long in history. Kim Jong Un left his lodging quarters at 8:10 a.m. local time and arrived at Capella Hotel on Sentosa Island of Singapore, the venue of the talks. Seen standing at the lobby of the venue of the talks where the top leaders of the DPRK and the U.S. will have the first meeting were the flags of the DPRK and the U.S. At 9:00 a.m. local time the respected Supreme Leader of the party, state and army of the DPRK Kim Jong Un met and shook hands with U.S. President Donald J. Trump for the first time. The top leaders of the two countries came to take their first step toward reconciliation for the first time in the 70 odd years-long history of standoff and antagonism since the division of the Korean Peninsula, and to stand face to face at the venue of dialogue. Chairman Kim Jong Un had a souvenir photo taken with President Trump. The two top leaders went to the conference room, having a familiar talk. Tete-a-tete talks were held between the two top leaders. Noting that it was not easy to get to where they were, Kim Jong Un made the meaningful words there was a past that gripped their ankles and prejudice and wrong practice covered their eyes and ears, but they overcame all that to come to this place and stand at a new starting point. The two top leaders had a candid exchange of views on the practical issues of weighty significance in putting an end to the decades-long hostile relations between the DPRK and the U.S. and making peace and stability settle on the Korean Peninsula. Then followed extended talks. Present there from the DPRK side were Kim Yong Chol and Ri Su Yong, vice-chairmen of the Central Committee of the WPK, and Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho. Present there from the U.S. side were Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, United States National Security Advisor John Bolton and White House Chief of Staff John Kelly. There was a comprehensive and in-depth discussion over the issues of establishing new DPRK-U.S. relations and building a permanent and durable peace mechanism on the Korean peninsula at the talks. Noting that he is pleased to sit face-to-face with President Trump and the U.S. side's delegation, Chairman Kim Jong Un highly praised the
Pompeo: “…Q: My question pertains to President Trump’s decision to suspend major military exercises on the Korean Peninsula. There was a reason why these exercises have been done for all these years, according to the Pentagon, in terms of helping the U.S. practice its ability to reinforce in a crisis. Is this decision to cancel the exercises open-ended, or would you resume the exercises if you concluded the North is not engaging seriously in the talks? And can you tell, please, a little bit about the process for deciding to suspend the exercises? Did you ask for guidance from USFK,
from DOD, from the South Koreans on whether and how to do this? POMPEO: So I’m not going to talk to internal processes and discussions that were had. But it – the President was very clear. I was present when the discussion took place. He made it very clear that the condition precedent for the exercises not to proceed was a productive, good-faith negotiations being ongoing. And at the point it’s concluded that they are not, the President’s commitment to not have those joint exercises take place will no longer be in effect. I mean, he was unambiguous about that and how he communicated it both I think at the press conference but certainly when he was with Chairman Kim as well. Q: I want to – could – the President also talked about you being in the lead of the negotiations in the future, and also that there will be a meeting I guess at the White House next week to discuss the – how you take it forward. What are the next steps, and when will you be meeting with the North Koreans again, with Kim Yong-chol, for instance? POMPEO: So on this issue it should be very clear that the President is in the lead. Having said that, I will be the person who takes the role of driving this process forward. I don’t know exactly what the timing will be for our next conversation with North Korea. I would anticipate it will be fairly quickly after we return to our home countries. I don’t know exactly what form that will take, but I’m very confident that by some time in the next week or so we will begin the engagement. There was a great deal of work done over days and days and days in Panmunjom that led to the discussions that took place there in Singapore for whatever it was, 70 hours or 60 hours, whatever the two sets of teams were on the ground. So there’s – not all of that work appeared in the final document, but lots of other places where there were understandings reached. We couldn’t reduce them to writing, so that means there’s still some work to do, but there was a great deal of work done that is beyond what was seen in the final document that will be the place that we’ll begin when we return to our conversations. Q: I wanted to follow up just quickly on one thing that you said to Michael. Why would the President use the term “provocative,” though, to describe the military exercises when that’s a term that often North Koreans and the Chinese use, and we’ve said that they are – that they’re long planned and for purposes of readiness? POMPEO: Yeah. I mean, I think – I think the President was very clear. His intention here was to put us in a place where we get the opportunity to have productive conversations connected to the denuclearization of North Korea. Our mission hasn’t changed, right. A lot has been made of the fact that the word “verifiable” didn’t appear in the agreement. Let me assure you that the “complete” encompasses verifiable in the minds of everyone concerned. One can’t completely denuclearize without validating, authenticating – you pick the word. The President’s committed to that. He believes that having made this commitment to Chairman Kim, that so long as we were making progress and having good-faith, productive conversations that we were setting the right conditions for moving forward with those talks. I think that’s what the President was thinking of when he made that commitment to him. Q: Mr. Secretary, I wanted to ask you about “verifiable and irreversible.” …You said – the day before you said it’s our only objective, our – it’s clear we want that. It’s not in the statement. Why it’s not in the statement? And the President said it will – POMPEO: Mm-hmm, it’s in the statement. It’s in the statement. You’re just wrong about that. Q: How is it in the statement? And I am also – POMPEO: You’re just – because “complete” encompasses verifiable and irreversible. It just – I suppose we – you could argue semantics, but let me assure you that it’s in the document. Q: And the President said it will be verified. POMPEO: Of course it will. Q: Can you tell us a little bit more about …how? POMPEO: Just so you know, you could ask me this – I find that question insulting and ridiculous and, frankly, ludicrous. I just have to be honest with you. It’s a game and one ought not play games with serious matters like this. Q: But how will it be verified? Did you discuss that? Do you have -- POMPEO: Oh, we’re – they’re – the modalities are beginning to develop. There’ll be a great deal of work to do. It’s – there’s a long way to go, there’s much to think about, but don’t say silly things. No, don’t. It’s not productive. It’s not productive to do that, to say silly things. It’s just – it’s unhelpful. Q: Well, I think -- POMPEO: It’s unhelpful for your readers, your listeners, for the world. It’s – because it doesn’t remotely reflect the American position or the understandings that the North Koreans have either. Q: We’re just trying to understand how it reflects what you asked that -- POMPEO: Yeah, and I just articulated that for you. …Q: Can I – just to help him with his question and as a question, the – a big issue is you – I think you identified yourself as been the pace at which …dismantlement might occur with the North, preferring a phased and somewhat prolonged approach and President Trump emphasized the need for rapid
Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un pledged to work toward complete

disarmament, something like that. Yes, most definitely, absolutely. With respect to timelines, I don’t want to get into
the public timeline that’s been – been out there, right – the North Koreans and the South Koreans have spoken of timeframes. The President has said, and it’s common knowledge, we’re hopeful that we can achieve that in the next – what is it – two and a half years, something like that. Q: You’re hopeful, but have you set a deadline for the North Koreans? POMPEO: We’re hopeful we get it done. There’s a lot of work left to do.” (DoS, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Remarks to the Traveling Press, Seoul, June 13, 2018)

China suggested that sanctions relief could be considered for North Korea, after U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un pledged to work toward complete
President Trump declared that North Korea is “no longer a nuclear threat” to the United States even though the two sides had yet to forge a concrete disarmament plan and offered incomplete accounts of what they agreed to during this week’s summit meeting in Singapore. But the path to disarmament remained no clearer a day after the meeting. North Korea’s state-controlled news media described a step-by-step process to dismantle its nuclear weapons, with the United States rewarding it at each stage, something Trump has seemed to reject in the past. Trump’s team insisted that North Korea had agreed to an intrusive inspection regime even though Pyongyang insisted that North Korea had agreed to an intrusive inspection regime even though Pyongyang.

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South Korea is quietly upgrading its military hardware, acquiring new fighters and missiles, and weighing purchases of nuclear submarines, even as Seoul pursues a peace track with North Korea that has brought Pyongyang to direct talks with the U.S. The moves reflect the country's ambition to create a force able to fight with minimal outside help, and concerns that its U.S. ally may not be in South Korea forever—a point highlighted by President Donald Trump's abrupt cancellation of future joint exercises and talk of bringing troops home. The military upgrades are focused on the air force and navy, traditionally seen as serving a less critical purpose than the army, which would play the primary role in countering any North Korean land invasion. The North's ground forces number more than a million men, with 7.62 million in reserves, according to Seoul's Defense Ministry. To extend its air superiority, South Korea is replacing its aging fleet of F-4 and F-5 fighters with Lockheed Martin F-35As—stealth aircraft capable of hitting strategic underground targets. Many of the F-4 and F-5s will remain in service, as Seoul must contend with a North Korean military whose 810 combat aircraft outnumber the South's two-to-one. The first of the 40 F-35As purchased in 2014 are due to arrive in March, a Defense Ministry spokeswoman said. The aircraft's stealth and ground-attack capabilities make it ideal for pre-emptive strikes against North Korean leadership targets and ballistic missiles in the first hours of a conflict, said Eric Gomez, a defense analyst at the Washington-based Cato Institute. While the jets were ordered under the government of his conservative predecessor, President Moon Jae-in has pushed ahead with the purchases as the North's nuclear threat has grown. Moon has pledged to implement a missile-defense system incorporating F-35As to hit North Korean missile-launch sites. To complement the
new fighters, Seoul officials have said they are looking to buy more German-made Taurus air-to-surface missiles that can hit North Korean targets from beyond the range of most of Pyongyang's conventional antiaircraft defenses. The military-hardware purchases are a delicate issue for the government. In driving a detente on the peninsula, Moon has sought to avoid provoking Pyongyang while pursuing talks aimed at increasing economic engagement. In March, the South's defense minister didn't attend the rolling-out ceremony of its new F-35As at a Lockheed Martin production facility in Texas, in contrast with defense ministers of other allied nations in recent years. South Korean officials remained puzzled by Trump's sudden cancellation of joint military exercises after his summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. A spokesman for Moon repeated that South Korea "feels the need to better understand the exact meaning of President Trump's remarks." Secretary of State Mike Pompeo arrived in South Korea on Wednesday for talks with the foreign ministers of Seoul and Tokyo. Back in Washington, Trump tweeted Wednesday morning that the U.S. could save "a fortune" by ceasing the exercises, as long as the U.S. and North Korea were "negotiating in good faith." Meanwhile, Japanese Defense Minister Onodera Itsunori called for the U.S. to maintain its military presence in South Korea. "U.S.-South Korea exercises and the U.S. military presence in South Korea have an important role in the peace and security of East Asia," said Onodera. A foreign ministry spokeswoman said Japan expected a "detailed briefing from the U.S. side" on what Trump meant. Moon has sought to appease Trump by promising to buy more American arms, at the same time hedging against any drawdown of U.S. forces-a long-held fear of many in South Korea. As North-South relations were warming in March, North Korea's state media published a commentary accusing Seoul of having ulterior motives and lashing out at "military warmongers" for their "North-targeted arms buildup." The article singled out South Korea's purchases of the F-35As and Taurus missiles. The F-35As can hit North Korean radar bases, communication facilities and concealed artillery along the demilitarized zone, neutralizing some of Pyongyang's first-strike capabilities, said Shin In-kyun, head of the Korea Defense Network, a defense consultancy in Seoul. Japan, too, has been beefing up its military under Prime Minister Abe Shinzo by investing in cruise missiles, buying at least 42 F-35A fighter jets and unifying the command of its army. Tokyo is studying whether it can convert a helicopter carrier into an aircraft carrier on which F-35B fighters could land. The ruling party has urged Japan to consider buying its own F-35Bs. Government officials and analysts say these steps are aimed at boosting the U.S.-Japan military alliance, not replacing it. Japan wants to show that with extra hardware and more personnel trained in amphibious warfare, it can work closely with the U.S. Navy and Air Force in combating regional threats. "Japan is building up its defense capability to keep the U.S. forces in Japan," said Ito Toshiyuki, a retired vice admiral in Japan's navy who is a professor at Kanazawa Institute of Technology. Back in Seoul, the government has looked into acquiring nuclear submarines to counter North Korea's submarine-launched ballistic-missile program, recently hiring Shin of the Korea Defense Network to investigate the feasibility. The country has about 10 diesel submarines, according to a defense white paper, which can stay underwater for about two weeks, compared with nuclear subs that can remain submerged for months. South Korea's navy has also shown interest in acquiring a light carrier, a ship that would be critical to defending maritime trade routes, said Kim Jin-hyung, a retired South Korean rear admiral. A Defense Ministry spokeswoman confirmed the navy's interest, but said Seoul didn't have official plans for such a purchase at the moment. (Andrew Jeong and Chieko Tsuneoka, "South Korea Bulks up Military Might While Preparing for Peace," Wall Street Journal, June 13, 2018)

The overwhelming victory of the ruling Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) in the local elections shows high public support and approval for the Moon Jae-in administration, especially amid the ongoing reconciliatory mood with North Korea which eclipsed other political issues. The fall of the current party leaders, including Chairman Hong Joon-pyo of the main opposition Liberty Korea Party (LKP), is inevitable and some parties may seek mergers. The local elections were the first nationwide poll since Moon took office in May last year, and thus were regarded as a midterm evaluation of his administration, especially because by-elections were also held for 12 National Assembly seats. The DPK's sweeping victory had long been expected considering the ever-high approval rating of the President, which keeps hovering over 70 percent. Such a forecast became firm along with the peace atmosphere surrounding the Korean Peninsula that has included
two inter-Korean summits and the first-ever Washington-Pyongyang summit. Boosted by the huge victory, the ruling bloc will be able to carry out its reform policies more easily and confidently because the election outcome means public support for the administration and ruling party. What's more encouraging for the DPKP is that its candidates won in districts that used to be the conservatives’ home turf, including Busan, Ulsan and South Gyeongsang Province. The by-election results were also in favor of the ruling bloc. These will help easier passage of the government’s reform bills at the Assembly, while many reform drives have so far faced setbacks due to opposition mainly from the LKP. A DPKP member is also likely to take the Assembly’s speaker position for the latter half of the 20th Assembly. Opposition parties, especially the main conservative LKP, are finding no way out from the collapse. The LKP failed to present itself as a reliable opposition force that can properly check the ruling bloc and provide alternative policy directions. Instead, it just focused on diminishing the peace mood created by the Moon administration — a tactic that has backfired. “The local elections were an evaluation of the LKP, not the Moon administration,” political analyst Choi Yo-han said. “The main opposition party kept criticizing everything about the government’s North Korea policy even in the reconciliatory atmosphere. That angered voters.” Hong may have to step down from the chairmanship to take responsibility for the poor election outcome. Even before the elections, he faced protests from his own party members for unilateral decision-making and offensive language. The LKP’s internal dispute could lead to a split and the whole conservative bloc may be realigned through mergers. Some predict the LKP may merge with the Bareunmirae Party, which includes former members of the former Saenuri Party, the predecessor of the LKP. (Kim Rahn, “Sweeping Local Elections Victory Gives Boost to Moon’s North Korea Policy,” Korea Times, June 15, 2018)
to the deterrents based on them play an essential role in security in the Northeast Asia concerning U.S. denuclearization. And we a while carefully monitoring whether North Korea takes concrete steps to fulfill its commitment to understand that the United States will advance the discussion on provision of security guarantees while the United States is committed to provide the sec North Korea reaffirmed its commitment to complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, joint effort to this end. With regard to security guarantees to North Korea, in the joint statement based on the outcome of the summit toward the full implementation of the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions briefly. Following Secretary Pompeo’s leadership of President Trump and hard work by Secretary Pompeo. This is only the beginning of achieving our common goal – peace and stability in the region and beyond through North Korea’s complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of all weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles of all ranges. Following Secretary Pompeo’s briefing, we had a frank discussion on how we urge North Korea to take concrete actions toward the full implementation of the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions based on the outcome of the summit. We all reaffirmed that the three countries continue our joint effort to this end. With regard to security guarantees to North Korea, in the joint statement North Korea reaffirmed its commitment to complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, while the United States is committed to provide the security guarantee to North Korea. We understand that the United States will advance the discussion on provision of security guarantees while carefully monitoring whether North Korea takes concrete steps to fulfill its commitment to denuclearization. And we also know that no security guarantees have been given yet. In addition, concerning U.S.-ROK exercise, we believe that the Japan-U.S. alliance as well as the deterrents based on them play an essential role in security in the Northeast Asia. With regard to the pause in U.S.-ROK exercise, the detail will be discussed between the United States and
ROK. In any case, we understand that any pause in exercise is contingent upon DPRK action towards denuclearization. We also understand that United States maintains its commitment to defend allies and Japan-U.S. security commitment, and U.S. forces in Japan posture remain unchanged. In any case, we would like to maintain close contact with them since these issues may also affect the security of Japan and the region. Japan continues to seek to normalize its relations with North Korea in accordance with Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration through complete comprehensively resolving outstanding issues of concern such as nuclear missile and abductees issues as well as through the settlement of unfortunate past. Japan will continue to play an important role in realizing peace and stability in Northeast Asia in close coordination with the United States and ROK. I am looking forward to further working with both Secretary Pompeo and Minister Kang Kyung-wha in the future. …” (DoS, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Press Availability with Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha and Japanese Foreign Minister Kono Taro, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Seoul, South Korea June 14, 2018)

Pompeo-Wang Yi: “…POMPEO: May I add to that? State Councilor Wang and I had a good, constructive discussion on these very topics. With respect to the pace at which the denuclearization will take place, I think we both agreed that we need to do it in as timely a fashion as is possible to achieve the outcome, and that the security assurances that we've talked about are provided at times that are appropriate. We also talked at some length about the sanctions. China has reaffirmed its commitment to honoring the UN Security Council resolutions. Those have mechanisms for relief contained in them, and we agreed that at the appropriate time that those would be considered. But we have made very clear that the sanctions and the economic relief that North Korea will receive will only happen after the full denuclearization, the complete denuclearization, of North Korea.” (DoS, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Press Availability with Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Beijing, June 14, 2018)

North Korean delegates at cross-border military talks in the truce village of Panmunjom on June 14 offered to move their long-range artillery pieces from the military demarcation line to rear areas, a source said June 17. The Defense Ministry denied it, but the source said, "The North Korean delegates brought it up first as a matter of principle." This would go a long way toward reducing military tensions. It is not known why the North made the offer or what it expects in return. The North has deployed about 1,000 artillery guns near the MDL. Some 330 are trained on the Seoul region, including six battalions of 170-mm self-propelled artillery guns with a range of 54 km and some 10 battalions of 240-mm multiple rocket launchers with a range of 60 km. The launchers are hidden in tunnels in ordinary times but can be moved out quickly to fire shells. A diplomatic source said, "This may be an attempt to maintain the momentum of the U.S.-North Korea summit." But the North is unlikely to have attached no conditions. It probably demanded that South Korea and the U.S. also move their frontline artillery guns to rear areas. Some commentators downplayed the threat the North Korean artillery poses. One retired general said, "Many people think that the North Korean artillery attacks could turn the Seoul area into ashes in just a few hours, but that's based on the assumption of the South Korean military giving no response at all." Shin Won-shik, a former operations chief at the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said, "Long-range artillery guns are not as effective as in the past. Our military is also developing a missile defense system. If the South Korean and U.S. artillery guns are removed to rear areas, we will be deprived of effective frontline defense in an emergency." The issue is expected to be discussed in the next cross-border talks. (Lee Yong-soo, “N. Korea Offers to Remove Long-Range Artillery from Frontline,” Chosun Ilbo, June 18, 2018) The two Koreas agreed to completely restore their military communication lines during their first general-grade military talks in more than a decade, their joint statement showed. They also exchanged opinions on demilitarizing the inter-Korean truce village of Panmunjom on a "trial basis" and agreed to thoroughly implement a 2004 bilateral agreement on preventing accidental clashes in the West Sea. The marathon talks were held at Tongilgak, a North Korean building in Panmunjom. Major Gen. Kim Do-gyun led South Korea's five-member delegation, while the North's side was represented by Lieut. Gen. An Ik-san. The two sides also discussed halting all hostile acts against each other; turning the Northern Limit Line (NLL), a de facto sea border, into a peace sea; and other issues that the April declaration touched on to reduce military tensions. In addition, they discussed the issue of recovering the remains of
Trump: “Q Mr. President, you have spoken so passionately about the circumstances that led to Otto Warmbier’s death. ... In the same breath, you're defending now Kim Jong Un's human rights records. How can you do that? THE PRESIDENT: You know why? Because I don't want to see a nuclear weapon destroy you or your family. I don't want to see -- Q .By the way, you declared the nuclear threat from North Korea is over. THE PRESIDENT: Excuse me. Because I don't want to see a nuclear weapon destroy you and your family. I want to have a good relationship with North Korea. I want to have a good relationship with many other countries. And what I've done, if you remember, if you're fair, which most of you aren't -- but if you're fair, when I came in, people thought we were probably going to war with North Korea. ...If we did, millions of people would have been killed. I don’t mean like -- you know, people are saying 100,000. Seoul has 28 million people 30 miles off the border. You would have had 30, 40, 50 million people killed. Who knows what would have happened? I came in; that was what I inherited. I should have never inherited. That should have been solved long before I got there. I did a great job this week. The fake news said, “Oh, you met.” But the only thing they saw that I gave up -- one broadcast said, "He gave up so much." You know what I gave up? I met. I met. We had great chemistry. He gave us a lot. You haven't had a missile test in seven months. You haven't had a firing. You haven't had a nuclear test in eight and a half months. You haven't had missiles flying over Japan. He gave us the remains of our great heroes. I have had so many people begging me -- parents, and fathers, mothers, daughters, sons -- wherever I went, “Could you please get the remains of my boy back?” They're giving them back. Nobody thought that was possible. ...They're doing so much. And now we're on our way to denuclearization. And the agreement says there will be total denuclearization. Nobody wants to report that. So the only thing I did was I met. I got along with him great. He is great. We have a great chemistry together. That's a good thing, not a bad thing. Q How can Kim love his people if he's killing them? THE PRESIDENT: I can't speak to that. I can only speak to the fact that we signed an incredible agreement. It's great. And it's going to be great for them, too. Because now North Korea can develop and North Korea can become a great country economically. It can become whatever they want. But there won't be nuclear weapons and they won't be aimed at you and your families. Q Mr. President, why did you offer to halt the military exercises with South Korea? THE PRESIDENT: That was my offer. Just so you understand. Military -- ... I call them “war games.” I hated them from the day I came in. I said, why aren't we being reimbursed? Q That's North Korea's term. "War games." THE PRESIDENT: That's my term. Q They use it too. THE PRESIDENT: They might use it. We pay for it. We pay millions and millions of dollars for planes, and all of this. It's my term. I said, I'd like to halt it because it's bad to be negotiating and
He inherited the family business from his dad & grandfather. He is a total weirdo who would not that while Trump wa
Trump's posture is inconsistent with Republican orthodoxy. Sen. Marco Rubio (R-
Trump claimed it had been a joke. “I’m kidding,” he said. “You don’t understand sarcasm.”

...Q What did you mean just now when you said you wished Americans would sit up at attention when you spoke -- THE PRESIDENT: I’m kidding. You don’t understand sarcasm. Who are you with? Wait, wait, who are you with? Who are you with? Q CNN. THE PRESIDENT: You’re with CNN! Hey, you are the worst. ...Q Mr. President, at the end of the “Fox & Friends” interview, you said that you were going to spend Father’s Day weekend doing work, and you said that you were going to have a call with North Korea. Who are you going to talk to in North Korea? THE PRESIDENT: Well, I’m going to speak to people in North Korea, and I’m going to speak to my people who are over in North Korea. A lot of things are happening. And I will tell you this: We now have a very good relationship with North Korea. When I came into this job, it looked like war -- not because of me, but because -- if you remember the sit-down with Barack Obama, I think you will admit this, he said the biggest problem that the United States has, and by far the most dangerous problem -- and he said to me -- that we've ever had, because of nuclear, is North Korea. Now, that was shortly before I entered office. I have solved that problem. Now, we're getting it memorialized and all, but that problem is largely solved, and part of the reason is we signed, number one, a very good document. But you know what? More importantly than the document -- more importantly than the document, I have a good relationship with Kim Jong Un. That's a very important thing. I can now call him. I can now say, "Well, we have a problem." I told him -- I gave him a very direct number. He can now call me if he has any difficulty. I can call him. We have communication. It's a very good thing. People are shocked that this is the kind of -- you know, they thought Trump was going to get in and he was going to start throwing bombs all over the place. It's actually the opposite. But we're building a military so strong -- $716 billion next year; $700 [billion] this year. We're building a military so strong, nobody is going to mess with us. But you know what? I never want to have to use it. ...Q What's verification process going to look like? THE PRESIDENT: We're going to have a very strong verification process. Q What's it's going to look like? THE PRESIDENT: Now, if you read the agreement, which most of you didn't, point after point after point he gave, including getting back our -- the remains of our great heroes, okay? Of our great, great heroes. Which made -- some people are crying in the streets they're so happy. Nobody thought we were going to get that. Point after point. All they said about me is, "You met. He met. It's terrible you met." Of course I met. Meeting is a good thing, not a bad thing. By the way, it was good for the United States; it was good for them. I spoke with China. They are very happy. Actually, they were much happier. Now, they may not be as happy today because of what I'm doing with trade. You probably heard that. I assume it's been announced by now. But we're putting tariffs on 50 billion dollars' worth of technology and other things because we have to, because we've been treated very unfairly. But China has been terrific. President Xi has been terrific. President Moon, everybody -- we're all working together because of me. Q How long will you give Kim Jong Un to follow through on denuclearization before you -- THE PRESIDENT: Well, we're working it as fast as possible. Q Is he coming to the White House soon? Q -- before you put sanctions back on? THE PRESIDENT: We're working it as fast as possible. Q Is he visiting the White House, Mr. Trump? THE PRESIDENT: We're working that. We're working denuclearization as fast as possible.” (White House Office of the Press, Remarks by Press Trump in Press Gaggle, North Lawn, June 15, 2018)

President Trump’s praise for Kim Jong Un’s authoritarian rule in North Korea — and his apparent envy that people there “sit up at attention” when the 35-year-old dictator speaks — marked an escalation of the American president’s open embrace of totalitarian leaders around the world. Reflecting on his impressions of Kim following their Singapore summit, Trump told Fox News: “He’s the head of a country, and I mean he’s the strong head. Don’t let anyone think anything different. He speaks, and his people sit up at attention. I want my people to do the same.” It was unclear whether Trump was referring to Americans generally or only to his staff. His interview took place along the West Wing driveway, and as the president talked about “my people,” he gestured toward the White House. Later, when pressed by a CNN reporter about the comment, Trump claimed it had been a joke. “I’m kidding,” he said. “You don’t understand sarcasm.” Trump’s posture is inconsistent with Republican orthodoxy. Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) tweeted that while Trump was “trying to butter him up to get a good deal,” Kim “is NOT a talented guy. He inherited the family business from his dad & grandfather. He is a total weirdo who would not
Prime Minister Abe Shinzo said Japan is prepared to meet some of the costs of inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency to ensure the "complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement" of North Korea's nuclear program. Appearing on a June 16 program broadcast by Osaka-based Yomiuri Telecasting Corp., Abe touched upon the denuclearization of North Korea in light of the recent summit talks between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. "We must have the IAEA conduct a thorough inspection. It would be only natural for Japan to shoulder the costs if it ended up enjoying the benefits of peace after the threat of nuclear weapons was removed," he said, adding that, "Rather than giving the money to North Korea, the measure could be pushed forward by creating a new (international) agency." While Abe also praised the joint declaration signed by Trump and Kim after their June 12 meeting in Singapore, he added that he would have preferred if the document contained wording about the "complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement" of North Korea's nuclear program. "The document is still significant because Chairman Kim placed his signature on it," Abe said. Abe indicated that joining an international framework to pay for nuclear inspection work in North Korea would be totally separate from any economic cooperation from Japan toward Pyongyang. "We will provide such cooperation only after the abduction is resolved when North Korea comes clean with everything it knows and returns the abductees to Japan. Chairman Kim will be asked to make a major decision." Abe also said Trump's recent announcement that joint military exercises between the United States and South Korea would be suspended was an expression of U.S. goodwill toward North Korea. He went on to say the decision did not mean a reduction of U.S. troops based in South Korea and that there would be no change in U.S. troops based in Japan or in joint military exercises between Japan and

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An American financier approached the Trump administration last summer with an unusual proposition: The North Korean government wanted to talk to Jared Kushner, the president’s son-in-law and senior adviser. The financier, Gabriel Schulze, explained that a top North Korean official was seeking a back channel to explore a meeting between President Trump and Kim Jong-un, who for months had traded threats of military confrontation. Schulze, who lives in Singapore, had built a network of contacts in North Korea on trips he had taken to develop business opportunities in the isolated state. For some in North Korea, which has been ruled since its founding by a family dynasty, Kushner, as a member of the president’s family, officials in Pyongyang judged, would have the ear of his father-in-law and be immune from the personnel changes that had convulsed the early months of the administration. Schulze’s quiet outreach was but one step in a circuitous path that led to last week’s handshake between Trump and Kim at a colonial-style island hotel in Singapore — a path that involved secret meetings among spies, discussions between profit-minded entrepreneurs, and a previously unreported role for Kushner, according to interviews with current and former American officials and others familiar with the negotiations. In reaching out to Kushner, the North Koreans were following the example of the Chinese, who had early on identified the 37-year-old husband of Ivanka Trump as a well-connected “princeling,” someone who could be a conduit to Trump and allow them to bypass the bureaucracy of the State Department. And in reaching out to the White House, Schulze was taking advantage of an unusual opening in an administration where matters of policy and business often seem to blur. The overture by Schulze, who had first met Trump family members several years ago when they were exploring business deals in Asia, came during a period of sharp division inside the administration over how to deal with North Korea’s growing nuclear arsenal, with some officials even advocating a pre-emptive military strike. Other figures besides Schulze played important roles in bringing about Trump’s summit meeting with Kim, not least South Korea’s president, Moon Jae-in. But people familiar with the negotiations said Schulze’s early contacts were useful in setting in motion the diplomacy that led to Singapore. Kushner did not play a direct role in back-channel negotiations with North Korean officials, according to people familiar with the matter. He instead notified Mike Pompeo, the C.I.A. director at the time, about Schulze’s outreach and requested that the agency be in charge of the discussions. It is unclear why Kushner thought the C.I.A. — rather than the State Department — should take the lead, though he had an antagonistic relationship with Rex W. Tillerson, who was the secretary of state at the time, and a good rapport with Pompeo. It is also unclear whether Kushner’s lack of a permanent top-secret security clearance at the time was a factor in his decision not to have a direct role. The White House and the C.I.A. declined to comment on Kushner’s contact with Schulze. For Schulze, the scion of a family that made billions in mining, a thaw in America’s relationship with North Korea would be potentially lucrative. His firm, SGI Frontier Capital, adopts a high-risk strategy of
investing in so-called frontier markets — Ethiopia, Mongolia and elsewhere. He did a number of small deals in North Korea before the Obama administration imposed new economic sanctions in 2016. “I really believe that opportunity is found on the edge of our comfort zone,” he told The Financial Times in 2013. In a statement, Schulze said, “I do not discuss the nature of my business or personal relationships.” The meetings between Kushner and Schulze briefly injected the president’s son-in-law into an issue in which he has otherwise had little involvement. Schulze is not the only person who has offered to act as a broker for talks between the United States and North Korea. More than a dozen people approached the State Department during the last year with claims to have connections to people high in the North Korean government, according to current and former officials. Most led nowhere, and some diplomats are doubtful that any were truly consequential. “Over the past three administrations, the North Korean leadership has used intermediaries to try to land a summit with the American president and to bypass normal diplomatic channels,” said Michael J. Green, who worked on North Korea during the George W. Bush administration. “At other times, intermediaries who had connections to the North Korean government would make offers to help.” North Korea’s motive for talking now, experts said, is linked to the progress it has made on its nuclear and ballistic missile programs. Having demonstrated the ability to strike the continental United States, the North believes it is in an advantageous position to strike a deal that would lift punishing sanctions. For all the role that spies played in arranging the summit meeting, it is hardly surprising that one of the earliest overtures came from an American investor with a history of doing deals in North Korea. Trump’s blossoming relationship with Kim seems as much a business proposition as a diplomatic overture. Trump enthused about the country’s idyllic beaches, which he said he could foresee being lined with luxury hotels and condominiums. “Think of it from a real estate perspective,” Trump said. (Mark Mazzetti and Mark Landler, “North Korea’s Overture to Trump’s Inner Circle,“ New York Times, June 18, 2018, p. A-1)

China provided the impetus for the halt of U.S.-South Korean joint military drills. When Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Kim in Dalian, China, on May 7-8, he prodded him to call on Washington to suspend military exercises with Seoul, according to Chinese diplomatic sources. At the meeting, Kim told Xi that he was ready to release three U.S. citizens who had been detained by North Korea. Xi supported their release, saying that making the first move would put Pyongyang at an advantage in light of the principle of rewarding an action with an action, according to the sources. And Xi suggested that Kim should call for the suspension of military exercises between the United States and South Korea in return. The day after Kim returned to North Korea, the U.S. detainees were released. Kim also had North Korea’s key nuclear testing site dismantled before an international troupe of reporters on May 24, ahead of the June 12 summit with Trump, signaling his nation’s move toward denuclearization. “Our top priority is securing the long-term survival of North Korea’s regime, and it was not on our mind (before the talks with Kim and Xi in Dalian) to demand a halt to U.S.-South Korean military maneuvers,” according to a North Korean source in Beijing. But Kim called for the suspension of military drills that cast North Korea as the enemy at his meeting with Trump, KCNA reported. In reply, the U.S. president broached his plans to end the joint military exercises at a news conference after the summit, saying it was not appropriate to negotiate while staging "war games." (Funakoshi Takashi, “Xi Urged Kim to Call for End of U.S.-S. Korean Military Drills,” Asahi Shimbun, June 17, 2018)

South Korea is planning to ask North Korea to move 350 artillery pieces along the inter-Korean border aimed at Seoul back from the military demarcation line, a government official said. The request will likely be made in the two countries’ next military meeting, though a date was not given. In the spirit of the Panmunjom Declaration, in which President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un agreed to alleviate military tension on the Korean Peninsula, Seoul will ask Pyongyang to pull back hundreds of pieces of military equipment it sees as a threat to the South Korean capital. It would like them moved 30 to 40 kilometers (19 to 25 miles) away from the border. That includes 150 pieces of 170 millimeter-caliber self-propelled artillery, which has a range of between 40 and 60 kilometers, and 200 pieces of 240 millimeter-caliber multiple rocket launchers, which include Seoul in their range. South Korea’s military believes that the North is
President Trump took aim at the media for its critical coverage of his meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. "Funny how the Fake News, in a coordinated effort with each other, likes to say I gave sooo much to North Korea because I 'met,'" Trump tweeted. "That's because that's all they have to disparage! We got so much for peace in the world, & more is being added in finals. Even got our hostages/remains!" he added. (Brett Samuels, "Trump Rips 'Fake News' for Reports of Concessions to North Korea," The Hill, June 17, 2018)

The Pentagon announced that it was cancelling — at least for now — the large-scale, long-planned Ulchi Freedom Guardian exercise set for August after President Trump's surprise announcement in Singapore that he was ending joint military exercises as an inducement for North Korea to dismantle its nuclear weapons program. The decision to "Consistent with President Trump’s commitment and in concert with our Republic of Korea ally, the United States military has suspended all planning for this August’s defensive ‘war game,’” the Pentagon spokeswoman, Dana W. White, said in a statement released tonight. "We are still coordinating additional actions,” Ms. White added. “No decisions on subsequent war games have been made.” Defense Department officials had said on June 15 that they expected the exercise to be canceled or scaled back, and that Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and his South Korean counterpart, Song Young-moo, discussed canceling the exercises during a telephone call on June 14. The possibility was kicked around last week of shrinking the sprawling Ulchi Freedom Guardian down to a so-called tabletop exercise, which would be less visible but stop short of a cancellation. But Trump’s assertion that he was canceling “war games” made it difficult to conduct the exercise in any form without the risk that North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-un, would accuse the United States of failing to keep its word. Mattis will meet at the Pentagon later this week with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and the national security adviser, John R. Bolton, to discuss the issue, Ms. White said in the statement, adding that it will not affect exercises in the Pacific outside the Korean Peninsula. Last year the Ulchi Freedom Guardian exercise ran for 11 days and involved 17,500 American forces, including about 3,000 from outside the peninsula, and 50,000 South Korean troops. The exercise includes computer simulations carried out in a large bunker south of the capital, Seoul, intended to check the allies’ readiness to repel aggressions by North Korea. The announcement on Monday seemed to clear the way for routine training between American and South Korean troops that takes place throughout the year, culminating in major war games in the spring and summer. Current and former Pentagon officials and senior military officers have said the United States’ combat readiness would not suffer dramatically by skipping one major war game, but that could shift dramatically if several big exercises were canceled over time. Adm. Harry B. Harris Jr., a former head of the Pentagon’s Pacific Command and the administration’s nominee to be United States ambassador to South Korea, said at his Senate confirmation hearing last week, “We should give exercises, major exercises, a pause to see if Kim Jong-un is in fact serious about his part of the negotiations,” adding, “I’ve spoken in the past about the need to bring Kim Jong-un to his senses and not to his knees.” As of today, the Pentagon still did not have an answer to Trump’s other big complaint: the cost of the war games. Officials said that was still under review. (Eric Schmitt, “Pentagon Suspends a Large-Scale Military Exercise with South Korea,” New York Times, June 19, 2018, p. A-10)
Pompeo: “Q. Not surprisingly, there were also a number of questions related to the recent summit with North Korea. So combining a couple of them, will a follow-up summit be necessary to build on and solidify the results of the recent meetings with North Korea? And what is the perspective of the Russians and the Chinese on the evolving U.S. relationship with North Korea? POMPEO: So let me take the second one first. When I traveled to Beijing after Singapore, spoke with my Russian counterpart this morning at 8:15 Eastern, they are excited that there’s this opportunity. It’s their backyard, after all. To eliminate the proliferation threat, the nuclear threat in North Korea, is something that they have long stated they were desirous for, but there wasn’t a motive force to drive it. So I am sure our interests diverge in certain places there, but the core opportunity to fundamentally reshape how North Korea thinks about itself and its place in the community of nations – both Russia and China are fully on board with our effort. As for whether they’ll need another summit, hard to know. There is a lot of work between here and there. My team is already doing it. I’ll likely travel back before too terribly long. There’s a great deal of work to do. We still have to flesh out all the things that underlay the commitments that were made that day in Singapore. I was there in the room with Chairman Kim. It was the third time I’d met Chairman Kim; twice in Pyongyang and there in Singapore now. He has made very clear his commitment to fully denuclearize his country. That’s everything, right? It’s not just the weapon systems, it’s everything. (Applause.) In return for that, the President has committed to making sure that we alter the armistice agreement, provide the security assurances that Chairman Kim needs. And I don’t know if you’ve had the chance to see the video that President Trump showed Chairman Kim that day in the meeting, but it talks about – it shows what North Korea could be like: beautiful beaches, a wonderful place, successful. There is a lot of work to do to make that, but President Trump is committed to delivering on that part of the bargain as well. And if we can get those two done in a way that matches, we will have reduced a global threat that has bedeviled the United States and the world for decades.” (DoS, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Remarks on America’s Economic Revival, Detroit Economic Forum, June 18, 2018)

South Korea aims to declare an end to the Korean War this year, but will be flexible when it comes to the specific timing and format, Seoul’s top diplomat said. “Declaration of the end to the Korean War is a result we should draw through consultation with the US and North Korea. But the government plans to handle the issue of timing and format flexibly,” Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha said at a press conference. Underscoring the importance of China’s role in building a peace regime on the peninsula, Kang said Seoul is consulting Beijing, too. After talking to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo over the phone, Seoul’s top diplomat also told reporters Pompeo plans to meet with North Korean counterparts in the near future and push for follow-up negotiations on the Singapore summit deal at a speedy pace. During this morning’s phone call, Kang and Pompeo shared the results of inter-Korean military talks and Pompeo’s recent visit to Beijing, as well as Washington’s preparations for the upcoming high-level talks with Pyongyang. The US has yet to take specific measures to establish a hotline with North Korea, Kang quoted Pompeo as saying. With regards to South Korea-US joint military exercises, she said there is no change at all in the allies’ stance that the combined drills are “defensive” and “legitimate” in nature. President Trump’s use of the term “provocative” “could be interpreted as having repeated the term used by Chairman Kim Jong-un as he had just finished his conversation with Kim,” Kang commented. “For us, there is no change at all in our stance that South Korea-US joint military exercises are defensive in nature and legitimate in response to North Korea’s illegal development of nuclear and missile programs and provocations,” she said, adding the decision on whether to halt the joint exercises will be announced soon. Kang also said that denuclearization will clearly involve a verification process and sanctions will remain in place until Pyongyang takes tangible steps to denuclearize. (Ock Hyun-ju, “Seoul to Be ‘Flexible’ on Timing, Format of Declaring End to Korean War,” Korea Herald, June 18, 2018)

South and North Korea agreed to march together and form a unified team for certain sports at the upcoming Asian Games as well as to hold a basketball match in Pyongyang next month, the ministry of culture, sports and tourism said. The agreement came after officials from the two sides met at the Peace House, located on the southern part of the truce village in Panmunjom, to discuss
ways to expand sports exchanges. South and North Korean athletes will march under the unified flag in the opening and closing ceremonies of the Asian Games, set to take place in Jakarta and Palembang, Indonesia, in August. Athletes will also form unified Korean teams for some of the games. The two sides also agreed to hold a friendly basketball match in the North Korean capital on July 4. The idea was proposed by North Korean leader Kim Jong-un when he met with South Korean President Moon Jae-in during the landmark April 27 summit. (Yonhap, “Two Koreas Agree to Partly Form Unified Teams for Asian Games, Hold Basketball Match in Pyongyang,” June 18, 2018)

Only days after South Korea and Washington determined that North Korea was no longer a serious enough threat to justify joint military exercises, Seoul has turned its attention to a different front: Japan. South Korea will begin two days of war games today in which navy, air force, coast guard and marine units will practice defending Dokdo, a collection of tiny islets off its east coast controlled by Seoul but claimed by Tokyo. In exercises to defend against a possible Japanese attack — one that no serious analyst believes is remotely likely — South Korean marines will land on the rocky outcrop, which is home to a lighthouse, police barracks and mobile-phone towers. Such maneuvers have happened regularly in the past. But the decision to conduct exercises just as Seoul and Washington cancel long-running joint military drills against North Korea — which has regularly threatened to turn both Japan and South Korea into a sea of fire — was greeted with dismay. “Japan is the last country on the planet to resort to force to resolve this issue,” one Japanese diplomat said, referring to the islets, called Takeshima by Japan. “In terms of resolving disputes with South Korea, Tokyo has always underlined using diplomacy based on international law.” Bong Youngshik, an expert at Yonsei University, said: “What is the point? The islands are clearly not coveted by any other country.” (Bryan Harris, “After Peace with Pyongyang, Seoul Turns to Saber-Rattling against Japan, Financial Times, June 18, 2018, p. 1)

South Korea said that sanctions against North Korea could be eased once it takes "substantive steps towards denuclearization", seemingly setting the bar lower than Washington for such a move. Amid fears the summit would weaken the international coalition against the North’s nuclear program, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stressed after the meeting that sanctions would remain in place until North Korea’s complete denuclearization. But his South Korean counterpart suggested on Monday they could be eased sooner. "Our stance is that the sanctions must remain in place until North Korea takes meaningful, substantive steps towards denuclearization," Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha told reporters. (AFP, “Seoul Says Sanctions May Be Eased before Full Denuclearization,” June 18, 2018)

Babson: “The dramatic shift in inter-Korean relations now underway provides a strategic opportunity to rethink future economic cooperation between the two Koreas. The nearly blank slate created by the May 24 measures in 2010 following the sinking of the ROK warship Cheonan and the closure of the Kaesong Industrial Complex in 2016 offers a unique opportunity to set new objectives and priorities for both Koreas in shaping their economic future in ways that will serve their longer-term as well as immediate interests. ...the April 2018 summit declaration included agreement “to actively implement the projects previously agreed in the 2007 October 4 Declaration in order to promote balanced growth and co-prosperity of the nation. As a first step, the two sides agreed to adopt practical steps towards the connection and modernization of railways and roads on the eastern transportation corridor as well as between Seoul and Sinuiju for their utilization.” The 2007 Summit Declaration included an agreement to promote investments in natural resources and infrastructure and preferential conditions and benefits for inter-Korean projects. It highlighted the expansion of the Kaesong Industrial Complex; rail, road and cooperative shipbuilding projects; and projects in agriculture, health and medical services, and environmental protection. Beyond these formal statements of intent, an informal private conversation about future inter-Korean economic relations did reportedly occur during the April Moon-Kim Summit, with President Moon conveying a USB stick to Chairman Kim with details of South Korean ideas. Before rushing to reboot inter-Korean economic relations, it is imperative that South Korean policymakers assess the lessons of the Sunshine Policy as well as the dramatic
changes in the context for bilateral economic cooperation that have evolved since 2010 when existing modalities for cooperation began a downward spiral. The hallmark success of the Sunshine Policy was the multi-dimensional character of inter-Korean relations. By simultaneously pursuing advances in economic cooperation in trade and investment, humanitarian assistance provided by both government and civic groups, family reunions, cultural and sports activities, and confidence-building measures between the two militaries, North-South relations evolved beyond the previous one-issue-at-a-time approach. Concrete advances in all of these areas lowered tensions and demonstrated that inter-Korean relations can produce cooperation and mutually beneficial activities. The negative aspects of the Sunshine era were two-fold. One was the over-reliance on a strategy of providing cash for concessions. Whether overt or under-the-table, these gifts reinforced the impression that South Korea was willing to buy or bribe its way to achieve its national objectives. This only served to undermine efforts to help the North Korean leadership adopt more businesslike ways of conducting relations with South Korea and other countries; it also certainly influenced their behavior in seeking rewards for concessions in the Six-Party Talks aimed at reducing North Korea’s nuclear threats, and engendered American frustrations expressed in an unwillingness to “buy the same horse twice.” The second negative aspect of the Sunshine era policies was acceptance of aid and trade arrangements that effectively propped up the status quo in Pyongyang, rather than provide incentives for systemic changes that would be more conducive to the growth of a market economy. Specific examples are: (a) wage payments in US dollars for North Korean workers in the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC); these payments and foreign exchange went to state coffers with no transparent linkage to what the workers actually earned; (b) the use of commissions, which allowed North Korean trading companies to act as intermediaries and permitted payments for services rendered by North Korean production firms to be transferred directly to state coffers; and (c) transfers of fertilizer, rice and other humanitarian assistance on a government-to-government basis that propped up the Public Distribution System rather than expand the role of markets, and allowed rents for those goods to accrue to senior government officials, not to needy North Koreans. Two counterexamples to this pattern of distorting incentives of South Korean economic cooperation were: (a) the decision by Hyundai Asan—when the Mount Kumgang Tourism project appeared to be headed for bankruptcy—to switch from an agreement to pay North Korea a fixed amount per month to an arrangement to share tourist receipts, thereby giving North Korea a stake in the economic success of the project; and (b) the use of Choco Pies to give North Korean workers in the KIC an incentive for performance by allowing them to sell their products in North Korean markets for considerable cash value that is not siphoned off by the government. The primary lessons to be learned from the Sunshine era for future inter-Korean relations are thus to: (a) revert to a robust multi-dimensional relationship where issues needing to be resolved in one area do not necessarily lead to breakdown of cooperative engagement on other areas in the relationship; and (b) establish economic relations based on good business practices that will help the North Korean economy develop in appropriate ways for eventually participating in the international economic system, and longer-term integration with the South Korean economy based on market principles. This means more emphasis on trade and investment at the enterprise-level rather than government-to-government aid, and practices which support the development of North Korean enterprises to be successful in rules-based and transparent market-based activities, both domestically and in inter-Korean and international economic cooperation. Under Kim Jong Un, the North Korean economic system has been evolving rapidly and economic development has been given equally high priority with the nuclear and missile programs under the byungjin policy, formally adopted at the 7th Party Congress in 2016. Kim Jong Un has tethered the legitimacy of his leadership to delivering on his promises to improve the livelihoods of all North Koreans, not just the elite. This provides new openings for building future inter-Korean economic relations that should be explored in order to secure commitments to priorities and specific modalities of cooperation that resonate with North Korean, as well as South Korean goals, and thus provide a firmer foundation for sustained cooperation with mutual benefits. Kim Jong Un’s tolerance for the expanding marketization of the economy and growing role of successful private entrepreneurs, together with the adoption of a new five-year economic development strategy under the guidance of the Cabinet, provide a very different context for shaping future economic engagement with South Korea than existed under the Sunshine era. Estimates of the size of the North Korean market economy are that there are about 450 officially licensed markets and 750 unlicensed
markets, and market activity now accounts for about 30% of the North Korean GDP. A large majority of the population derives most of their income from market activity. Many state enterprises participate in the market economy by providing legal cover to private enterprises for a price, sourcing inputs to their own production from the market, and/or selling part of their production over the state quota to the market directly. The regime has also allowed local officials and state enterprises to enter into economic deals with private entrepreneurs. Such practices include contracting a state-owned business to be managed privately, use of state factory buildings for private production activities, and lease of locally owned agriculture land for housing development. Thus, the boundaries between the state-managed economic system and market economy are becoming increasingly blurred. China’s economic engagement with North Korea is a major factor that has reinforced these developments and is one reason China may be reluctant to enforce economic sanctions tightly. These dynamics of economic systemic change raise important questions for future South Korean economic engagement strategy—in particular, whether and how it can be designed to reinforce the marketization of the North Korean economic system, encourage policy reforms and institution-building to support a growing mixed economy, and provide direct benefits to the North Korean people. Laws that have been adopted for North Korean Special Enterprise Zones (SEZs) are also very different from the agreements governing the operations of the KIC and are based on efforts to learn lessons from the experience of other countries use of SEZs to promote their economic development. Among other features, these include rights to set salaries and pay workers directly, opportunities to form joint ventures, access to financial and other services for investors, and legal protections against various risks. This also raises an important question for a future South Korean strategy of reopening the KIC and Mount Kumgang. If North Korea has accepted commercial and not politically-driven rules used in other SEZ’s (including potential South Korean participation in these other zones), should South Korea press for adopting similar rules in restructured agreements for KIC and Mount Kumgang? Specifically, issues worth exploring are allowing or promoting direct payment to employees; direct joint ventures between South and North Korean enterprises; sourcing of inputs for production from North Korean suppliers in addition to South Korean suppliers; backward linkages to small and medium-sized North Korean enterprises and markets; and use of banking institutions for settlements. ...One impact of sanctions has been to give North Korea greater incentives to seek cash transactions and non-transparent trade-using front companies willing to act as intermediaries with third parties. Given past experience, cash for concessions in inter-Korean relations should not be resumed in this environment. South Korean enterprises will need to be transparent with the South Korean government as to their business dealings with North Korean enterprises in order to avoid the challenges now facing the Chinese government in reignining in front companies profiting from North Korea’s need to earn foreign exchange in non-transparent ways. On the other hand, sanctions are also creating incentives for both state and non-state North Korean actors to seek non-sanctioned economic activities to earn foreign exchange and to increase efficiency in domestic production and value-added in exports. This may provide new opportunities for collaboration in KIC, rebuilding processing-on-commission trade, and the design of other inter-Korean economic ventures.” (Bradley Babson, “Rebooting Inter-Korean Economic Relations: A Challenging Road Ahead,” 38North, June 18, 2018)

North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-un, arrived in Beijing amid an escalating trade conflict between China and the United States, one that gives him an opening to play the powers against each other as Washington presses him to dismantle his nuclear arsenal. “This could be regarded as an intuitive response to Trump’s escalation of the trade war,” Shi Yinhong, a professor of international relations at Renmin University in Beijing, said of China’s invitation to Kim. His two-day trip was announced by Xinhua as Kim was arriving this morning; his previous two stops in China were not made public until after they were over. This time, Kim arrived much as any other foreign leader might, landing at Beijing’s international airport and taking a stretch limousine to the city center. Xinhua’s report gave no details of the agenda for Kim’s visit. Andrei Lankov, a Russian expert on North Korea who has lived in the North and still has ties there, said Kim would be seeking to take advantage of the trade conflict between the United States and China, “He wants to further disrupt the united China-U.S. front, which somewhat surprisingly emerged last year, but now is in critical condition due to the trade war.” Kim is turning out to be a “very good diplomat,”
Xinhua: “Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and Chinese president, held talks with Kim Jong Un, chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) and chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), in Beijing on Tuesday [June19]. The two leaders had a candid and in-depth exchange of views on the current development of China-DPRK relations and the situation on the Korean Peninsula. They agreed to safeguard, consolidate and develop China-DPRK relations, and jointly push forward the sound momentum of peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula to make a positive contribution to safeguarding world and regional peace, stability, prosperity and development. Xi said that China was pleased to see the important summit between Comrade Chairman and U.S. President Donald Trump in Singapore achieve principled consensus and positive results in realizing the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and establishing a lasting peace mechanism on the Peninsula. "China speaks highly of the summit," Xi said.

Comrade Chairman's visit to China showed the great importance he attaches to the strategic communication between the two parties and two countries, Xi said, expressing his appreciation to Kim. Xi stressed that he and Kim had met three times in less than three months, which pointed out the direction for the development of the relations between the two parties and the two countries, and opened a new chapter in the development of China-DPRK relations. "The CPC and the Chinese government attach great importance to China-DPRK friendly cooperative ties," Xi said. "No matter how the international and regional situations change, the firm stance of the CPC and the Chinese government on consolidating and developing the relations with the DPRK remains unchanged, the Chinese people's friendship with the DPRK people remains unchanged, and China's support for the socialist DPRK remains unchanged," he said. Xi voiced his willingness to work with Kim to continue implementing the important consensus reached by both sides, and promoting the long-term development of China-DPRK relations in a healthy and stable way, to benefit the two countries and the two peoples. This year marks the 40th
anniversary of China's reform and opening-up policy. Xi said that since the reform and opening-up, the Chinese people have been courageous to carry out self-reform and innovation, on the basis of the national conditions and having the whole world in view, and have explored a development path suitable for China's national conditions. "We are happy to see that the DPRK made a major decision to shift the focus to economic construction, and the development of the DPRK's socialist cause has entered a new stage in history," Xi said, adding that China supports the DPRK's economic development, the improvement of people's livelihood, and its development path that accords with its national conditions. Kim said he was very happy to meet with General Secretary Xi Jinping in a short period of time. He stressed China is DPRK's great friendly neighbor, and Comrade General Secretary Xi Jinping is a great leader who is greatly respected and trusted by the DPRK people. Kim said he appreciated the sincere friendship of and valuable support from Comrade General Secretary Xi Jinping and the CPC, the Chinese government, and the Chinese people, to himself, the WPK, the DPRK government, and the DPRK people. "I will guide all WPK members and the DPRK people to earnestly implement the important consensus reached by Comrade General Secretary and me, to lift the unbreakable DPRK-China relations to a new level," Kim said. Xi said for a period of time, with joint efforts of parties concerned, the Korean Peninsula issue had been put back on the right track of seeking settlement through dialogue and consultation, and the situation on the Peninsula was developing towards peace and stability. "Comrade Chairman has made positive efforts for realizing denuclearization and maintaining peace on the Peninsula," Xi said. On the recent DPRK-U.S. summit, Xi said it marked an important step forward in the political settlement of the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue. He called on the two sides to implement the outcomes of the summit, and parties concerned to make concerted efforts to advance the peace process. China will continue to play a constructive role to this end, Xi said. Kim said the DPRK-U.S. summit had achieved positive results in line with the interests of concerned parties and the expectations of the international community. "If the two sides can implement the consensus of the summit step by step solidly, the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula will open up a new and important prospect," Kim said. He said the DPRK greatly appreciated China's important role in promoting denuclearization of the Peninsula as well as in maintaining peace and stability on the Peninsula. "The DPRK side hopes to work with China and other concerned parties to promote the establishment of a lasting and solid peace mechanism on the Korean Peninsula, and make joint efforts to achieve lasting peace on the Peninsula," Kim said. Before the talks, Xi held a welcome ceremony for Kim at the North Hall of the Great Hall of the People. After the talks, Xi and his wife Peng Liyuan held a welcome banquet for Kim and his wife Ri Sol Ju, and watched an art performance together. Related activities were also attended by Li Keqiang, Chinese premier and member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee; Wang Huning, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and member of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee; Chinese Vice President Wang Qishan; Ding Xuexiang, member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, member of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee and director of the General Office of the CPC Central Committee; Yang Jiechi, member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee; Guo Shengkun, member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, member of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee and head of the Commission for Political and Legal Affairs of the CPC Central Committee; Huang Kunming, member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, member of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee and head of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee; Cai Qi, member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and secretary of the CPC Beijing Municipal Committee; and State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi. Choe Ryong Hae, vice-chairman of the WPK Central Committee; Pak Pong Ju, DPRK premier; Ri Su Yong, vice-chairman of the WPK Central Committee and director of the International Department; Kim Yong Chol, vice-chairman of the WPK Central Committee and director of the United Front Department; Pak Thae Song, vice-chairman of the WPK Central Committee and Minister for Science and Education; No Kwang-chol, Minister of People's Armed Forces; and Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho, attended related activities." (Xinhua, "Xi Jinping, Kim Jong Un Hold Talks in Beijing," June 20, 2018)
A key U.S. official involved in denuclearization talks with North Korea is leaving the White House just as the Trump administration prepares to engage in high-stakes negotiations with the isolated regime, the official confirmed to The Washington Post. The departure of Andrea Hall, the National Security Council’s top staff official on weapons of mass destruction, comes as the Trump administration assembles a negotiating team capable of the intricate task of understanding and negotiating over North Korea’s elaborate array of nuclear weapons production facilities, warheads and missiles to deliver them. Until last week, Hall led an interagency task force for denuclearizing North Korea that included members of the State Department, Pacific Command, the National Nuclear Security Administration and other agencies. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo specifically mentioned her job when he criticized a New York Times report last week that noted the paucity of nuclear physicists advising the president on North Korea. “On the ground in Singapore, we have a team that includes the president’s senior most expert in weapons of mass destruction who can cover any technical needs that the meetings may present,” Pompeo said. “Any suggestion that the United States somehow lacks the technical expertise across government or lacks it on the ground here in Singapore is mistaken.” Others expressed concern Hall’s departure as coordinator of a large team spread across numerous agencies and still being assembled might complicate the effort. “The loss of Andrea Hall — a known and respected expert on weapons of mass destruction — is a big loss for the NSC,” said Harry Kazianis, an Asia expert at the Center for the National Interest. “The departure could not come at a worse time.” Hall was detailed to the NSC in June 2016 under the Obama administration after serving in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence as a senior adviser on WMD and proliferation issues from 2014 to 2016. In a statement to The Post, Hall said “it truly has been a privilege to work for the Administration alongside so many amazing colleagues at the National Security Council.” Her acting replacement, already on the job, is Maj. Gen. Julie A. Bentz, the administration official said. Bentz has a doctorate in nuclear engineering and has spent three previous stints on the NSC staff dealing with nuclear policy. Most recently, she was vice director of the military’s Defense Threat Reduction Agency. It was unclear why Bentz was appointed only in an acting capacity. (John Hudson and Karen DeYoung, “Key Nuclear Expert Departs White House as North Korea Negotiations Loom,” Washington Post, June 21, 2018, p. A10)

Japan is offering to assist in the denuclearization of North Korea by providing the technical expertise acquired from dealing with nuclear accidents, such as working in environments with high radiation levels. Several government sources said Foreign Minister Taro Kono brought up the
possibility of Japan providing nuclear energy technological know-how during a June 14 meeting in Seoul with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha. Kono told his U.S. and South Korean counterparts that Japan was prepared to cooperate for the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of North Korea’s nuclear weapons program. For Japan to be actively involved in the denuclearization process for North Korea, the government is considering not only shouldering part of the financial burden for nuclear inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency, but also technological assistance. Specifically, the experience from dealing with the 1999 criticality accident at an uranium reprocessing facility in Tokai, Ibaraki Prefecture, and the 2011 Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant accident would be applied to the dismantling of North Korea’s nuclear facilities. On June 20, high-ranking Foreign Ministry officials met in Tokyo with Christopher Ford, U.S. assistant secretary for international security and nonproliferation, and discussed the specific areas of potential technological cooperation by Japan. Coordination is now taking place to schedule an early July meeting in Vienna between Kono and Yukiya Amano, the IAEA director-general, to further discuss the specific measures Japan could provide in technological cooperation. “Work, such as the dismantling of nuclear facilities, will be carried out in environments of high radiation levels,” a high-ranking Foreign Ministry official said. Japan is considering dispatching engineers as well as providing accumulated knowledge and technology for decommissioning nuclear reactors as well as dealing with accidents at nuclear facilities. “Japan’s knowledge could be put to good use because the United States does not have much experience in dealing with accidents at nuclear facilities,” a government source said. It remains to be seen if North Korea would be willing to accept Japanese nuclear engineers, which will be another topic for discussion with U.S. officials. (Kiyomiya Ryo and Kihara Tamiyuki, “Japan Offering Nuke Expertise to N. Korea to Help Denuclearize,” Asahi Shimbun, June 26, 2018)

Chung In-bum: “Following the 12 June 2018 United States-North Korea summit, U.S. President Donald J. Trump announced that the semiannual “war games” – taken to mean certain combined/joint exercises including Foal Eagle – with South Korea would end, describing them as “inappropriate, expensive” and “provocative.” On 19 June, ROK and the U.S. confirmed that UFG 2018 would be suspended as long as negotiations on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula continued. Only time will tell if President Trump’s decision to willingly give up the “War Games” was a stroke of genius or a big mistake. As of writing, it is a huge concession by the U.S., for which we still await a similar act of good faith by North Korea. Ulchi-Freedom Guardian is the world’s largest computer-generated Command Post Exercise (CPX), involving nearly all ROK command centers from all four services alongside with the entire apparatus of the U.S. military organization in Korea. UFG’s purpose is to deter and, if deterrence fails, defend South Korea from an invasion by the North. UFG was first conducted in 1976 and takes place annually in August or, at the latest, early September. Before 2015, Ulchi-Freedom Guardian was referred to as the Ulchi-Focus Lens exercise. Ulchi-Focus Lens, in turn, was a combination of two exercises “Focus Lens” and the “Ulchi exercise.” Focus Lens was a UN Command exercise that existed from the 1960s. The Ulchi exercise was created to prepare the ROK government for contingencies on the Korean peninsula including war and was started from 1968 with the attempted assassination and armed assault by North Korean commandos. In 1976, it was decided to combine the Focus Lens military exercise and the ROK government civilian exercise. Its name was changed in 2008 to its current incarnation: Ulchi-Freedom Guardian. Another theater-level exercise is the Key Resolve drill. Key Resolve, which was previously known as Team Spirit, is another annual computer-generated command post exercise held by United States Forces Korea with the Republic of Korea Armed Forces. Typically taking place between February and April, it focuses on Reception, Staging, Onward Movement and Integration (RSOI) supporting South Korea’s defense. RSOI is the deployment of forces from outside the Korean peninsula that allows those forces to be used to conduct operations. U.S. units are brought to Korea from other countries, and they conduct maneuvers and training. ROK units are also involved. In 2001, Key Resolve was combined with the annual combined field training exercise (FTX) Foal Eagle. Foal Eagle is a combined field training exercise (FTX) conducted annually by the Republic of Korea Armed Forces and the United States Armed Forces. Foal Eagle is different from UFG and KR in that it involves actual combat troops and their equipment. It is one of the largest military exercises conducted annually in
the world. Foal Eagle is an exercise conducted by the U.S. and ROK armed forces, consisting of rear area security and stability operations, onward movement of critical assets to the forward area, special operations, ground maneuver, amphibious operations, combat air operations, maritime action group operations and counter special operations forces exercises. These exercises involve more than one nation and more than one service (army, navy, air force etc.) and are conducted on large maps and/ or screens. The purpose of these CPXs is to practice coordination between organizations and countries, execute, maintain and improve procedures for the conduct of operations, evaluate and improve planning and supporting systems. Although, often referred to as “War games,” it is an oversimplification of this critical part of a larger military structure/ process; Plan-Prepare (Equip)-Practice (Train and Exercise)-Improve Plan (Restart cycle). The United Nations Command informs the Korean People’s Army (KPA) that South Korea and the United States will be conducting the exercise, and reassures them that these exercises, conducted annually, are purely defensive in nature and have no connection to ongoing or current events. The Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission monitors the exercise for violations of the Korean Armistice Agreement. The suspension will not immediately have an impact on readiness, especially with smaller and more routine training and drills continuing on a daily basis and the probable training events that will be created to offset the lost opportunity. The next CPX is in March/April of 2019, and if negotiations do not proceed as expected, then the exercise will restart. In the meantime, communications checks and the occupation of wartime command post are a relatively easy and non-threatening training event that will cover a large part of the training requirement. These communication exercises (COMMEX) are an effective and efficient way to train technicians and the working staff. The real challenge is in the training opportunity for the commanders and their supporting staff during the CPX and the physical training opportunity that is provided during the Foal Eagle FTX exercise. For the commanders and staff, developing a neutral training script will be required that will also engage as many relevant U.S. units as possible. Another issue is the ROK government exercise “Ulchi Exercise,” a mobilization training exercise that not only supports military operations but is a useful tool for natural disasters and other contingencies. Seoul announced this week that it will also be canceling this component of the drill. Finally, both in the U.S. and ROK military organizations, a significant number of people change job positions on a regular basis. The suspension of just one exercise will deprive these new people of the opportunity to learn their job. Developing a realistic and a large enough scale exercise will be critical to resolving this challenge. President Trump’s announcement that he would end the “war games” was totally unexpected. CNN reports that 52% of the U.S. public support the results of the summit while 40% support the decision to suspend the exercises and 48% oppose the decision. In retrospect, the decision to suspend the exercises might have caught the North Koreans off guard as well. So now that the U.S. has made a significant concession, what should North Korea do? Allowing inspections will be a start but would take time. The immediate surrendering of a significant number of North Korean nuclear warheads for transport to the U.S. or a third country and/ or the public destruction of the same number of transporter erector launchers (TEL) for the DPRK’s missiles would be a great show of faith. The worst thing that could happen to the Korean peninsula is for the U.S. and President Trump to feel betrayed or fooled by North Korea. The fact that Kim Jong Un is visiting China could be a balancing strategy that does not really fit well with confidence-building with the United States. In the end, the most important issue is the impact on the readiness of the U.S. forces and ROK military forces. It is uncertain when the window for North Korea’s good faith action will close, but this window will not be open for long. In the next ten months until KR/FE, Pyongyang must show an act of good faith that meets the expectations of the United States and President Trump. For this period, ROK and especially U.S. military leaders will be certain to ensure there are options to maintain readiness. It appears that high-quality military advice is being provided to the civilian leadership but in the end, this is a political decision that will weigh the risks and benefits of a deal.” In his capacity as a Lieutenant colonel and, later, a full Colonel in the South Korean army, Chun In-bum designed/managed and controlled the Ulchi Focus Lens Exercise for three years from 1997 to 1999. As a general in the ROK JCS staff and the ROKUS Combined Forces Command staff he participated in more than a dozen “War games.” As the Special Forces commander and Deputy Commander for First ROK Army, he participated in numerous more such
South Korea’s President Moon Jae-in pledged to enhance trilateral cooperation between the two Koreas and Russia, expressing hopes that the Trans-Siberian Railway will link to the southern tip of South Korea. During his speech at the Russian parliament in Moscow, Moon said if the two Koreas replace the current armistice agreement with a peace treaty, the Northeast Asia region will be able to establish its own “collective security system.” “I have always hoped for permanent peace and common prosperity on the Korean Peninsula and Eurasia. I’m hoping the Russian lawmakers will join that journey,” Moon said in a special speech delivered at Russia’s State Duma, the lower house of the Russian parliament. “Through permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula, I’m hoping that the Trans-Siberian Railway will extend all the way to the southern port city of Busan, where I grow up. I hope you join our efforts to open up new possibilities and common prosperity on the Korean Peninsula.” The president stressed that trilateral cooperation on the railway, energy and electricity between the two Koreas and Russia will pave the way for establishing an economic community in Northeast Asia. Moon arrived in Moscow earlier Thursday on a three-day state visit that includes a bilateral summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin. He is the first South Korean president to have addressed the State Duma, according to Cheong Wa Dae. (Yeo Jun-suk, “Moon Vows to Enhance Trilateral Economic Cooperation with North Korea and Russia,” Korea Herald, June 21, 2018) He said inter-Korean economic cooperation, which will become active once a peace regime is established, should involve a partnership with Russia. "As to the three-way economic cooperation, initial discussions have already been made over joint studies on railway, gas pipeline and electricity grid networks connections. Cooperation in these sectors will help establish strong grounds for an economic community in Northeast Asia. Peace between the two Koreas will also develop into multinational cooperation for peace and security in the region." He said the Trans-Siberian Railway has become a symbol and basis for a Eurasian community. "I hope permanent peace will be established on the peninsula so the railway can be extended (through North Korea) to Busan, the southern end of the peninsula where I grew up." Moon said Putin's New Eastern Policy to develop Russia's Far East combines the strengths of the East and the West to achieve the co-prosperity of Eurasia. "The Korean people also want peace and the co-prosperity of all Northeast Asia beyond the peninsula. My New Northern Policy, which I announced at last year's Eastern Economic Forum, was the corresponding dream of the Korean people who support the New Eastern Policy," he said. (Kim Rahn, “Russia Important Partner in Security, Economic Development,” Korea Times, June 21, 2018)

Trump: “So with that, I'll end by saying we had a tremendous success in North Korea. We continue to work on that. Mike Pompeo has been fantastic. John Bolton, working together with Mike, has been fantastic. I don't even know where -- there he is. I thought he might have gone back to North Korea. (Laughter.) He spent so much time in North Korea. Surprised to see you here. But I think I can speak for both of us in saying it's been an incredible experience. The relationship is very good. They've stopped the sending of missiles, including ballistic missiles. They're destroying their engine site. They're blowing it up. They've already blown up one of their big test sites. In fact, it was actually four of their big test sites. And the big thing is, it will be a total denuclearization, which is already starting taking place. And I understand, Mike, that they've already sent back, or are in the process of sending back, the remains of our great heroes who died in North Korea during the war. And that's already in the process of coming back. Plus, as you all know very well, we got back our hostages -- our three hostages, who are right now living very happily with their families, and we're very happy about that. So we've made tremendous progress with respect to North Korea, even since I last spoke to you. What we agreed to do is have a meeting. I know that some of the media says, "Oh, they agreed to meet." Well, yeah, anybody would have agreed to meet, and it would not have been possible for past administrations to have met in the way that we've met. This was an incredible, important meeting. All over Asia, they're in love with the United States because of what we've done. And Japan, I spoke to Prime Minister Abe, and he was so thrilled. He doesn't have rockets going over Japan. That makes him very
happy, General. You know that, right? He's very thrilled not to see rockets going over Japan. There were plenty of them sent right over Japan, and he said, I want to thank you because what you've done is incredible. There are no more rockets going, and there's no thought of it. Now, things can change. I said it last night at a speech. Things can change. Personalities can change. Maybe you end up with conflict, maybe you don't. But the relationship that Mike has and I have with Chairman Kim and his group is a very good one, very strong one. And I think it's going to lead to tremendous success. But the document we signed, if people actually read it to the public, you'd see: Number one statement, we will immediately begin total denuclearization of North Korea. Nobody thought that would be possible. If you remember, a year and a half ago when Mike and I came into office and when this group came into office, everybody was talking about there's going to be a war -- going to be a war with North Korea. During the Obama years, that's all I heard about: War with North Korea. You have 28 million people, 30 miles away from the border where they have thousands of massive -- they call them "cannons." And that's what they are. They're bigger than howitzers. And they're all aimed at Seoul. Seoul has 28 million people. And it would be not a catastrophe of 100,000 people or 200,000, like I'd read from you. This was a -- this could have been a catastrophe of 30-, 40-, 50 million people. And I think we're very close to having that situation solved. We've had some very good news, even over the last couple of days. They want to get it done. We want to get it done. And we're moving quickly. So North Korea has been an incredible experience for me, and I -- we're going to help them also get back on track. We think that it has tremendous potential. Chairman Kim thinks it has tremendous potential. I want to also thank, as you know, Prime Minister Abe. I want to thank President Moon from South Korea. He's been terrific. He's been really moving it along and pushing as hard as they can. But without the United States, it had no chance whatsoever. I also wanted to thank President Xi of China because the border was very strong during a very critical period. Unfortunately, the border is getting a little bit weaker now, but that's okay. That's okay. But we have to get him to keep it tough. But I do want to thank President Xi of China.”” (White House Office of the Press, Remarks by President Trump at a Cabinet Meeting, June 21, 2018)

6/22/18

The two Koreas agreed at Red Cross talks to hold the long-stalled reunion of the Korean War-separated families next month. The event will be held August 20-26 at Mt. Kumgang, with 100 families attending from each side, according to officials. The talks kicked-off around 10 a.m. at a hotel on the North’s scenic eastern slopes of Kumgangsan, according to the Ministry of Unification. South Korea’s four-member delegation was led by Park Kyung-seo, head of the Korean Red Cross. The North sent a three-member delegation headed by Pak Yong-il, vice chairman of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country. The morning session of the meeting, attended by all delegates, lasted 45 minutes, according to pool reports. It was soon followed by an hour-long private meeting between the head delegates. More sessions were scheduled throughout the afternoon. Ahead of the meeting, Seoul reiterated that resolving issues surrounding the reunion of separated families would be a top agenda item. It has been calling for a swift resumption of the meeting, citing the old age of the family members. Government data showed that the registered number of South Koreans seeking to meet their loved ones in the North totaled 132,124 as of end-May, among whom only about 57,000 remain alive. Some 86 percent of them are in their 70s or older. Confirming the whereabouts of the separated families in North Korea was a key issue that was expected to be raised at the meeting. According to a survey conducted by the Unification Ministry in 2016, 74.4 percent of separated families were unaware of the whereabouts of their family members in the North. However, skeptics cast doubt on whether the two Koreas will able to draw up a sustainable system for the separated family members. “It will be difficult for the North to locate the family members, who are now very old or deceased, with their current system and lack of technology,” said Koh Yu-hwan, a professor of North Korean studies at Dongguk University. Koh added that it was known that North Korea fed malnourished members of the separated families to make them look more “presentable” at the reunions. Sensitive issues, such as the mass defection of 12 female restaurant workers to South Korea from China in 2016, were expected to be addressed as well. The North claims the women were kidnapped by South Korean officials, while the South maintains that they all defected of their own volition. Controversy flared up anew as a local TV network recently aired an interview with a male manager for the workers, who said that he coerced the other employees to come with him to
the South at the instruction of Seoul’s spy agency. Reinstating stalled humanitarian assistance was also expected to be raised at the talks. Last year, Seoul announced a North Korean humanitarian assistance project worth $8 million, but the plan has floundered amid escalating tensions caused by the North’s nuclear and missile provocations. The issue of the six South Korean citizens detained in North Korea, however, is unlikely to be discussed this time as South Korea’s chief delegate Park earlier said that he had no such plan out of concern that such a sensitive matter could derail efforts to make headway on broader objectives. (Jung Min-kyung and Joint Press Corps, “Koreas to Hold Family Reunion on Aug. 20-26 at Mt. Kumgang: Red Cross Talks,” Korea Herald, June 22, 2018)

The U.S. and South Korea agreed to indefinitely suspend two exchange program training exercises, to support diplomatic negotiations with North Korea, the Pentagon said. The move came after the two countries had previously announced the shelving of the large-scale Ulchi Freedom Guardian exercises slated for August, making good on a pledge by Trump during his summit. The decision followed a meeting between Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joe Dunford, and National Security Advisor John Bolton. "To support implementing the outcomes of the Singapore Summit, and in coordination with our Republic of Korea ally, Secretary Mattis has indefinitely suspended select exercises," Pentagon spokeswoman Dana White said in a statement. Two Korean Marine Exchange Program training exercises scheduled to occur in the next three months have now been shelved. After flying back to Washington last week, boasting of success, the US leader tweeted: "There is no longer a Nuclear Threat from North Korea." "Sleep well tonight!" he added on June 13, a day after the Singapore meeting. But a presidential declaration sent to Congress today struck a different note as it explained why the administration would keep in place tough economic restrictions first imposed by former president George W. Bush. "The existence and risk of proliferation of weapons-usable fissile material on the Korean Peninsula and the actions and policies of the Government of North Korea continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States," it said. "I am continuing for one year the national emergency with respect to North Korea," added the statement. (Issam Ahmed, “Despite Summit, N. Korea Still a Threat, Trump Says,” AFP, June 22, 2018)

Pompeo: “...Q: Interesting. Let me ask about President Xi. What is his role vis-a-vis Chairman Un and the deal? Does he have a veto over what North Korea is doing with you in your conversations? POMPEO: The conversations between the United States and North Korea have been bilateral talks, just the two of us. We are working to strike a deal, a deal that Chairman Kim has signed up for, where there will be a bargain where he will fully denuclearize, he will permit us to verify that complete denuclearization, and in exchange for that we’ll provide security assurances. You know the story well. For decades the North Korean leadership – Chairman Kim, his father and grandfather alike – believed the nuclear program was their security out; it provided them with regime stability and security. And we’ve now flipped that narrative. I believe we have convinced him that that nuclear program, in fact, presents a threat to him and that giving up that program is the path towards a brighter future for the North Korean people. Q: What is he like, Mr. Secretary, when the cameras aren’t on and the door is closed? When you first went to Pyongyang, what was – what – does he have a sense of humor? Did he joke with you? POMPEO: Yeah, he does have a sense of humor. He’s conversant in things Western, so he’s paying close attention to what takes place. I’m confident he’ll be watching this show. He’s watching things that Americans are saying. He’s looking to determine if, in fact, America is serious about this. If he does this, if he takes this step and reorients, sets a new strategic direction for North Korea where they focus on the economy and their people as opposed to their war-making machine – if you make it that strategic change, does he have a reliable partner in America who will behave the way that President Trump committed that we would when they met in Singapore? So he’s bright. He knows the file. He knows the topic very, very well. He’s not turning to others for guidance. It is Chairman Kim who was clearly articulating what you heard him say when he was in Singapore, that he is prepared to fully denuclearize. Q: Secretary Pompeo, when you sit down with someone like Chairman Kim or President Xi, you’re sitting down with people who have
human rights records which are awful. But FDR sat down with Stalin, and Nixon with Mao, and President Reagan with Gorbachev. What’s in your mind when you’re going through with someone who you know the body count is high but with whom we have to deal? POMPEO: Yeah, we know the histories. This administration has been very clear about defending human rights. Everywhere we go we talk about it, when we meet with countries that aren’t complying with human rights in the way we would want, that aren’t consistent with our value sets. We’ve done that with Chairman Kim. I know the President has spoken about that with Xi as well. But you have to remember those human rights challenges existed long before this administration came in, when our policies with respect to those countries were very different; that is, previous efforts to improve on those human rights conditions had failed. We are confident that the biggest threat to the United States, Chairman Kim’s nuclear program, is the place we need to begin. And if we are successful, if we can get the outcome we hope to have, we think we create a greater probability that human rights conditions not only in North Korea but around the world may well improve. Q: Are there signed protocols to the Singapore summit communiqué that we don’t know about? POMPEO: I just don’t want to get into the details of the negotiations that took place before, in Singapore, and have continued since then. I think it is fair to say that there are a number of things, a number of principles that have been agreed to, that I think both parties understand, red lines, things that we – neither country is prepared to go past that give us an opportunity to believe that we really might, for the first time – this is not the first rodeo negotiating with North Korea – that perhaps this time is different. We know, too, we could be wrong, and the President has said this very clearly. If this isn’t – if it’s the case that Chairman Kim either is unable to or unprepared to denuclearize, sanctions will remain in place, the enforcement of those sanctions will continue, and we’ll be back hard at it if the negotiations prove to be either not in good faith or unproductive.” (DoS, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Interview with Hugh Hewitt of MSNBC, Treaty Room, June 22, 2018)

Sigal: “It was a riveting moment. Two enemies talking for a change. The Singapore summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and Chairman Kim Jong Un of North Korea raised the prospect not only of a Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons but also of a strategic realignment in Northeast Asia. In Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s words, it could lead to “a fundamentally different strategic relationship between our two countries.” Unlike previous U.S.-North Korea agreements, the leaders themselves signed a joint statement this time committing Pyongyang to “complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” without spelling out specifics. They pledged to “establish new U.S.-DPRK relations” and “build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.” The details that have not yet been agreed will be ironed out at follow-on negotiations to commence at the “earliest possible moment” and at a second summit meeting in Washington or Pyongyang. South Korean President Moon Jae-in deserves praise for bringing Trump and Kim together to exchange vows. Onlookers wondered whether hope would triumph over experience in this arranged marriage, the third try for North Korean rapprochement with the U.S. To understand why this third marriage may last where others have failed, it is essential to understand what the North Korean leader was up to. Contrary to speculation about the end of the alliance with South Korea, the abandonment of the nuclear umbrella, the withdrawal of U.S. forces, a Marshall plan, or even written security assurances, what Kim really wants is an end to U.S. enmity. That has been the Kims’ aim for 30 years. Throughout the Cold War, Kim Jong Un’s grandfather, Kim Il Sung, had played China off against the Soviet Union to maintain his freedom to maneuver. In 1988, in anticipation of the Soviet Union’s collapse, he reached out to reconcile with the US, South Korea and Japan in order to avoid over-dependence on China. North Korea’s need has become greater as China’s power has grown. From Pyongyang’s vantage point, that aim was the basis of the 1994 Agreed Framework that committed Washington to “move toward full normalization of political and economic relations,” or, in plain English, to end enmity. It was also the essence of the September 2005 Six-Party Joint Statement, which bound Washington and Pyongyang to “respect each other’s sovereignty, exist peacefully together, and take steps to normalize their relations subject to their respective bilateral policies,” as well as to “negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.” For Washington, the point of these agreements was the abandonment of Pyongyang’s nuclear and missile programs. Both agreements collapsed, however, when Washington did little to implement its commitment to
reconcile and Pyongyang reneged on denuclearization. What better way for Trump to indicate a readiness to reconcile than to sit down with Kim and say, as Trump has, that he is prepared to negotiate an end to the Korean War and to normalize relations — something his predecessors never did — as well as to suspend joint major military exercises with South Korea? Nor was Trump’s willing engagement as impulsive as critics would have it. During the 2016 campaign, candidate Trump repeatedly talked about negotiating with North Korea, a signal not missed in Pyongyang. Within days of his inauguration, Trump signed off on delivery of a token amount of flood relief, the first humanitarian aid to North Korea in five years. In February 2017, he authorized an invitation for Choe Son Hui, director-general of the American division in the North Korea Foreign Ministry, to meet in New York with Joseph Yun, the US ambassador in charge of negotiating with North Korea — only to cancel the meeting over the assassination of Kim’s half-brother in Kuala Lumpur. Yet within weeks, Yun began talks via the “New York channel” and later met Choe in Oslo and Pyongyang. That fall, Yun was authorized to drop preconditions for negotiations. Intelligence channels were also activated. Kim has also long signaled his interest in negotiating. Even his byungjin strategic line, promulgated on May 31, 2013, had a key condition implying that it could stop testing nuclear weapons and missiles and generating fissile material. It spoke of “carrying out economic construction and building nuclear armed forces simultaneously under the prevailing situation,” or, as North Korean diplomats explained it, as long as the “hostile policy” persists. In its decision of May 8, 2016, the Seventh Korean Workers’ Party Congress characterized byungjin as “simultaneously pushing forward economic construction and the building of a nuclear force and boosting a self-defensive nuclear force both in quality and quantity as long as the imperialists persist in their nuclear threat and arbitrary practices.” The conditionality of byungjin implies that North Korea might eventually limit its missile and nuclear weapons production. A statement of June 16, 2013, by the National Defense Commission called for “high-level talks between the DPRK and the US authorities to ... establish peace and security in the region.” That statement also showed a willingness to accommodate the key US demand: “The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is the behest of our leader” and “must be carried out ... without fail.” In informal contacts, North Korean officials underscored their leader’s wishes and asked for help in arranging high-level talks with South Korea. On July 6, 2016, even as its nuclear and missile testing continued, a North Korean government spokesman issued a statement characterizing denuclearization as sanctified by Kim’s father and grandfather: “The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is [at] the behest of the Great Leader [Kim Il Sung] and the Fatherly General [Kim Jong Il] and the steadfast will of our party, army and people.” Kim kept hinting at a stopping point for tests. In “guiding” the launch of the Hwasong-12 intermediate-range missile on Sept. 16, 2017, Kim said: “We should clearly show the great-power chauvinists how our state attained the goal of completing its nuclear force despite their limitless sanctions and blockade,” underlining the need to finalize the work with “the mobilization of all state efforts as it nearly reached the terminal.” That statement raised the possibility of suspending tests once the terminal was reached. After the second successful test-launch of the Hwasong-14 ICBM, Kim declared that “the test-fire reconfirmed the reliability of [the] ICBM system, demonstrated the capability of making a surprise launch of an ICBM in any region and place any time, and clearly proved that the whole US mainland is in the firing range of the DPRK missiles.” After the successful launch of the Hwasong-15 ICBM on Nov. 29, 2017, Kim was more categorical: He said that the day “was a significant day when the historic cause of completing the state nuclear force, the cause of building a rocket power was realized.” In his New Year’s speech on Jan. 1, 2018, he hinted that testing was now accomplished, but that full-scale production would continue: “The nuclear weapons research sector and the rocket industry should mass-produce nuclear warheads and ballistic missiles, the power and reliability of which have already been proved to the full, to give a spur to the efforts for deploying them for action.” Nothing more has been said about mass production since. On New Year’s Day 2018, Kim said that while “the nuclear button is on my office desk all the time,” and that his missiles could target all of America, he nonetheless proposed that North Korea attend the PyeongChang Olympics to “ease the acute military tension” and “create a peaceful environment on the Korean Peninsula.” A day after Kim’s New Year’s Day speech one year earlier, President-elect Donald Trump tweeted, “North Korea just stated that it is in the final stages of developing a nuclear weapon capable of reaching parts of the United States,” adding, “It won’t happen.” By stopping nuclear and missile testing just short of having a proven
thermonuclear weapon and an ICBM with a re-entry vehicle capable of delivering it to all of the US, Kim Jong Un has made it possible for Trump to get his wish. Now that the summit is over, the parties have to follow up by negotiating detailed steps. The first order of business is to induce North Korea to suspend production of fissile material and possibly suspend deployment of intermediate- and intercontinental-range missiles. Remote monitoring may prove of some use, but delaying suspension to negotiate detailed verification would allow time for more plutonium and highly enriched uranium to be produced and more missiles to be fielded in the interim. In return, Washington could issue a declaration, with Seoul and Pyongyang committing to end the Korean War; sanctions under the Trading with the Enemy Act, imposed before the nuclear issue arose, could be relaxed for yet a third time; and energy assistance that was unilaterally halted by South Korea in 2008 could also be resumed. Verification could be pursued along the lines of a joint document from October 2008, in which North Korea agreed to allow “full access” to “experts of the six parties” with the IAEA “to provide consultancy and assistance” for “safeguards appropriate to non-nuclear-weapons states.” It included records, “personal notebooks” and “interviews with technical personnel,” “forensic measurements of nuclear materials and equipment” and “environmental samples and samples of nuclear waste” at the three declared sites at Yongbyon — the reactor, the reprocessing plant and the fuel fabrication plant. This might suffice to ascertain how much plutonium North Korea had produced, and, if not, Pyongyang also agreed to allow “access, based on mutual consent, to undeclared sites.” This will require further steps to end enmity, including a commitment by Washington to begin a peace process in Korea, take steps toward diplomatic recognition, provide energy aid and allow reciprocal inspections in South Korea. The chances of persuading North Korea to go beyond another temporary suspension to dismantle its nuclear and missile programs are slim without movement by Washington and Seoul toward political and economic normalization, peace talks for a formal treaty to end the Korean War, and regional security arrangements, among them a nuclear weapon-free zone that would provide a multilateral legal framework for denuclearization. Whether Kim is willing to keep his pledge to disarm is mere speculation. Sustained diplomatic give-and-take followed by full implementation of commitments is the only way to find out. Dismantling production facilities and disarming will take years. So will convincing steps toward reconciliation. Only then will Kim reveal his willingness to give up his weapons.” (Leon V. Sigal, “Arranged Marriage No. 3: Can Trump and Kim Work It out Despite Past Failures?” Global Asia, 13, 3 (Summer 2018))
making progress. But look, the President was clear. Each of the actions that we’ve taken – his decision to suspend the high-level war games – exists only so long as there is good-faith negotiation progress, productive results being achieved. If we can’t do that, if it turns out that there’s just – there’s no – there’s no capacity to deliver the outcome that both presidents said they wanted – yeah, we’ll reassess whether that’s – I’m not going to put a timeline on it. But whether that’s in two months or six months, we’re committed to moving forward in an expeditious manner to see if we can achieve what it is the two leaders set out to do.” (DoS, Interview with Elise Labott of CNN via Telephone, Washington, June 24, 2018)

6/25/18

The two Koreas agreed to "quickly" restore their military communication lines during their working-level talks aimed at reducing tensions and building trust, Seoul's defense ministry said. The first colonel-grade meeting in more than seven years was held at the Customs, Immigration, and Quarantine office in Paju, just south of the inter-Korean border, for about an hour to follow up on an agreement from their June 14 general-grade talks. Army Col. Cho Yong-geun led the South Korean delegation, while Col. Om Chang-nam represented the North. "At this working-level contact, the two sides shared the understanding that restoring military communication lines is urgent so as to implement the military segment of the Pannunjom declaration," the ministry said in a press release. Today's talks focused on completely restoring western and eastern communication lines, such as telephone and fax lines, so as to prevent any misunderstandings that could needlessly raise tensions or trigger accidental clashes. The two sides agreed to promptly take measures necessary to normalize the partially restored western line, while holding additional talks over the severed eastern line for its early restoration. The two sides opened the western communication line in 2002 and the eastern one the following year. The western line was suspended in 2016 following Seoul's shutdown of the inter-Korean industrial complex in the border city of Kaesong, but its telephone link was restored in January ahead of the PyeongChang Winter Olympics, in which the North participated. The eastern line was blocked in 2011 amid military tensions and then completely severed due to a wildfire in 2013. (Yonhap, “Koreas Agree to ‘Quickly’ Restore Military Communication Lines,” June 25, 2018)

The United States will soon present a timeline to North Korea with "specific asks" of Pyongyang after a historic summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, a senior U.S. defense official said. The official, who spoke to a small group of reporters ahead of a trip to Asia this week by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, did not specify details but suggested that the timeline would be rapid enough to make clear Pyongyang's level of commitment. "We'll know pretty soon if they're going to operate in good faith or not," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "There will be specific asks and there will be a specific timeline when we present the North Koreans with our concept of what implementation of the summit agreement looks like." Mattis, at the start of a week-long trip that includes stops in China, South Korea and Japan, said Trump's guidance on suspending military drills applied not just to the major Freedom Guardian exercise in August but also to two smaller Korean Marine Exchange Program training exercises. "The large, joint, combined exercises have been suspended. ... We'll see if the continuing negotiations keep them that way," Mattis said, adding that he was in frequent contact with Pompeo. (Phil Stewart, “U.S. to Give North Korea Post-Summit Timeline with ‘Asks’ Soon: Official,” Reuters, June 25, 2018)

In another sign of detente following the summit, North Korea has decided to skip one of the most symbolic and politically charged events of its calendar: the annual “anti-U.S. imperialism” rally marking the start of the Korean War. Fist-pumping, flag-waving and slogan-shouting masses of Pyongyang residents normally assemble each year for the rally to kick off a month of anti-U.S., Korean War-focused events designed to strengthen nationalism and unity. It all culminates on July 27, which North Korea celebrates as a national holiday called the day of “Victory in the Fatherland Liberation War.” Last year’s event was held in Kim Il Sung Square with a reported 100,000 people attending. North Korea even issued special anti-U.S. postage stamps. Officials had no on-the-record comment on the decision not to hold the event this year. But Associated Press staff in the North Korean capital confirmed today that it would not be held. North Korea has
noticeably toned down its anti-Washington rhetoric over the past several months to create a more conciliatory atmosphere for the summit and avoid souring attempts by both sides to reduce tensions and increase dialogue. North Korea’s state media were filled with reports, photos and video of the June 12 meeting between Trump and Kim in Singapore. A 42-minute documentary-style news special was aired on the state television network two days after the summit and has been repeated frequently since, meaning that by now there are probably few North Koreans who are unaware of the changes in the air. For many North Koreans, the program was also quite likely the first time they had ever seen what Trump looks like. So far, it hasn’t said much about what Washington is interested in the most — denuclearization. But it has made significantly fewer references to its need to have nuclear weapons than it was making last year, when Kim was test-launching long-range missiles at a record pace and tensions with Washington neared the boiling point. (Cha Song Ho and Eric Talmadge, “In Sign of Détente, North Korea Skips Annual Anti-U.S. Rally,” Associated Press, June 25, 2018)

South and North Korea agreed to conduct a joint study on modernizing the railways that run through their borders “at an early date.” The joint study will start first on the northern part of the Seoul-Sinuiju western railways from July 24 and then on the railways running along the eastern region of the Korean Peninsula, according to the unification ministry. The agreements were reached after the two Koreas held working-level talks on the southern side of the truce village of Panmunjom to discuss railway cooperation in a follow-up on the summit between their leaders in April. The meeting kicked off around 10 a.m. and was attended by a three-member South Korean delegation headed by Vice Transport Minister Kim Jeong-ryeol and a North Korean team led by Vice Railroad Minister Kim Yun-hyok. “A long time has passed by before we met again, but I think our mind and determination about railway cooperation remain unchanged,” the North’s chief delegate said at the start of the meeting. Kim Yun-hyok also noted that the railway project could pave the way for further South-North economic cooperation, and said good results would come by advancing together with “wisdom and strength.” South Korea’s chief delegate in return expressed hope that “good achievements” would come from talks on June 28. The meeting was expected to address issues surrounding connecting andmodernizing the Gyeongui and Donghae cross-border railways, each respectively established in the western and eastern parts of the peninsula. The two Koreas already have established railways in the western region that link the South’s capital of Seoul to the North’s northwestern border city of Sinuiju, but they require modernization for proper operation. Connecting cross-border railways in the eastern region, of which the Gangneung-Jejin section in the South remains severed, was forecast to be another key topic to be raised. The line could connect South Korea’s southeastern port city of Busan to Europe by cutting through North Korea and even Russia. Seeking ways to make the railways technologically adaptable for high-speed trains such as KTX or SRT was another topic for discussion. Linking the cross-border railroad to a Eurasia railway is also part of South Korean President Moon Jae-in’s blueprint for economic prosperity for the peninsula. (Jung Min-kyung, “Koreas Agree to Conduct Joint Study on Railway Cooperation, Korea Herald, June 26, 2018)

KCNA Commentary: “Japan is just thick-headed in politics though it is allegedly good at finance. Prime Minister Abe recently appeared in a TV show and talked such rubbish that Japan is willing to bear the "expense for the dismantlement of north Korea's nukes." It seems that Japan wants to have a share in the rapid process to settle the issue of the Korean Peninsula by showing off its purse. It is a well-known fact that Japan is now mired in the self-contradiction as it has doggedly resorted to pressure on the DPRK against the trend of the times until recently. Japan should know what should be done first, though it gets the jitters. What is basic in the DPRK-Japan relations is for Japan to atone for the past crimes. Japan is legally and morally obliged to make a sincere apology and reparation for the past history of the colonial rule the Japanese imperialists enforced by illegally occupying Korea in the 20th century. Japan can never evade this responsibility as it is just a historical problem which had to be resolved with the end of the Second World War. The decades-long colonial rule by the Japanese imperialists was so cruel that it was unprecedented in history. Many Koreans lost their lives and the Korean nation suffered untold human, material, cultural, mental and moral losses. But Japan has made neither apology nor atonement for its
past crimes though more than half a century has passed since its defeat. On the contrary, it is orchestrating a political farce of disguising itself as victim though it is just an assailant. Japan is loud-voiced about the worn-out story about "abduction" but it is just a stupid act to cover up the hideous crimes against the Korean people and avoid the settlement of its past.

Yohei Kono, former chief Cabinet secretary of Japan, said in a lecture in Tokyo on June 13 that now is the time for Japan to make an apology for having colonized the Korean Peninsula. This is not just a private opinion of an elder statesman but a view common to Japanese of conscience and great insight. But the Abe regime pretends ignorance of it. Japan should honestly make atonement of its past crimes first, instead of playing tricks with money. That is indispensable for repairing the DPRK-Japan relations.” (KCNA: “Japan Should Do What Japan Should Do: KCNA Commentary,” June 26, 2018)

The Foreign Ministry said it will set up a new division to exclusively deal with issues related to North Korea, as Tokyo aims to better respond to developments on the Korean Peninsula. The ministry's Northeast Asia Division currently covers both North and South Korea. But it will be separated into two units under the ministry's planned organizational change. Effective July 1, the First Northeast Asia Division will deal with South Korea, while North Korean issues will be handled by the Second Northeast Asia Division, according to the ministry. The organizational change is "aimed at strengthening bilateral coordination between Japan and South Korea and addressing the issues of North Korea's nuclear and missile programs and abductions," Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide said at a press briefing. (Kyodo, “Japan’s Foreign Ministry to Set up New Division to Handle N. Korea,” Mainichi, June 26, 2018)

In recent days, Donald Trump has repeatedly claimed that Kim Jong Un agreed in Singapore to the denuclearization of North Korea. But Kim agreed to no such thing. What he actually agreed to during his summit with the U.S. president was to “work toward” the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. This isn’t some trivial semantic distinction. Reconciling these two goals may well be what everything—resolving the North Korean nuclear crisis, establishing peace and economic exchange between North and South Korea, even determining the future geopolitical order of Northeast Asia—depends on. And the path to doing so remains utterly mysterious. In May, however, I heard one detailed vision from a top aide to South Korean President Moon Jae In, who has played a critical role in steering international diplomacy with North Korea over the past several months. Chung In Moon, a special adviser for foreign affairs and national security, suggested that the two Koreas, the United States, and possibly China could declare an end to the Korean War, which concluded with an armistice in 1953, by the end of this year—notably before the denuclearization of North Korea has been completed. As we sat in his office in Seoul, Moon walked me through what might come next: a years-long process of “reciprocal exchanges” involving nuclear concessions from North Korea and political, security, and economic concessions from the United States and its partners, with the end result a peace treaty that would be finalized alongside the North’s full nuclear disarmament. He proposed a novel idea for how to provide the Kim government with security assurances that went beyond “a piece of paper”: allow American investors to start doing business in North Korea. If there are “Americans working in North Korea, then there is very little chance that the U.S. will take military action against North Korea,” Moon argued. “There’s got to be a real American presence.” Then Moon turned to what is perhaps the most sensitive issue of all, since it cuts to the core of how the United States guarantees the security of South Korea: What exactly do North Korean leaders mean by the “denuclearization of the Korean peninsula”? Could it entail retracting the “nuclear umbrella” that the United States extends to the region by deterring South Korea’s adversaries and committing to defend its ally if necessary with the American nuclear arsenal? The North has called for the “denuclearization of the Korean peninsula” ever since George H.W. Bush withdrew U.S. tactical nuclear weapons from South Korean territory in the early 1990s. While the United States no longer stations nuclear weapons in South Korea, it still has multiple ways to launch a nuclear attack against North Korea, and the North Koreans know it. In any case, North Korean leaders don’t believe the United States removed its nuclear weapons from the South any more than American officials would believe it if the Kim government suddenly declared they had no more nukes but didn’t permit that declaration.
to be verified. The North Koreans want proof of denuclearization in South Korea in exchange for
denuclearization in North Korea, according to Moon, and that’s not all: They have said they want
no more deployment of American nuclear-capable vessels and aircraft during training exercises
with South Korean forces, a non-aggression pledge from the U.S., and eventually a normal
diplomatic relationship with America. “Here comes my own idea,” added Moon. (Moon is also a
professor at Yonsei University in Seoul and often speaks in that unofficial capacity.) “North and
South Korea and other concerned parties should sign a treaty that declares a nuclear-weapon-free
zone on the Korean peninsula,” prohibiting nuclear weapons, facilities, and materials in both
North and South Korea. There are five such internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones,
in Latin America, the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Central Asia. What makes it a
difficult sell in the case of Northeast Asia is the presence of two countries with nuclear weapons—
China and North Korea—and the nuclear dimensions of America’s military alliances with South
Korea and Japan. Under a UN-backed nuclear-weapon-free zone on the Korean peninsula, Moon
said, “North Korea will not have nuclear weapons, [and] South Korea will not be under [the]
American nuclear umbrella.” Nuclear-weapons states that are parties to the treaty—the United
States, China, Russia—would therefore need to offer the Koreas certain guarantees. They could,
for example, promise not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against states that don’t have
them, or at least not to use them first in a conflict. To some, this looks like a plan to walk right into
North Korea’s trap. Cheon Seong Whun, a national-security official in the conservative
administration of former South Korean President Park Geun Hye, recently pointed out that North
Korean leaders have for decades spoken of the “denuclearization of the Korean peninsula” and a
“nuclear-weapon-free zone.” Their objective is not peace, he argued, but to trick the Americans
and South Koreans into abandoning their alliance in the false hope of eliminating the North
Korean nuclear program—whereupon the North will attempt to reunify the peninsula by force.
While North Korea is “lying in the same bed” as the U.S. and South Korea when it comes to
denuclearization, Cheon has written, they “are dreaming two different dreams.” But Peter Hayes, a
Korean expert and the director of the California-based Nautilus Institute, doesn’t see it that way.
Moon’s is not a “peacenik proposal,” he told me. It’s “a standard legal instrument that already
exists in many regions of the world.” (Hayes believes the U.S. nuclear umbrella could still operate
in a Korean nuclear-weapon-free zone to protect South Korea from nuclear states outside the
peninsula, though other scholars disagree.) “If I was [the North Korean leader], I wouldn’t accept
anything less” than a multilateral treaty, Hayes said, since a UN-backed nuclear-weapon-free zone
means binding security guarantees not just from the United States, but from other nuclear powers.
“The last political agreement on non-hostility that they had with the United States, which was with
President Clinton in 2000, George Bush Junior used for toilet paper the day after he was elected.”
Ultimately, Hayes said, North Korean leaders seem to define the “denuclearization of the Korean
peninsula” not rigidly in terms of any particular policy but more flexibly as about fundamentally
transforming their hostile relationship with the United States. He recalled what Kim Yong Chol,
now Kim Jong Un’s right-hand man and point person for talks with the Trump administration, told
him when Hayes traveled to Pyongyang in 1991: Kim “emphasized that there are no permanent
enemies, no permanent friends for a small- or medium-sized power, and that there was no reason
for the United States forever to be an enemy of North Korea.” (Incidentally, “No Friends, No
Enemies” is how one senior Trump administration official recently summarized the Trump
Doctrine to The Atlantic’s Jeffrey Goldberg.) What the North Koreans are really after is not
booting U.S. troops from Korea, establishing normal relations with the United States, or securing
economic aid, Hayes argued. “They want an authentic, cooperative, collaborative relationship with
the United States. And that starts at the top. That’s why it was actually a stroke of political genius
by Trump to break out of the conventional mold and agree to meet with Kim Jong Un. That was a
radical and heretical move, and only Donald Trump could have done it.” Hayes cited the Korean
saying “swords to sword, rice cake to rice cake”—essentially, “we’re willing to make peace with
you or we’re willing to go to war with you,” as he explained. “I think [the North Koreans are] now
putting their swords on the table. They’re saying, ‘What swords are you going to put on the table
in the territory that matters to us? And then we’ll put our rice cake up. What rice cakes are you
putting up?’” And once again, the North Koreans have a big ask: In the long run, Hayes said, they
may see the United States as a better great-power partner than China, which has its own
aspirations to assert influence over Korea. If it sounds bizarre that North Korea, which has raged
approaching and will approach," he added. Brooks made an implicit call for cooperation from what South Korean President Moon has spoken about. Those four levers are where the flexibility includes exercising flexibility in the execution of exercises. number of ways to maintain military readiness while putting large-scale exercises on hold. They include exercising flexibility in the execution of exercises.

Washington to suspend their combined military drills and weaken deterrence capabilities. Gen. Vincent Brooks defended the decision, noting that the suspension appears intended to help the allies build trust with North Korea and add “greater effectiveness” in ongoing diplomacy on the communist state's denuclearization. “I don't anticipate that this is an end of all exercises and training as we know it, but rather these visible exercises that are right up front that may cause unnecessary irritation at a time when the need for trust building is so important,” he said during an alliance forum in Seoul. "I will eliminate the doubt and concerns about all military training going away. I don't have any such instruction coming my way. I don't feel that is the spirit of our leaders but rather to create a room for them to be able to navigate the way forward ... to give them room if this helps set the conditions for them to have greater effectiveness in their dialogue and discussions," he added. "Remember, this is two ways. (The North Koreans) are looking for indications from us also. I think the decisions about the upcoming exercise, the UFG, is related to that to signal an intention to move forward in a positive direction unlike the direction we have gone before," he said. "So my encouragement is we maintain that spirit of moving forward even with the doubt and we look for ways to help North Korea save face where possible but while also keeping pressure on them to not back up." Brooks also pointed out a number of ways to maintain military readiness while putting large-scale exercises on hold. They include exercising flexibility in the execution of exercises. "I had lots of discussions (with South Korean military officials) about it. ... How can we creatively and innovatively create readiness in our force and preserve it once we have created it," he said. "The exercises are flexible. That is what South Korean President Moon has spoken about. Those four levers are where the flexibility comes from — timing, scope, scale and communication volume. That is the way we are approaching and will approach," he added. Brooks made an implicit call for cooperation from

Pabian, Bermudez, and Liu: “Commercial satellite imagery from June 21 indicates that improvements to the infrastructure at North Korea’s Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center are continuing at a rapid pace. Modifications to the 5 MWe plutonium production reactor’s cooling system appear complete, but a less-than-normal cooling water discharge from the outfall pipe makes a determination of the reactor’s operational status difficult. The status of the Radiochemical Laboratory—used to separate plutonium from spent fuel rods—remains uncertain, although the associated Thermal Plant has likely continued operations, and a small non-industrial building of an unknown purpose has been newly erected near the cooling tower. Construction continues on support facilities throughout other operational areas of Yongbyon, especially at the Experimental Light Water Reactor (ELWR), where the new engineering office building appears externally complete and a small building similar to the one observed at the Radiochemical Laboratory has been erected. Continued work at the Yongbyon facility should not be seen as having any relationship to North Korea’s pledge to denuclearize. The North’s nuclear cadre can be expected to proceed with business as usual until specific orders are issued from Pyongyang.” (Frank V. Pabian, Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. and Jack Liu, “Infrastructure Improvements at North Korea’s Yongbyon Nuclear Research Facility,” 38North, June 26, 2018)

The chief of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) dismissed concerns that the recent decision by Seoul and Washington to suspend their combined military exercises would lead to an end of all other allied exercises would lead to an end of all other allied
Finally we have the option of adjusting the communication volume. That can be challenging to journalists. We respect what you do as journalists in democracy. That is very important. But candidly, sometimes we just have to be more quiet. It is not to hide something from the public but rather it is to make sure that the environment around us for national decisions that are consequential to all of us. ... Sometimes it is better to turn down the volume," he added. To a question of whether the alliance could see its end when a lasting peace comes here, the commander said, "Let's just live the alliance." "I am going to make a metaphorical jump here. How do you live your life? Are you worried about the last day, the day you are going to die? Or are you living every day that you have?" he said. "I prefer to live every day I have because there is no guarantee how long it is going to last, not my life, not my alliance. So right now, how about let's just live the alliance. That is what we should be doing every single day," he added. Brooks also reassured South Koreans that the U.S. is "willing to shed blood if necessary." "But that should also be very clear that the U.S. knows the cost of shedding blood. It is not just a human toll, it is a cost on society, a cost on infrastructure," he said. "It is the impact on the world when you have a massive loss of life like what the Korean War was. We should never." (Yonhap, “USFK Chief Dismisses Concerns over Possible End of All Military Exercises,” June 27, 2018)

Defense Minister Song Young-moo and his U.S. counterpart James Mattis agreed to continuously devise measures to build confidence with North Korea as long as the communist regime maintains "goodwill dialogue." On the issue of how to proceed with future exercises in a way that does not undermine the momentum for dialogue, Song and Mattis agreed at their 70-minute meeting to make a joint decision on it in light of progress on the North's denuclearization, a Seoul official said. "When it comes to the combined exercises on the peninsula, the two sides agreed to make a joint announcement on them after consultations over their timing, scale and content in consideration of progress on the North's denuclearization and each unit's combat preparedness posture," the official said, declining to be named. On the issue of transferring wartime operational control, the defense chiefs agreed to strengthen cooperation to ensure that conditions necessary for the transfer can be met "at an early date." At their Security Consultative Meeting slated for autumn in Washington, the two sides are expected to agree on a broad road map for the transfer, which observers expect to come in the early 2020s. The joint statement also pointed out that the bilateral alliance is "more solid than at any other time." "(The ministers) agreed to closely cooperate to develop the alliance in a future-oriented, mutually complementary way," it reads. Mattis also touched on the allies' recent decision to suspend a major combined exercise, casting it as an effort to facilitate diplomacy on North Korea's denuclearization. "The recent decision to suspend the Freedom Guardian exercise creates an increased opportunity for our diplomats to negotiate, increasing the prospects for a peaceful solution on the Korean Peninsula," he said. "At the same time, the U.S. and ROK forces remain united, vigilant and ready to defend against any challenge.” (Song Sang-ho, “S. Korea, U.S. Agree to Continuously Devise Confidence-Building Measures with N. Korea,” Yonhap, June 28, 2018)

The two Koreas agreed to conduct a joint study on modernizing and connecting cross-border roads as part of efforts to carry out agreements reached by their leaders in recent summit talks. They also agreed to modernize the Kaesong-Pyongyang section of the northern side of roads in the western region and the Wonsan-Goseong section of roads running through their eastern border. The agreements were reached as the two Koreas held working-level talks at the truce village of Panmunjom to discuss road-related cooperation. A joint study will be conducted first on the roads in the western area early in August and then on those in the eastern region. Designs and other work will also be carried out, and the launch of construction will start "at an early date" when necessary preparations are completed. (Yonhap, “Koreas Agree to Conduct Joint Study on Cross-Border Road Connection,” June 28, 2018)

U.S. intelligence agencies believe that North Korea has increased its production of fuel for nuclear weapons at multiple secret sites in recent months — and that Kim Jong Un may try to hide those facilities as he seeks more concessions in nuclear talks with the Trump administration, U.S. officials told NBC News. The intelligence assessment, which has not previously been reported,
seems to counter the sentiments expressed by President Donald Trump, who tweeted after his historic June 12 summit with Kim that "there was no longer a nuclear threat from North Korea." Analysts at the CIA and other intelligence agencies don't see it that way, according to more than a dozen American officials who are familiar with their assessments and spoke on the condition of anonymity. They see a regime positioning itself to extract every concession it can from the Trump administration — while clinging to nuclear weapons it believes are essential to survival. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment. In recent months, even as the two sides engaged in diplomacy, North Korea was stepping up its production of enriched uranium for nuclear weapons, five U.S. officials say, citing the latest intelligence assessment. North Korea and the U.S. agreed at the summit to "work toward" denuclearization, but there is no specific deal. On Trump's order, the U.S. military canceled training exercises on the Korean peninsula, a major concession to Kim. While the North Koreans have stopped missile and nuclear tests, "there's no evidence that they are decreasing stockpiles, or that they have stopped their production," said one U.S. official briefed on the latest intelligence. "There is absolutely unequivocal evidence that they are trying to deceive the U.S." Four other officials familiar with the intelligence assessment also said North Korea intended to deceive the U.S. U.S. intelligence agencies have stepped up their collection against North Korea in recent years, and it appears to be paying off with greater insights into a country that has long been the world's hardest spying target, officials say. NBC News agreed to withhold some details of the latest intelligence assessment that officials said could put sources at risk. "There are lots of things that we know that North Korea has tried to hide from us for a long time," a U.S. intelligence official said. It's long been understood that North Korea had at least one undeclared facility to enrich nuclear fuel, aside from Yongbyon, its main nuclear site. "When North Korea constructed the enrichment facility at Yongbyon in 2009, the North Koreans did so at a pace that suggested this was not their first rodeo, i.e. not the first time they had assembled large cascades of centrifuges," said Jeffrey Lewis, director of the East Asia Nonproliferation Program for the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey. Joel Wit, who negotiated a 1994 nuclear agreement with North Korea, said the U.S. always believed North Korea had two facilities to enrich nuclear material: Yongbyon and a second site the U.S. is aware of but whose name has not been disclosed. "People have been open to the possibility there might be more," he said. The latest U.S. intelligence assessment concludes that there is more than one secret site, officials tell NBC News. The question is whether Kim will be willing to admit it. "This is why people want North Korea to declare all its facilities up front," said Wit, a former Clinton administration official and senior fellow at the Stimson Center who founded a web site devoted to North Korea, 38north.org. The intelligence assessment comes on the heels of a report by 38north.com showing that North Korea was continuing to make improvements at its major disclosed nuclear facility at Yongbyon. "The observed activity appears inconsistent with a North Korean intent to abandon its nuclear weapons programs," said Bruce Klingner, a former CIA analyst and North Korea expert at the Heritage Foundation. "There seems little reason to continue expansion plans if the regime intended to dismantle them as would be required under a denuclearization agreement." One senior U.S. intelligence official offered a different view, noting that the decision by Kim to suspend nuclear and missile tests was unexpected, and the fact that the two sides are talking is a positive step. But that official also acknowledged that intelligence analysts expect the Kim regime to try to deceive the United States. "Work is ongoing to deceive us on the number of facilities, the number of weapons, the number of missiles," he said. "We are watching closely. (Courtney Kube, Ken Dilanian and Carol E. Lee, “North Korea Has Increased Production at Secret Sites, Say U.S. Officials,” NBC, June 29, 2018) The new intelligence, described by four officials who have seen it or received briefings, is based on material gathered in the weeks since the summit. Specifically, the DIA has concluded that North Korean officials are exploring ways to deceive Washington about the number of nuclear warheads and missiles, and the types and numbers of facilities they have, believing that the United States is not aware of the full range of their activities. Some U.S. intelligence officials have for at least a year believed that the number of warheads is about 65, as reported last year by the Washington Post. But North Korean officials are suggesting that they declare far fewer. The lone uranium-enrichment facility that has been acknowledged by North Korea is in Yongbyon, 60 miles north of Pyongyang. That site is estimated to have produced fissile material for as many as a couple of dozen warheads. Meanwhile, the North Koreans also
have operated a secret underground uranium enrichment site known as Kangsong, which was first reported in May by The Washington Post. That site is believed by most officials to have twice the enrichment capacity of Yongbyon. U.S. intelligence agencies became aware of the nuclear facility in 2010. In recent years, the United States, through imagery and computer hacking, has improved its intelligence collection in North Korea. Officials in Pyongyang are seeking to obfuscate the true number of their weapons facilities, and U.S. intelligence officials believe that more than just one hidden site exists. The Post is withholding details at the request of intelligence officials. The Office of the Director of National Intelligence declined requests for comment. Asked by senators on June 27 about the status of private talks with North Korean officials, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declined to offer specifics. “I’m not prepared to talk about the details of the discussions that are taking place,” he said in testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee. “I think it would be inappropriate and, frankly, counterproductive to achieving the end state that we’re hoping to achieve.” Asked about Trump’s claim that the North Korea threat had been eliminated, Pompeo said Trump had meant to say only that the threat had been reduced. “I don’t think there’s any doubt about that,” he said. (Ellen Nakashima and Joby Warrick, “N. Korea Plotting to Keep Arsenal, Washington Post, July 1, 2018, p. A-1)

President Trump’s national security adviser said that North Korea could dismantle all of its nuclear weapons, threatening missiles and biological weapons “in a year,” a far more aggressive schedule than the one Secretary of State Mike Pompeo outlined for Congress recently, reflecting a strain inside the administration over how to match promises with realism. Pompeo will arrive in Pyongyang with a proposed schedule for disarmament that would begin with a declaration by North Korea of all its weapons, production facilities and missiles. The declaration will be the first real test of the North’s candor, amid increasing concern that it may be trying to conceal parts of its nuclear program. Advisers to Pompeo, both outside the government and inside the C.I.A., which he used to direct, have cautioned him that North Korea will not give up its arsenal of 20 to 60 weapons until the last stages of any disarmament plan — if it gives them up at all. Many of the plans they have given him call for the North to halt production of nuclear fuel — at a moment that there are signs of increased production — but do not insist on dismantling weapons until Kim gains confidence that economic benefits are beginning to flow and that the United States and its allies will not seek to overthrow him. It is an approach fraught with risk, and runs contrary to what Bolton, before entering the government, and Trump had said the North must do: dismantle everything first, and ship its bombs and fuel out of the country. If the North is permitted to keep its weapons until the last stages of disarmament, it would remain a nuclear state for a long while, perhaps years. The effort to put North Korea on a schedule is particularly urgent because there is no evidence the Singapore summit meeting has produced tangible results, despite Trump’s tweeted proclamation that “there is no longer a Nuclear Threat from North Korea.” Even Bolton seemed to distance himself from that assertion today. C.I.A. officials are watching to see whether the North reveals in the declaration a covert plant suspected of enriching uranium, the other main fuel for nuclear arms. The plant is known as Kangsong, according to a report on the secretive facility by the Institute for Science and International Security, a Washington group that tracks the spread of nuclear arms. The fact that the United States knew about the plant was a closely guarded secret until a few months ago, one former government official with access to the intelligence said. The official predicted that the North would have to admit having the plant, or watch negotiations fall apart. The Kangsong plant is suspected of housing many thousands of centrifuges — tall machines that spin at supersonic speeds to concentrate the rare form of uranium used in bombs. It has been running for years, and the group noted that it “could have made a substantial amount of weapon-grade uranium, complicating further efforts to dismantle and verify denuclearization.” In his television appearance, Bolton set out a schedule that intelligence officials have already warned is unrealistic. Pompeo, he said, “will be discussing this with the North Koreans in the near future, about, really, how to dismantle all of their W.M.D. and ballistic missile programs in a year.” He added, “If they have the strategic decision already made to do that and they’re cooperative, we can move very quickly.” Pompeo told Congress recently that he would like to see complete disarmament within two and a half years, or around the time Trump’s first term would end. Few analysts believe it can happen that fast, if at all. Pompeo has sought out nonproliferation experts for detailed proposals about how to proceed, and he has turned to a tight team, many drawn from
his days at the C.I.A., to draw up a plan. One of the most detailed proposals emerged from the nuclear policy program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, which has advocated beginning with what it calls a “freeze plus reduction in readiness” for the North Korean nuclear program. The first step would be a rigorous program to get the North to separate nuclear warheads from missiles; to remove from the weapons a key element called the “pit,” without which it is impossible to detonate them; and to halt the production of most nuclear material. “The idea is that they cannot be moved, they cannot be touched, and all facilities and locations are to be declared,” said Ariel Levite, a former senior official of the Israel Atomic Energy Commission who, with George Perkovich, drew up the plan sought by Pompeo. All nuclear enrichment activity would have to be limited to one major site, Yongbyon, where international inspectors lived before being evicted from the North many years ago. “This means that any activity detected outside of Yongbyon is cheating,” Levite said in an interview, “and you say, ‘If we catch you, the whole thing collapses.’” But under that proposal, and others presented to Pompeo, the dismantling of existing nuclear weapons would come last. “The idea is to say we have been putting up with your nuclear weapons for a while,” Levite said, “and we are willing to put up with it a while longer, provided you make tangible progress on a number of fronts in rapid succession.” Bolton, officials say, does not support any proposals that leave the North in possession of weapons for more than a year. And not all experts buy the bombs-last approach. Robert Kelley, a nuclear engineer and former Iraq inspector now at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, recently argued that American teams and the North’s weapon dismantlers could meet “in the first week” and quickly set to work on atomic disassembly. “Of course,” he noted, “this only works if” Kim is as deeply committed to the North’s denuclearization as Trump seems to believe — an extraordinarily large “if,” in many nuclear analysts’ view. Another plan given to Pompeo was devised by David Albright, the president of the Institute for Science and International Security. His first steps centered on Pyongyang turning over a comprehensive inventory of facilities, sites, materials and officials. “We really don’t know much about their nuclear program from a verification point of view,” Albright said recently. “It really is a bit of a black box.” The disclosure of the program’s secretive workings, Albright said, would allow Western officials and nuclear experts to begin visiting the facilities and making preparations for a wide range of deactivations and dismantlement. Only near the end of his public presentation did Albright turn to dismantling the nuclear arms. That would start with comprehensive disclosures of weapons, component parts and how the North’s specialists went about their development. Only then, he added, would the teams turn to nuclear disassembly and destruction. After his presentation, as prominent experts estimated that the denuclearization job could take a decade or more, Albright’s group argued that many of the phases should occur in parallel. The atomic unwinding, the institute declared, “should not be structured in a way that invites North Korea to go slowly.” One of the most authoritative plans was put forward by a Stanford University team led by Siegfried S. Hecker, a former director of the Los Alamos weapons laboratory in New Mexico and now a professor at the university. A co-author was Robert L. Carlin, a former C.I.A. analyst and State Department intelligence official who has traveled to North Korea more than 30 times. The team in late May unveiled a phased denuclearization plan that also left weapon disassembly for last — beginning six years after the plan’s start and extending through the 10th year. At the end, international inspectors were to be routinely patrolling the North to verify its status. At the plan’s start, the team argued, North Korea and the United States had to find ways to build trust and interdependence, calling that a prerequisite for long-term denuclearization. It argued that North Korea will probably want to keep some parts of its nuclear program as a hedge should any potential agreement fall apart, but called that risk manageable. The secret to dismantling the program, Hecker said in an interview, had less to do with delineating the phases and specifics of dismantlement than with establishing “a different relationship with North Korea where its security rests on something other than nuclear weapons.” (David E. Sanger and William J. Broad, “Disarm North Korea ‘in a Year’? Reality Offers a Sobering Contrast,” New York Times, July 2, 2018, p. A-1)

Bolton: “MARGARET BRENNAN: The Washington Post is reporting that U.S. intelligence has new evidence that North Korea is trying to obscure and hide the number of missiles, facilities and other parts of its nuclear program. Have you seen any evidence that they're actually dismantling their nuclear infrastructure? BOLTON: Well I don’t want to comment on that specific report. I-I
don’t really don’t want to comment on anything related to intelligence I’d- I’d rather discuss it as a more general proposition. We’re very well aware of North Korea’s patterns of behavior over decades of negotiating with the United States. We know exactly what the risks are of them using negotiations to drag out the length of time they have to continue their nuclear chemical biological weapons programs and ballistic missiles. President would like to see these discussions move promptly to get a resolution. This has been the advice that China’s leaders Xi Jinping has given us as well. So we’re going to try and proceed to implement what the two leaders agreed to in Singapore, but rather than have a-a series of reports things are going better things are not going well, they are concealing this, they’re not concealing that. Really it doesn’t serve the purpose of advancing the negotiations. But there’s not any-any starry eyed feeling among the group doing this that we’re well- well aware of what the North Koreans have done in the past. BRENNA: How quickly will North Korea turn over its actual arsenal? I mean are they using diplomacy as a cover? BOLTON: Well certainly that’s what they’ve done before. But the Kim Jong-un was very emphatic several times in Singapore he was different from prior regimes. Now we’ll let their actions speak for themselves. BRENNA: And you were emphatic that you were different here as an administration, that the weapons are going to be handed over before concessions are made when you were with us last time. BOLTON: Right. And we have developed a program, I’m sure that the Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will be discussing this with the North Koreans in the near future about really how to dismantle all of their WMD and ballistic missile programs in a year if they have the strategic decision already made to do that and they’re cooperative we can move very quickly and it’s to North Korea’s advantage to see these programs dismantled very quickly because then the elimination of sanctions aid by South Korea and Japan and others can all begin to flow. BRENNA: Within a year? BOLTON: Well what our experts have--have devised is a program that with North Korean cooperation with full disclosure of all of their chemical and biological nuclear programs ballistic missile sites-- BRENNA: That hasn’t happened yet? BOLTON: We can-- it has not. We can get physically we would be able to dismantle the overwhelming bulk of their programs within a year.” (CBS News, Transcript: National Security Adviser John Bolton on “Face the Nation,” July 1, 2018)

The South Korean defense ministry said the two Koreans have resumed using ship-to-ship radio links for smooth communications at sea for the first time in 10 years. The ministry said the connection is to uphold the recent agreements between the two to defuse military tensions and prevent unexpected confrontations, especially in the Yellow Sea. During the 9 o’clock test communication earlier in the day, a South Korean Navy vessel off Yeonpyeong Island contacted a North Korean patrol boat, which responded immediately to the call, the ministry said. The ministry said the maritime communication between the two was severed in May 2008 when the North stopped responding to all South Korean calls made via the global merchant marine communication network. In June 2004, when the two Koreans maintained amicable relations, they agreed to use the same radio frequencies and visual signals for better communications in the waters around the Korean Peninsula. On June 14, the first-ever communications at sea between South and North Korean patrol ships were carried out. (Yonhap, “Two Koreas Normalize Maritime Communication Hotline: Defense Ministry,” July 1, 2018)

An American delegation met with their North Korean counterparts in Panmunjom in the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea, a State Department spokesperson confirmed to ABC News. The team -- led, as it has been, by U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines and former Special Representative for North Korea Policy Sung Kim -- discussed the “next steps on the implementation of President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong Un’s joint declaration” from the Singapore summit on June 12, the spokesperson said. “Our goal remains the final, fully-verified denuclearization of the DPRK, as agreed to by Chairman Kim in Singapore,” the spokesperson added. (Conor Finnegan and Joohye Cho, “U.S. Delegation Met with North Korea to Discuss Next Steps in Denuclearization,” July 2, 2018)

North Korea is completing a major expansion of a key missile-manufacturing plant, according to the new satellite imagery from San Francisco-based Planet Labs Inc. that was analyzed by David
Schmerler and Jeffrey Lewis, researchers at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey. It is the latest sign Pyongyang is pushing ahead with weapons programs even as the U.S. pressures it to abandon them. The facility makes solid-fuel ballistic missiles—which would be able to strike U.S. military installations in Asia with a nuclear weapon with little warning—as well as re-entry vehicles for warheads that Pyongyang might use on longer-range missiles able to hit the continental United States. North Korea has continued to expand its main solid-fuel missile manufacturing facility, In August, Kim Jong Un visited the missile plant, the Chemical Material Institute in Hamhung, and ordered it to produce more solid-fuel rocket engines and rocket warhead tips. During the visit, Kim gestured before a drawing of a bird’s-eye view of planned expansions at the facility, which is part of North Korea’s Academy of Defense Science. The image was published in North Korea’s main party newspaper. New building didn’t appear to begin in earnest until April this year, around the time Kim shook hands with South Korean President Moon Jae-in in a landmark summit meeting at the inter-Korean border, according to a series of satellite images. The bulk of construction took place in May and June. “The expansion of the production infrastructure for North Korea’s solid-fuel missile infrastructure probably suggests that Kim Jong Un does not intend to abandon his nuclear and missile programs,” said Schmerler. Notably, the Hamhung facility makes the tips of missile re-entry vehicles—a closely watched component of Pyongyang’s missile program. In addition to the Hamhung site, the Middlebury experts believe North Korea has two other nearby facilities dedicated to missile production. Schmerler said satellite imagery shows a new entrance road has been built at one facility and demolition work completed near another—possible preludes to further expansion. (Jonathan Cheng, “North Korea Expands Key Missile-Producing Plant,” Wall Street Journal, July 2, 2018)

Schmerler: “Despite the April 27 Panmunjom Declaration, in which North and South Korea ‘confirmed the common goal of realizing, through complete denuclearization, a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula,’” satellite images captured by Planet show that North Korea is completing a major expansion of an important factory for producing solid rocket motors for North Korea’s nuclear-armed missiles. The expansion is taking place at the Chemical Material Institute in Hamhung, which is an important facility in North Korea’s missile program—it produces wound-filament airframes and nozzles for North Korea’s solid-fueled missiles, probably including the Pukguksong series of missiles. (The Chemical Materials Institute also produces components for other missiles as well as the tips of the reentry vehicles.) Airframes from the Chemical Material Institute are then sent to the No. 17 Factory in Hungnam, where they are filled with solid propellant to make a rocket motor. The rocket motor is then probably sent for final assembly at a location near Magunpo where the nozzles are attached and where static motor tests are conducted. (In addition to these three sites, North Korea constructs launchers for the missiles at locations near Kusong— itself a cool geolocation using imagery from Planet — and Sinpo. North Korea conducts tests launches from mobile launchers at locations around the country and at sea.) North Korea publicly announced plans to expand the production of rocket motors at the Chemical Material Institute in mid-2017. During an August visit, Kim Jung Un instructed the Institute to increase the production of solid rocket motors: “He instructed the institute to produce more solid-fuel rocket engines and rocket warhead tips by further expanding engine production process and the production capacity of rocket warhead tips and engine jets by carbon/carbon compound material.” … The foundations for the major buildings were largely in place by April. The bulk of construction, however, occurred during May—after the meeting at Panmunjom that resulted in the commitment to denuclearize. (Kim reaffirmed his Panmunjom commitment in Singapore.) The expansion of the production facilities at the Chemical Material Institute largely matches the diagram shown to Kim, although there are minor differences in office and administrative buildings. … In particular, the expansion appears to make good on Kim Jong Un’s May 2017 instruction, following the successful test of a Pukguksong-2 type solid fueled missile, that “this type of missile should be rapidly mass-produced in a serial way to arm the KPA Strategic Force…” The production of airframes and nozzles at the Chemical Material Institute is, of course, only the first step in rocket motor production. We should expect to see changes at the other two sites as well. In fact, there is evidence that North Korea is preparing to expand the other two sites, although work in both places appears to be in the very early stages. Over the past few months,
North Korea has created a new entrance road for the No. 17 Factory, which manufactures the propellant for North Korea’s solid rocket motors. This new entrance provides easier access between the suspected propellant manufacturing area (identified by the UN Panel of Experts) via an internal rail line and roads connecting to other two facilities in Hamhung and Magunpo. The new entrance and road may reflect an expectation that there will be a larger flow of traffic as more airframes are transported from Hamhung to the No. 17 Factory to be filled and then sent to Magunpo for final assembly. (At the moment, the No. 17 Factory does not appear to have a suitable facility for final assembly of the missiles.) ... The expansion of the production infrastructure for North Korea’s solid-fueled missile infrastructure probably suggests that Kim Jong Un does not intend to abandon his nuclear and missile programs. However, this expansion remains in the early stages. The paint is hardly dry at the Chemical Material Institute. A verifiable freeze on missile production now may still offer the possibility of limiting the size of North Korea’s emerging solid-fueled missile arsenal. But the Trump Administration will have to act quickly. Moreover, it is important that any freeze be founded upon a solid understanding of the structure of North Korea’s solid-fueled missile program. A recent and widespread misunderstanding about the structure of the Pukguksong program demonstrates the danger of engaging in a diplomatic process that is not adequately informed by a comprehensive picture of North Korea’s solid-fuel missile programs. Some observers, for example, recently interpreted the removal of a test rig at a facility near Kusong as a significant confidence-building measure. The Kusong facility, however, manufactures tracked vehicles that transport and launch the missiles, not the missiles themselves. The rig was used to test the vehicle’s canister that ejects the missile before it fires. The tear-down of the rig is relatively meaningless now that the vehicle is in production and in light of the expansion underway at Hamhung. ... (Dave Schmerler and Jeffrey Lewis, “North Korea Expanding Key Missile Site,” Arms Control Wonk, July 2, 2018)

North Korea, according to three NBC reporters and “more than a dozen” unnamed U.S. officials familiar with the new assessment, has reportedly increased production of fuel for its nuclear weapons “at multiple secret sites” and “may try to hide those facilities” in its upcoming talks with the Trump administration. NBC’s exclusive was quickly updated by The Washington Post, first under the provocative headline “North Korea plotting to deceive U.S. on nuclear program” on its opening page. “Specifically, the DIA has concluded that North Korean officials are exploring ways to deceive Washington about the number of nuclear warheads and missiles, and the types and numbers of facilities they have, believing that the United States is not aware of the full range of their activities,” the Post reported. Critics of President Trump’s approach to North Korea and various “experts” immediately seized on the reports as examples of Kim Jong-un’s perfidy and Trump’s poor negotiating skills. “Now we learn there is ‘absolutely unequivocal evidence’ Kim Jong Un is deceiving us,” Representative Ted Lieu, a California Democrat, tweeted. “The observed activity appears inconsistent with a North Korean intent to abandon its nuclear weapons programs,” Bruce Klingner, a former CIA analyst at the right-wing Heritage Foundation, told NBC. But Leon Sigal, the director of the Northeast Asia Cooperative Security Project in New York and the author of Disarming Strangers: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea, said the new assessment may have been stating the obvious about the negotiations that were launched in Singapore by Trump and Kim but have yet to begin in earnest. North Korea, he told The Nation by e-mail, “is continuing to make fissile material” used in nuclear bombs, a fact that he said should not be a surprise. “As some of us have been saying, the most urgent step is to negotiate reciprocal steps to halt that production and then to induce them to disclose the location of all such sites,” Sigal said. “How much they have made is the main difference among US agencies. So we start by getting them to declare how much Pu [plutonium] and HEU [highly enriched uranium] they’ve made and how many nukes they have. Then comes the long, hard work to verify that.” Even John Bolton, Trump’s hawkish national-security adviser, seemed to agree with that analysis. In an interview on CBS’s Face the Nation on Sunday, he downplayed its conclusion that North Korea might be concealing parts of its weapons program, and characterized the internal debate within the administration as an inevitable aspect of the highly unusual talks Trump has launched with North Korea. “A series of reports [that] things are going better [or] things are not going well, they are concealing this, they’re not concealing that…doesn’t serve the purpose of advancing the negotiations,” he said. Kim Jong-un, he added, “was very emphatic several times in Singapore he
was different from prior regimes. Now we’ll let their actions speak for themselves.” He told CBS
that the Trump administration would push North Korea to dismantle its nuclear and missile
programs within a year. Few analysts believe that timeframe is realistic, however. Given the
widespread acceptance of the leaked intelligence report, the DIA’s sinister conclusions indicated
that the stories were a clear attempt by anonymous officials in Washington to derail a negotiating
process they fundamentally disagree with. Another motivation may have been to persuade the
public that Kim has already broken the terms of the broad and somewhat vague agreement he
signed with President Trump in Singapore on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.
“There are no solid agreements to breach at this point,” a diplomatic troubleshooter in Seoul who
meets regularly with US and Korean officials told The Nation. “We haven’t even gotten to the
stage of North Korea making a declaration” of its weapons or its plutonium and uranium facilities.
He spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of his position. The
troubleshooter, whose contacts in Korea go back many years, said that the U.S. and North Korean
intelligence officials who have been handling bilateral talks since they began in March will soon
be replaced by diplomats, including Pompeo and North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho.
They will seek to carry out the joint pledge by both sides in Singapore to “work toward complete
denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” To Kim Jong Un, he said, that means a verification
scheme that also includes South Korea and the many U.S. bases there. “There are no obligations
until there’s an agreement in place covering nuclear material on both sides of the DMZ,” he told
me over lunch at a Seoul hotel. “Why should they agree until it covers both halves of the Korean
Peninsula?” He pointed out that, while then-President George H.W. Bush withdrew US-controlled
tactical nuclear weapons from the South in 1991, “North Korea never verified it.” The North
might also push for any agreement to include the U.S. nuclear umbrella over the South, including
US nuclear-armed ships and warplanes in the Northeast Asia region. “Let’s have the agenda, and
then decide who’s violating it or not,” he said. But meanwhile, the status quo for both the North
(with its small nuclear arsenal and powerful ICBMs) and the United States (with its 30,000 troops
in South Korea and a massive, nuclear-armed military force in the Asia region) remains in play
until both sides reach an agreement on a peace and disarmament process. As an example of the
continuation of US policies, on June 29 U.S. and South Korean military officials formally opened
America’s largest overseas military base, at Camp Humphreys in Pyeongtaek, about 80 miles from
Seoul. The secretary of state underscored U.S. intentions to make a fundamental change in US–
North Korean relations when he met with Kim in May. The North has reciprocated, said the Seoul
troubleshooter. “I can confirm that the North Koreans have talked about an entirely new
arrangement based on new security guarantees,” he told The Nation. Glyn Ford, a member of the
British Labor Party and a former member of the European Parliament, addressed that issue at an
international forum on Jeju Island last week. The best way for the United States to get the North to
move on denuclearization, he said, is to make some “front-loading” gestures reassuring Kim that
the US “hostile policy” is no longer operative, he argued. “Frankly, he doesn’t want to give up his
nuclear weapons and his nuclear deterrent, but he can’t keep both,” said Ford, who has made over
50 trips to North Korea. “So he’s looking for a deal that makes him safe. There’s a lot of talk
about CVID [complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization],” he added. “Kim’s looking for
CVIS—complete, verifiable irreversible security guarantees. Not ones that are temporary.” On
June 21, Defense News reported from Washington that the Air Force has been flying two “WC-
135 Constant Phoenix nuke-sniffing planes” for the collection mission around North Korea. These
planes, which were first deployed near the peninsula last September, will soon by augmented by a
modified C-130 Hercules aircraft equipped with a $5 million modular kit “that allows it to detect
nuclear particles in the atmosphere,” the publication said. The planes fly out of Kadena Air Force
Base in Okinawa. When a Defense News reporter, Valerie Insinna, visited the base last February,
“the words ‘North Korea’ often seemed like the elephant in the room,” she wrote. Because “the
capabilities of all these aircraft are highly classified,” leaders “shied away from talking about the
country, and when asked explicit questions about North Korea, avoided mentioning the country by
name in responses.” In an interview before the Singapore summit with The Nation, Joseph
DeTrani, a former CIA nonproliferation analyst who was a special envoy to the Six-Party Talks
with North Korea during the George W. Bush administration, said “sniffing” technologies would
be extremely useful once a verification process begins. “When you have an arms-control
agreement, you can bring a lot of technology into the picture,” he said. “You have sensors, plus
Michael Madden: “Prior to the Singapore Summit, the biggest news about the DPRK concerned a personnel shuffle of the Korean People’s Army (KPA) High Command. Some of the coverage of these changes, obviously targeted on a general audience, was misleading. According to recent commentary, Kim Jong Un, the “brutal dictator,” had once again embarked on a bloody purge of senior officials. A more coherent and accurate interpretation of Kim Jong Un’s rationale was that he switched his top military leaders as part of the preliminary phase of mothballing the DPRK’s WMD program; there is a certain logic to moving malcontents to other positions, lest they resist Kim’s moves on denuclearization. However, this was only a minor factor in Kim Jong Un’s calculations. A better explanation of the recent adjustments in the KPA high command lies in understanding how senior personnel appointments are orchestrated and implemented in the party, army and state; looking at personnel appointments in relation to the institutions and personalities involved on a case-by-case basis; and recognizing the continuation of Kim Jong Un’s efforts to strengthen party and civilian control over North Korea’s armed forces. The changes in the KPA high command made in the past two months involve the heads of the three institutions which comprise a military and political command and control over the KPA’s conventional and special operations forces, as well as the rear service and administrative components which support them. These institutions include the Minister of the People’s Armed Forces (the DPRK’s equivalent of a defense minister), the Chief of the KPA General Staff Department (and by extension the 1st Vice Chief of the General Staff and Director of the Operations Bureau) and the director of the KPA General Political Bureau. These are the top three positions in the KPA high command. They come with automatic membership (either full or alternate) on the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK) Political Bureau which places the incumbent officeholders in the “Top 20” of the DPRK’s formal political hierarchy. All three of the appointees are Kim Jong Un loyalists who have held high office since 2012. They will contribute to and implement his policies, including external overtures to China and the ROK as well as phased denuclearization, with little to no resistance. None has any long-standing patronage ties, and can be counted on not to feather their nests through malfeasance or misappropriation of resources. This is not to suggest that their predecessors were corrupt or disloyal; rather, the new appointments are an insurance policy based on their previous positions and contributions to the regime and their close links to Kim Jong Un and other members of the core leadership. In this respect, the Suryong (supreme leader) is leaving nothing to chance. To be sure, these are highly significant personnel changes in the North’s political culture. Moreover, the fact that they were leaked and subsequently publicized at roughly the same time created a kind of shock factor. Two of the men who were replaced were observed saluting ROK President Moon Jae-in during the April 27 high-level Inter-Korean Summit, and the adjustments were reported two weeks before the June 12 US-DPRK Singapore meeting, heightening the drama around the changes in the high command. However, there is a significant gap between the time the Suryong and core leadership made these personnel appointments, when they were actually effected and when they were either leaked or reported in state media. It is highly probable the decision to replace the three officials was made several months ago, possibly at the beginning of the year. Unless there are particularly exigent circumstances, as was the case with the dismissal of Jang Song Thaek, at the earliest it takes between six to eight weeks to successfully implement these types of high-level changes. The average amount of time for such changes is about 12 weeks and...
at maximum, the amount of the decision and transition period takes six months. ...The KPA General Political Bureau (GPB) is responsible for the Party’s (WPK) political management of North Korea’s conventional and special operations forces. The GPB, through its network of political committees and political commissars, manages—among other things—political indoctrination and education, cultural activities, surveillance, and some aspects of personnel affairs of military units subordinate to the Ministry of the People’s Armed Forces and the KPA General Staff Department. Part of the GPB’s political control involves ensuring that the WPK’s military policies are implemented by the North’s armed forces. Kim Jong Un cut his political teeth back in 2007 working with the GPB. He has used a number of former GPB alums as a personnel-feeder for top positions throughout the DPRK’s national security community, what Ken Gause calls the “GPB Mafia.” Many of these personnel appointments occurred while Kim Jong Un used a combination of the GPB’s political powers, field inspections, live-fire exercises and hardened commanders to establish discipline and his unitary command over the military. This largely occurred during the KPA High Command’s revolving door years of 2012-2015. With the GPB in the driver’s seat and Kim Jong Un focusing his energies on the Ministry of the People’s Armed Forces and the KPA General Staff Department, this most likely created an institutional arrogance among senior and mid-level GPB personnel. By late 2016 and early 2017, the GPB had become a cohort that, if left unchecked, could have emerged as an impediment to Kim Jong Un’s policy goals, a challenge to his political authority and, however remote the possibility, a threat to his personal safety. Influential GPB personnel, however, need not present the Supreme Commander with a direct power challenge to be a problem. Instead, the GPB’s Organizational Affairs Department can exert bureaucratic resistance to policy implementation. The network of its political committees, commissars and instructors could half-heartedly implement policies, refuse to use their political power to ensure policy compliance or slow down direct orders from The Center. Human resources or materiel allocation could be slowed or not happen altogether. Another factor, which became salient during the last half of 2017, is malfeasance and corruption. The GPB Organizational Affairs Department has several branch offices located in close proximity to military bases. While their primary mission is policy implementation, indoctrination, labor activities and so forth, each of these regional branch offices has a finance and accounting unit which issues production quotas, allocates resources, and uses financial audit powers over the KPA’s foreign currency and domestic production sites. These sites run the gamut from small consumer good factories to fisheries and agricultural units. Between the Ministry of the People’s Armed Forces and the KPA General Staff Department there are between 36 to 50 trading corporations which are subject to the economic planning and financial audit controls of the Organization Affairs Department and its regional offices. The GPB has undergone the most organizational upheaval during the last year. From July-November 2017, the GPB was subject to its first top-to-bottom investigation, inspection and audit by the WPK Organization Guidance Department (OGD) since 1996. Some accounts claim that senior GPB personnel were accepting bribes for military promotions. This is probably accurate, but only one of many things that would trigger such a comprehensive and capacious inquiry. Other matters of interest to the OGD investigators included the embarrassment of ghost fishing vessels—linked to KPA fishery production units turning up in Japanese waters—inefficiency in allocating service members, and materials for civilian infrastructure projects. One might find KPA trading companies and economic production compelled into financial misappropriation (skimming more from the top) as multilateral sanctions put pressure on KPA-owned companies to earn revenue. During the fall of 2017, several GPB political officers were executed and, considering the GPB’s financial and audit reach into the KPA all of these factors lie on the doorstep of the Organizational Affairs Department. It is no accident that the first personnel change made at the top level of the GPB was to the head of the Organizational Affairs Department. In November 2017, Colonel-General Son Chol Ju was appointed as head of the Organization Affairs Department and his appointment was not widely publicized until May 2018. At the same time, the GPB’s then-director Vice Marshal Hwang Pyong So was removed from office. Hwang’s removal prompted speculative reports that he may have been incarcerated or undergoing political education through manual labor. When Hwang resurfaced in public over three months later in February 2018, he reappeared in his previous position as a WPK Central Committee Department Deputy Director (most likely in OGD). This means that if he was not quite the whistleblower on his GPB subordinates, then he
accepted responsibility for lax management and the institutional defects in the GPB. Vice Marshal Kim Jong Gak replaced Hwang Pyong So as head of GPB. Kim’s appointment was publicized on February 8, 2018, when he attended a military parade held to honor the KPA’s historical anniversary. A respected senior KPA commander, Kim is one of the few senior KPA officials who has held leadership positions across the entirety of the DPRK’s armed forces—he has been a corps deputy chief of staff and corps commander, headed a training facility, and was involved in military administration. As a prerequisite to lead the GPB, even on a temporary basis, Vice Marshal Kim served as Senior Deputy Director of the GPB, a specially created position with responsibility for the GPB’s daily operational management on behalf of the ailing former director, the late Vice Marshal Jo Myong Rok. When he was tapped to lead the GPB, Kim was serving as the founding rector and dean of the KIS Military University Post-Graduate School, a pet project of Kim Jong Un’s. It is highly likely that Vice Marshal Kim was in office in late 2017. But by May 2018, despite being elected to the WPK Political Bureau and the State Affairs Commission, he had been replaced. There is a possibility that Kim anticipated a continuation of the GPB’s skim or, being in his late 70s, lacked the stamina to head the GPB. What is more likely, however, is that his term of office was always intended to be temporary. Given Vice Marshal Kim’s background, and the fact that Kim Jong Un had previously installed interim officials at the top of a number of organizations, Kim Jong Gak was appointed to lead the GPB on a transitional basis until a more permanent replacement was appointed. The new GPB Director is General Kim Su Gil. Prior to his appointment, from 2014 to 2018, General Kim was the Chairman of the Pyongyang WPK City Committee, the Party’s boss in the DPRK capital. Kim’s formative experience was serving as a political committee member and officer in the GPB. He was a member of an informal group of adjutants who attended a number of on-site visits and military field inspections early in Kim Jong Un’s leadership during 2012 to 2013. There are two things to note about Kim Su Gil’s elevation. First, for the last four years, he has been a civilian senior party official and is migrating back to serving as a uniformed military officer. Second, and more critically, when he was appointed as the party boss in Pyongyang, it occurred four months after the dismissal and execution of Jang Song Thaek. Among the institutions in Jang’s domain was the Pyongyang WPK City Committee. One of Jang’s protégés led the committee and the party apparatus included numerous members of Jang’s patronage network. With this appointment and the current GPB Director, Kim has taken over leadership of a major DPRK institution, at Kim Jong Un’s behest, after it had undergone a major investigation and some subordinate officials were subjected to incarceration, relocation or even execution. The Ministry of the People’s Armed Forces (MPAF) is the DPRK’s defense ministry. It is responsible for allocating material and human resources, administration, and diplomacy with foreign militaries and defense ministries. The MPAF also processes munitions and equipment orders for the North’s conventional armed forces. In addition, it contains the KPA General Logistical Department which is responsible for a number of rear service missions including food supply, medical care (including hospitals, clinics and KPA physicians and nurses), property management at KPA bases (the KPA is the largest landowner in the country), and the construction and maintenance of critical infrastructure on or in the vicinity of KPA bases. To some Pyongyang watchers, the MPAF is merely a figurehead umbrella organization for the GPB, the KPA General Staff Department, the Military Security Command (MSC) and other service and support organizations for the DPRK’s conventional and special operations forces. However, the MPAF gradually emerged as a functional defense ministry during the last years of Kim Jong Il’s life and has become a signature part of Kim Jong Un’s defense policies since he assumed power. One substantive change was formally subordinating the KPA General Logistical Department (GLD) to MPAF and making the 1st Vice Minister of the People’s Armed Forces concurrently the GLD’s Director, which started in 2012. Prior to that the GLD was technically subordinate to the MPAF, but tilted in the orbit of the GPB. And from 2014 to 2017, the KPA’s construction and non-combat engineering units—which were previously dispersed around the KPA General Staff, GPB and MPAF—were consolidated under the MPAF’s command and control. Because of this organizational restructuring, and a sharpening of previously blurred lines of authority, the MPAF has been subject to the most personnel upheaval at the top. Under Kim Jong Un, six Ministers of the People’s Armed Forces have been appointed. The last Minister was General Pak Yong Sik, who held the position for three years. General Pak was one of the two senior KPA commanders observed saluting ROK President Moon Jae-in on April 27. As mentioned previously, he is a
member of the “GPB Mafia” and has long-standing ties to the Kim Family, having previously served as the head of the Political Committee of the Pyongyang Defense Command (PDC), also known as the 91 Metropolitan Defense Corps. There are two ways to view Pak Yong Sik’s removal from office. First, when General Pak was a political manager of the PDC, there was a dispute between that corps unit and the Guard Command over the allocation of construction materials for indok (benevolent or humanitarian) and kangsong taeguk (strong and prosperous state) projects which both these Praetorian Guard units were rushing to complete for Kim Il Sung’s centenary in 2012. With the potential inflow of money, daily necessities and construction materials from South Korea and most likely China, and given a prior history of participating in a bureaucratic turf war, General Pak may have been removed from office or temporarily disappeared because the margin of error on this inter-Korea-go-round is very small. Misappropriation of funds, and especially building materials, was a constant headache for The Center during the latter part of the Sunshine Policy years. Secondly, he may turn up in another position, even if he has been temporarily sidelined to thwart skimming or misappropriation. If one is picking a position where he is likely to resurface in the KPA, then he might turn up as a political director of one of the KPA’s four forward-deployed ground corps units (I, II, IV and V Army Corps). It is a standard procedure for general-grade officers to rotate between positions in KPA High Command organizations, such as MPAF, and Corps Command positions. This applies to military field commanders under the KPA General Staff Department, as well as GPB political officers. General Pak turning up in a Corps Command or as head of a Corps Political Committee would be neither unprecedented nor surprising.

As a commander or political committee chief of a forward-deployed ground corps unit, General Pak would retain his stripes in the KPA High Command and would be a trusted figure ensuring that inter-Korea military agreements are being kept by the KPA. General No Kwang Chol was appointed to replace General Pak. No’s appointment was corroborated in DPRK state media coverage of Kim Jong Un’s visit to Singapore. For a little over two years, General No served as Chairman of the Second Economic Committee, which is the manufacturing and production arm of the DPRK’s conventional and strategic weapons. He has been an integral part of the country’s nuclear tests and ballistic missile drills, albeit less visible than other senior officials of the WPK Munitions Industry Department. Like Kim Su Gil at the head of the GPB, General No is a KPA general-grade officer who came to public prominence after Kim Jong Un’s accession. Also, like Kim, General No has rotated between serving as a uniformed officer and a civilian party official. No has also held positions as Vice Chief of the KPA General Staff and a brief term as the 1st Vice Minister of the People’s Armed Forces. This appointment can be viewed as both a reward for his loyalty to Kim Jong Un and his service as a trusted manager, but also as an effort to give him experience in a variety of top positions in the DPRK’s national security community before he ascends the top of the KPA High Command. Moreover, as Minister of the People’s Armed Forces, No will be the principal representative of North Korea’s armed forces with foreign civilian and military leadership. While accompanying Kim Jong Un to Singapore, No participated in interactions with Singapore’s Prime Minister and President Trump. The KPA General Staff Department (GSD) is responsible for planning, operations, training and command and control of the KPA’s three conventional service branches (Ground, Navy and Air and Anti-Air Forces) and its special operations forces (SOF). In contrast to the GPB and the MPAF, the leadership of GSD has been stable for five years and it remains unclear if a personnel change at the top was attempted or completed. According to several media reports and sources, General Ri Yong Gil has been appointed Chief of GSD. General Ri, however, has served at the top of GSD since 2013. Except for a three-month disappearance from public view in 2016, which prompted erroneous reports about his execution and arrest, General Ri has held only two positions since February 2013—either Chief of GSD (August 2013 to February 2016) or Director of the GSD Operations Bureau and 1st Chief of GSD (from February to August 2013, and then from May 2016 to May 2018). The GSD Operations Bureau is responsible for the planning, training and daily command and control of the KPA’s three conventional service branches along with the training and movements of the PDC and III Army Corps which protect Pyongyang and its vicinity. The GSD Operations Bureau even contains a staff of adjutants and commanders that form the C4ISR link between the KPA Supreme Command and field commanders. The Chief of the GSD, in addition to having some supervision over the GSD Operations Bureau, is also responsible for the command and supervision of the GSD’s other bureaus (including combat engineering, the
The United States appears to have shelved an “all or nothing” approach to North Korean denuclearization as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo prepares to head back to North Korea this week hoping to agree a roadmap for its nuclear disarmament. At the Singapore summit, Kim made a broad commitment to “work toward denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” but has made no mention of how or when Pyongyang might give up a nuclear weapons program that threatens the United States and its allies. U.S. officials have since been trying to flesh out an agreement that critics say is short on substance and map a route to a deal that might live up to Trump’s enthusiastic portrayal of the summit outcome. But U.S. officials said there had been no sign of a breakthrough and little progress toward even defining the keys terms of any agreement. What has been seen instead is an apparent softening in the Trump administration’s approach, in spite of what U.S. officials say are intelligence assessments saying that North Korea is continuing to deceive Washington about its weapons programs. The U.S. administration has previously demanded that North Korea agree to abandon its entire nuclear program before it could expect any relief from tough international sanctions. Ahead of the Singapore summit, Pompeo said Trump would reject anything short of “complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization.” But following talks on July 1 between U.S. envoy Sung Kim and North Korean counterparts to set up Pompeo’s latest Pyongyang visit, this “CVID” mantra appears suddenly to have disappeared from the U.S. State Department lexicon. It says pressure will remain until North Korea denuclearizes, but in statements this week, has redefined the U.S. goal as “the final, fully verified denuclearization of (North Korea) as agreed to by Chairman Kim.” Two U.S. officials said the Trump administration had stepped back from its CVID demand on South Korea’s advice. The South Koreans, who have been pursuing their own talks with North Korea, argued that step-by-step negotiations were more likely to be successful than insisting Pyongyang yield to all U.S. demands before any concessions. There was also a realization, one official said, that maintaining Chinese and Russian cooperation over North Korea would be “more problematic if the U.S. stuck to an all-or-nothing posture.” The official said that the North Koreans had largely refused in talks with Sung Kim to respond to attempts to define the key terms of an eventual agreement, including the words complete, verifiable and irreversible. “The choice was either bend it or break it,” one of the officials said. A senior South Korean official told U.S. officials in a meeting in Washington last month that the U.S. side should stop pressing for CVID, which North Korea saw as a recipe for unilateral disarmament that would leave it vulnerable to regime change, according to a source familiar with the discussions. The South Korean official suggested that the U.S. instead refer to
“mutual threat reduction,” the source said. The official also argued that it would be difficult to inspect North Korean nuclear and missile facilities in a conventional way involving “hundreds” of international investigators, as Pyongyang would be unlikely to accept. White House national security adviser John Bolton said on July 1 the bulk of North Korea’s weapons programs could be dismantled within a year, “if they have the strategic decision already made to do that.” However, on Tuesday, State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert declined give a timeframe for North Korea’s denuclearization. “I know some individuals have given timelines; we’re not going to provide a timeline for that,” she said. “A lot of work is left to be done, certainly. We go into this eyes wide open.” (David Brunnstrom, “U.S. Softens Nuclear Approach as Pompeo Prepares for More Nuclear Talks,” Associated Press, July 5, 2018)

The Foreign Ministry strategist behind Japan's groundbreaking summit with North Korea in 2002 accused Prime Minister Abe Shinzo of flawed diplomacy with his consistent tough language on the abduction issue. “Abe reached the pinnacle of power by taking a strong stance toward North Korea. But just using strong words for his domestic audience doesn't constitute diplomacy,” said Tanaka Hitoshi, who, after the historic trip by Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro that led to the return of five abductees, was promoted to deputy vice foreign minister. He now chairs the Institute for International Strategy at the Japan Research Institute. Tanaka outlined his concerns about Abe’s handling of the thorny issue during a lecture at the Japan National Press Club in Tokyo on July 3, and asked, “Is he producing results?” He recommended that Japan switch from its hardline stance of insisting that international sanctions remain in place until North Korea disarms its nuclear and missile arsenals to more traditional diplomacy based on dialogue and engagement. “The time is ripe to change from a policy of exerting pressure,” said Tanaka, adding that Tokyo would be better served by steady and consistent diplomatic efforts rather than trying to hold a Japan-North Korea summit suddenly. “Unless Japan demonstrates it has a solid strategy for Korean Peninsula issues, it will be derided by the United States and China,” he said. “It is irresponsible to say that the abductees must be alive or that they are dead without having implemented thorough research,” Tanaka said. One way to resolve the issue could be for the Japanese government to "establish a liaison office in Pyongyang," he said. (Fujita Naotaka, “North Korea Blasts Abe over Handling of Abduction Issue,” Asahi Shimbun, July 4, 2018)

South and North Korean basketball players played two friendly matches in Pyongyang today amid a thaw in inter-Korean relations. The games were played in the afternoon at Ryugyong Chung Ju-yung Gymnasium between a "peace" team and a "prosperity" team made up of a mixture of North and South Korean players. The women's teams played first followed by the men's. They were part of four planned games scheduled for today and tomorrow. Senior North Korean officials, including Ri Son-gwon, chairman of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country, and Choe Hwi, a vice party chairman and the chief of the national sports body, came to watch the games. South Korea's Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon also attended the games. He is leading a 100-strong delegation, including the athletes, coaches, staff members and journalists. Cho told the athletes and the spectators filling the 12,000-seat gymnasium that he hopes inter-Korean sports exchanges will further expand and eventually contribute to the reconciliation and unity of the two Koreas. "Through the Panmunjom Declaration adopted by our two leaders on April 27, the South and the North have been making their way toward a new peace and prosperity," he said, referring to the summit agreement. "At the forefront of it lies inter-Korean sports exchanges." "In particular, I believe that this reunification basketball event held in line with the summit agreement will expand and advance sports exchanges and greatly contribute to reconciliation of our people and unity," he added. Kim Il-guk, the North's sports minister, said that the event was possible due to a "strong aspiration" for reunification demonstrated by the leaders of the two Koreas. (Yonhap/Joint Press Corps, “Koreas Hold Friendly Basketball Match in Pyongyang,” July 4, 2018)

The two Koreas agreed to cooperate on North Korea's reforestation and transferring South Korea's knowledge of cultivating seedlings to the North, the Ministry of Unification said. They plan to conduct joint research on the exact condition of the North's forests. Seoul's three-member
Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met North Korean officials in Pyongyang, hoping to “fill in” details on North Korea’s commitments and maintain the momentum towards implementing the agreement from the summit, according to a pool report by reporters traveling with him. Pompeo met Kim Yong Chol, who played a key role with Pompeo in arranging last month’s summit between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore, according to a pool report by reporters traveling with him. Pompeo’s talks with Kim were expected to last a “couple of hours” and it was uncertain whether he would meet Kim Jong Un, the pool report said. He will spend the night in Pyongyang, his first overnight stay in North Korea. “Today’s meeting is a really meaningful meeting,” Kim Yong Chol told Pompeo. “The President told me he believes that Chairman Kim sees a different, brighter future for the people of North Korea. We both hope that’s true,” Pompeo said on Twitter after a phone call with Trump as he headed for North Korea. “Next stop: Pyongyang. I look forward to continuing my meetings with North Korean leaders. There’s much hard work ahead but peace is worth the effort.”

Pompeo would try to agree on at least an initial list of nuclear sites and an inventory that could be checked against the available intelligence, U.S. intelligence officials told Reuters. Also high on the agenda is the issue of the remains of U.S. soldiers missing from the 1950-53 Korean War. Trump said after the Singapore summit that Kim had agreed to send the remains back to the United States. Both issues are considered essential tests of whether Kim is serious about negotiations.

North Korean officials have yet to demonstrate that in working-level talks, the intelligence officials said. “If they’re serious, then we can get down to the business of defining the terms of final denuclearization,” said one official. But the U.S. ability to verify the accuracy of any North Korean list is limited due to the lack of a “high confidence” accounting of the North’s nuclear arsenal, such as the number of warheads and uranium enrichment facilities, especially if they are not operational, they said. Pompeo was greeted by Kim Yong Chol and Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho, who some Seoul officials expect to lead negotiations, according to a pool report. Kim Yong Chol is a hardline former spy chief, while Ri is a career diplomat with a long history of negotiations on the nuclear issue. Whether Kim or Ri leads negotiations could provide a clue on what approach Pyongyang will take, experts said. “This is your third visit to our country so I guess you are used to it now,” Kim Yong Chol told Pompeo at the guesthouse, according to the report. “The more you come, more trust we can build between one another.” Pompeo replied: “I was joking that if I come one more time, I will have to pay taxes here.”

(Hyonhee Shin and John Walcott, “Pompeo Meets North Koreans, Hopes to ‘Fill in’ Details on Denuclearization,” Reuters, July 5, 2018) Secretary of State Mike Pompeo began his first trip to Pyongyang since President Donald Trump’s summit with leader Kim Jong Un last month with a vow to nail down the specifics of Kim’s commitments on denuclearization. He was met at the Pyongyang airport by Kim Yong Chol, a senior ruling party official and former intelligence chief, and Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho. Soon afterward, he and Kim Yong Chol, who has been something of a point-man on Washington negotiations for Kim Jong Un, sat down for their first talks. “The more you come, more trust we can build between one another,” Kim told Pompeo, according to a pool from reporters traveling with the secretary. On the flight to Pyongyang, Pompeo said both sides made commitments at the Singapore summit on the complete denuclearization of North Korea and on what a transformed bilateral relationship might look like. “On this trip, I’m seeking to fill in some details on these commitments and continue the momentum toward implementation of what the two leaders promised each other and the world. I expect that the DPRK is ready to do the same,” Pompeo said. But just before Pompeo’s arrival, Uriminzokkiri lobbed a warning shot saying Washington should stop provoking the North with an “anachronistic human rights racket” at a time of diplomatic attempts to improve ties. Speaking aboard Air Force One on a trip to Montana, Trump said he still believes Kim will follow through and said he forged a personal connection with the young autocrat he once pilloried as “Little Rocket Man.” “I think we understand each other. I really believe that he sees a different future for North Korea,” Trump told reporters. “I hope that’s true. If it’s not true, then we go back to the
other way, but I don’t think that’s going to be necessary.” (Andrew Harnik, “Secretary of State Pompeo Vows to Get Details of Nuke Commitment in Visit to Pyongyang,” Associated Press, USA Today, July 6, 2018) In comments to reporters on his plane en route to Pyongyang, Pompeo said, “Our leaders made commitments at the Singapore summit on the complete denuclearization of North Korea and outlined what a transformed U.S.-DPRK relationship could look like,” according to the Associated Press. “On this trip,” Pompeo continued, “I’m seeking to fill in some details on these commitments and continue the momentum towards implementation of what the two leaders promised each other and the world.” He went on, “I expect that the DPRK is ready to do the same.” Shortly before his arrival in Pyongyang, Pompeo tweeted that he spoke with Trump while in the air, saying Trump told him he believed Kim saw a “different, brighter future” for the people of North Korea. In another tweet that followed shortly afterward, Pompeo wrote that he looked forward to continuing his meetings with North Korean officials. “There’s much hard work ahead but peace is worth the effort,” he wrote. Among Pompeo’s delegation are top North Korean experts in the administration, including Allison Hooker, director for Korean affairs for the White House National Security Council; Andrew Kim, head of the CIA’s Korea Mission Center; and Sung Kim, America’s ambassador to the Philippines and a seasoned negotiator with the North who led working-level meetings between the two countries ahead of the Trump-Kim summit and Pompeo’s latest North Korea visit. The most recent hint on how the talks might unfold came from Reuters yesterday, when the agency cited a U.S. official as saying that Pyongyang largely refused to respond to attempts to define the key terms of an eventual denuclearization agreement, including the words “complete, verifiable and irreversible” during U.S.-North talks led by Ambassador Kim and North Korea’s Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui earlier this week. Faced with a choice to either bend it or break it, the Trump administration decided to shelve its “all or nothing” approach to the North’s denuclearization issue, the report said. But the State Department denied softening its approach to the North in response to the Reuters article. “Nothing could be further from the truth,” said Heather Nauert, the department’s spokesperson. Trump told reporters Thursday aboard Air Force One en route to Montana that he “really believes” Kim sees a different future for North Korea, adding, “I hope that’s true. If that’s not true, we’ll go back to the other way.” (Lee Sung-eun, “Pompeo Starts Talking on Nukes,” JoongAng Ilbo, July 6, 2018)

Kim Yong Chol, vice chairman of the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK) Central Committee, declared plans to hold “good discussions” in a July 6 meeting in Pyongyang with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, South Korean Minister of Unification Cho Myung-gyon reported. Meeting on the morning of July 5 with Cho and other visiting South Korean government delegation members at Pyongyang’s Koryo Hotel, where they are staying while in the city to attend unified inter-Korean basketball matches, Kim said he was “scheduled to meet with Secretary Pompeo on July 6.” During the 50-minute-long meeting, Kim also explained why leader Kim Jong-un, who proposed the unified matches, would not be viewing them himself at the Ryugyong Chung Ju-yung Gymnasium (Pyongyang Arena). “Our Chairman is traveling for on-the-spot guidance in the provinces, far away, and he will therefore be unlikely to watch the match today,” Kim Yong Chol was quoted as saying. “The general trends for activities related to the organization of this event were individually decided by the Chairman,” he reportedly said, adding that Kim Jong-un had “provided individual instructions” on detailed aspects. In particular, he said Kim Jong-un had asked that the South Koreans be “encouraged to bring their own broadcasting personnel and music” and suggesting that they be “accommodated in such a way that all 100 or so [visiting South Korean delegation members] can use the Koryo Hotel.” Kim Yong Chol’s account suggests the July 3 addition of venue broadcast personnel to the delegation roster just before the visit was made at Kim Jong-un’s “direction.” Kim Yong Chol was further quoted as saying the “unified basketball matches, which have received such special attention [from the South and North Korea leaders] are a great event worthy of note in the history of inter-Korean relations.” “If this trend keeps up in the future, I believe inter-Korean relations will enter a truly great path,” he was also reported as saying. Kim explained that his own visit to the Koryo Hotel to meet with the South Korean government delegation came at Kim Jong-un’s “suggestion” as well. “Minister Cho Myung-gyon and all the rest of you are here from the South, and he suggested it would be good for me to meet with you, and to share a few simple words I wanted to convey while Minister Cho is back in Pyongyang after such a long time,” he reportedly said. In a separate closed-door meeting with
Cho, Kim Yong Chol suggested the two sides work “more quickly and practically” with inter-Korean talks between authorities for implementation of the April 27 Panmunjom Declaration and proposed that South Korea “actively implement the agreed-upon terms at a faster rate and work to generate more concrete and visible achievements the South and North Korean people can truly sense,” Cho reported. During the conversation, the two of them “held discussions to the effect that the South and North Korean sides will be addressing matters related to a joint march [at the Asian Games] and the Korean Peninsula flag issue in an appropriate way from the same perspective,” he explained. They also pledged to “hold consultations and smooth preparations” for an anticipated full schedule including more unified basketball matches and a Seoul performance by a North Korean performers’ delegation, he said. “Nothing new was agreed upon,” Cho said of his closed-door meeting with Kim Yong Chol. (Lee Je-hun, “Kim Yong Chol Declares Plans for ‘Good Discussions’ with Pompeo in Pyongyang,” Hankyore, July 5, 2018)

As North Korea will likely repatriate the remains of U.S. troops killed during the 1950-1953 Korean War in sync with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s planned visit to Pyongyang on Friday, Pyongyang has informed Washington that it would not charge the repatriation expenses as it did in the past. According to multiple sources on North Korea, the North did not demand that Washington pay for the repatriation while negotiating with the United States over returning the remains of some 200 U.S. troops killed in action. The North searched for the remains of killed U.S. troops from 1990 through 2007 and has so far returned those of 443 soldiers. During the process, Washington has paid about 50,000 U.S. dollars per body. “If the North returns 200 bodies this time, the United States will have to pay over 10 million dollars,” one source said. “As far as I know, there will be no payment this time because of concerns that it could violate the U.N. sanctions that prohibits large cash payments to the North.” However, North Korea plans to charge expenses for possible future repatriations, as it costs hefty amounts of money for the North mobilizing its troops for the excavation job. (Na-Ri Shin, “N. Korea Waives Expenses for Returning U.S. Troop Remains,” Donga Ilbo, July 5, 2018)

7/6/18

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met with a top North Korean official for several hours in talks aimed at persuading the North to give up its nuclear and ballistic missile programs — a mission that, in conversations with at least two outside experts, he said was doomed from the outset. Pompeo has repeatedly said he believes that the country’s young leader, Kim Jong-un, is serious about negotiations. He is making his third trip to Pyongyang, North Korea’s capital, even as others — including his rivals in the administration — have been more skeptical of the diplomatic efforts. Pompeo met for almost three hours this afternoon with Kim Yong Chol, a former intelligence chief and a leading negotiator in the nuclear talks, followed by a nearly two-hour dinner on Friday night. In remarks made before the meeting, Kim said, “The more we meet, the deeper our friendship will be, I hope.” Kim called it a “really meaningful meeting,” and Pompeo said he counted on it “being very productive.” If the ultimate goal of North Korean denuclearization seems like a long shot, Pompeo’s proximate goal, according to one senior administration official, is at least to get North Korean officials to reveal their true intentions fairly quickly. Previous American administrations spent years in detailed and ultimately fruitless negotiations, giving the North breathing space to develop its lethal arsenal further. John R. Bolton, Trump’s national security adviser, does not believe that North Korea intends to surrender its nuclear or ballistic missile weapons programs, he has told others. If failure is inevitable, Pompeo wants it to come more quickly this time, so the administration can return to its maximum pressure campaign of sanctions and diplomatic isolation of North Korea, he has told advisers. “After this meeting, Pompeo will probably again say that Kim Jong-un is intelligent and trustworthy, which is truly unfortunate,” said Sung-Yoon Lee of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. “I think we’re headed in the direction of giving up and accepting North Korea as a de facto nuclear state.” Heather Nauert, the State Department spokeswoman, denied that Pompeo saw negotiations with the North as bound to fail. “Will this be tough? Yes,” she said of the expected many rounds of talks. “Will negotiations involve a lot of hard work? Of course. But the secretary is committed to implementing the plan agreed to by both leaders in Singapore.” Michael Green, who negotiated with North Korea during the administration of President George W. Bush, agreed that the Trump administration would soon be forced to accept North Korea as a nuclear state. “If
the North Koreans don’t fire off missiles or nuclear weapons but instead just don’t comply with
denuclearization, the administration is going to have a very hard time, having sold the Trump-Kim
relationship the way they did, going back to China and the allies and saying in effect, ‘We were
duped,’” Green said. During his visit, Pompeo will be pushing the North Koreans for “real action,
real change” toward what he has said is Kim’s stated commitment for complete, verifiable,
irreversible denuclearization. So far, however, the only actions American intelligence agencies
have detected have been efforts to expand weapons facilities and conceal the number of weapons
it has as well as the facilities used to make them, according to reports. (Gardiner Harris, “A Wary
Pompeo Leads Talks to Suspend North Korea's Nuclear Program,” New York Times, July 7, 2018,
p. A-5)

38North: “Recent commercial satellite imagery indicates that North Korea has finished work on
the secondary cooling system for the 5 MWe reactor. It is unclear whether the detection of water
flowing from the pump house indicates that the system is being tested or that the reactor is
beginning operations. Satellite imagery also indicates that operational testing of the experimental
light water reactor’s (ELWR) secondary cooling system is ongoing and may have begun as early
as late March 2018. Thermal infrared (TIR) imagery confirms that despite the testing, the reactor
itself was not yet operational as of June 14. Testing of these systems is likely standard procedure
to ensure the safe and efficient use of the reactors if they resume/start operations. In addition to
two previously identified non-industrial, blue-roofed buildings, two additional structures have
been recently built, with one now in each of the four major operational areas of Yongbyon. Their
purpose remains unclear, although one possibility is for use by VIP visitors, either senior North
Korean staff or officials, or foreigners.” (38North, “North Korea’s Yongbyon Nuclear Research
Center: Testing of Reactor Cooling Systems; Construction of Two New Non-Industrial
Buildings,” July 6, 2018)

Pompeo: “Q: Mr. Secretary, how did the meetings go? ...POMPEO: So yeah, so let me just – a
couple things. We had many hours of productive conversations. These are complicated issues, but
we made progress on almost all of the central issues. Some places a great deal of progress,
other places there’s still more work to be done. We now have a meeting in Panmunjom set up
for July 12 – it could move by one day or two – where there will be discussions between the folks
responsible for the repatriation of remains, will take place at the border, and that process will
begin to develop over the days that follow. So very productive conversation about the process by
which we will deliver on the commitments that were made in the Singapore summit. The
North Koreans also confirmed the missile engine testing facility, we talked about what the
modalities would look like for the destruction of that facility as well, and so some progress there
as well. And then we have laid out a path for further negotiations at the working level so that
the two teams can get together and continue these discussions. Q: Did you bring up the satellite
images that show that the facilities are actually expanding, and what did the North Koreans say
when you mentioned that? POMPEO: Well, your characterization is interesting. We talked
about what the North Koreans are continuing to do and how it’s the case we can get our
arms around achieving what Chairman Kim and President Trump both agreed to, which
was the complete denuclearization of North Korea. There is no – no one walked away from
that. They’re still equally committed. Chairman Kim is still committed. I had a chance to speak to
President Trump this morning. I know my counterpart spoke with Chairman Kim during the
course of our negotiations as well. We had productive, good-faith negotiations. ... Q: Mr.
Secretary, are you any closer to a sense of a timeline for denuclearization and a baseline
declaration for their weapons of mass destruction? SECRETARY POMPEO: I’m not going to
get into the details of our conversations, but we spent a good deal of time talking about each of
those two things, and I think we made progress in every element of our discussions. ...” (DoS,
Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo Remarks to the Traveling Press, Pyongyang Sunan
International Airport, July 7, 2018)
Statement of the DPRK-U.S. summit after the first historic summit meeting and talks were held between the DPRK and the U.S. We expected that the U.S. side would bring itself with a constructive proposal which would help build up trust true to the spirit of the DPRK-U.S. summit meeting and talks. We, on our part, were also thinking of doing something which corresponds with it. It was, however, so regretful to mention what the U.S. side had shown in its attitude and stand at the first DPRK-U.S. high-level talks held on July 6-7. The DPRK side, during the talks, put forward the constructive proposals to seek a balanced implementation of all the provisions of the Joint Statement out of its firm willingness to remain faithful to the implementation of the spirit and agreed points of the DPRK-U.S. summit meeting and talks. These include taking wide-ranging proactive steps of simultaneous actions in a respective manner such as realizing multilateral exchanges for improved relations between the DPRK and the U.S., making public a declaration on the end of war first on the occasion of the 65th anniversary of the signing of the Korea Armistice Agreement to build a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, dismantling the test ground of high thrust engine to make a physical verification of the suspension of ICBM production as part of denuclearization steps and making an earliest start of the working-level talks for recovering POW/MIA remains. Before the talks, Kim Yong Chol, vice-chairman of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea who is also a chief delegate from our side to the talks, was authorized to convey with due respect to U.S. State Secretary Pompeo a personal letter sent from Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the DPRK Kim Jong Un to President Trump. Chairman Kim Jong Un expressed his expectation and conviction that good personal relations forged with President Trump and his sentiments of good faith built towards the latter at the Singapore summit meeting and talks would be further consolidated through the process of future dialogues such as high-level talks this time. But, the U.S. side came up only with its unilateral and gangster-like demand for denuclearization just calling for CVID, declaration and verification, all of which run counter to the spirit of the Singapore summit meeting and talks. The U.S. side never mentioned the issue of establishing a peace regime on the Korean peninsula which is essential for defusing tension and preventing a war. It took the position that it would even backtrack on the issue it had agreed on to end the status of war under certain conditions and excuses. As for the issue of announcing the declaration of the end of war at an early date, it is the first process of defusing tension and establishing a lasting peace regime on the Korean peninsula, and at the same time, it constitutes a first factor in creating trust. The U.S. side insisted on at the talks are all roots of troubles, which the previous administrations also had insisted on to disrupt the dialogue processes, stoke the distrust and increase the danger of war. The U.S. side, during the talks, made a great publicity about suspension of one or two joint military exercises. But suspension of one action called exercises is a highly reversible step which can be resumed anytime at any moment as all of its military force remains intact in its previously-held positions without scraping even a rifle. This is incomparable with the irreversible step taken by the DPRK to explode and dismantle the nuclear test ground. The results of the talks can't but be so apprehensive. We thought that the U.S. side would come with a constructive proposal which accords with the spirit of the DPRK-U.S. summit meeting and talks. But expectation and hope of ours were so naive as to be gullible. Conventional ways can never create new things. Treading on trite stereotype of all the failure would invite another failure only. Valuable agreement was reached in such a short time at the Singapore summit first ever in the history of the DPRK-U.S. relations. This is attributable to the fact that President Trump himself said he would move towards resolving the DPRK-U.S. relations and the issue of denuclearization of the Korean peninsula in a new way. If both sides at the working level reneged on the new way agreed at the summit and returned to the old way, the epoch-making Singapore summit would be meaningless, which was held thanks to the determinations and will of the two top leaders to open a new future for the interests of the two peoples and peace and security of the world. The first DPRK-U.S. high-level talks this time brought us in a dangerous situation where we may be shaken in our unshakable will for denuclearization, rather than consolidating trust between the DPRK and the U.S. In the last few months, we displayed maximum patience and watched the U.S. while initiating good-will steps as
many as we can. But, it seems that the U.S. misunderstood our goodwill and patience. The U.S. is fatally mistaken if it went to the extent of regarding that the DPRK would be compelled to accept, out of its patience, the demands reflecting its gangster-like mindset. A shorter way to denuclearization on the Korean peninsula is to remove deep-rooted mistrust and build up trust between the DPRK and the U.S. For this, both sides should be bold enough to be free from old ways which had only recorded failures and resolve the problem in a fresh manner which is never bound by the existing ways. A shortcut to it is also to take a step-by-step approach and follow the principle of simultaneous actions in resolving what is feasible one by one while giving priority to creating trust. But, if the U.S., being captivated in a fidget, tries to force upon us the old ways claimed by the previous administrations, this will get us nowhere. If the objective situation does not stand in favor of the denuclearization against our will, this would rather cast a heavy cloud over the atmosphere of developing bilateral relations which had shown its good movement in its beginning. Should the headwind begin to blow, it would cause a great disappointment not only to the international society aspiring after global peace and security but also to both the DPRK and the U.S. If so, this will finally make each side seek for another choice and there is no guarantee that this will not result in yet another tragedy. We still cherish our good faith in President Trump. The U.S. should make a serious consideration of whether the toleration of the headwind against the will of the two top leaders would meet the aspirations and expectations of the world people as well as the interests of its country.” (KCNA, “FM Spokesman on DPRK-U.S. High-Level Talks,” July 7, 2018)

North Korea accused the Trump administration of pushing a “unilateral and gangster-like demand for denuclearization” and called it “deeply regrettable,” hours after Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said his two days of talks in the North Korean capital were “very productive.” Despite the criticism, North Korea’s Foreign Ministry said the country’s leader, Kim Jong-un, still wanted to build on the “friendly relationship and trust” forged with President Trump during their summit meeting in Singapore on June 12. The ministry said Kim had written a personal letter to Trump, reiterating that trust. The harsh North Korean reaction may have been a time-tested negotiating tactic. But North Korea’s remarks also played to a larger fear: that the summit meeting’s vaguely worded commitment to “the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula” meant something very different in Pyongyang and Washington. Distrust on both sides has led the Americans to insist on rapid, deep dismantlement and highly intrusive verification; the North Koreans want an early lifting of sanctions and a formal end to the Korean War, among other steps. Pompeo and his entourage offered no immediate evidence that they had come away with anything tangible to show that North Korea was willing to surrender its nuclear and missile weapons programs. “These are complicated issues, but we made progress on almost all of the central issues,” Pompeo said before boarding a plane for Tokyo. He called the meetings “productive.” Administration officials said that they were neither surprised nor concerned about the North Korean response, and they pointed out that its final lines, the ones attributed directly to Kim, were conciliatory and referred to a feeling of trust toward Trump. The North Korean Foreign Ministry’s assessment was decidedly downbeat. “The attitude and demands from the U.S. side during the high-level talks were nothing short of deeply regrettable,” the ministry said, accusing American “working-level” officials of trying to destroy the agreement struck in Singapore. Pompeo came to Pyongyang to try to get the North Koreans to match their vague commitment to denuclearization — signed by Kim Jong-un in the June meeting with President Trump — with some kind of action. Among the first priorities were a declaration of weapons sites, a timeline of deconstruction efforts and, perhaps, a written statement that the North’s definition of denuclearization matched Pompeo’s. Asked if he had gotten any of those, Pompeo declined to divulge details. Today’s North Korean statement reiterated that “phased, simultaneous actions” were “the quickest way of realizing the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” During their meetings with Pompeo, North Korean officials proposed dismantling a missile engine-test site and opening negotiations for repatriating the remains of American service members killed in the Korean War, the Foreign Ministry said. In return, they proposed that the United States take “simultaneous” actions of expanding bilateral exchanges and announcing an end to the Korean War in July. But the ministry said that the United States balked at declaring an end to the war, which North Korea said was a crucial first step toward building trust. “The issues the U.S. side insisted on during the talks were the same
unusually lengthy exchange between Pompeo and Kim. Privately, Pompeo has said that he doubts the North Korean leader will ever give up his nuclear weapons. And those doubts have been reinforced in recent days by intelligence showing that North Korea, far from dismantling its weapons facilities, has been expanding them and taking steps to conceal the efforts from the United States. There had been hopes that Pompeo would get the North to agree to hand over the remains of American war dead. But Pompeo said that another meeting had been set for July 12 for further talks on repatriating the remains, a dialogue that will be led by the Defense Department. At the airport in Pyongyang, when asked if he had brought up the satellite images that appeared to show that the North was actually expanding its capabilities, Pompeo responded: “We talked about what the North Koreans are continuing to do.” He said they had discussed “achieving what Chairman Kim and President Trump both agreed to, which is the complete denuclearization of North Korea. No one walked away from that, they’re still equally committed, Chairman Kim is still committed.” Blistering rhetoric is certainly not unusual from Pyongyang, but the North’s statement points to the risks of Trump’s decision to bypass the usual process of extensive low-level talks to build a framework for an agreement that leaders can push across the finish line. Critics say the administration’s approach—and Trump’s declarations of success—have ended up easing much of the economic and diplomatic pressure on Pyongyang. “Negotiating with North Korea is always difficult, but President Trump made it immeasurably harder with his euphoric tweets about how the North is no longer a nuclear threat,” said Wendy Sherman, a top Obama administration diplomat who helped negotiate the Iran nuclear deal and has negotiated with the North Koreans as well. Sherman added: “With North Korea, there is no full knowledge of what they have, where it is and no ability to verify denuclearization. Long way to go.” (Gardiner Harris and Choe Sang-Hun, “North Koreans Say U.S. Position Is ‘Gangster-Like,’” New York Times, July 8, 2018, p. A-1) Pompeo insisted that two days of talks with his North Korean counterpart on dismantling Pyongyang’s nuclear arsenal had been "very productive." But, briefing reporters before flying on to Tokyo, he offered few new details as to how North Korea would honor its commitment to "denuclearize" in exchange for US security guarantees. "These are complicated issues, but we made progress on almost all of the central issues, some places a great deal of progress, other places there's still more work to be done," he said. Pompeo spoke after emerging from more than eight hours of talks over two days with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's right-hand man Kim Yong Chol in a Pyongyang diplomatic compound. "We talked about what the North Koreans are continuing to do and how it's the case that we can get our arms around achieving what Chairman Kim and President Trump both agreed to, which is the complete denuclearization of North Korea," he said. "No-one walked away from that, they're still equally committed. Chairman Kim is still committed, I had a chance to speak to President Trump this morning. I know my counterpart spoke with Chairman Kim during the course of our negotiations as well. We had productive, good-faith negotiations." In practical terms, however, Pompeo mentioned only that officials from both sides would meet on July 12 as a working group to discuss the repatriation of the remains of some US soldiers killed during the 1950-1953 Korean War. And he said some progress had been made towards agreeing "the modalities" of North Korea's destruction of a missile facility. (Dave Clark, “Pompeo Insists Talks Were ‘Very Productive,’” AFP, July 7, 2018)Mike Pompeo and his North Korean counterpart began their meetings with the customary flowery greetings. But just before reporters were pushed out of the room, the exchange acquired an edge. “There are things that I have to clarify,” said Kim Yong Chol, a senior North Korean official who has been negotiating with Americans for decades. “There are things that I have to clarify as well,” Pompeo quickly responded. Privately, Pompeo has said that he doubts Kim will ever give up his nuclear weapons. But he hopes that these follow-up talks will at least get the North Koreans to reveal their true intentions fairly quickly, according to one senior administration official. A small group of reporters traveling with Pompeo have been allowed into the Pyongyang meetings to record their initial moments, as is routine for such diplomatic encounters. But the North Koreans, unaccustomed to the presence of independent journalists, have allowed the reporters to stay several minutes longer than usual. This morning, those extra moments led to the recording of an unusually lengthy exchange between Pompeo and Kim. “This isn’t your first visit to our country,
yet this is your first night in our country,” Kim began. “Did you sleep well last night?” “I did, I
did, thank you for the accommodation,” Pompeo answered. The American delegation is staying at
the Paekhwawon guesthouse, an elaborate facility just outside Pyongyang, beside a small lake
with a tiny island in the center. The place has the feel of a minor Middle Eastern palace, with high
ceilings, gold carpets and stiff mattresses. Soldiers with rifles and fixed bayonets patrolled the
perimeter of the guesthouse overnight (quickly disappearing into the shrubbery when a reporter
jogged by). “The area around this Paekhwawon guesthouse is full of trees and plants, and the air
is really fresh, so it is a good place for people over 50,” Kim said. “That would include me,” Pompeo
replied with a chuckle. “But we did have very serious discussion on very important matters
yesterday,” Kim said. “So thinking about those discussions, you might have not slept well last
night.” “Director Kim, I slept just fine,” Pompeo responded, as an edge crept into his voice. “We
did have a good set of conversations yesterday. I appreciate that, and I look forward to our
continued conversations today as well.” Pompeo then glanced toward his staff, perhaps expecting
the reporters to be ushered out. But Kim continued: “Since this is the first high-level discussion
between our two countries since the Singapore summit, and hence the political field of the United
States and the entire world is playing close attention to our meeting,” he said. “We have not yet
announced the outcomes of our meeting, but the outside seems to think this is going well. And I
have heard the news that Secretary Pompeo is quite pleased with the meeting,” he said. “We are
just doing our best we can to make your stay comfortable.”

Kim Jong Un letter to Trump: “Your Excellency Mr. President, The significant first meeting with
Your Excellency and the joint statement that we signed together in Singapore 24 days ago was
indeed the start of a meaningful journey. I deeply appreciate the energetic and extraordinary
efforts made by Your Excellency Mr. President for the improvement of relations between the two
countries and the faithful implementation of the joint statement. I firmly believe that the strong
will, sincere efforts and unique approach of myself and Your Excellency Mr. President aimed at
opening up a new future between the DPRK and the US will surely come to fruition. Wishing that
the invariable trust and confidence in Your Excellency Mr. President will be further strengthened
in the future process of taking practical actions, I extend my conviction that the epochal progress
in promoting the DPRK-US relations will bring our next meeting forward.
Kim Jong Un
Chairman of the State Affairs Commission
Democratic People’s Republic of Korea
Pyongyang, July 6, 2018”

FOREIGN MINISTER KONO: ...Today, we were able to reaffirm our unwavering
commitment to continue strengthening of our trilateral cooperation towards the common goal of
North Korea’s complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of all weapons of mass
The U.S. defines its goal as final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea. At the same time, we have reaffirmed that international community will continue to fully implement relevant UN Security Council resolutions in order to materialize CVID. Japan continues to seek normalize its relations with North Korea in accordance with Pyongyang Declaration through comprehensively resolving outstanding issues of concern such as nuclear missile and abductions issue, as well as through the settlement of the unfortunate past. We wish to initiate a new start for our relations with North Korea. Japan is determined to continue playing a major role in realizing peace and stability in Northeast Asia in close coordination with United States and ROK. In this regard, I am very much looking forward to continue working closely with both Secretary Pompeo and Minister Kang in coming month.  

POMPEO:  …Over two days, my team and I met with Vice Minister Chairman Kim Jong-ul – chul – Kim Yong-chul and his colleagues. We had good-faith, productive conversations which will continue in the days and weeks ahead. In the meantime, sanctions remain in place, and we will continue to enforce them with great vigor. During the visit, we intended to build upon the agreements made by President Trump and Chairman Kim, and we made progress. But first let me make clear North Korea reaffirmed its commitment to complete denuclearization. We had detailed and substantive discussions about the next steps towards a fully verified and complete denuclearization. In addition, North Korea agreed to meet in mid-July in Panmunjom to discuss the repatriation of remains of our American service members. North Korea also reaffirmed its earlier commitment to destroy its missile engine test site, which will make the region and the world safer. We also established a working-level team that will carry out the day-to-day work of our two sides. Yep, the road ahead will be difficult and challenging, and we know critics will try to minimize the work that we’ve achieved. But our allies, like the Republic of Korea and Japan, President Trump and I believe that peace is worth the effort. And that’s something that we all want. As allies we share and are committed to the same goal – the fully verified, final denuclearization of North Korea, as agreed to by Chairman Kim Jong-un. As President Trump has said, there is no limit to what North Korea can achieve if it gives up its nuclear weapons. Should the DPRK follow through on its commitments, we look forward to eventually helping North Korea obtain prosperity and earn the respect of the world; however, North Korea will first have to fulfill its commitments to denuclearize. Sanctions will remain in place until final, fully verified denuclearization, as agreed to by Chairman Kim, occurs. Multiple UN Security Council resolutions unanimously passed require all nations to fully enforce those sanctions. Our three countries will continue to be vocal in reminding each country of its obligations to do so. And so while we are encouraged by the progress of these talks, progress alone does not justify the relaxation of the existing sanctions regime. There is also no change to our ironclad commitment to the defense of our allies, the Republic of Korea and Japan. The security of our allies is integral to our American security. The United States looks forward to continuing our close coordination with Japan and South Korea as we achieve the successful implementation of the agreement that was achieved at the Singapore summit.  

FOREIGN MINISTER KANG:  …Secretary Pompeo’s visit to Pyongyang, his third one, this visit having taken place in follow-up to the historic U.S.-North Korea summit, has been a productive starting point for implementing the agreements reached between President Trump and Chairman Kim in Singapore. Today’s meeting among the three of us underscores the unwavering commitment on the part of our three countries to achieve the shared goal of complete denuclearization and the establishment of lasting peace and – on the Korean Peninsula. …The Security Council sanctions, as we have agreed in our trilateral meeting, will remain in place and faithfully implemented until we are assured of complete denuclearization by North Korea. North Korea’s denuclearization and provision of security guarantees and economic development that it desires must move together in our joint efforts to chart a brighter future towards lasting peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula and indeed beyond in this region. This was the blueprint set forth in President Moon’s speech in Berlin a year ago, as well as the vision that President Trump and Chairman Kim agreed to in Singapore. And therefore, it is thus in the interest of all that we move forward expeditiously in this endeavor. …Q: This is Ryo Kiyomiya from Asahi Shimbun …First, I would like to ask each of you, recently the U.S. defines its goal as final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea
instead of CVID – complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization. It seems softer than CVID. My question is: Will the U.S., Japan, and South Korea continue to work towards CVID of North Korea? And what do you think is the difference between CVID and final, fully verified denuclearization? And my second question is about the abduction issue of the Japanese. Secretary Pompeo, you said you raised the abduction issue of the Japanese during your visit to North Korea. We would like to know the detail and response from North Korea. Secretary and Minister Kang, how will the U.S. and South Korea work with Japan on this abduction issue? (Via interpreter) And my question is to Minister Kono regarding the Japanese policy on countering or reacting to these issues. Thank you. KONO: (Via interpreter) First, I would like to respond to your question. With respect to related resolutions of the Security Council, it clearly stipulates that North Korea must dismantle in a method – complete and verifiable, irreversible method dismantle the WMD as well as the ballistic missiles. So it is clearly stipulated that CVID is demanded in the resolutions. As far as we are concerned, we would like to continue to work toward North Korea so that North Korea would completely implement the Security Council’s resolution. We are completely in agreement on that. In terms of the international community, we are in agreement. For me, see, instead of CVID denuclearization of Korean Peninsula, sometimes I refer to this phrase. But even in doing so, what I mean is to look toward the dismantlement of all weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles of all ranges, at least as Security Council stipulates certain goals. And that should be solidly implemented by North Korea, and we have to demand North Korea to do that. We have – we are unchanged in that goal. So the words may be different and there is no much – not much significance in the different phrases and words that we may use. Now on the question of abduction, from Secretary Pompeo this time around the issue was raised, and I’d like to thank him for raising the issue at the meeting. Regarding the reaction from North Korea, I will refrain from making any comment. As far as Japan is concerned, the U.S. and North Korean negotiations should advance furthermore, and we’d like to work in tandem with the international community so that Security Council resolution-based sanction can be solidly implemented regarding North Korea. ... KAG: Well, I think our goal remains complete denuclearization, and I think the FFVD, as used by Secretary Pompeo, isn't any softer in stating our shared goal of complete denuclearization. Obviously, terms have historical context, and this has been somewhat difficult for North Korea to signed onto in written form, but we are assured that Mr. Pompeo’s engagement with the North Koreans have been very, very clear on what complete denuclearization means and how to get from here to complete denuclearization, which means the complete dismantlement of the weapons, the materials, the facilities, the plans. This is a very clearly-set goal for North Korea, and we expect them to deliver on this commitment to complete denuclearization. On the abduction issue, yes, my president has also raised this in two rounds of discussions with Chairman Kim, and we urge them to engage in bilateral discussions with Japan on this issue. After all, it’s a bilateral issue. We also have a couple of our nationals detained in North Korea, so it’s an issue that concerns us as well. ...POMPEO: I think my two colleagues answered your first question very clearly. There is no difference. But most importantly is what the North Koreans understand. We had lengthy discussions about the scope of what complete denuclearization means over the past two days. They acknowledge that this is broad; this is, as my two colleagues have said, from weapons systems to fissile material to the production facilities, enrichment facilities, across the range of weapons and missiles. It’s a broad definition of denuclearization. The North Koreans understand that and have not challenged that. Second, they also understand that denuclearization makes no sense absent verification, and they acknowledge that as well. There will be a verification connected to the complete denuclearization. It’s what President Trump and Chairman Kim both agreed to. And so folks can try and parse words should they choose to do so. What’s most important is what the North Koreans understand and the demands that the world is making of North Korea, and there can be – it’s unmistakable, the scope of what denuclearization means to the North Koreans. I’ve been very clear with them. Second, I did raise the issue of the abduction of Japanese. I’ve done it at each conversation I’ve had with my North Korean counterparts, whether it was on my first two trips with Chairman Kim or on this trip with Kim Yong Chul. I’ve raised it repeatedly. I won’t go into any of the details about particular parts of that element of our discussion. Know that it is important to the United States; it’s part of our discussions each and every time we interact with our North Korean counterparts. ...Q: I’m David Clark from Agence France-Presse, AFP. Following your talks yesterday, Mr. Secretary, the North
Koreans issued a statement in which they described your demands as gangster-like and insisted that there be a series of political and economic concessions hand-in-hand with the progress towards denuclearization. You have said that maximum pressure will continue until this denuclearization, as you define it, is complete. Is there any scope for concessions en route, or will they simply have to accept denuclearization before you can move towards sanctions relief and political settlement of the Korean War and so forth, the other demands that they have? ...And given what they’ve said, how can you continue to say that you believe they are negotiating in good faith? POMPEO: Because they were. And they did. It’s pretty simple. So look, people are going to make certain comments after meetings. If I paid attention to what the press said, I’d go nuts, and I refuse to do that. I am determined to achieve the commitment that President Trump made, and I am counting on Chairman Kim to be determined to follow through on the commitment that he made. And so if those requests were gangster-like, they are – the world is a gangster, because there was a unanimous decision at the UN Security Council about what needs to be achieved. The second point, as we move forward, we have been very clear there were three parts of the agreement in the Singapore summit. There were the establishment of peaceful relations between the countries, increased security assurances to North Korea and its people, and finally, denuclearization. Each of those needs to be conducted in parallel. We need to work on those efforts simultaneously. And so it is absolutely the case that there are places where there will be things that take place along the way that help achieve the security assurances that the North Koreans need and improvement in the peaceful relations between our two countries during the time that denuclearization is taking place. But the economic sanctions are a different kettle of fish altogether. The economic sanctions and the continued enforcement – so the world will see continued enforcement actions by the United States in the days and weeks ahead, and I’m counting on those other countries that are with me here today and others around the world to continue to enforce these sanctions as well. The enforcement of those sanctions will continue until denuclearization is complete. ...Q: (Via interpreter) Hello, I am Yoon Seol-Young from JoongAng Daily. Secretary Pompeo, you mentioned how you saw many progress in almost all central issues, however North Korea stated that the United States had unilateral position and it expressed regrets for that. Secretary Pompeo, you highlighted FFVD, so I would like to know what reaction North Korea showed to this. And we believe that there were also other discussions. So regarding declaration of North Korea’s nuclear missile facilities and stockpiles and also timeline to denuclearization, how much achievement have you achieved? And finally, you did not meet Chairman Kim Jong-un this time around. Is there any particular reason for that? POMPEO: With respect to progress, you again referred to the statements after the event. I was there for the event. I know actually what precisely took place. When we spoke to them about the scope of denuclearization, they did not push back. It wasn’t my language; it was the language of Chairman Kim. He committed to complete denuclearization. The commitment that Chairman Kim made is important and powerful, and I am convinced that he understands the commitment he made, and I am hopeful that we will find a path forward to achieve that commitment that Chairman Kim himself made personally to President Trump and then to world in the signed agreement between our two leaders. With respect to timeline, we talked about timeline a great deal during our conversations. There’s still much work to do to establish what the precise timeline for the various events will be, and we talked about it in the context of the continued commitment of North Korea to destroy their missile engine test site, a commitment that they reaffirmed yesterday and told us that it would happen at a time that was important. And we told them important would be soon, and I am hopeful that that will take place soon. It will be an important event along the step towards denuclearization. It will be a good step towards fulfilling their goal. And then your final question was about the fact that I did not meet with Chairman Kim Jong-un on this trip. It was never anticipated that I would meet with him. We went there to work with Kim Yong Chul and our two teams to work together over the course of two days. We did just that. ...” (DoS, Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo, Japanese Foreign Minister Kono Taro, and South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha at a Press Availability, Tokyo, Japan July 8, 2018)
Vietnam War against the U.S. ended. The top U.S. diplomat, visiting the Vietnamese capital after two days of talks in Pyongyang aimed at dismantling North Korea’s nuclear weapons program, said 23 years of normalized U.S. relations with Vietnam should be proof to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un that the U.S. can create new ties with former foes. “We know it is a real possibility because we see how Vietnam has traveled this remarkable path,” Pompeo said. He said the fact that the U.S. is “cooperating — and not fighting” with Vietnam “is proof that when a country decides to create a brighter future for itself alongside the United States, we follow through on American promises.” He reiterated President Donald Trump’s pledge to boost North Korea’s economy and provide it with security assurances in exchange for Kim giving up nuclear weapons. “In light of the once-unimaginable prosperity and partnership we have with Vietnam today,” Pompeo said, “I have a message for Chairman Kim Jong Un: President Trump believes your country can replicate this path. It’s yours if you’ll you seize the moment. This miracle can be yours. It can be your miracle in North Korea as well.” (VOA, “Pompeo: N. Korea Could Have Ties with U.S. Like Vietnam,” July 8, 2018)

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President Donald Trump suggested that Beijing might be seeking to derail efforts aimed at denuclearizing North Korea, but added that he was confident that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un would uphold a pact the two agreed on last month. "I have confidence that Kim Jong Un will honor the contract we signed &; even more importantly, our handshake. We agreed to the denuclearization of North Korea," Trump wrote on Twitter. "China, on the other hand, may be exerting negative pressure on a deal because of our posture on Chinese Trade-Hope Not!" (Susan Heavey, “Trump Suggests China Might Be Interfering in North Korea Talks,” Reuters, July 9, 2018)

Carlin: “The July 7 DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman’s statement appears to be a warning message to the U.S., carefully tinged with a tone more in sorrow than in anger. Overall, the key formulations are carefully balanced (e.g., frequently noting the task or dangers ahead for “both sides”) and buffered to leave the way open for further engagement. Most important, instead of any hint of criticism of President Trump, the statement ends on a positive note: “We still cherish our good faith in President Trump,” underlining that the problem is not the President but rather “headwind against the wills of the two top leaders…” The point is not whether the North Koreans actually believe this, but that they are crafting their public position to leave the door open to future dealings between the two leaders. To reinforce the picture of the personal links at the top level, the spokesman’s statement went out of its way to note that the North had passed a “personal letter” from Kim Jong Un to the President “[b]efore the talks” began. The timing of the letter may also have been meant to indicate that Kim would not meet Secretary Pompeo during this visit. The complaints contained in the spokesman’s statement were like clouds on the horizon ever since the June 12 Singapore summit document appeared. At least judging by the public U.S. position in the intervening weeks, there was, from the start, a fundamental disconnect in the two side’s understanding of the outlines of what had been agreed to in Singapore. This train wreck in the making, however, may now have been avoided as a result of last week’s meeting. No one not at the table can be sure of what happened—and sometimes even those who were there do not absorb it right away—but it looks as if the two sides have made progress narrowing the gap on how the negotiations would proceed, how to measure progress, and how progress on one front can support progress on the others. The first three points in the June 12 summit statement had exactly reflected Pyongyang’s position—that denuclearization (listed third) would come as a result of, or at least in synch with, (1) establishing “new” US-DPRK relations, and (2) creating a “lasting and stable peace regime” on the Korean Peninsula. Last week’s Foreign Ministry pronouncement reemphasized that position, laying out the steps the North had proposed at the July 6-7 meeting with Secretary Pompeo that, in effect, ticked all three boxes: realizing multilateral exchanges for improved relations between the DPRK and the US; making public a declaration on the end of war first on the occasion of the 65th anniversary of the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement to build a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula (note: the FM statement puts special emphasis on this step); and dismantling the test ground of high thrust engines to make a physical verification of the suspension of
ICBM production as part of steps on denuclearization. The central North Korean message to Washington in the statement was that the “shortcut” (shortcut is a favorite Kim Jong Un concept, one his subordinates are encouraged to adopt) to denuclearization was: “[A] step-by-step approach and follow the principle of simultaneous actions in resolving what is feasible one by one while giving priority to creating trust.” For this, “both sides should be bold enough to be free from old ways which had only recorded failures and resolve the problem in a fresh manner which is never bound by the existing ways.” Note the reference to “both sides,” a construction the North Koreans typically use when they want to be seen as flexible and accommodating. What threat there was in the Foreign Ministry statement was constructed with utmost care: “Should the headwind begin to blow, it would cause a great disappointment not only to the international society aspiring after global peace and security but also to both the DPRK and the U.S. If so, this will finally make each side seek for another choice and there is no guarantee that this will not result into yet another tragedy.” Here again, note the deliberate use of the construction that puts the onus and consequences for failure on both sides. In a darker scenario, at this point the statement would have taken a more hard-edged tack, asserting that the danger was to the U.S. alone and that the North could endure whatever the consequences. The Foreign Ministry pronouncement was apparently not carried by Pyongyang domestic media for the internal audience. If that’s the case, it suggests an effort to keep the main internal message over the past several months fully intact, i.e., that the way is open for a significant improvement in DPRK-U.S. relations, and that along with this, big changes are coming in the economic sector. The only whiff of problems the domestic audience got was a brief report on the departure of Secretary Pompeo’s party noting that issues had been discussed “in depth.” (Robert Carlin, “What the North Koreans Really Said on July 7,” 38 North, July 9, 2018)

Sigal: “Verification of North Korea’s denuclearization now preoccupies negotiators. An unhappy past holds some important lessons for what may work this time around. Among them is that verification takes time and is best achieved through reciprocal steps, not unilateral demands, and that reneging on an agreement leads to retaliation which damages U.S. security. Verification is a political judgment in a technical guise. It is not the same as monitoring, just as a net assessment is not the same as raw intelligence. Verification is sometimes confused with playing “gotcha,” seizing on a suspected breach—however minor—as evidence of cheating and using it to invalidate a deal. While no agreement can be absolutely verifiable and any breach takes on political significance because of what it implies about a violator’s intention to some, to say that an agreement is verifiable is to assert that no militarily significant breach is very likely to go undetected for long and that lesser breaches are constrained by the prudential calculation that trivial military advantages are not worth the risk. Nor are they sufficient to cancel an agreement. Absolutism in verification may pose as great a risk to US security as some North Korean violations. The distinction between the “gotcha” approach and a breach that could affect the balance of power can be seen in 2002 when National Security Adviser John Bolton—then the Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security—seized on raw intelligence that North Korea had been acquiring the means to enrich uranium as “the hammer I had been looking for to shatter the Agreed Framework.” A declassified version of an untitled CIA statement reads, “We assess that North Korea embarked on the effort to develop a centrifuge-based uranium enrichment program about two years ago. Last Year the North began seeking centrifuge-related materials in large quantities. It also obtained equipment suitable for use in uranium feed and withdrawal systems. We recently learned that the North is constructing a plant that could produce enough weapons-grade uranium for two or more nuclear weapons per year when fully operational—which could be as soon as mid-decade.” The issue came to a head in the Department of State in July 2002. To Bolton, that was conclusive evidence of cheating, as he said, “I wanted a decisive conclusion that the Agreed Framework was dead.” To others, like Assistant Secretary of State for Asian and Pacific Affairs James Kelly, what mattered for US national security was when the enrichment plant would start operating and how long it would take to generate enough highly enriched uranium for a weapon. Bolton recalls, “Kelly responded that there was still disagreement about exactly when North Korea would have enough highly enriched uranium to make a warhead, which was true but irrelevant to the point that the DPRK was violating the Agreed Framework.” Those who assessed that it would take a full decade for the
plant to become operational turned out to be correct. Shattering the Agreed Framework prompted North Korea to restart its 5 MWe reactor at Yongbyon and resume reprocessing plutonium to fuel its first handful of nuclear weapons. Even worse, when Kelly went to Pyongyang in October 2002, North Korea put its enrichment effort on the negotiating table, but he was under strict instruction, consistent with the “gotcha” approach, not to pursue the offer. In her memoir, Condolezza Rice—the then-National Security Adviser—recalls how Kelly was bound in a diplomatic straitjacket: “Usually there is enough trust in an experienced negotiator that the guidance is used more as points of reference than as a script. But in this case, given the fissures, the points were to be read verbatim. There were literally stage directions for Kelly. He was not to engage the North Koreans in any side conversation in any way. That left him actually moving to the corner of the table to avoid Pyongyang’s representatives.” Rice’s conclusion is worth underscoring: “Because his instructions were so constraining, Jim couldn’t fully explore what might have been an opening to put the program on the table.” Verification is analogous to threat assessment in the absence of any arms control agreement. Such estimates are artifacts that Washington treats as facts; erroneous assessments can complicate verification. That was not only the case in 2002. How much plutonium North Korea reprocessed before 1991 dogged the implementation of the 1994 Agreed Framework. The pre-1991 reprocessing issue arose after May 4, 1992, when the DPRK gave the IAEA a 150-page initial declaration inventorying its nuclear material and equipment. It included the surprising revelation, which had gone undetected by US intelligence, that it had reprocessed spent fuel once in spring 1990 to extract 90 grams of plutonium from spent reactor fuel. During an official visit to North Korea on May 11-16, 1992, IAEA Executive Director Hans Blix toured the reprocessing facility at Yongbyon and found it under construction and far from fully equipped. Later, when the IAEA conducted ad hoc inspections to verify the initial declaration, inspectors took smear samples at glove boxes used to handle nuclear material. Subsequent analysis revealed an “anomaly” that reprocessing had taken place on three distinct occasions—not one—in 1989, 1990, and 1991. It reached no firm conclusion about the amount of plutonium extracted. Nevertheless, it led Blix on February 9, 1993, to demand a special inspection of the nuclear waste sites at Yongbyon, which the North rebuffed. On February 25, the IAEA Board of Governors took the unusual step of threatening to refer the matter to the UN Security Council. On March 12, the DPRK gave 90 days’ notice of its intention to withdraw from the nonproliferation (NPT). A sharply divided intelligence community produced a November 1993 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) that assessed there was a “better than even chance” that the North had extracted 12 to 13 kilograms of plutonium and made one or two nuclear devices. It was based on guesswork about the reactor history—how long and at what power the reactor had been operating—as well how long the North would take to fabricate a working device. The Department of State’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) dissented. Subsequent analysis by the national laboratories would question whether the North had yielded even one bomb’s worth of plutonium but the November 1993 estimate would confound subsequent nuclear diplomacy for years to come.

It was at heart a dispute over verification that led to the breakdown of the September 2005 Six-Party Joint Statement. An October 3, 2007, agreement committed the North to provide “a complete and correct declaration of all its nuclear programs” and put Pyongyang on a path to disable, not dismantle, its plutonium facilities at Yongbyon, making it more time-consuming and costly to restart, and thereby whittling away a bit of its nuclear leverage. In return, the other parties pledged to supply the North with energy aid and the United States agreed to ease sanctions under the Trading with the Enemy Act and delist the DPRK as a “state sponsor of international terrorism,” as a gesture of reconciliation. This agreement said nothing about verifying the North’s declaration, which was left to a later phase of implementation. On June 26, 2008, the DPRK handed China a written declaration of its plutonium program, as required by the October 2007 accord. The declaration had been worked out in US-DPRK talks. North Korea reportedly declared it had separated 38 kilograms of plutonium—within the range of US estimates, albeit at the low end. In a side agreement with Washington, Pyongyang committed to disclosing its enrichment and proliferation activities, including its help constructing Syria’s nuclear reactor that Israel destroyed in 2007. Many in Washington, Tokyo and Seoul questioned whether the declaration was “complete and correct,” as required by the October 2007 agreement. The crux of the dispute was again how much plutonium the North had separated before the end of 1991, as well as the help it
lent to construct Syria’s reactor. Washington decided to demand arrangements to verify the declaration before completing the disabling and moving on to the dismantlement phase of talks. The trouble was the October 2007 agreement contained no provision for verification in the second phase of denuclearization. The day that Pyongyang turned in its declaration, the White House announced its intention to relax sanctions under the Trading with the Enemy Act and to delist the DPRK as a “state-sponsor of terrorism”—but with a caveat. As Secretary of State Rice told the Heritage Foundation on June 18, “[B]efore those actions go into effect, we would continue to assess the level of North Korean cooperation in helping to verify the accuracy and completeness of its declaration. And if that cooperation is insufficient, we will respond accordingly.” Rice acknowledged Washington was moving the goalposts: “What we’ve done, in a sense, is move up issues that were to be taken up in phase three, like verification, like access to the reactor, into phase two.” In bilateral talks, the DPRK agreed to establish a six-party verification mechanism and allow visits to declared nuclear facilities, a review of documents and interviews with technical personnel. These commitments were later codified in a July 12 six-party communiqué. Undisclosed at the time, it also committed orally to cooperate on verification during the dismantlement phase. That was not good enough for the new right-of-center governments in South Korea and Japan. They demanded a written verification protocol, and President Bush agreed. US officials gave the North Koreans a draft with demands for highly intrusive verification, and in late July the White House announced it had delayed delisting the DPRK as a “state-sponsor of terrorism” until they agreed to it. North Korea’s negative reaction was predictably swift. Retaliating for what it took to be a renege on the October 2007 accord, Pyongyang suspended disabling the Yongbyon plutonium facilities on August 14 and soon began to restore those facilities. It also attempted to send WMD equipment by air to Iran, overflying India in a transparent threat to resume the proliferation that it had forsworn under the October 2007 accord. On August 26, a Foreign Ministry spokesman accused the United States of an “outright violation” of the October agreement in failing to delist the DPRK as a “state-sponsor of terrorism” and threatened to resume operations at Yongbyon. Noting that verification was to be fulfilled in the final phase of denuclearization, the spokesman added that the September 2005 agreement had called for denuclearization of the entire Korean Peninsula and required verification to ensure that no nuclear weapons had been reintroduced “in and around South Korea.” On October 9, it barred IAEA inspectors from its Yongbyon nuclear complex. With the freeze and disabling in jeopardy, US negotiator Christopher Hill met his DPRK counterpart Kim Kye Gwan in Pyongyang from October 1-3 armed with a revised draft protocol. Stopping short of accepting it, Kim agreed to allow “full access” to “experts of the six parties” with the IAEA “to provide consultancy and assistance” for “safeguards appropriate to non-nuclear-weapons states.” It included access to records and “personal notebooks,” “interviews with technical personnel,” “forensic measurements of nuclear materials and equipment,” “environmental samples and samples of nuclear waste,” at the three declared sites at Yongbyon—the reactor, reprocessing plant and fuel fabrication plant—which might suffice to ascertain how much plutonium it had produced. If these measures proved insufficient, Kim also accepted “access, based on mutual consent, to undeclared sites,” according to a Department of State briefing on October 11, which also declared that, “[t]he US-North Korea agreement on these verification measures has been codified in a joint document between the United States and North Korea and certain other understandings, and has been reaffirmed through intensive consultations.” These measures, it said, “will serve as the baseline for a verification protocol,” which would come in the third phase of implementation. That day, overriding Japanese and South Korean objections to the lack of a formal verification protocol, President Bush went ahead and delisted the North as a “state-sponsor of terrorism.” That angered Prime Minister Taro Aso in Tokyo. As Secretary of State Rice recalls, “It began to feel as if the Japanese wanted the six-party talks to fail lest they lose their leverage with us to help them with the admittedly tragic abduction issue.” Tokyo and Seoul signaled their intention to raise objections in the talks. In the first week of December, the North objected to the Department of State’s inclusion of environmental sampling in the list of verification measures. “The agreement includes no paragraph referring to the collection of samples. To demand what is not mentioned in the written agreement…is an infringement upon sovereignty as it is little short of seeking a house search.” Tokyo and Seoul thereupon insisted on halting energy aid, and Washington went along. The issue was joined at the December 8-11, 2008, session of the Six-Party Talks. The chairman’s statement
tried to paper over the differences, but there was no disguising the threat by South Korea, Japan and the United States to suspend the provision of energy aid unless the DPRK accepted a written verification protocol. On his departure from the talks, DPRK envoy Kim Kye Gwan made it clear that the North would retaliate for any reneging and would “probably adjust the speed of disablement work at nuclear facilities” if energy aid was “suspended.” When Seoul failed to deliver promised energy aid, retaliate it did by accelerating its weapons programs. Will North Korea allow monitoring of any new accord? The historical record is inconclusive. The North balked when the IAEA demanded access to its nuclear waste site in 1992 and gave notice of its withdrawal from the NPT. It allowed IAEA monitoring of the Agreed Framework to verify that its reactor and reprocessing facility remained shuttered and the spent fuel it had removed from the Yongbyon reactor in 1994 was not diverted. But when the Bush administration abandoned the Agreed Framework, it threw out the inspectors, reprocessed the spent fuel and resumed operations at its nuclear facilities. The North Koreans also agreed to “[e]very element of verification that we sought” for the 2005 Six-Party Joint Statement according to the Department of State,[10] though this commitment had not yet been codified in a formal protocol when South Korea and Japan signaled they would object to proceeding without one and Pyongyang balked at environmental sampling. Some lessons can be drawn from this unhappy history: A “gotcha” approach can jeopardize national security; invoking international law to compel the North to comply, the crime-and-punishment approach, does not work; reneging on agreements only prompts North Korea to renege in turn; verification takes time and patience; coordination on verification positions with allies in advance is essential; and reciprocity involving steps to end enmity and reconcile just might succeed.” (Leon V. Sigal, “Lessons from the Unhappy History of Verification in North Korea,” 38North, July, 9, 2018)

It began with great expectations, an eagerly-anticipated meeting with a reclusive leader, and a gift bag that included an Elton John CD. It ended with a scuttled rendezvous, statements declaring disappointment and stalemate. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's overnight visit to Pyongyang last week failed to demonstrate any progress on denuclearization talks, leading one source with knowledge of the discussions to say the White House felt it went “as badly as it could have gone.” "The North Koreans were just messing around, not serious about moving forward," the source told CNN's Michelle Kosinski, adding that Pompeo had been promised a meeting with North Korea's Kim Jong Un, and so not getting that meeting sent a big message. "By now it's abundantly clear that this approach is a dead end," said Adam Mount, a senior fellow and director of the Defense Posture Project at the Federation of American Scientists, where he covers US nuclear strategy, deterrence and North Korea. "The White House has essentially tried to shoot for the moon and total disarmament, and it's clear that North Korea is not only not willing to do that, but sees very little reason to take steps in that direction," he told CNN. (Jamie Tarabay, “Pompeo’s North Korea Meeting Went ‘As Badly as It Could Have Gone.’” CNN, July 11, 2018)

A United Nations official called for an investigation into whether 12 North Korean waitresses were brought to South Korea against their will, saying that some had told him they had not known where they were going when they made the journey in 2016. The 12 women and their manager left Ningbo, China, where they worked at a restaurant run by the North Korean government, in April 2016, arriving in South Korea two days later. The South’s government promptly announced their defection, which was the most sensational in years, involving a large group of people who, as workers abroad, belonged to the North Korean elite. But the government’s account of the episode was disputed in May by the manager and four of the women. Interviewed by a South Korean news channel, those women said they had been brought to the South against their will, and the manager said he had been pressured into doing so by South Korea’s intelligence agency. Tomás Ojea Quintana, the United Nations special rapporteur, said at a news conference in Seoul, the South’s capital, that some of the women who defected had confirmed part of that version of events in interviews with him. “From the information that I have received from some of them, they were taken to the Republic of Korea without knowing that they were coming here,” he said, using the official name of South Korea. Ojea Quintana, speaking at the end of a nine-day trip to South Korea, referred to the women he interviewed as “victims,” adding that it was “the duty and
UN to Cut off Oil Products to North Korea,” July 12, 2018)

The United States is asking the UN Security Council to order an immediate halt to all deliveries of refined oil products to North Korea after finding that Pyongyang had violated restrictions on those imports, according to documents seen by AFP today. A confidential US report sent to a UN sanctions committee estimated that at least 759,793 barrels of oil products had been delivered to North Korea between January 1 and May 30, well above the annual quota set at 500,000 barrels. The illegal supplies were provided through ship-to-ship transfers at sea using North Korean tankers that have called in port at least 89 times "likely to deliver" the shipments, according to the report. The United States requested in a letter that the UN sanctions committee declare that North Korea had violated the UN-approved quota and "order an immediate halt to all transfers of refined petroleum products” to North Korea. The committee was expected to take five days to consider the request, which China and Russia are expected to block. The declassified US intelligence sent to the UN sanctions committee estimated that ship-to-ship transfers may have provided North Korea with as much as 1,367,628 barrels of refined products. In its report, the United States pointed the finger at China and Russia for continuing to sell refined petroleum products to North Korea. “These sales and any other transfer must immediately stop since the United States believes the DPRK has breached the ... refined petroleum products quota for 2018,” it said. (AFP, “U.S. Asks UN to Cut off Oil Products to North Korea,” July 12, 2018)

7/11/18

There is "very clear evidence of humanitarian need" in North Korea, U.N. Humanitarian Chief Mark Lowcock said during the first visit of its kind to the isolated country since 2011. He met Kim Yong Nam, the nominal head of state and president of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly, today, KCNA said. "One of the things we've seen is very clear evidence of humanitarian need here," he said in the video, posted to his official Twitter account and the U.N. website. "More than half the children in rural areas, including the places we've been, have no clean water, contaminated water sources." (Josh Smith, “‘Clear Evidence of Humanitarian Need’ in North Korea – U.N. Aid Chief,” Reuters, July 11, 2018)

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responsible” of the South Korean government to investigate their claims. “When I say victims, I am implying that they were subject to some kind of deceit in regards to where they were going,” he said. “If they were taken against their will from China, that may be considered a crime.” South Korea responded by saying that the women had defected of their own free will. It has said that the women signed statements to that effect. South Korea also says all North Koreans who have come to the South since the 1990s, numbering more than 30,000, have done so voluntarily. The case has become a problem for the government of President Moon Jae-in. The defection occurred during the presidency of Moon’s predecessor, Park Geun-hye, a conservative who was much more confrontational toward North Korea. Her government said the group defection indicated that North Korea’s elite — which includes those citizens trusted to work abroad — was becoming disillusioned with Kim Jong-un. South Korea took the unusual step of announcing the women’s defection the day after they arrived. In the interview in May with the South Korean news channel JTBC, the women’s manager, Heo Kang-il, said he had conspired with South Korean intelligence officers to bring the women to the South. He said he told them they were being transferred to another restaurant in Southeast Asia. Like other North Korean workers abroad, the women were trained to obey their manager, who held their passports. The women interviewed by JTBC said they did not realize where they were going until Heo took them to the South Korean Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. When they balked at entering, they said Heo threatened to tell the North Korean authorities that the women often watched South Korean movies in China, a serious offense for North Korean workers abroad. Heo said he had indeed made that threat. “I blackmailed them and told them to make a choice: ‘If you return home, you die, and if you follow me, you live,’” he said. “It was luring and kidnapping, and I know because I took the lead.” Heo told JTBC that the South’s National Intelligence Service had timed the defection to rally conservative votes in parliamentary elections. Ojea Quintana said the government should respect the women’s individual decisions about whether they wanted to return. The women interviewed by JTBC said they had struggled to adjust to life in South Korea and wanted to go back. (Choe Sang-hun, “U.N. Official Demands Inquiry into Defection of 12 North Korean Waitresses,” New York Times, July 11, 2018, p. A-14)

The United States pointed the

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North Korean criticism of the U.S. attitude following recent talks in Pyongyang can be considered part of its negotiation “strategy,” South Korean President Moon Jae-in said in Singapore. This week’s visit to the South East Asian city-state saw the ROK President meet with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and President Halimah Yacob to exchange views on last week’s DPRK-U.S. dialogue, Presidential Senior Secretary for Public Relations Yoon Young-chan said. “When you look at the contents, it is a complaint that the U.S. doesn’t take corresponding measures although the [North] takes substantive measures with full sincerity,” Yoon quoted Moon as having said. “I consider it a strategy that might possibly appear in the negotiation process.” Moon also noted that the North’s demands had changed. “Another important point is the corresponding measures that the North requests the U.S. take is not easing sanctions and providing economic compensation like they did in the past, but the termination of hostile relations and the establishment of trust,” Moon reportedly said. “This shows a big difference compared to the North’s previous attitude toward negotiation.” Despite what was widely seen as an underwhelming round of talks, the South Korean President expressed his positive stance on ongoing U.S.-DPRK dialogue. “Negotiation between the North and the U.S. can now get on the right track,” Moon said. “I cautiously predict that the North-U.S. negotiations can achieve the success if the North implements its complete denuclearization and the international community jointly strives to guarantee the North’s security.” Working-level talks will “take a long time and some parts won’t proceed smoothly,” he continued, with the outcome of Pompeo’s two-day visit to Pyongyang “symbolically representing” such difficulties. Moon also reiterated his view that both the North and the U.S. are on a “normal course,” adding that the two Koreas and the U.S. share the same definition of denuclearization and rejecting claims that the countries have a differing understanding of the term. “Through Secretary Pompeo’s visit to the North, it is confirmed that there is no difference in the concept of the denuclearization.” (Dagyum Ji, “North Korean Criticism of U.S. Attitude Part of Pyongyang’s ‘Strategy’: Moon,” NKNews, July 12, 2018)

South Korean President Moon Jae-in said he hopes to declare a formal end to the 1950-53 Korean War this year, and discussions are underway among the two Koreas and the US, but there are stumbling blocks along the way, according to experts. In a written interview with the Straits Times conducted before his overseas trip to India and Singapore that kicked off July 8, Moon said that declaring an end to the Korean War would be a milestone toward permanent peace. “As agreed in the Panmunjom Declaration, my government’s goal is to declare an end to the war this year, the 65th anniversary of the signing of the armistice,” he said. “As for the timing and format (of the official declaration), we will closely consult with North Korea and the US and others. There have been additional discussions for that matter.” (Ock Hyun-ju, “Moon Hopes to Declare End to Korean War This Year; Experts Say Not Impossible,” Korea Herald, July 12, 2018)

North Korean officials did not turn up to a meeting today with the U.S. military about repatriating the remains of the war dead, according to a U.S. official with knowledge of the situation. The two sides had been expected to meet at the Korean Peninsula’s demilitarized zone — an arrangement that the State Department had announced after Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s July 7-8 visit to Pyongyang. State Department officials had said that the meeting would likely take place on July 12, though they said that the date could shift. Today, however, Department of Defense and United Nations Command officials were left waiting in the DMZ’s Joint Security Area. The expected North Korean officials never arrived, according to the official who requested anonymity as he was not permitted to talk publicly about the event. “We were ready,” the official said. “It just didn’t happen. They didn’t show.” In a statement released to reporters today, South Korea’s Foreign Ministry said that North Korean military officials were now seeking a meeting with their U.S. counterparts on July 15. It was not immediately clear why North Korean officials did not attend today’s meeting or whether they had ever confirmed their intention. The State Department did not respond to a request for comment. (Adam Taylor, “North Korea Officials a No-Show for Meeting on U.S. Troop Remains,” Washington Post, July 12, 2018) North Korea has reportedly proposed holding general-level military talks with the United Nations Command (UNC) over the repatriation of remains of American troops killed during the 1950-53 Korean War, sources here said. With the meeting not taking place, the UNC reportedly made a phone call and North Koreans
responded by saying that they needed to upgrade the "level" of the talks. "North Korea apparently wants a U.S. general to appear at the table to quickly finalize the repatriation issue," the source said. "It is likely that military generals from the U.S. and North Korea will take part in the meeting." The UNC told the U.S. defense ministry about North Korea's proposal and is waiting for Washington's answer, the source added. "We have to see the U.S. defense ministry's response, but the UNC reportedly gave a positive signal to North Korea, so there is a good chance of the talks taking place on Sunday [July 15]," the source said. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Proposes General-Level Military Talks over Repatriation of American Troop Remains: Source,” July 12, 2018)

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has ordered his aides to “re-explain” to Tokyo the findings of a probe into the whereabouts of missing Japanese nationals suspected to have been abducted by Pyongyang decades ago, according to a South Korean activist. Kim gave the directive after his historic summit with U.S. President Donald Trump in Singapore last month, said Choi Sung-yong, head of a group representing families of South Koreans abducted by North Korea, citing an informed source in the North’s capital. This would signal a shift in tone from Pyongyang’s previous unwillingness to open up dialogue with Tokyo — which has been somewhat sidelined amid the flurry of diplomacy over North Korea’s nuclear program, resulting in a recent thaw in relations between the North and the United States. But skepticism remains over whether North Korea’s findings will satisfy Japan. The investigation in question was carried out by a special committee formed by Kim to revisit the abduction issue in exchange for lifting sanctions, under a May 2014 agreement struck in Stockholm. But the North disbanded the committee in February 2016 after Japan retaliated over its nuclear and missile tests with fresh sanctions. According to Choi’s source, the North Korean government says it has already unofficially presented its findings to Japan, but Kim has ordered the probe outcome to be explained again since Prime Minister Shinzo Abe Shinzo’s administration claims to have never been briefed about it. The source said that Kim did not see any need to hold dialogue with Japan before his summit with South Korean President Moon Jae-in in April, instead favoring relations with the United States, China and Russia. But Kim apparently changed his mind after both Moon and Trump brought up the abduction issue in their respective talks, opting to see whether Japan would be willing accept its probe findings. (Kyodo, “Kim Jong Un Orders Aides to ‘Re-Explain’ Findings of Probe into North Korea’s Past Abductions of Japanese Nationals,” Japan Times, July 12, 2018)

Trump: “Glor: What do you see right now is America's role globally? President Trump: Well, I think we're perceived as a much stronger nation now than we were two years ago. I think two years ago we were apologizing for everything. We were not doing certain things that we should have been doing. You look at our trade deals, they were a disaster. We're doing them. And we're gonna make them very successful, and we're gonna make them fair for our country and other countries. But we were, in so many different ways, in such bad shape. North Korea, you look at us now compared to what we were two years ago. Two years ago, they were testing nuclear all over the place. They were shooting missiles. They were shooting rockets. They were shooting all sorts of things. Glor: Has Kim Jong Un moved quickly enough after the, after the summit, in your estimation? President Trump: Well, it depends on what. He may move very quickly on hostages. I got the hostages before we, you know, before I went. And paid nothing. But I think it was a very smart move on his behalf, 'cause it really was a sign of good will. I think that, you know, this has been going on for many, many decades, but I'm in no real rush. I mean whatever it takes, it takes. In the meantime, things are happening behind the scenes that are very positive. Just this weekend, U.S. and North Korean officials met at the Demilitarized Zone to discuss repatriating the remains of Americans killed in the Korean War, something Kim Jong Un agreed to do immediately after his June meeting with the president. Glor: They promised the remains would come back, but they haven't come back yet. President Trump: Well, they're in the process of doing it. It doesn't go quickly. I mean it's complicated process. But, they're in the process of doing it. In fact, we're sending a two-star general over there very shortly to meet one of their two-star generals to work on some kind of a process. You know, remains are complicated. Some of the remains, they don't even know if they are remains. I know one thing, they would like to be able to do it, if they can.”
The United States and North Korea held general-level talks for the first time in more than nine years to discuss the details of an agreement to repatriate the remains of American troops killed during the 1950-53 Korean War. The meeting had originally been scheduled to take place July 12, but the North called it off at the last minute, citing a lack of preparations. The North then suggested holding general-level talks with the U.S.-led U.N. Command (UNC) today, and the U.S. agreed. Today's talks began around 10 a.m. at the inter-Korean border village of Panmunjom. Maj. Gen. Michael Minihan, chief of staff for the UNC, led the U.S. side and the North's delegation included a two-star general, sources said. Further details were not immediately available. Recovering and repatriating the remains of U.S. troops killed during the war was one of the agreements that U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un reached during their historic summit in Singapore last month. Today's talks were expected to focus on such details as when and how the remains should be transferred. But the North could also demand something in exchange for the return or raise other issues related to the armistice that ended fighting in the Korean War. The North's proposal of talks with the UNC, even though the UNC is led by the U.S., was seen as an attempt to use the meeting not only to discuss the repatriation of war remains but also other issues, such as a proposal to jointly declare an end to the Korean War. But a South Korean government source said the North and the U.S. agreed to discuss the issue of repatriating remains only at today's talks. Today's meeting was the first between the UNC and the North's military in nine years and four months. General-grade talks between the two sides have been held 16 times since 1998 and the last meeting took place in March 2009. (Yonhap, “U.S., N. Korea Hold Talks about Return of American Troops’ Remains,” July 15, 2018)

DoS Statement: “On Sunday, July 15, representatives from the United States held the first General Officer-level talks with the DPRK since 2009. They met to discuss the return of U.S. service members’ remains missing since the Korean War. This meeting was aimed at fulfilling one of the commitments made by Chairman Kim at the Singapore Summit. Today’s talks were productive and cooperative and resulted in firm commitments. Working level meetings between U.S. and North Korean officials will begin on Monday, July 16, to coordinate the next steps, including the transfer of remains already collected in the DPRK. Additionally, both sides agreed to recommence field operations in the DPRK to search for the estimated 5,300 Americans who never returned home.” (Secretary of State Mike Pompeo Press Statement, General-Officer Talks between the United States and DPRK on the Repatriation of Remains, July 15, 2018)

President Donald Trump said he is in “no rush” for denuclearization negotiations with North Korea in an interview following his summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki. Trump told Fox News’ Sean Hannity that the Russian president “wants to be very helpful with North Korea. “We’re doing well with North Korea, we have time,” said Trump on the pace of talks with Pyongyang following his June 12 summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un in Singapore. “There’s no rush, it has been going on for many years. “I think a lot of good things are happening,” Trump said on progress following North Korea’s halting of nuclear and missile tests. “But President Putin is very much into making that all happen.” Trump said he and Putin will cooperate on the North Korea denuclearization issue, stressing that nuclear proliferation is “one of the most critical challenges facing humanity.” In a joint press conference after the talks, Trump said he briefed the Russian leader on his summit with Kim, adding, “I am very sure that President Putin and Russia want very much to end that problem. They’re going to work with us, and I appreciate that commitment.” “We’re glad that the Korean Peninsula issue is starting to resolve,” said Putin at the press conference. “To a great extent, it was possible thanks to the personal engagement of President Trump, who opted for dialogue instead of confrontation.” (Sarah Kim, “Trump Is in ‘No Rush’ for North Korea Talks,” JoongAng Ilbo, July 18, 2018)

The U.S. military is expecting to repatriate from North Korea the remains of as many as 55 service members who were killed during the Korean War, a U.S. official said. The repatriations would
probably take place next week or the week after, the official said. It would be the first time that remains believed to be those of U.S. troops have been directly returned by North Korean officials in 13 years. The official, who was not authorized to speak publicly about the plan and spoke on the condition of anonymity, cautioned that the timing and the number of remains could still change. Citing practical difficulties, the official said that 55 was a “ballpark” figure and that further testing by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency would be required to confirm the number. (Adam Taylor, “U.S. Expecting War Dead Remains from North Korea within 2 Weeks, Official Says,” Washington Post, July 17, 2018)

South Korean authorities have opened an investigation into two illegal shipments of North Korean coal into South Korean ports last year in violation of United Nations sanctions, the foreign ministry said. Earlier in the day, American broadcaster Voice of America (VOA) reported that North Korean coal was twice shipped to South Korea via Russia last year. Citing an annual report submitted by an expert panel under the U.N. sanction committee, the broadcaster said that the North's coal shipped to the Russian port of Kholmsk was reloaded and sent to South Korean ports of Incheon and Pohang on Oct. 2 and Oct. 11, 2017, respectively. The foreign ministry in Seoul said in a press briefing that the government was already conducting an investigation into the case.

"The South Korean government has been closely cooperating with the international community to faithfully implement the U.N. sanctions on North Korea. I'm aware of an ongoing investigation by the authorities," ministry spokesman Noh Kyu-duk said. An official at the ministry said separately that import declaration and registration for the two shipments was completed before the relevant intelligence was obtained by the authorities. "The coal in question was unloaded on arriving at South Korean ports. Private South Korean importers are now under probe on suspicion of importing North Korean coal in violation of the Customs Law," the official said. According to the U.N. report, North Korean coal was shipped from the North's ports of Wonsan and Chongjin to Kholmsk on six occasions between July and September last year. The coal was then reloaded onto two ships, registered in Panama and Sierra Leone, which later docked at Incheon on October 2 and Pohang on October 11, respectively. It stated that the Panama-registered ship carrying North Korean coal arrived in Incheon on October 2, while the Sierra Leone-registered vessel shipped 5,000 tons of North Korean coal to Pohang on October 11. The value of the North Korean coal shipped to Pohang is estimated at US$325,000 if the per-ton price is set at $65, the VOA noted. The broadcaster said there is a possibility of the North Korean coal transshipped to Incheon and Pohang being exported to other countries, though nothing has been confirmed. Under U.N. resolution 2371 adopted by the Security Council in August last year, exports of North Korean minerals, including coal, are banned. (Yonhap, “Seoul Probes Illegal Shipments of N.K. Coal into S. Korea,” July 17, 2018)

South Korea and North Korea will try to continue their peacemaking mood through sport by sending joint teams to the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia. The Koreas agreed to field joint teams in three sports -- basketball, canoeing, and rowing -- at this year's Jakarta-Palembang Asian Games, which will be held from Aug. 18 to Sept. 2. They will join forces in the women's five-on-five basketball; men's and women's dragon boat, a canoe discipline; and the lightweight coxless men's four, lightweight men's eight and lightweight women's double sculls events in rowing. (Yonhap, “Koreas to Continue Peacemaking Mood by Sending Unified Teams to 2018 Asian Games,” Korea Herald, July 17, 2018)

North and South Korea have fully restored a military communications hotline that connects the Koreas on the Yellow Sea side, in another move aimed at easing military tensions and building trust across the heavily armed border. The communication channel on the West Sea was suspended by the North in February 2016 over the South’s abrupt decision to close the Kaesong joint industrial complex. (Song Jung-a, “Koreas Reconnect Severed Military Hotline,” Financial Times, July 18, 2018, p. 4)

Signaling new tensions over North Korea at the United Nations, Russia and China blocked disciplinary steps sought by the United States to stop what it called rampant cheating on North
that sanctions led them to enter into negotiations with the United States this year. The North Korean state in economic distress, although Pyongyang officials have repeatedly denied weight to the argument that the Trump sanctions last year, according to a new Bank of Korea estimate released North Korea's economy saw its biggest decline in two decades amid tightening international On North Korea, Lack of Trust Is the Enemy," so let's keep our eye on that and not get distracted." could mean several things. We know what our end point is and we know what they've agreed to, things like that," he said. "If those things are true, what does it mean to us he said, reports of discussions between the two countries continue, saying that diplomacy takes time. This includes, Some of that might be attributed to fuel shortages; some of that might be because of the renewed training readiness from North Korea's million plus army, the majority of which are positioned between Pyongyang and Seoul. He said he has seen some reduction in training readiness from North Korean troops. "They have to alternate their training with harvesting and planting. We've seen some changes in terms of how much time they're spending in the field. Some of that might be attributed to fuel shortages; some of that might be because of the renewed engagement," he said. He also noted that in terms of what North Korea has promised to do regarding the denuclearization process, nothing has actually changed on the ground. "Let's say their production capability is still intact," he said. "We haven't seen a complete shutdown of production. We have not seen removal of fuel rods. There still steps that must be taken on the road to denuclearization." Brooks said at least some remains of Americans killed during the Korean War would be brought back to the United States. "We are confident we'll succeed in transferring some of the remains. Not all of them, but some of them," he said. "The pain of those families is as acute today as it was then." Brooks downplayed possible posturing by North Korea as the discussions between the two countries continue, saying that diplomacy takes time. This includes, he said, reports of North Korea stepping up its nuclear production activity. "We don't overreact to things like that," he said. "If those things are true, what does it mean to us as we go forward? It could mean several things. We know what our end point is and we know what they've agreed to, so let's keep our eye on that and not get distracted." (Jamie Tarabey, "U.S. Military Commander: On North Korea, Lack of Trust Is the Enemy," CNN, July 21, 2018)

North Korea's economy saw its biggest decline in two decades amid tightening international sanctions last year, according to a new Bank of Korea estimate released today. The estimates lend weight to the argument that the Trump administration’s “maximum pressure” campaign has left the North Korean state in economic distress, although Pyongyang officials have repeatedly denied that sanctions led them to enter into negotiations with the United States this year. North
Korea’s real annual gross domestic product fell by 3.5 percent in 2017, the South Korean central bank said in a statement. The last time the bank observed a larger decline in the North’s economy was in 1997, when the GDP dropped by 6.7 percent as the country struggled through a devastating famine estimated to have killed millions. In 2016, it was estimated to have grown by 3.9 percent, the largest annual increase in more than a decade. Sanctions imposed by the U.N. Security Council and the U.S. government appear to have hit the North Korean economy hard last year, despite speculation to the contrary. The Bank of Korea estimated that North Korea’s total external trade dropped 15 percent, to $5.55 billion, with exports declining 37.2 percent in a single year. China announced last year that it would ban the import of North Korean iron ore, iron, lead and coal to bring its policy in line with U.N. sanctions. The Bank of Korea’s data showed that mining production in the North fell 11 percent last year, largely because of a sharp drop in the coal sector. The export of mineral products was estimated to be down 55.7 percent year over year. (Adam Taylor and Min Joo Kim, “North Korean Economy Contracts Sharply,” Washington Post, July 21, 2018, p. A-10) “The negative growth is attributable to a drop in its mining output and a retreat in its heavy and chemical industries, as the United Nations imposed tougher sanctions over its nuclear and missile activities,” said a BOK official, adding that unfavorable weather conditions hit the already fragile economy. The sanctions call for a ban on the country's exports of coal and other mineral resources to cut off its access to hard currency. Last year, the mining industry in North Korea tumbled 11 percent due to a drop in coal production, a sharp turnaround from a 8.4 percent growth in 2016. Its agricultural and fisheries output fell 1.3 percent on-year, according to the data. The manufacturing sector also suffered a 6.9 percent decline, compared to a 4.8 percent increase in 2016. Though light industry inched up 0.1 percent, the heavy and chemical sectors sank 10.4 percent, the bank said. The electricity, gas and tap water business shed 2.9 percent in 2017 due to a fall in hydroelectric power production, and the construction field posted a 4.4 percent decrease. But the service sector went up 0.5 percent. The BOK put the North's gross national income (GNI) in 2017 at 36.6 trillion won ($32.2 billion), which is 2.1 percent of that of South Korea. Its per-capita GNI stood at 1.46 million won, which is 23-times less than the South’s. The communist country's trade volume stood at $5.55 billion last year, down 15 percent from a year earlier, the BOK said. Exports tumbled 37.2 percent to $1.77 billion, while imports inched up 1.8 percent to $3.78 billion. The volume of inter-Korean trade collapsed 99.7 percent on-year to log $900,000 in 2017, after the Seoul government shut down the joint industrial complex of Kaesong the previous year. Such a downturn would continue well into this year, officials said, despite a recent thaw in relations between the North and the outside world. “The U.N. imposed fresh sanctions against the North in August and December, and those will make a serious dent in the North Korean economy this year,” another BOK official said, noting that the North's transactions with China have already tumbled "significantly" in the first half of this year. (Yonhap, “N. Korea’s Economy Shrinks 3.5 Pct. in 2017: BOK,” July 20, 2018)

North Korea's state-run media released a string of articles that criticized the South Korean government, hinting that planned reunions for families split between the two nations could be canceled. An editorial in Rodong Sinmun argued that South Korea has been exaggerating its role in denuclearization talks between Pyongyang and Washington. South Korea’s role in the talks does “not even amount to that of an assistant,” the editorial said. The same article described comments made by South Korean President Moon Jae-in in Singapore last week as “presumptuous” and “flippant.” The South Korean leader had told reporters that the world would judge the United States and North Korea if they failed to live up to the agreements their leaders had made. Although Moon was not named in the Rodong Sinmun editorial, the article constitutes some of the most direct criticism of the South Korean leader to appear in North Korea’s state media since he met with Kim Jong Un for a historic inter-Korean summit in April. Separately today, two North Korean propaganda websites released articles calling on the South Korean government to repatriate a group of North Korean restaurant workers who defected two years ago in disputed circumstances. “If our female citizens’ repatriation issue is not resolved as quickly as possible, it could become an obstacle not just to the planned reunions of divided families between the two Koreas but also to overall inter-Korean relations,” wrote Uriminzokkiri, one of the websites. An article in the state-run online outlet Meari also said that unless the issue of the restaurant workers is resolved soon, it could hinder family reunifications. After the April summit, the two Koreas
agreed to hold reunions in mid-August for families split up by the division of the Korean Peninsula after the 1950-1953 Korean War. The articles in Urinminzokkiri and Meari are the first public attempts to link the family reunions with the outcome of the restaurant workers case. (Adam Taylor, “N. Korea Criticizes S. Korea, Warns That Family Reunions May Be Scrapped,” Washington Post, July 20, 2018)

KCNA: “Truth behind conspiratorial cases is bound to be disclosed. More details of the story about forcible abduction of DPRK women citizens by the Park Geun Hye group of traitors have been disclosed in south Korea, touching off a flurry of censure at home and abroad. An official concerned of a UN human rights body in a press conference on July 10 quoted the DPRK women employees as saying they did not know they were coming to south Korea, calling on the authorities to conduct thorough-going investigation, ferret out and punish those concerned with the case and respect the employees' intent for return. On July 15 there was a confession by a criminal who had been involved in deceiving the women and bringing them to south Korea by appeasement, deception and threatening, which brought to light the case of “defection according free will.” This has proved in fact that the Park Geun Hye group cooked up the conspiratorial farce against the DPRK in order to turn the table in its favor with the "National Assembly” election taking place a few days later. The crime committed by the group of traitors, which forcibly separated young girls from their beloved families in wanton violation of their rights in order to meet its political purpose, has aroused strong indignation of the public and this has touched off strong demand for their immediate repatriation. Their repatriation is a pending issue which brooks no further delay. But the south Korean authorities are still not taking a proper stand on the issue. Now the north and the south are promoting issues for improvement of the relations and for peace and prosperity in the spirit of the Panmunjom Declaration and the reunion of separated families and relatives is also high on the agenda. It is ridiculous to trumpet about the "pain of separated families" while keeping the new "separated families” deliberately created due to the inhumane act of the former conservative regime and while shunning the strong appeal of the separated families. The repatriation of the women has to be realized without delay in the light of humanitarianism and for the abolition of evils and for the sustained development of the north-south ties. Solution of humanitarian issue is an urgent issue more important than any exchange and cooperation. The implementation of the Panmunjom Declaration does not mean the selected implementation for saving face or putting on airs. It is utterly disgusting that the south Korean authorities have taken up double-dealing attitude while talking about "solution of humanitarian issue" and "development of the south-north relations” after forcibly separating those women from their parents for years. The south Korean authorities should acknowledge the inhuman crimes committed by the Park Geun Hye group, though belatedly, and send back the DPRK citizens to the embrace of the motherland at once. An attitude to this issue would make one judge their will for the improvement of the north-south ties. Hypocrisy will never work.” (KCNA, “KCNA Commentary Urges Repatriation of N. Korean Women from S. Korea,” July 21, 2018)

North Korea provided little new information regarding abducted nationals when officials contacted Pyongyang around the time of the June 12 U.S.-North Korea summit, according to a Japanese government source. North Korea repeated the results of their own investigation into Japanese abducted during the 1970s and 1980s that they gave following their talks in Stockholm on May 2014, the source said today. Tokyo had repeatedly asked the United States to raise the abduction issue at the Singapore summit, but little is known about any response given by the reclusive state. Japan officially lists 17 of its citizens as having been kidnapped by North Korean agents and suspects the North’s involvement in many more disappearances of Japanese nationals. Of the 17, five were repatriated in 2002, but North Korea has claimed eight of them died and that the other four never entered the country. It is not known whether North Korean officials provided any information on the remaining 12 people that are formally recognized by Tokyo as abduction victims during the contact last month. According to the source, North Korea said no Japanese nationals had come to the country since the arrival of two Japanese men, who were listed by North Korea as having entered, in an “interim” report presented to Japan shortly after the Stockholm meeting. The source said the two men are Tanaka Minoru and Kaneda Tatsumitsu, who used to
work at the same restaurant in Kobe. Tanaka is one of the four individuals North Korea previously said as never having entered the country, and that Kaneda is among those who the Japanese government suspects were abducted. (Kyodo, “North Korea Provide Little New Info on Japanese Abductees: Tokyo,” Japan Times, July 22, 2018)

When he emerged from his summit with Kim Jong Un last month, President Trump triumphantly declared that North Korea no longer posed a nuclear threat and that one of the world’s most intractable geopolitical crises had been “largely solved.” But in the days and weeks since then, U.S. negotiators have faced stiff resistance from a North Korean team practiced in the art of delay and obfuscation. Diplomats say the North Koreans have canceled follow-up meetings, demanded more money and failed to maintain basic communications, even as the once-isolated regime’s engagements with China and South Korea flourish. Meanwhile, a missile-engine testing facility that Trump said would be destroyed remains intact, and U.S. intelligence officials say Pyongyang is working to conceal key aspects of its nuclear program. The lack of immediate progress, though predicted by many analysts, has frustrated the president, who has fumed at his aides in private even as he publicly hails the success of the negotiations. “Discussions are ongoing and they’re going very well,” Trump told reporters July 17. The accounts of internal administration dynamics come from conversations with a half-dozen White House aides, State Department officials and diplomats. Officials say Trump has been captivated by the nuclear talks, asking staffers for daily updates on the status of the negotiations. His frustration with the lack of progress has been coupled with irritation about the media coverage of the joint statement he signed on June 12 in Singapore, a document that contains no timeline or specifics on denuclearization but has reduced tensions between the two countries. “Trump has been hit with a strong dose of reality of North Korea’s negotiating style, which is always hard for Americans to understand,” said Duyeon Kim, a Korea expert at the Center for a New American Security. Trump’s interest in the issue has put a particularly bright spotlight on Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who has tried to wring concessions from his counterpart, Kim Yong Chol, a former spy chief viewed by the Trump administration as uncompromising and unable to negotiate outside the most explicit directives from Kim Jong Un. A low point from the perspective of U.S. officials came during Pompeo’s third visit to Pyongyang on July 6 when he pressed North Korean officials for details on their plans to return the remains of U.S. soldiers killed during the Korean War, as they had agreed to do in Singapore. The issue had been discussed in several meetings and was viewed by the United States as an easy way for North Korea to demonstrate its sincerity. But when Pompeo arrived in Pyongyang, the North Koreans insisted they were still not ready to commit to specific plans, according to diplomats familiar with the discussions. The delay angered U.S. officials, who were under pressure to deliver given Trump’s premature announcement on June 20 that North Korea had already “sent back” the remains of 200 soldiers. The sentiment worsened when Kim Jong Un chose not to meet with Pompeo during his stay as had been expected. Pompeo later denied that a meeting was planned, a claim contradicted by diplomats who said the secretary initially intended to see the North Korean leader. Unable to secure an agreement on remains during his trip, Pompeo scheduled a meeting between the North Koreans and their Pentagon counterparts to discuss the issue at the demilitarized zone on July 12. The North, however, kept U.S. defense officials waiting for three hours before calling to cancel, the diplomats said. The North Koreans then asked for a future meeting with a higher-ranking military official. “Leaving another U.S. official standing at the altar, waiting forlornly for the North Korean representative to show up adds insult to injury,” said Bruce Klingner, a North Korea scholar at the conservative Heritage Foundation. “Pyongyang has reverted to its heavy-handed negotiating tactics.” The Trump administration has maintained a strong public show of support for the negotiations, even as North Korea denounced the United States’ “unilateral and gangster-like demand for denuclearization” after Pompeo’s last visit and described the discussions as “cancerous.” On July 18, Trump said he secured a commitment from Russia to “help” with the North Korea issue. “The process is moving along,” he tweeted. “Big benefits and exciting future for North Korea at end of process!” But late last week in meetings with his aides, Trump bristled about the lack of positive developments in the negotiations. And on July 20 at the United Nations, his ambassador, Nikki Haley, accused Russia of blocking efforts to discipline North Korea’s illegal smuggling. Trump and his senior team “haven’t given up entirely” on the goal of full denuclearization, but they are worried, said one person familiar with the
discussions. Climbing down from earlier soaring rhetoric, Trump told CBS this week that “I’m in no real rush. I mean whatever it takes, it takes,” he said. That more patient approach stands in contrast to earlier Trump administration demands for North Korea to dismantle its nuclear program within a year. “Trump is too vested to walk away right now,” said Victor Cha, a North Korea expert who the Trump administration nearly selected to be the next U.S. ambassador to Seoul. “At least until after the midterms.” U.S. officials lay some of the blame on Kim Yong Chol, who despite being North Korea’s chief negotiator has consistently stonewalled discussions by saying he is not empowered to talk about an array of pertinent issues. That dynamic drew the ire of U.S. officials in an early July meeting in Panmunjom when he refused to discuss the opening of a reliable communications channel or even specific goals of Pompeo’s then-upcoming trip to Pyongyang, diplomats briefed on the meetings said. The U.S. officials in the meeting, led by State Department official Sung Kim and the CIA officer Andy Kim, wanted to discuss Pompeo’s visit and make progress on returning the fallen soldiers’ remains. But Kim Yong Chol said he was authorized only to receive a letter Trump had written to Kim Jong Un. When U.S. officials tried to raise substantive issues, Kim Yong Chol resisted and kept asking for the letter. Unable to make headway, the Americans eventually handed over the letter and ended the meeting after only an hour. “[Kim] has a reputation for being extremely rude and aggressive,” said Sung-Yoon Lee, a North Korea scholar at Tufts University. Kim Yong Chol’s negotiating tactics so frustrated U.S. officials that several expressed hope that he would be replaced as top negotiator by Ri Yong Ho, the North’s more agreeable minister of foreign affairs. The swap appeared possible because of the joint statement in Singapore, which explicitly named Pompeo as the top U.S. negotiator but referred to his counterpart only as a “relevant high-level DPRK official.” “I think there is a debate within North Korea over assigning Kim Yong Chol or Ri Yong Ho as the counterpart,” said Cha, who is also a scholar at Georgetown University. “Ri knows the issues better and can speak perfect English. Kim is a former spy, not a negotiator.” Ri greeted Pompeo at the airport earlier this month alongside Kim Yong Chol, but the former spy chief spent more time with Pompeo than any other senior North Korean official during the two-day visit, seemingly solidifying his position. In the absence of progress on denuclearization, the Trump administration is likely to focus on the war remains. At a meeting in the demilitarized zone on Sunday, the two sides agreed to recommence field operations to search for the remains of some 5,300 Americans still missing from the conflict in North Korea. Pompeo said this week that he believes the first sets would arrive in the United States “in the next couple weeks.” U.S. officials familiar with the discussions said the North pledged to return 55 sets of remains on July 27, the 65th anniversary of the signing of an armistice that ended the war. But Pentagon officials, who sent transit cases to the demilitarized zone weeks ago, are wary of North Korea’s pledges given its previous cancellations. One of Pompeo’s key objectives ahead of the Pyongyang meeting was to improve basic communications with the North, which had been spotty and unresponsive through intelligence and diplomatic channels, U.S. officials said. The two sides have established working groups aimed at improving the communication problem, a senior State Department official said. Many of the president’s top security and intelligence officials have long doubted that North Korea would live up to any of its commitments. But given the lack of options outside of the diplomatic realm, some analysts said a tolerant approach still provides the best outlook. “I worry that Trump might lose patience with the length and complexities of negotiations that are common when dealing with North Korea, and walk away and revert back to serious considerations of the military option,” said Duyeon Kim, the Korea scholar. “Getting to a nuclear agreement takes a long time, and implementing it will be even harder.” (John Hudson, Josh Dawsey and Carol D. Leonnig, “Trump Fumes as Korea Talks Stall,” Washington Post, July 22, 2018, p. A-1)
program, these efforts represent a significant confidence building measure on the part of North Korea.” (Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., “North Korea Begins Dismantling Key Facilities at the Sohae Launch Site,” 38North, July 23, 2018) An official from South Korea’s presidential office on Tuesday said Seoul has also been detecting dismantlement activities at North Korea’s Sohae launch site but did not specify what the North was supposedly taking apart. While the official said such moves could have a “positive effect” on the North’s denuclearization, analysts say such steps wouldn’t reduce North Korea’s military capabilities unless the country dismantles the whole site. The 38 North website said commercial satellite images between July 20 and 22 indicate the North began dismantling key facilities at the site. Lee Choon Geun, a missile expert at South Korea’s Science and Technology Policy Institute, said the North is giving up little in dismantling the rocket engine test site when it seems clear the country is satisfied with the current design of long-range weapons. However, Lee said that the supposed move to dismantle the rail-mounted processing building was more notable, as it potentially indicated to broader dismantlement activities at the site. “If North Korea goes further and dismantle the entire Sohae site, that would meaningfully reduce the country’s long-range missile capability by eliminating a facility where it could fire multiple ICBMs in succession,” Lee said. “The North can also fire ICBMs from transporter erector launchers, but their technology with these vehicles isn’t stable.” (Associated Press, “North Korea Scrapping Key Launch Facilities/ Appears to Be Indicating Commitment to Accord,” Yomiuri Shimbun, July 24, 2018)

Bermudez: “In an important first step towards fulfilling a commitment made by Kim Jong Un at the June 12 Singapore Summit, new commercial satellite imagery of the Sohae Satellite Launching Station (North Korea’s main satellite launch facility since 2012) indicates that the North has begun dismantling key facilities. Most notably, these include the rail-mounted processing building—where space launch vehicles are assembled before moving them to the launch pad—and the nearby rocket engine test stand used to develop liquid-fuel engines for ballistic missiles and space launch vehicles. Since these facilities are believed to have played an important role in the development of technologies for the North’s intercontinental ballistic missile program, these efforts represent a significant confidence building measure on the part of North Korea.” (Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., “North Korea Begins Dismantling Key Facilities at the Sohae Launch Site,” 38North, July 23, 2018) An official from South Korea’s presidential office on Tuesday said Seoul has also been detecting dismantlement activities at North Korea’s Sohae launch site but did not specify what the North was supposedly taking apart. While the official said such moves could have a “positive effect” on the North’s denuclearization, analysts say such steps wouldn’t reduce North Korea’s military capabilities unless the country dismantles the whole site. The 38 North website said commercial satellite images between July 20 and 22 indicate the North began dismantling key facilities at the site. Lee Choon Geun, a missile expert at South Korea’s Science and Technology Policy Institute, said the North is giving up little in dismantling the rocket engine test site when it seems clear the country is satisfied with the current design of long-range weapons. However, Lee said that the supposed move to dismantle the rail-mounted processing building was more notable, as it potentially indicated to broader dismantlement activities at the site. “If North Korea goes further and dismantle the entire Sohae site, that would meaningfully reduce the country’s long-range missile capability by eliminating a facility where it could fire multiple ICBMs in succession,” Lee said. “The North can also fire ICBMs from transporter erector launchers, but their technology with these vehicles isn’t stable.” (Associated Press, “North Korea Scrapping Key Launch Facilities/ Appears to Be Indicating Commitment to Accord,” Yomiuri Shimbun, July 24, 2018)

The Defense Ministry said it will seek to withdraw troops and equipment from guard posts inside the Demilitarized Zone, pledging to transform the heavily fortified area into a symbol of peace between the two Koreas. In a briefing to lawmakers, the ministry said the withdrawal plan would be sought “on a trial basis” until the conditions are in place for a complete withdrawal, following environmental and historical research on the cross-border region. “The ministry is seeking to reduce the number of personnel for guard posts, adjust the number of heavy-fire equipment and resume free exchange of people,” the ministry said in a document submitted to the parliamentary
Mark Lambert, the department's Korea desk director and acting deputy assistant secretary, plans to arrive in Seoul tomorrow and meet foreign ministry officials, a government official here said. They include Kim Tae-jin, head of the North American affair bureau, and Jeong Yeon-doo, director general for the North Korean nuclear issue. Lambert is also expected to hold a roundtable meeting with South Korean businesspeople involved in inter-Korean economic projects. Earlier in the day, the U.S. government issued an advisory alerting businesses to North Korea's sanctions evasion tactics. It called on them to "implement effective due diligence policies, procedures and internal controls to ensure compliance with applicable legal requirements across their entire supply chains." But South Korea is seeking a waiver of its punitive steps against Pyongyang aimed at maintaining the momentum of inter-Korean reconciliation via the resumption of limited cross-border programs. On Washington's latest note, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs construed it as reaffirming a position that the strict implementation of sanctions on Pyongyang is imperative in order to achieve the goal of denuclearizing the nation. "The (South Korean) government is communicating and cooperating with the U.S. on various levels regarding the sanctions on North Korea," the ministry's spokesman Noh Kyu-duk said at a press briefing. (Yonhap, “U.S. Official to Visit S. Korea for Consultations on N. Korea,” July 24, 2018)

South Korea's Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha told the National Assembly there's a possibility of relevant parties declaring an end to the Korean War at the U.N. General Assembly session, to be held in New York in September, but added that no specific moves have yet been made. If realized, it would be a "political declaration" aimed at facilitating the denuclearization of Korea, Kang said. "(We) are in consultations with related countries for the war-ending declaration at the earliest possible date," she said. South Korea wants to do so by the end of this year. The North is also eager for that. Asked if China should be involved in the process of proclaiming an end to the 1950-53 conflict, the minister noted the neighboring country is an "important partner to cooperate with on Korean Peninsula issues." On the future of the inter-Korean industrial complex in Kaesong, now closed, she said conditions have not been created yet to talk about the resumption of the project. She said appropriate conditions, including sanctions relief, are necessary for full-fledged economic cooperation between the two Koreas. "The government’s basic position is that the framework of the sanctions on North Korea by the (U.N.) Security Council and the international community should be maintained and implemented faithfully until there's assurance that denuclearization has been achieved completely," she said. (Yonhap, “S. Korea Eyes Early War-Ending Declaration: Minister,” July 25, 2018)

Bermudez and Dueweke: “While recent press reports have focused on the expansion of North Korea’s Chemical Materials Institute (CMI)—a key facility in its production of solid-rocket motors for missiles—in the months leading up to and in the aftermath of the US-DPRK summit, these efforts have actually been ongoing for at least the past eight years. This activity indicates that the North is continuing to expand its production capabilities to produce solid rocket motors for the Pukguksong-1 and -2 and potentially the -3 and beyond. The Pukguksong-1 submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) began testing in 2016 and the Pukguksong-2 medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM) began testing the following year, but both presumably have now halted as part of the DPRK’s moratorium on nuclear and ballistic missile testing. Although the institute has been described as a “missile manufacturing plant,” CMI only produces several sub-components of those missiles and is only part of the North’s broader long-term program to
War is crucial for Kim to be able to move ahead with his economic plans, which will require a new relationship. Internally, finally getting past the Korean War without a single mention of whom the war was fought against or over whom the “US-led imperialist aggressors.” This year’s coverage went no further than simply referring to “imperialists.” In addition to softer rhetoric, this year’s anniversary had a relatively low profile, even though it was a quinquennial—normally the occasion for expanded treatment. This year’s anniversary dropped the normal national meeting with high-level turnout. Although Pyongyang did host the 5th National Conference of War Veterans, Kim Jong Un only posed for a photo with the group. At the fourth conference, in 2015, he had addressed the meeting.

The United States has blocked a request from the International Olympic Committee to allow sports equipment to be sent to North Korea to help athletes prepare for the Olympics, diplomats said. IOC president Thomas Bach asked a UN sanctions committee on July 3 to allow deliveries of sports equipment “in order to assist the DPRK athletes to prepare for, qualify and effectively participate at the Olympic Games,” according to a letter from the committee chair seen by AFP. "The United States objects to this proposed transfer," the U.S. mission to the United Nations told Security Council members in a brief response sent yesterday. (AFP, “U.S. Blocks IOC Request for Sports Equipment to North Korea,” July 26, 2018)
U.S. spy agencies are seeing signs that North Korea is constructing new missiles at a factory that produced the country’s first intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of reaching the United States, according to officials familiar with the intelligence. Newly obtained evidence, including satellite photos taken in recent weeks, indicates that work is underway on at least one and possibly two liquid-fueled ICBMs at a large research facility in Sanumdong, on the outskirts of Pyongyang, according to the officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe classified intelligence. The findings are the latest to show ongoing activity inside North Korea’s nuclear and missile facilities at a time when the country’s leaders are engaged in arms talks with the United States. The reports about new missile construction come after recent revelations about a suspected uranium-enrichment facility called Kangson that North Korea is operating in secret. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo acknowledged during Senate testimony last week that North Korean factories “continue to produce fissile material” used in making nuclear weapons. He declined to say whether Pyongyang is building new missiles. During a summit with Trump in June, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un agreed to a vaguely worded pledge to “work toward” the “denuclearization” of the Korean Peninsula. But since then, North Korea has made few tangible moves signaling an intention to disarm. Instead, senior North Korean officials have discussed their intention to deceive Washington about the number of nuclear warheads and missiles they have, as well as the types and numbers of facilities, and to rebuff international inspectors, according to intelligence gathered by U.S. agencies. Their strategy includes potentially asserting that they have fully denuclearized by declaring and disposing of 20 warheads while retaining dozens more. The Sanumdong factory has produced two of North Korea’s ICBMs, including the powerful Hwasong-15, the first with a proven range that could allow it to strike the U.S. East Coast. The newly obtained evidence points to ongoing work on at least one Hwasong-15 at the Sanumdong plant, according to imagery collected by the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency in recent weeks.

“We see them going to work, just as before,” said one U.S. official. The exception, the officials said, is the Sohae Satellite Launching Station on North Korea’s west coast, where workers can be observed dismantling an engine test stand, honoring a promise made to Trump at the summit. Buttressing the intelligence findings, independent missile experts this week also reported observing activity consistent with missile construction at the Sanumdong plant. The daily movement of supply trucks and other vehicles, as captured by commercial satellite photos, shows that the missile facility “is not dead, by any stretch of the imagination,” said Jeffrey Lewis, director of the East Asia Nonproliferation Program at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies. The Monterey, Calif., nonprofit group analyzed commercial photos obtained from the satellite imagery firm Planet Labs Inc. “It’s active. We see shipping containers and vehicles coming and going,” Lewis said of the Sanumdong plant. “This is a facility where they build ICBMs and space-launch vehicles.” Intriguingly, one image, taken July 7, shows a bright-red covered trailer in a loading area. The trailer appears identical to those used by North...
U.S. official. It added that while “one photo showed a truck and covered trailer similar to those
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program provides them with a deterrent, in their mind, against regime change by the United States.

Giving up the nuclear capability will violate the two fundamental centers of gravity in the North
Korean regime.” Pompeo, at the Senate hearing last week, sought to assure lawmakers that the
disarmament talks with North Korea remained on track and that the effort to dismantle the
country’s nuclear arsenal was just getting underway. He brushed aside suggestions that the
administration had been deceived by Kim. “We have not been taken for a ride,” he said. But some
independent analysts think the Trump administration has misread Kim’s intentions, interpreting
his commitment to eventual denuclearization as a promise to immediately surrender the country’s
nuclear arsenal and dismantle its weapons factories. “We have this backward. North Korea is not
negotiating to give up their nuclear weapons,” Lewis said. “They are negotiating for recognition of
their nuclear weapons. They’re willing to put up with certain limits, like no nuclear testing and no
ICBM testing. What they’re offering is: They keep the bomb, but they stop talking about it.”
( Ellen Nakashima and Joby Warrick, “New Evidence of Missile Work Seen in North Korea,”

First came reports last month that North Korea was
upgrading nuclear and missile facilities and increasing production of fuel for nuclear bombs at
secret sites. Then came a report this week in The Washington Post that the North is building new
long-range missiles and exploring ways to hide the extent of its nuclear-weapons program from
the United States. What does all this add up to? Is Kim Jong Un serious about his commitment at
the June Singapore summit to “work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula”? Is
he instead out to trick the United States into making concessions for little in return? Or are the
reports, which are based on U.S. intelligence assessments and commercial-satellite imagery, proof
of nothing much beyond standard operating procedure for a country engaged in early negotiations
on an arms-control agreement? The truth is that the same evidence can lead to opposite
conclusions depending on who is evaluating it. Yet it’s perhaps especially true in the case of
intelligence related to North Korea’s nuclear program, since the intentions and activities of the
nation’s leaders are uniquely opaque, and talks with the United States are at such a preliminary
stage. The Singapore summit has left a trail of tea leaves, and there are multiple ways to read
them. The fresh evidence of missile work, for example, comes primarily from imagery gathered by
the U.S. National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency that “points to ongoing work on at least one
Hwasong-15” intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) at a missile factory, according to The
Washington Post, which cited anonymous officials “familiar with the intelligence.” But Reuters
soon followed up with a suggestion that the signs of such moves might be largely circumstantial.
“Photos and infrared imaging indicate vehicles moving in and out of the facility … but do not
show how advanced any missile construction might be,” Reuters noted, citing an unnamed “senior
U.S. official.” It added that while “one photo showed a truck and covered trailer similar to those
the North has used to move its ICBMs,” the cover on the trailer meant “it was not possible to know what, if anything, it was carrying.” The arms-control expert Jeffrey Lewis, who was quoted in the Post’s article stating that “North Korea is not negotiating to give up their nuclear weapons,” noted in a later podcast that his research team had also tracked through satellite imagery ongoing activity at the factory that was consistent with missile construction. But he also acknowledged that they couldn’t confirm from those open-source images alone that new ICBMs were in fact being built, even if that was the most plausible explanation. A red trailer visible in one photograph might have been used to transport part of a Hwasong-15, he observed. Or “it might just be a fucking shipping container.” The case for pessimism in response to these reports goes something like this. It’s true that North Korea’s reported activities are “not per se a violation of the Singapore agreement, because we really don’t have an agreement,” said Bruce Klingner, a former top Korea analyst at the CIA who is now at the Heritage Foundation. What came out of the Trump-Kim summit was a “bare-bones … communiqué,” in which the North Korean leader committed to a vague objective of “denuclearization” but not to halt his nuclear and missile production and development, let alone reverse or eliminate it. Nevertheless, these activities are a “violation of the spirit” of the Singapore statement and also do “seem to be consistent with a government that’s about to abandon all these programs and production facilities.” Why continue to invest in expanding a nuclear program you’d have to dismantle as part of a nuclear deal? The activities do, however, appear to be consistent with Kim Jong Un’s statement in January about North Korea pivoting from testing missiles and nuclear weapons to mass-producing them. “History is a very good predictor for the future,” Klingner told me, noting the many unsuccessful efforts over the past 25 years to end North Korea’s nuclear pursuits. “But it’s not perfect. So perhaps this time is different,” even though “so far it doesn’t seem to be,” and diplomacy should proceed. For this time to really be different, however, North Korea needs to provide the United States with a much more thorough accounting of the various elements of its nuclear program, agree to much more detailed language on denuclearization, and consent to much more robust procedures to independently verify that denuclearization than it has in the past, Klingner said. “When the Soviets gave us a data declaration [on their nuclear-weapons program] and it wasn’t the exact same numbers as the [U.S. intelligence] community numbers, we instantly assumed they were hiding stuff,” he noted. “And it turned out over time, when we did inspections, we refined our own numbers and they came closer to the Soviet numbers.” “You test their intentions,” Klingner continued. “You make sure you close all the loopholes. You painfully detail what is a missile, what is a nuclear weapon, what does it mean for it to be destroyed, what kind of inspections are allowed, how many are allowed, what equipment is the inspection team allowed to bring with it.” “You’re buying a car from someone who’s cheated you on eight previous agreements. You are going to define what a car is. It can’t be a toy car. It has to have an engine. It has to have a carburetor. You’re going to get your lawyer involved to make sure there is no way they can cheat you a ninth time.” There are plenty of reasons to think North Korea will not completely relinquish its nuclear arsenal, from its long record of breaking or not fully implementing previous accords to its long string of pronouncements about its nuclear deterrent being a “treasured sword” against American aggression. But even if the United States finds itself staring down a “rabbit hole” it’s worth going “down it a little bit further,” Klingner advised. The challenge for the Trump administration is figuring out, in the absence of some blatantly bad-faith behavior like another North Korean nuclear test, when it has gone too far down the hole and needs to shift back to its “maximum pressure” approach or some other strategy for containing the North Korean nuclear threat. “If you’re three months down the road, six months down the road, and you still are at where we are today with no seeming progress, what day do you pull the plug?” he asked. When I reached the Korea expert Joel Wit, however, he had a markedly more optimistic reaction to the same developments. After reading aloud the first lines of the Post’s report, he abruptly stopped. “Yeah?” he asked, as if pressing me to tell him what the big news was in the latest news. “Okay?” The Singapore statement, despite Donald Trump’s exaggerated claims about its import, “was just a declaration of what the two sides intended to achieve,” Wit explained. “Now they need to sit down and actually achieve that … In the meantime I would not expect the North Koreans to stop work on the [nuclear] program.” “If you look at the history of every nuclear arms-control negotiation [from] the end of the Cold War up until the present day, you will find that as people are negotiating, the countries participating … are still building weapons until the agreements are
finalized”—both because they’re hedging against the talks failing and because this can strengthen their negotiating position, Wit told me, citing his experience with the Russians as a State Department official in the Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations. France’s nuclear tests in the run-up to signing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and Iran’s continued work on centrifuges for producing nuclear material ahead of entering into its nuclear deal with the United States and other world powers. Witt dismissed the notion that the North Koreans might suspend their nuclear activities as a demonstration of good faith even if they aren’t obligated to do so. (While Kim didn’t publicly pledge in Singapore to quit building missiles or churning out fissile material, he so far has honored promises made before the summit to stop tests of nuclear bombs and intercontinental ballistic missiles.) “Why should they?” Witt asked. “Seven or eight months ago, we all thought we were on the brink of a nuclear war with these people. And then all of a sudden they’re going to show us … good faith by stopping their main defensive program? … That’s ridiculous. No government’s going to do that—and certainly no government you’ve had hostile relations with for” decades. He added that while “everyone dismisses” the unilateral steps that North Korea has taken since Singapore—such as the demolition work it has begun at a satellite-launch site that has played an important role in the country’s missile program—these are efforts by the North Koreans to show “sincerity.” And the trust-building measures that both North Korea and the United States have implemented so far are understandably limited because the reservoir of trust between the two sides is so limited. What could come next, he predicted, is an interim agreement in which, for instance, the two Koreas and the United States formally declare an end to the Korean War in exchange for the North disclosing details of its production of missiles and nuclear material, agreeing to a plan for U.S. authorities to help verify its progress on denuclearization, and turning its Yongbyon nuclear facility into a peaceful scientific and industrial site. What about The Washington Post’s reporting that North Korea might try to conceal the true number of nuclear warheads it has, claiming to have only 20 when U.S. analysts suspect it has dozens more? Witt didn’t seem rattled by this either. “They can say what they want,” he told me. “The point of any agreement is to verify their declaration.” What united the perspectives of Wit and Klingner was a sense that the latest intelligence assessments revealed a North Korea mostly persisting with business as usual in the absence of a firm nuclear agreement—and that what’s needed next is for the United States to probe whether such an agreement is possible. Where the interpretations diverged is in how much stock the two men seemed to place in the prospect of a real deal materializing and actually curbing the usual business. (Uri Friedman, “Two Ways to Read the Latest Intelligence on North Korea,” The Atlantic, August 1, 2018)

Madden: “Recent commercial satellite imagery analysis by the Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Middlebury Institute for International Studies, published by The Diplomat, identifies what is suspected to be a uranium enrichment facility in Colima District, Nampo City. However, the intelligence community has been monitoring this site for more than a decade, its actual function is still in question. It does have some of the characteristics of a site for production of weapons grade material, but a variety of contextual factors, especially the location, suggest it has been built and is being used for some other purpose. …In some ways, the facility seems well-suited for uranium enrichment. Because of its location, the site would be optimal for DPRK scientists and technical personnel to conduct experiments; they would have ready access to convey documents and status reports to Pyongyang and easy access to Kim Cheek University, Kim IL Sung University and the State Academy of Sciences, where technical resources or personnel can be accessed. However, that is not how working-level experts or personnel in the DPRK’s WMD programs operate or function. There exists also the probability that an off-the-books uranium enrichment facility was constructed in Nampo. However, scholars and subject matter experts approaching the North will sometimes fall into a trap of thinking the country plans, behaves and functions like other nuclear weapons powers. This might hold true for technical and industrial processes, but not in terms of deployment, policy planning and the organizational behavior and psychology of the core leadership. That said, The Diplomat article presents little tangible evidence to support the claim that the Kangson site is a uranium enrichment facility or contributes components, parts or technology to North Korea’s WMD program. There is nothing particularly remarkable about a DPRK industrial facility with security fencing, worker housing and Kim iconography. There are scores of industrial and commercial plants throughout the country with these characteristics. The piece also fails to consider logistical and political factors that argue against a role for Kangson in
nuclear material production. When trying to assess whether Kangson may be a uranium
enrichment site, the first consideration is the construction of the facility itself. Construction and
engineering personnel for nuclear facilities, industrial and critical infrastructure and uranium
mining and milling are under the jurisdiction of the Korean People’s Army (KPA) 620th Brigade
and the 41st Brigade which are technically subordinate to the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK)
Munitions Industry Department and the Party’s Second Economy Commission (Second Economic
Committee). The 42nd and 43rd Brigades, subordinate to the 620th, are stationed in and around
Yongbyon and are involved in excavation, engineering, construction, framing and finishing of
nuclear facilities there and in the surrounding counties. This is not a routine construction-related
human resources allocation, such as for a hydroelectric power station or recreation facility (like a
ski resort). Rather, these are specialized construction and engineering units that if deployed to
Nampo, would create a distinct footprint in satellite imagery. Moreover, that type of deployment
would have surfaced through alternate information channels (human intelligence, defector
debriefings or open sources). A uranium enrichment facility is also not a sporadic years-long
project. This is a major personnel deployment that requires significant resource allocation.
Considering the logistical and personnel requirements, it is easier to build an off-site in North
Pyongyang Province, in relatively close proximity to Yongbyon. Thus, some sources have pointed
to, and some analysts have poked around, Pak chon and Techno Counties, west of Yongbyon.
Second, there is the question of physical access to the facility itself. There are two major concerns
here: first, preventing ready access to the facility (i.e., someone making a wrong turn or a rogue
actor being able to commit theft); and second, having the ability to shut off access to and from the
facility in the event of an industrial accident. The alleged uranium facility is situated 1.4 km (.84
miles) from the Pyongyang-Nampo Highway. A view of the area shows a highway turnoff and an
access road from the highway to the facility that does not have any type of gate or barrier, or any
evident inspection post to form an outer security line before entering the facility’s main gate. In
commercial satellite imagery of the facility from April 2018, there is a gate and security building
at the main entrance. There is a fence between the gate and a vehicle and personnel trench that
traverses the wall around the facility. As far as security gates go, the one at the Kangson site is a
factory gate typical to many industrial sites in the county. The security building is not a hardened
garrison, but also appears to serve as an administrative and property management facility. The
vehicle/personnel trench indicates that the on-site security personnel are mobile and fairly few in
number. These security measures are more in line with a production unit or facility for component
parts or technology, not a highly sensitive uranium enrichment facility. In contrast, the Tae-sung
Machine Factory, located two miles west, has outer checkpoints and inspection posts, in addition
to a large reinforced main gate. This missile factory is not only located further in from the
highway at 2.3 km (1.45 miles), but also has numerous natural defenses including heavy foliage,
trees and mountains surrounding the facility. The alleged uranium enrichment facility has none of
these additional natural barriers, though it would stand to reason that there would be similar, if not
greater, security measures in place. While much larger in size, the outer security lines at
Yongbyon, where North Korea’s nuclear reactors and known uranium enrichment facility are
housed, are protected by well-attended inspections posts 4-5 miles away from the nearest
enrichment facilities. Once inside the Yongbyon complex, even employees have to pass through
multiple security inspection posts and checkpoints, including to gain access to individual
buildings. The facilities at Yongbyon are admittedly high profile. Whereas, the location of the
Tae-sung Machine Factory—a legacy munitions industrial plant—is somewhat anomalous because
of its proximity to a large highway between Pyongyang and Nampo. Most other WMD research
and production facilities follow a three-pronged approach to security and physical access, due to
the secret nature of the work involved and the need to maintain tight control over access to the
facility. First, research facilities and production units are almost always located in relatively
remote geographic areas. For instance, the headquarters and major offices of the Second
Economic Committee (SEC), the production and manufacturing arm of the DPRK’s strategic and
conventional weapons, are located 45 km (30 miles) from central Pyongyang. The Second
Academy of Natural Sciences (SANS) and the Sane-dong research campus is 15 km (10 miles)
from central Pyongyang. These are major research and production bases for WMD and do not
account for the isolated and closed parts of North Pyongyang and Changing (Jagging) Provinces
where the bulk of North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic missile production takes place. Second, all
of these facilities have a high number of guard barracks and inspection checkpoints and enjoy the protection of natural defenses. Yongbyon is surrounded by water. Other weapons research and production facilities are located between mountains and foothills. Heavy foliage and tree plantings usually line the roads and the outer perimeter of the buildings. Finally, based on cumulative interview data from defectors and migrants, personnel involved in nuclear weapons and ballistic missile research and production are deliberately isolated from the rest of the DPRK’s population; they are subject to rigorous Party Life assessments and routine indoctrination and are closely monitored by party cadres, notification personnel, the State Security Department and the Military Security Command. These three general security measures reduce the probability that the industrial plant in Colima District is a uranium enrichment site. First, it has minimal security measures and is next to a major highway. In contrast to almost every other WMD facility in the country, it is located in a relatively open part of the DPRK, only eight miles from Lake Teasing, which has a public golf course and the Teasing Guest House. There are several other reasons why the DPRK leadership would not place a uranium enrichment facility near the Pyongyang-Nampo Highway or near to either Nampo or Pyongyang. The Pyongyang-Nampo Highway is a key southern defense route for the Pyongyang Defense Command and III Army Corps. In the event of a domestic or foreign attack (from the South) on the DPRK, the 107th and 108th Tank Divisions deploy on the highway to cut off access routes into Pyongyang. Any initial air attack against the North, even a “bloody nose” strike, would target nuclear facilities. The DPRK’s core leadership and Korean People’s Army’s (KPA) planners would not likely expose this key defense area to an air attack. The KPA also keeps open an escape route to the south; in the event of a decapitation strike (targeting central Pyongyang), core leadership could attempt to migrate to Nampo and leave the country via ship. Moreover, the road running south of the Kangson facility, along with the southwestern part of the Taejon River, is a key civilian and military logistics route. Goods and products come from factories in Nampo, its suburban districts or off the boat in Nampo and move north toward distribution networks in Pyongyang. The Taejon River and the southern road mark the last six miles of a critical KPA logistics route that begins in Pynchon District, Pyongyang; using a combination of shipping vessels and trucks, various necessities and supplies are routinely moved to an underground storage facility on the eastern bank of the Taejon. This is a heavy traffic area for several populations in the DPRK—the civilian economy, the North’s conventional armed forces and foreigners (tourists and residents in the DPRK). This greatly reduces the probability of DPRK policymakers and planners situating a uranium enrichment facility in this area. The risks of an industrial accident, however remote, far outweigh any benefits derived from convenience or efficiency. While there is a general belief that North Korea likely has covert uranium enrichment facilities, there are several contextual considerations that make Kangson an unlikely candidate, or at least a security anomaly if it is. What then is the Kangson facility? Considering its relatively minimal security, close access to a major highway and proximity to a major missile factory it’s probably an extension of the Tae-sung Machine Factory. Admittedly, there is no definitive proof for this assertion, but the contextual evidence raises serious doubts on the role of Kangson to North Korea’s nuclear program. (Michael Madden, “Much Ado about Kangson,” 38North, August 3, 2018)

High-level military talks led by generals from the two Koreas were held at the Peace House on the southern side of the inter-Korean truce village of Panmunjom, and the two sides agreed on disarmament issues in the Joint Security Area (JSA) and to excavate remains of soldiers at the inter-Korean border. It was 47 days since the last such talks in June. The talks kicked off at 10 a.m. and the South’s five-member delegation was led by Major Gen. Kim Do-gun, who is in charge of North Korea policy at the Ministry of National Defense in Seoul. The North’s five-person team was led by Lt. Gen. An Ki-san. This marks the ninth round of inter-Korean military talks between generals. A Seoul defense official said that the two sides “shared understanding” on issues that were not covered in the June 14 joint statement, such as the disarmament of the JSA, along with discussions to withdraw guard posts from the DMZ. But the official added “detailed implementation and methods will be discussed through various channels later.” This could lead to efforts to transform the DMZ into a “peace zone,” as agreed upon by the two leaders in their April 27 summit. Another topic discussed was a joint excavation project in the DMZ to recover bodies of soldiers killed in the Korean War. It was unclear if the two sides agreed on any measures to turn
the Northern Limit Line (NLL), the de facto maritime border, into a “maritime peace zone.” This was a topic that had been discussed by the two sides in previous talks and also in the Panmunjom Declaration, which called for a peace zone to prevent accidental military clashes and guarantee safe fishing. In remarks at the beginning of the talks, An referred to a recent South Korean report ahead of the military meeting that said the North is trying to sway the United States and the South towards a formal declaration to end the 1950-53 Korean War. “I listened to a YTN report the other day which was predicting all the topics that I would discuss face to face with Gen. Kim Dong-kyun today,” said An jovially. “I think it was wonderful.” He continued, “It even said that we tried to shake up the United States, but that didn’t work out, so this time, we are trying to shake the South to push for the declaration of the end of the Korean War. I think it is a possibility.” An pointed out that, before he could vouch for the “authenticity” of this report, he “learned that the North and South Korean people placed that much consideration on the talks” and that he has “realized the sense of duty and role military authorities have in the inter-Korean efforts toward peace and prosperity.” (Sarah Kim and Joint Press Corps, “High-Level Military Talks Are Held,” JoongAng Ilbo, July 31, 2018)

The two Koreas’ militaries “broadly agreed” on the need for disarming a jointly controlled area at the truce village of Panmunjom and excavating war remains inside the heavily fortified Demilitarized Zone, Seoul’s Ministry of National Defense said Tuesday. At general-level military talks held at Panmunjom Tuesday, the two sides’ delegates shared the need for the withdrawal of guard posts from the DMZ on a trial basis and suspension of hostile activities in the West Sea, the ministry said. The two sides failed to come up with a joint statement and a specific timeline for the military confidence-building measures, however, after marathon negotiations that began at 10 a.m. “Regarding specific implementation timeline and method, we agreed to continue our discussion through exchange of letters and working-level contacts,” South Korean chief delegate Maj. Gen. Kim Do-gyun said during a press briefing held after the talks. “We believe that the inter-Korean military talks were meaningful because we aligned our positions and shared the need for implementing military components of the Panmunjom Declaration following the inter-Korean summit in April,” Kim said. “The two Koreas agreed on the need to withdraw guard posts on a trial basis, expanding the cooperation into a broader area and ultimately pulling out all guard posts,” a military official told reporters under the customary condition of anonymity. The official added that South Korea will not withdraw the guard posts unilaterally, stressing the measure would also apply to North Korea. “It was more about building a consensus for a starting point,” the official said. (Yeo Jun-suk, “Two Koreas’ Generals Hold Talks to End Cross-Border Hostilities,” Korea Herald, July 31, 2018)

8/1/18

John Bolton has quietly gotten his very own John Bolton, and his name is Tim Morrison. Morrison possesses a hostility to negotiated restrictions on U.S. nuclear weapons that rivals Bolton’s own, as well as an expertise on nuclear issues undisputed by even his harshest critics. Among arms controllers, Morrison’s name is equivalent to Keyser Söze. A former State Department official called him “the hardlinest of the hardline on nuclear policy.” Arms controllers see a different pattern. “Tim has never met an arms control agreement he liked. He has worked to prevent them from being approved, like New START, and help kill agreements already in place, like the INF agreement,” said Jon Wolfsthal, who had Morrison’s job in the Obama White House. “I worry that he and John Bolton will continue to undermine these agreements instead of using them to help reduce the risk of nuclear conflict and [increase] transparency.” Morrison declined to comment. A lawyer and Naval Reserve intelligence officer in his early 40s, he came onto the arms-control scene in force while working for Kyl, who in 2010 represented the opposition to the Obama administration’s New START treaty with Russia to cut both nations’ nuclear arsenals. (Spencer Ackerman, “John Bolton Brings Nuclear Superhawk into the White House,” Daily Beast, August 1, 2018)

Trump tweet: “Thank you to Chairman Kim Jong Un for keeping your word & starting the process of sending home the remains of our great and beloved missing fallen! I am not at all surprised that you took this kind action. Also, thank you for your nice letter - I look forward to seeing you soon!”
Ormes: “July 27th this year marked the 65th anniversary of the signing of the Armistice Agreement that militarily, though not politically, ended the Korean War. It also marked the beginning of a new but familiar chapter in the 65 year, often troubled history of U.S./DPRK cooperation in the effort to account for thousands of still missing American servicemen from the Korean War. On that day, for the first time in eleven years, North Korea returned cases, fifty-five in all that Pyongyang claimed held the remains of unaccounted for American servicemen found in North Korea. There are 36,574 Americans listed by the Department of Defense (DOD) as having been killed in the Korean War. Sixty-five years later, 7,699 of these men are still missing. Compare this to the Vietnam War where 58,200 Americans died, but only 1,597 are still unaccounted for. DOD estimates that the remains of most of these missing Korean War servicemen – approximately 5,300 – are still in North Korea. As shown in the accompanying table, since the signing of the Armistice Agreement, there have only been two extended, multi-year periods during which the DPRK actively cooperated in the effort to account for America’s missing Korean War servicemen. The first was from 1990-1994 when, at the request of the United Nations Command and the U.S. Government, the DPRK unilaterally recovered and returned up to 400 human remains. During the second period, from 1996-2005, American military and DOD civilian personnel traveled to North Korea and worked jointly with North Korean soldiers to find and recover the remains of 229 probable American servicemen.

![All Repatriations of Remains of Missing Korean War American Servicemen from North Korea: 1954-2018](image)

The DPRK’s current failure to fulfill its Singapore Statement commitment to the “immediate repatriation” of remains in its possession by both delaying their return for forty-five days and then withholding most of the 200 sets of remains it has claimed to have recovered is troubling. Nevertheless, there is room for optimism that the July 27, 2018 repatriation of remains from North Korea will mark the beginning of a new extended period of active DPRK cooperation in America’s mission to find our missing men. With this new attempt at mutual cooperation ongoing, it is worth clearing up some misconceptions from the past. **Misconception # 1.** North Korea pulled the plug on both the 1990-1994 unilateral recovery program and the 1996-2005 joint recovery program. In fact, it was the United States that surprised the DPRK by terminating both of these programs. The 1990-1994 program was terminated at America’s request because of initial difficulty in identifying unilaterally recovered remains with the technology available at that time. The 1996-2005 joint recovery program was abruptly and unexpectedly halted by the Bush administration because of unspecified “safety concerns.” The biggest “safety concern” continuing from that time is likely worry that in a time of crisis, or for other political reasons, the DPRK might arbitrarily arrest and imprison one or more American joint recovery team members. **Misconception # 2.** When we see a flag draped coffin or case being returned from North Korea, the remains of a missing American serviceman are inside. In fact, the only thing that is relatively certain at the time of repatriation, especially when the remains have been unilaterally recovered by the DPRK, is that there are human remains of one or more people inside each coffin or smaller case. That much is normally verified ahead of time. It is possible that there are American or other United Nations Command remains in the coffin, hence the respect shown to it. As the table shows, because of commingling, the remains of up to 400 people were inside the 208 coffins.
returned from 1990-1994, 181 of whom have since been identified as missing Americans. The
remains of seven people were inside the six cases of remains given to New Mexico Governor Bill
Richardson during his visit to North Korea in 2007. Six of them have since been identified as
missing Americans. Only the lengthy identification process proves that a given set of remains is
that of a missing American serviceman. Misconception # 3. Because of commingling and other
problems, it is nearly impossible to identify missing Americans among human remains unilaterally
recovered by the DPRK. That was true in 1994, but, in fact, as the table shows, more
identifications to date have come from remains North Koreans unilaterally recovered and
repatriated from 1990-1994 than have come from the 1996-2005 joint recoveries (181 to 153),
albeit at a lower overall identification rate percentage (45% to 67%). This is largely a testament to
remarkable advances in science, technology, and techniques in recent years. Misconception # 4.
The DPRK demanded compensation for costs it claimed it incurred during the joint recovery
program, but not for the remains it unilaterally recovered. In fact, it demanded compensation for
both, although North Korea certainly received far more compensation for its participation in the
joint recovery program, $19.5 million, than it did for its unilateral recoveries, $2.8 million.[15] It
is true that Pyongyang didn’t ask for compensation when it first began returning unilaterally
recovered remains in 1990. It waited until later to drop that card. Misconception # 5. The
DPRK’s primary motivation for assisting in accounting for missing Americans is money. In fact,
Pyongyang’s primary motivation is political. It seeks to satisfy long-standing U.S. government
policy that North Korea’s assistance in this effort is a precondition to any improvement in
relations with the United States and to turn the remains issue to its own political advantage in
other ways. That didn’t stop its negotiators from keeping up a never ending demand for more and
more compensation, however; a practice that significantly slowed progress on this issue, frustrated
American negotiators, and compromised the good will Pyongyang could otherwise have earned
from the American people for their help in bringing home our missing servicemen. (Ashton
Ormes, “Five Misconceptions about Recovering the Remains of America’s Korean War
Servicemen Missing in North Korea, KEIA, August 1, 2018)

Russia is allowing thousands of fresh North Korean laborers into the country and granting new
work permits in potential violation of U.N. sanctions, the Wall Street Journal reported. Over
10,000 new North Korean workers have registered in Russia since September, the paper said,
citing records from the Russian Interior Ministry. Russia’s action potentially violates U.N.
sanctions to reduce cash flows to North Korea and puts pressure on Pyongyang to give up its
nuclear weapons, the Journal reported, citing U.S. officials. Labor Ministry records obtained by
the Journal showed that a minimum of 700 new work permits have been issued to North Koreans
in Russia this year, the paper said. U.N. officials are probing potential violations of the sanctions,
which contain narrow exceptions, WSJ reported citing sources. “It’s absolutely clear that Russia
needs to do more. Russia says it wants better relations with the United States, so Moscow should
prove that by cooperating with us, not working against us, on this urgent threat to all nations,” a
State Department spokesperson told Reuters. “It is estimated that North Korean laborers in Russia
send between $150 and $300 million annually to Pyongyang. Now is the time for Russia to take
action: Moscow should immediately and fully implement all the U.N. sanctions that it has signed
on to.” In a report released today by the non-profit research organization C4ADS, it said initial
restrictions in China and Russia - where around 80 percent of North Korean laborers are believed
to work - appear to have loosened. “For a time, both Russia and China appeared to be expelling
North Korean workers well before U.N. deadlines, but more recent reporting suggests that North
Korea may have again begun to dispatch labor to both countries,” the report concluded. A separate
report released this week by the Seoul-based Asan Institute for Policy Studies said between 2015
and 2017 the Moscow-based Independent Petroleum Company (IPC) sold far more oil to North
Korea than what was officially reported. “The amount of oil IPC sold to North Korea between
2015 and 2017 could be worth as much USD 238 million,” the report estimated. “This far exceeds
Russia’s official report on its oil exports to North Korea during the same period, which amounted
to USD 25 million.” IPC was sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department in June 2017 over its
trade with North Korea, and in December 2017 the U.N. imposed its strictest limits on North
Korean imports to date. In September last year, Reuters found that at least eight North Korean
ships that left Russia with a cargo of fuel headed for their homeland despite declaring other
destinations, a ploy that U.S. officials say is often used to undermine sanctions. (Reuters, “Russia Allows Entry of Thousands of North Korean Workers: WSJ,” August 2, 2018)

The Defense Department agency that accounts for missing American service members from past wars hopes to negotiate the resumption of joint operations to recover remains in North Korea, an official said, calling such efforts a “sacred obligation.” Talks on resuming field operations, which ran for a decade before they were suspended by the Bush administration in 2005, could take place soon, McKeague said. While North Korea at times has unilaterally handed over boxes of remains, as the country did this week, more fruitful in the eyes of U.S. officials have been joint efforts to find and recover remains with American personnel on the ground. “Given the fact that the North Koreans reaffirmed that commitment to Secretary Pompeo last month, we fully expect that there might be an environment in which case they would be open to sitting down to negotiate,” he said. The United States is preparing to analyze and identify remains of presumed U.S. war dead that North Korea handed over in 55 boxes last week, the largest number of boxes of remains Pyongyang has returned at any one time since the modern process began in the 1990s. The U.S. military sent 200 boxes to the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea in anticipation of the latest transfer, but North Korea handed over only 55 boxes, McKeague said, explaining that U.S. officials didn’t know the specifics in advance. The last time North Korea handed over remains, in 2007, the country transferred six boxes, out of which seven individuals were identified, he said. The Hawaii military laboratory that analyzes and identifies the remains is planning to double the number of people working on its Korean War team to 10 from five as a result of this week’s influx, chief scientist John Byrd said, noting that the process of DNA sampling would begin immediately. Byrd cautioned that the 55 boxes did not necessarily equate to the remains of 55 individuals. He said many of the remains appear to have come from a village associated with the Battle of Chosin Reservoir, a harrowing fight against Chinese forces in late 1950 that claimed thousands of American lives. The United States has sent North Korea $22 million since 1990 as it recovered an estimated 629 sets of remains, according a spokesman for the U.S. military. Much of that money was sent as reimbursement for the costs incurred during the recovery process, which for years involved North Korean officials accompanying American delegations as they traveled to war sites and obtained remains. McKeague said North Korea did not receive any payment for the transfer this week. “There are no costs associated with this particular repatriation,” he said. “None whatsoever. No caveats. No conditions.” McKeague did not say whether the United States would continue reimbursing North Korea, should field operations in the country resume. (Paul Sonne, “U.S. Hopes to Resume Joint Field Operations with North Korea to Find War Remains<” Washington Post, August 2, 2018)

8/3/18

Pompeo: “Q: It’s been close on two months since the Trump-Kim summit here in Singapore. Are we closer to a denuclearization of North Korea? SECRETARY POMPEO: Oh, of course we are. Of course we’re closer. The two presidents came here and made a historic commitment to each other. Chairman Kim Jong-un made the commitment to denuclearize. That’s consistent with what the UN Security Council has been demanding. There are two resolutions that require North Korea to do just that. America, in return, made commitments. We said we are prepared to improve the relationship between our two countries and offer a brighter future for North Korea. We’re still intent upon that. We’re thrilled that North Korea fulfilled its commitment by beginning the process of returning the remains of American servicemen this past week. We hope that process will continue. And we’re confident that Chairman Kim remains committed to denuclearization. The world is counting on it. Q: But you’ve also said that it’s been imperative that the various countries still maintain the sanctions on North Korea. If so much progress has been made, why not then scale back on the sanctions? POMPEO: Oh, because the sanctions must remain in place until we’re done. So no matter how much progress we make along the way – by the way, these aren’t American sanctions – it’s important for the world to know this – these are the world’s sanctions. Every country supported the UN Security Council resolutions, and those sanctions will remain in place until we have full denuclearization in North Korea. So no matter how much progress we make, those sanctions will remain in place. But that day, that day when we achieve this thing that the whole world is demanding – we welcome that day – a brighter future for
the people of North Korea will be at hand. Q: So you have got nothing to do with sort of a carrot system in which it’s going to be sort of accretionally; you’ll have some sanctions which will scale back as North Korea begins to denuclearize? POMPEO: The UN Security Council resolutions are very clear. There will surely be things along the way that take place. We’ve already had meetings. We are engaged in things which will improve the trust between our two countries. Those all make sense. But with respect to sanctions, the UN has spoken; the world has spoken. Q: Time scales. Everybody has – yes, you’re right, everybody’s watching this, but we all want to know: When will this take place? When do you see denuclearization of North Korea taking place? Because having it open-ended just makes everybody incredibly nervous. POMPEO: Well, the world should be less nervous than they were before the summit between the two leaders, where we were in a very difficult place with frequent missile launches, nuclear testing taking place. None of that has taken place since June 12th. We’re happy about that. The ultimate timeline for denuclearization will be set by Chairman Kim, at least in part. The decision is his. He made a commitment and we’re very hopeful that over the coming weeks and months we can make substantial progress towards that and put the North Korean people on a trajectory towards a brighter future very quickly.” (DoS, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Interview with Lin Xueling of Channel NewsAsia, Singapore, August 3, 2018)

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo flew back to Singapore today and said North Korea’s continued work on weapons programs was inconsistent with its leader’s commitment to denuclearize. “Chairman Kim made a commitment to denuclearize,” Pompeo told reporters. “The world demanded that they (North Korea) do so in the U.N. Security Council resolutions. To the extent they are behaving in a manner inconsistent with that, they are a) in violation of one or both the U.N. Security Council resolutions and b) we can see we still have a ways to go to achieve the ultimate outcome we’re looking for.” Pompeo thanked ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) at a meeting in Singapore for their efforts in strictly enforcing sanctions on North Korea. (David Brunnstrom, “Pompeo Says North Korea Weapons Work Inconsistent with Kim Pledge, Reuters, August 3, 2018) In the last five days, President Trump has thanked Kim Jong-un of North Korea for his “nice letter,” reminisced about his “great meeting” with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia and offered to meet Iran’s president, Hassan Rouhani, without any preconditions. There is Trump’s foreign policy, and then there is the foreign policy of the rest of the Trump administration, backed by the Republican Party. This week, the two were openly at odds with each other. Be it Russia, NATO, Iran or North Korea, Trump’s staff and his party projected a radically different message than the president himself. “There is a clear dissonance between what the president says and what his administration says,” said Vali R. Nasr, the dean of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, “and it has been noticed by allies and adversaries around the world.” Administration officials have long argued that foreign leaders should focus on the policies, not the president’s Twitter posts or offhand statements. After Singapore, Trump declared that he and Kim had solved the North Korean nuclear crisis — an assessment he has not abandoned even after intelligence reports that the country was still producing nuclear fuel and building ballistic missiles. Yesterday, Trump thanked Kim for returning the remains of American soldiers killed in the Korean War. “I am not at all surprised that you took this kind action,” he said on Twitter. “Also, thank you for your nice letter — I look forward to seeing you soon!” This has put Pompeo, the president’s chief negotiator with North Korea, in a devlish position. He told reporters today that North Korea’s latest moves violated its United Nations obligations and underscored how difficult it will be to rid the country of its nuclear weapons. “The North Koreans have been conditioned by the president’s habit of ignoring his officials’ hard line positions,” said Daniel R. Russel, a former assistant secretary of state for East Asian affairs. “As a result, they only want to deal with Trump, who has proved so far to be an easy mark.” “Dealing with North Korea is never easy,” he said, “but this makes Pompeo’s task exponentially more difficult.” (Mark Landler, “Foreign Policy Leaves Trump and Team Split.” New York Times, August 4, 2018, p. A-1)

South Korea reiterated its stance that resuming the operation of an inter-Korean industrial complex should be considered in light of progress in denuclearization talks and wait until sanctions are lifted. “The government’s stance remains unchanged when it comes to the issue of the resumption
of the Kaesong Industrial Complex,” Lee Eugene, a deputy spokesperson of the unification ministry, told reporters during a regular press briefing. "The stance has not been changed either that things will be considered in line with progress in denuclearization efforts and within the frame of sanctions," she added. "From a broad perspective, it would be desirable to push for its resumption after the lifting of the sanctions." (Yonhap, “Seoul Says Reopening of Kaesong Should Wait until Sanctions Lifted,” Korea Herald, August 3, 2018)

The U.N. Security Council is poised to back a U.S. proposal aimed at removing some of the hurdles that tough sanctions on North Korea have thrown up in the way of delivering humanitarian aid, according to documents obtained by AFP. North Korea’s humanitarian crisis has left about 10 million people — nearly half of the population — undernourished, according to U.N. officials, who have reported a drop in food production last year. U.N. resolutions specify that sanctions should not affect humanitarian aid, but relief organizations argue that strict trade and banking measures are creating bureaucratic obstacles and slowing down the flow of vital supplies. A U.S. proposal put forward last month would provide clear instructions to aid organizations and governments on how to apply for U.N. sanctions exemptions for North Korea, according to the text. After weeks of negotiations, the U.N. sanctions committee is expected to give final approval to the new guidelines on Monday. Once approved, a notice will be sent to the U.N.’s 193 member states by the committee “to provide a clear explanation of its comprehensive humanitarian exemption mechanism” which will “improve the delivery of humanitarian assistance to DPRK,” say the documents. “Economic sanctions are not supposed to have an impact on impartial humanitarian action. But they do. They have unintended consequences,” said Simon Schorno, the head of aid operations for the International Red Cross in Asia. “We haven’t seen the guidelines yet but we have been promised that they will speed up procedures, exemptions and generally make processes run smoother. We’re hopeful that the guidelines will make carrying out our work easier,” he said. A U.S. official said the guidelines would ensure that “only critical, life-saving humanitarian activities needed in North Korea can continue” and that requests for exemptions will undergo a detailed review. “The United States has been very clear that we will continue to enforce the current sanctions until we achieve the final, fully verified, denuclearization of North Korea,” said the official, speaking on background. Asked about the new guidelines, a Dutch official, speaking as the chair of the sanctions committee, said, “We want to make clear that this is about easing the process, not about easing the sanctions.” The Security Council last year adopted three rafts of sanctions targeting North Korea’s economy in response to Pyongyang’s sixth nuclear test and a series of ballistic missile launches. The measures have had a chilling effect, with U.N. agencies and aid organizations struggling to find partners willing to deal with the bureaucratic red tape from the tight sanctions regime on North Korea. At a U.N. meeting last month, North Korean Deputy Ambassador Kim In Ryong complained that deliveries of medical equipment such as X-ray machines, anti-malaria insecticides and reproductive health kits had been held up for months. Kim said humanitarian aid was being “ politicized” and argued that denying assistance to North Koreans in need was a violation of human rights. The United Nations is also facing a major funding shortfall for its aid operations in North Korea. An appeal for $111 million in funding for food, medicine and other basic needs for 6 million North Koreans has so far raised only $12 million — 10.9 percent of the total amount needed. Only four countries have come forward with donations: Switzerland, Sweden, Canada and France. (AFP, JIJI, “U.N. Moves to Unblock Humanitarian Aid to North Korea,” Asahi Shimbun, August 3, 2018)

8/4/18

Diplomats from the United States and North Korea alternately shook hands and lobbed critiques at one another, in what appeared to be another roadblock in the path to negotiations aimed at ending Pyongyang’s nuclear and missile programs. In a day of head-snapping twists of tone at the annual conference of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Singapore, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo warned Russia not to help North Korea cheat on U.N. sanctions that Moscow had voted for. Then, just a few short hours later, Pompeo and North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho approached each other for a public handshake and exchanged promising pleasantries with big smiles. According to State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert, Pompeo suggested they would talk soon, and Ri agreed, adding, “There are many productive conversations to be
had.” Nauert said that beyond the brief exchange at the group photo, Pompeo and Ri did not have a more formal meeting. Given where the United States and North Korea were a year ago, Nauert said, “This is a step in the right direction.” As the two top diplomats returned to their seats, Sung Kim, the U.S. ambassador to the Philippines, approached Ri and handed him a white envelope bearing a letter from President Trump to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. While the full contents were unknown, Pompeo tweeted later Saturday that the letter was Trump’s reply to amissive the president received from Kim last week, which White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders characterized as a “follow-up” to their June summit in Singapore. In his own tweet, Trump described Kim’s letter as “nice,” breezily adding, “I look forward to seeing you soon!” But things at the Singapore conference went downhill after Pompeo departed for Indonesia: Ri waited until then to deliver a sharp attack on the United States in remarks at the forum. Though he said the North Korean government remains committed to a joint statement that followed a summit between Trump and Kim in June, Ri criticized the White House for insisting on maintaining sanctions until disarmament is complete and demanded “confidence-building” measures along the way. “What is alarming, however, is the insistent moves manifested within the U.S. to go back to the old, far from its leader’s intention,” Ri said. (Carol Morello, “U.S. and N. Korea Strike Two Tones at Conference,” Washington Post, August 5, 2018, p. A-1) North Korea and the United States sparred over an agreement reached at a landmark summit in June for the Asian country to end its nuclear program, as Washington called for maintaining sanctions pressure against Pyongyang, which in turn said it was alarmed by U.S. intentions. The discord at the ASEAN Regional Forum in Singapore was the latest reminder of the difficulties that have long impaired efforts to negotiate an end to North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs. “The DPRK stands firm in its determination and commitment for implementing the DPRK-U.S. Joint Statement in a responsible and good-faith manner,” Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho told the forum, using his country’s official name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. “What is alarming however is the insistent moves manifested within the U.S. to go back to the old, far from its leader’s intention,” he said. Ri made the statement after U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had left the Singapore conference center for Indonesia having pressed Southeast Asian nations to maintain sanctions on North Korea until it gives up a nuclear weapons program that now threatens the United States. Ri said North Korea had made goodwill gestures, including a moratorium on nuclear tests and rocket launches and the dismantling of a nuclear test ground. “However, the United States, instead of responding to these measures, is raising its voice louder for maintaining the sanctions against the DPRK and showing the attitude to retreat even from declaring the end of the war, a very basic and primary step for providing peace on the Korean peninsula,” he said. Today, Pompeo said Washington took very seriously any relaxation of U.N. sanctions, calling out Russia for possibly violating a U.N. resolution by issuing work visas to North Korean workers. “I want to remind every nation that has supported these resolutions that this is a serious issue and something that we will discuss with Moscow,” he said. “We expect the Russians and all countries to abide by the U.N. Security Council resolutions and enforce sanctions on North Korea.” Russia has denied a report by the Wall Street Journal that said Moscow was allowing thousands of fresh North Korean laborers into the country and granting them work permits in a potential breach of U.N sanctions. Russia’s ambassador to North Korea also denied Moscow was flouting U.N. restrictions on oil supplies to North Korea. According to a confidential U.N. report seen by Reuters yesterday, North Korea has not stopped nuclear and missile programs in violation of United Nations sanctions. Although Pompeo has been leading U.S. negotiating efforts with North Korea, he had no formal meeting with Ri in Singapore. However, at a group photo session on Saturday, he walked up to the North Korean and shook hands and exchanged words and smiles. He told Ri: “We should talk again soon,” the State Department said. “I agree, there are many productive conversations to be had,” Ri replied, according to the State Department. Pompeo later tweeted that it had been “a quick, polite exchange” and there had been the opportunity to deliver a letter for Kim Jong Un from Trump. U.S. Ambassador Sung Kim handed Ri the letter, which the State Department said was in return for one from Kim to Trump that the White House said was received on Wednesday. The State Department has not said what is in Trump’s letter to Kim. Trump posted a note on Twitter on August 2 thanking Kim for returning the remains of U.S. soldiers from the Korean War and saying he looked forward to seeing Kim again “soon,” although the White House said no second meeting was currently planned. (Jack Kim, and David
“We believe that a method involving the balanced, simultaneous, step-by-step implementation of all terms in the Joint Statement, preceded by the establishment of trust, is the only realistic means of achieving success.” This was the statement of principles and methodology that North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho announced for implementation of Joint Statement from the North Korea-US summit in a speech at the 25th ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Foreign Ministers’ Meeting at the Singapore Expo convention center. Ri also emphasized two other areas: that “Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s unswerving resolution and commitment to responsible, good-faith implementation of the Joint Statement” and the “unacceptability of a situation in which we alone are the first to move unilaterally.” In short, his message read as Pyongyang declaring that it will not accept a unilateral denuclearization scenario, while urging the US to implement the terms of the June 12 Joint Statement in a “balanced, simultaneous, step-by-step” manner. Ri’s speech is significant as the first case of a North Korea diplomatic leader speaking publicly since the June 12 North Korea-US summit to relate Pyongyang’s official position. While North Korea did state its views in a July 7 Foreign Ministry spokesperson’s statement shortly after a third visit by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, the format and lower ranking of the figure responsible meant it was less “official” in character than Ri’s speech. Ri used the expression “building trust” eight times and variants of “new” eleven times (including references to methods, history, currents, strategy, and relationships) in a roughly 700-word speech, while stressing the importance of a break with the longstanding hostile relationship between Pyongyang and Washington. In particular, he emphasized trust building as the “essential key to guaranteeing complete implementation of the North Korea-US joint statement.” “When the US allows us to relax and move closer, we will be able to open our hearts to the US and show that through our actions,” he said. “This is the core of the agreement reached by the leaders of North Korea and the US,” he added. Ri was also critical of Washington’s attitude in his speech. “Far from responding in kind to the good-faith measures we took the initiative in adopting, including halts to nuclear testing and rocket launches and the dismantlement of our nuclear test site, the US has only grown louder in its insistence on maintaining sanctions, and has been backtracking even on the matter of a declaration ending the [Korean] war, which is the most rudimentary of rudimentary measures to ensure peace on the Korean Peninsula,” he said. “The worrying thing is the continued expression of attempts in the US to return to the old ways despite the intentions of the leadership,” he continued. “We must not allow backlash against the leaders’ intentions to arise with the North Korea-US Joint Statement becoming a scapegoat to US domestic politics,” he stressed. His remarks avoided targeting US President Donald Trump for criticism himself while at the same time laying the blame for the recent deadlock over implementation of the June 12 statement at the US’s feet. (Kim Ji-eun and Noh Ji-won, “North Korean Foreign Minister Releases Statement Denouncing Unilateral Denuclearizations,” Hankyore, August 6, 2018)

KCNA: DPRK Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho Saturday made a speech at the Ministerial Meeting of ASEAN Regional Forum held in Singapore. He said: “The summit meeting and talks held here in Singapore, the first of its kind in the history of the DPRK-U.S. relations, served as a landmark milestone that had the most profound and positive impact on the situation in Asia and the Pacific. A remarkable significance of international dimension wrought by the Singapore summit meeting lies in its demonstration that once mutual confidence is built, even the countries with longstanding hostility could resolve the regional and global peace and security issues through dialogue and negotiation. The DPRK remains committed to actively developing friendly and cooperative relations with all the regional countries on the principles of respect for sovereignty, equality and mutual benefit and making continued contributions to the common efforts of the ARF to implement confidence-building and preventive diplomacy. The new trend of peace and stability created on the Korean Peninsula is a precious green shoot to be carefully attended to and jointly cultivated by all the regional countries for the sake of stable and constructive development of the situation throughout Asia and the Pacific. The present situation of the Korean Peninsula can be
said, in a word, to be a moment of history when the old is overthrown and the new is emerging. Here on Sentosa Island in June, the leaders of the DPRK and the U.S. reached an epoch-making agreement. **The DPRK stands firm in its determination and commitment for implementing the DPRK-U.S. Joint Statement in a responsible and good-faith manner.** Confidence building is the key to the full implementation of the Joint Statement. **Confidence is not a sentiment to be cultivated overnight.** In order to build full confidence between the DPRK and the U.S., it is **essential for both sides to take simultaneous actions and phased steps to do what is possible one after another.** We believe that the only practical way for moving forward is to take a new approach of giving priority to confidence-building and implementing all items of the Joint Statement in a balanced, simultaneous and phased way. Only when the U.S. ensures that we feel comfortable with and come close to it, will we be able to open our minds to the U.S. and show it in action. This is the core essence of the spirit of the agreement shared by the leaders of the DPRK and the U.S. What is alarming, however, is the insistent moves manifested within the U.S. to go back to the old, far from its leader's intention. **The DPRK-U.S. Joint Statement should not be permitted to fall prey to the American internal politics, inviting an adverse wind at odds with the intentions of the leaders.** We thought of doing something in response, if the U.S. would come with constructive ideas. However, **as long as the U.S. does not show in practice its strong will to remove our concerns, there will be no case whereby we will move forward first unilaterally.** There is a Korean proverb which says "slow yet at bull's pace". A fastest and most reliable shortcut to denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is to build confidence in good faith through taking one-by-one and phase-by-phase simultaneous actions. In April this year, the DPRK has put forward a new strategic line of concentrating all its efforts on economic construction. Economic revival and improved people's livelihood in our country will be good for peace, security and economic growth of the region at large. It will never be the contrary. The international community should respond to our goodwill measures already taken for denuclearization with its constructive steps that would encourage and promote peace and economic development of the Korean Peninsula. Availing myself of this opportunity, I express my expectation and conviction that all the ARF member states at this meeting would value this hard-won epoch-making chance for turnaround of the situation on the Korean Peninsula and do helpful work conducive to fundamentally resolving the Korean issues.” (KCNA, “DPRK Foreign Minister Makes Speech at ASEAN Regional Forum,” August 5, 2018)

Japan informed North Korea of its readiness to hold summit talks between their respective leaders at the earliest opportunity. Japan's offer, made by Foreign Minister Kono Taro, was the first high-level contact between officials of the two countries since historic U.S.-North Korea talks here in June. Kono was visiting Singapore to attend ASEAN-related foreign ministers' meetings when he talked with his North Korean counterpart, Ri Yong Ho, at an anteroom outside the venue for the banquet for delegates to the ASEAN Regional Forum after the function began around 7:30 p.m. Kono told reporters that he conveyed “Japan’s basic stance” to Ri, referring to Tokyo's insistence on resolving the decades-old issue of abductions of Japanese citizens by North Korean agents and Pyongyang’s nuclear and missile program before moving to normalize diplomatic relations. Japan insists that terms agreed to in 2002 in the Japan-North Korea Pyongyang Declaration be fulfilled. Kono is believed to have made clear to Ri that Tokyo will provide Pyongyang with economic assistance if the two countries normalize their ties. (Kihara Tamiyuki and Tajima Nobuhiko, “Kono Tells North Korea That Japan Is Ready for Summit Talks,” Asahi Shimbun, August 4, 2018)

Every week for the past 12 years, a small team has headed past military checkpoints and barbed wire fences to the farthest northeast corner of South Korea, where they clean a railway station that never sees any trains. Apart from a few never-used metal detectors, the spotless station lies completely empty. The timetable is blank, the ticket offices are closed. Indeed, only one passenger train has ever arrived at Jejin station: It came from North Korea in 2007. It is hard to imagine now that this mothballed, remote station could one day play a significant role in South Korea’s political and economic future, but South Korean officials are holding out hope that it will — and what is more, that this station could help open up North Korea, too. For South Korea to actually reconnect
its rail network to North Korea, it will first have to convince the United States to reconsider the “maximum pressure” policy toward Pyongyang. That seems unlikely anytime soon. During their meeting in the peninsula’s demilitarized zone in late April, South Korean President Moon Jae-in handed Kim a USB stick containing detailed plans for an inter-Korean rail network. The two Korean leaders agreed to work toward reconnecting their rail network, built under Imperial Japan at the turn of the 20th century, then severed during the Korean War in the 1950s. “We cannot go further,” said Moon Chung-in, an influential adviser to the South Korean president. “Why? Because of the sanctions regime.” There is growing frustration that a slow pace on sanctions could dash renewed hopes for a connection. “It’s so stressful that the United States is so controlling,” said Song Young-gil, a South Korean politician who recently inspected North Korea’s railways for the president’s office. For many South Koreans, the prospect of reconnecting the rail link to North Korea is one of the most evocative, even romantic, aspects of the Korean detente. It represents not only a step toward eventual reunification of North and South but also a correction to the cruel 20th-century history that made their nation an “island” without an open land border. Much attention has been focused on a west coast line between Seoul and Pyongyang. In the DMZ not far from Seoul, another station that opened in 2007 is now a tourist attraction where visitors can buy “tickets” and look at part of the Berlin Wall. But while a west coast railroad would connect political capitals, an east coast line through Jejin would be important for two key areas of Moon’s plans for cooperation with North Korea: trade and tourism. Following existing tracks, this line would start at Busan, South Korea’s second-largest city and one of the world’s busiest seaports. Train service would run through Jejin and on into North Korea, passing through the Mount Kumgang tourist zone and then Wonsan, a weapons-industry hub converted into a beach resort. The service would continue to Hamhung, an industrial city and the second largest in North Korea. Eventually, it would reach Rason, an ice-free seaport close to North Korean natural resources. From there, travelers would go on to the Russian border, where there are links to the Russian seaport of Vladivostok and beyond. In theory, a train could continue to Europe on what’s been dubbed the “Iron Silk Railroad.” South Korean experts believe that this trade and tourism could help open up North Korea politically. At the same time, there is hope that such a connection could boost South Korea’s struggling economy and bring more business to the port of Busan. Na Hee-seung, the president of the Korea Railroad Research Institute, said that using container ships to send goods from Busan to Europe takes far too long for high-end goods. Freight rail would cost more but would take half the time, he said. A railroad could also solidify relationships with neighbors, particularly Russia. Artyom Lukin, a political scientist at Far Eastern Federal University in Vladivostok, said Russia has long seen an inter-Korean connection to the Trans-Siberian Railway as a way of extending its influence in the Far East. “Russia expects to rake in profits,” he said. But not all are convinced. Anton Vorobyev, an independent consultant who works with Russians living in Busan, said that discussions about an inter-Korean railway have been going on for years but that the “project does not go further than talking.” Certainly, it has been a long and painful process. The two Koreas first agreed to reconnect their rail systems in 2000, but that was just the start of seven years of construction and negotiations. A North Korean train finally arrived in Jejin on May 17, 2007, welcomed by cheering crowds. But things soured quickly. In 2008, a North Korean soldier fatally shot a South Korean tourist who wandered into a restricted area in the Mount Kumgang resort, and the train service was shut down. Jejin station never received any passengers other than from that one test run in 2007. Given the large financial cost involved, restarting plans to reconnect the rail service is risky. A complete renovation of North Korea’s railways could easily run into billions of dollars, with much of the cost borne by South Korea. Recent visitors say that unlike South Korea’s world-class infrastructure, the North’s once-lauded rail network is decrepit. Even near economic hubs such as Rason, only painfully slow trains sharing single tracks are available, and delays stretch from hours to days. Ahn Byung-min, a South Korean railway expert who advises Moon’s government, said he had not seen any improvements in North Korea’s trains in more than 40 visits since 2000. “I’d say it’s got worse,” he said. Some of his travel was on trains that reminded him of the runaway mine cart in the film “Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom,” he said. South Koreans have sought ways to get the ball rolling. On July 3, Song, the South Korean politician, wrote directly to Trump, pleading with him to lift U.S. sanctions on a project to connect the Russian city of Khasan to the port of Rason in North Korea. As the project was already exempt from U.N. sanctions, he wrote, Trump
could remove U.S. sanctions unilaterally as a gesture of goodwill to Pyongyang. If this happened, “Kim Jong Un would have some leverage to persuade the hawkish military group” in North Korea that denuclearization was worth it, Song said. He has not received a response to his letter, however. “If you’re on the one hand refusing to import North Korean coal and minerals until they make tangible steps on denuclearization, while at the same time constructing railroads to import said goods, that’s an inherently contradictory policy,” said Benjamin Katzeff Silberstein, co-editor of North Korean Economy Watch. (Adam Taylor, “South Korea Wants Rail Link North, U.S. Sanctions Bar the Way,” Washington Post, August 5, 2018, p. A-10)

One hundred eighty one elderly Koreans – 93 from the South and 88 from the North, will meet their relatives during a reunion of separated families scheduled from August 20 to 26. The list was finalized and exchanged between the Red Cross organizations of the South and North, Saturday, through the truce village of Panmunjom in the Demilitarized Zone, according to the Ministry of Unification. The 93 South Koreans will reunite with their North Korean relatives from August 20 to 22 at North Korea’s scenic resort on Mount Kumgang. The 88 North Koreans will have a separate reunion from August 24 to 26 at the same venue. (Yi Whan-woo, “Tearful Reunion: 188 South Korean to Meet Separated Family in North on Aug. 20-28,” Korea Times, June 6, 2018)

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Secretary of State Mike Pompeo played down an exchange of contentious remarks with North Korea on the sidelines of weekend regional meetings in Singapore, saying Pyongyang had made clear its continued commitment to denuclearize. Pompeo was asked in a briefing to reporters traveling back with him to Washington whether he was concerned by Ri’s remarks. He noted the tone of the North Korean statement was far different that it was last year. “The minister made very clear of their continued commitment to denuclearize,” Pompeo said. “I probably don’t have his words exactly right, but it’s pretty close. Compare the anger, frankly, over years and years, and hatred, as spewed by the North Koreans; his comments were different.” Pompeo stressed the U.S. “mission statement” remained clear. “The U.N. Security Council has said they must end their nuclear program and their ballistic missile program. He has to deliver on the commitments he’s made,” he said, referring to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Asked whether North Korea could be offered concessions other than sanctions relief, Pompeo replied: “I am not going to comment on the sanctions and what others may have proffered.” Asked why he had apparently not held a formal meeting with Ri in Singapore, Pompeo, who has been leading U.S. negotiating efforts with Pyongyang, replied: “Your question has a predicate and I’m just going to say, there are lots of conversations taking place.” (David Brunnstrom, “Pompeo Plays down North Korea Sparring,” Reuters, August 5, 2018)

Pompeo: “So a couple thoughts as we get started. … The second, we got to bring them up to speed on the progress, places we haven’t made progress on North Korea, and our plan moving forward, including the need for each of them to continue to enforce the UN Security Council resolutions and what that meant and what our expectation was for every country who – part of the UN who had voted for those Security Council resolutions. …Q: (Inaudible) Korea. Were you concerned about the foreign minister’s – Foreign Minister Ri’s intervention just after you left? It’s – he seemed to put a rather negative (inaudible). SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, you compare it to last year. … Foreign minister made very clear their continued commitment to denuclearize. I think that was – I don’t – probably don’t have his words exactly right, but it’s pretty close. Compare the anger, frankly, over years and years, and hatred spewed by the North Koreans. This was – his comments were different, and put the comments aside for a minute. The mission statement’s very clear. The UN Security Council has said they must end their nuclear program and their ballistic missile program…. Q: You said there’s a lot of work to do towards denuclearization. POMPEO: He’s got to deliver on the commitments he's made. Q: But why (inaudible) the opportunity of being in Singapore with him to have a proper meeting and go forward, to move forward (inaudible)? POMPEO: Yeah, you – your question has a predicate, and I’m just going to say there are lots of conversations taking place. Q: (Inaudible.) Did you meet him? POMPEO: Lots of conversations taking place. You want to ask again? Q: Yeah. POMPEO: Lots of conversations taking place. Q: In (inaudible) comments, though, he brought up again the
North Korean demand for this phased approach, and I know that you’ve said that some things are possible before the end, but not sanctions. **POMPEO:** Yeah. That’s right. **Q:** So do they have a specific non-sanctions, for lack of a better word, concession that they would like to see before? **POMPEO:** I know where you’re headed. I’m not going to comment on the negotiations and what others may have proffered or what we have considered. Just not appropriate. Wouldn’t be fair to them or to us as we try and solve this.” (DoS, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Remarks, En Route to Joint Base Andrews August 5, 2018)

North Korea has not stopped its nuclear and missile programs and is violating U.N. sanctions including by “a massive increase in illicit ship-to-ship transfers of petroleum products,” U.N. experts said in a new report. A summary of the report by experts monitoring U.N. sanctions against North Korea, which was sent to the Security Council two nights ago and obtained by The Associated Press, said North Korea is also violating sanctions by transferring coal at sea and flouting an arms embargo and financial sanctions. The panel of experts said North Korea attempted to sell small arms and light weapons and other military equipment via foreign intermediaries, including Syrian arms traffickers in the case of Houthi Shiite rebels in Yemen as well as Libya and Sudan. The report also said North Korea has continued military cooperation with Syria, in breach of U.N. sanctions. The panel said it is continuing to investigate sanctioned individuals, companies and other entities in Asia that clandestinely procured centrifuges for North Korea’s nuclear program and attempted to sell a wide range of military equipment to governments and armed groups in the Middle East and Africa. Many diplomats and analysts credit the sanctions, which have sharply cut North Korea’s exports and imports, with helping promote the thaw in relations between North Korea and South Korea as well as the June meeting between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. But the report said North Korea “has not stopped its nuclear and missiles programs” and continues to defy the sanctions resolutions. The experts said ship-to-ship transfers of petroleum products, oil and coal involve “increasingly sophisticated evasion techniques.” These include turning off Automatic Identification Systems, which are required to be on at all times under international regulations, physically disguising North Korean tankers, using small unregistered vessels, illegally changing names, carrying out night transfers and using additional vessels to trans-ship cargo, the report said.

The United States said last month that North Korea is illegally smuggling refined petroleum products into the country beyond the quota of 500,000 barrels per year allowed under U.N. sanctions. U.S. documents sent to the Security Council committee monitoring sanctions against North Korea cite 89 instances between Jan. 1 and May 30, in which North Korean tankers likely delivered refined products "illicitly procured" via ship-to-ship transfers. The documents say that even if each tanker delivered only one-third of its listed capacity, the total volume would be above the 500,000 barrel annual quota. If loaded at around 90 percent, the U.S. said the tankers would have delivered nearly 1.4 million barrels of refined products to North Korea, almost triple the quota. The experts said if the report is accurate, North Korea is violating sanctions and all countries "would have to immediately halt all such transfers" to North Korea. As for U.N. financial sanctions, the report said they are among the most poorly implemented and evaded measures. The experts said individuals empowered to act for North Korean financial institutions operate in at least five countries, which weren’t named, "with seeming impunity." They said accounts closed in the European Union to comply with sanctions were transferred to accounts at financial institutions in Asia. North Korea is also using overseas companies and individuals to obscure income-generating activities for the government, the panel said. And the experts’ investigation of more than 200 joint ventures and/or cooperatives turned up a number that violated U.N. sanctions resolutions by maintaining links with companies and entities under sanctions. The experts said North Korean diplomats also continue to play "a key role in sanctions evasion,” including by controlling bank accounts in multiple countries and holding accounts in the name of family members and front companies. (Edith M. Lederer, “U.N. Exports: North Korea Hasn’t Stopped Nuke and Missile Programs,” Associated Press, August 5, 2018)
North Korea released a South Korean citizen on Tuesday who was detained in the North last month, a rare humanitarian gesture welcomed by the South Korean government. The returnee was handed over to the South Korean authorities through Panmunjom, a contact point on the border between the two countries, the South’s Unification Ministry said in a statement. The 34-year-old man, who was identified only by his last name, Seo, was arrested in North Korea for illegal entry on July 22. The ministry released no further details, citing a pending investigation. The man will probably face criminal charges in South Korea because of a national law that bars citizens from visiting the North without government permission. (Choe Sang-hun, “In Rare Move, N. Korea Releases S. Korean It Detained,” New York Times, August 7, 2018)

The Trump administration has presented North Korea with a formal timeline for starting the process of denuclearization — and Pyongyang has rejected it several times. It shows that even after months of talks, Washington and Pyongyang have made little progress toward ending the North Korean nuclear threat. The details of the US-proposed timeline, which have not previously been reported, are as follows: North Korea hands over 60 to 70 percent of its nuclear warheads within six to eight months; the US or a third party — likely another country — takes possession of them and removes them from North Korea. It’s unclear what concessions, if any, the US would offer in exchange beyond sanctions relief or removing North Korea from the state sponsors of terrorism list. According to two people familiar with the discussions, this is the plan that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has presented to North Korean negotiators multiple times over the past two months. But each time, the North Korean negotiators, led by Kim Yong Chol — a top aide to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un — have turned down Pompeo’s proposal. Further complicating matters, North Korea hasn’t yet disclosed to the United States exactly how many nuclear bombs it even has. So even if North Korean negotiators did agree to the US timeline and handed over what it says is 60 to 70 percent of its arsenal, it would be difficult to verify that. Indeed, one source told me that Pompeo’s main goal in this stage of the negotiations is merely to get North Korea to officially disclose how many nuclear weapons it possesses, and has pressed the North Koreans to fully account for its warhead total. This timeline — and the North Koreans’ rejection of it — tracks with previous reporting about the negotiations, including from the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, and the Japanese newspaper the Asahi Shimbun. National Security Adviser John Bolton has also expressed frustration with the progress of the negotiations in recent days. On Tuesday, he told Fox News that “North Korea that has not taken the steps we feel are necessary to denuclearize.” He has a point: Since the Trump-Kim summit in Singapore in June, North Korea has done very little to actually end its nuclear program. Up until now, it’s looked like Pyongyang is purposely stalling instead of acceding to Trump’s denuclearization demand. A letter Kim sent to Trump in July didn’t even mention “denuclearization.” (Alex Ward, “Exclusive: Pompeo Told North Korea to Cut Its Nuclear Arsenal by 660 to 70 Percent,” Vox News, August 8, 2018)

DPRK FoMin spokesman press statement: “At the first historic DPRK-U.S. summit meeting and talks, the top leaders committed to work together toward putting an end to the extremely hostile relations through confidence building and establishing new DPRK-U.S. relations in favor of the requirements and interests of the peoples of two countries and to make active contribution to peace, security, and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula and over the world. Whereas we already took such practical denuclearization steps as discontinuing nuclear test and ICBM test fire, followed by dismantling the nuclear test ground since the end of last year, the U.S. insisted on its unilateral demand of "denuclearization first" at the first DPRK-U.S. high-level talks held in Pyongyang in early July. Nevertheless, for the sake of building confidence between the DRPK and the U.S., a foremost and indispensable process for implementation of the joint statement of the
DPRK-U.S. summit, we took such broadminded measures as repatriating POW/MIA remains. We hoped that these goodwill measures would contribute to breaking down the high barrier of mistrust existing between the DPRK and the U.S. and to establishing mutual trust. However, the U.S. responded to our expectation by inciting international sanctions and pressure against the DPRK. The U.S. is attempting to invent a pretext for increased sanctions against the DPRK by mobilizing all their servile mouthpieces and intelligence institutions to fabricate all kinds of falsehoods on our nuclear issue. They made public the “North Korea Sanctions and Enforcement Actions Advisory” and additional sanctions, and called for collaboration in forcing sanctions and pressure upon us even at the international meetings. Worse still, the U.S. is resorting to such highly despicable actions as hindering international organizations’ cooperation with our country in the field of sports and forcing other countries not to send high-level delegations to the celebrations of the 70th founding anniversary of the DPRK. Now the issue in question is that, going against the intention of president Trump to advance the DPRK-U.S. relations, who is expressing gratitude to our goodwill measures for implementing the DPRK-U.S. joint statement, some high-level officials within the U.S. administration are making baseless allegations against us and making desperate attempts at intensifying the international sanctions and pressure. Expecting any result, while insulting the dialogue partner and throwing cold water over our sincere efforts for building confidence which can be seen as a precondition for implementing the DPRK-U.S. joint statement, is indeed a foolish act that amounts to waiting to see a boiled egg hatch out. The international society is struck by this shameless and impertinent behavior of the U.S., and we also closely follow the U.S. behavior with high vigilance against their intentions. As long as the U.S. denies even the basic decorum for its dialogue partner and clings to the outdated acting script which the previous administrations have all tried and failed, one cannot expect any progress in the implementation of the DPRK-U.S. joint statement including the denuclearization, and furthermore, there is no guarantee that the hard-won atmosphere of stability on the Korean Peninsula will continue. We remain unchanged in our will to uphold the intentions of the top leaders of the DPRK and the U.S. and to build trust and implement in good faith the DPRK-U.S. joint statement step by step. The U.S. should, even at this belated time, respond to our sincere efforts in a corresponding manner.” (KCNA, “Press Statement of Spokesperson for DPRK Foreign Ministry,” August 9, 2018)

If US officials were to enter North Korea to recover the remains of American soldiers from the Korean War, equipment and payment incurred in the process should be exempt from the UN sanctions imposed on North Korea. In an interview with Radio Free Asia, Kelly McKeague, director of the US Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), said Washington needs to seek exemption from UN sanctions if payment and equipment are to be sent to North Korea for recovery operations. Under the current UN sanctions, the transfer of any money and shipment of equipment to North Korea are prohibited unless the UN Security Council’s sanctions committee allows them “on a case-by-case basis.” “In order for us to operate and to reimburse North Korea for expenses incurred, we will have to get sanctions relief from the UN. That’s part of dialogue and discussion,” McKeague said during the interview on August 9. The DPAA director said the agency aims to enter North Korea for the recovery projects in spring next year because of weather in North Korea. Previous projects were conducted between mid-March and mid-October, according to McKeague. (Yeo Jun-suk, “UN Sanctions Exemption Needed to Recover War Remains in N.K.: U.S. Official,” Korea Herald, August 12, 2018)

North Korea is insisting that the United States declare that the Korean War is over before providing a detailed, written disclosure of all its atomic weapons stockpiles, its nuclear production facilities and its missiles as a first major step toward denuclearization. [??] North Korea has not yet even agreed to provide that list during private exchanges with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, according to American and South Korean officials familiar with the talks. Pompeo maintains progress is being made, although he has provided no details. But John R. Bolton, Trump’s national security adviser, this week said, “North Korea that has not taken the steps we feel are necessary to denuclearize.” Yesterday, Rodong Sinmun called the declaration of the end of the war “the demand of our time” and that would be the “first process” in moving toward a
fulfillment of the June 12 deal struck between Trump and Kim. Pyongyang also wants peace treaty talks to begin before detailing its arsenal. If the standoff over the parallel declarations remains, it is hard to see how the two countries can move forward with an agreement. “The North Koreans have lied to us consistently for nearly 30 years,” Joseph Nye, who wrote one of the National Intelligence Council’s first assessments of the North’s weapons programs in 1993, said at the Aspen Institute on August 7. “Trump is in a long tradition of American presidents who have been taken to the cleaners,” Nye said. Neither Trump nor Pompeo has acknowledged the impasse. But officials said South Korea has quietly backed the North Korean position, betting that once Trump has issued a “peace declaration” it would be harder for him to later threaten military action if the North fails to disarm or discard its nuclear arsenal. And fears remain that making concessions to Pyongyang — especially after Trump shelved annual American military exercises with South Korea that he called “war games,” the phrase used by the North — would outrage Republicans in Congress and open Trump to charges that he has been outmaneuvered by the North Korean leader. Pompeo has told associates that he believes his tenure as secretary of state will be judged largely on how he handles the negotiations. In recent weeks he has softened some of his statements toward North Korea, saying the United States is open to a step-by-step approach that most officials had previously rejected. “The ultimate timeline for denuclearization will be set by Chairman Kim,” Pompeo said last week — a stark contrast to Trump’s statements last year that North Korea should give up its weapons rapidly, or face tremendous, if unspecified, consequences. “I had low expectations about Singapore, which have been more than met,” said Christopher Hill, who negotiated the accord that resulted in the blowing up of the reactor cooling tower. He noted that the agreement that Trump struck with Kim did not go beyond commitments the North had made to Presidents Clinton and Bush. While there is no agreement on how many nuclear weapons North Korea now owns, the C.I.A.’s official estimate of around 20, issued when Trump came to office, is creeping up, officials said. The current estimates are closer to 40. The Defense Intelligence Agency uses a larger figure of 60, but that assumes highly efficient production capabilities, which many experts doubt. The wide variance in weapons estimates underscores the problem of knowing whether North Korea is actually giving up its arsenal. The declared listing of its current stockpiles and production facilities is meant as a critical first step, so that American intelligence agencies can compare it to their findings, and then challenge the North Koreans if they have not revealed suspected sites. But the North Koreans have many reasons to balk at providing the declaration. They fear that once they identify locations of key facilities, the United States will use that information to target any preemptive strikes in the future. And they also fear that the declaration will put them on a pathway to giving everything up — or being charged with lying about the true scope of their program. Some parts of that program are hard to hide. Analysts who study satellite images say the North is firing up a large new reactor — its second at Yongbyon, its top nuclear site. Such reactors make plutonium, a main fuel of nuclear arms. The new reactor, analysts say, can make four times more than the North’s existing large reactor, which long supplied plutonium for its nuclear arsenal. Last month in Senate testimony, Pompeo acknowledged that North Korea’s plants “continue to produce fissile material,” the technical term for the fuel at the core of nuclear warheads. (David E. Sanger and William J. Broad, “North Korea in New Standoff over Its Arsenal,” New York Times, August 11, 2018, p. A-11)

Three South Korean firms imported North Korean coal from Russia by forging customs documents in apparent violation of a U.N. sanctions resolution, authorities here announced Friday. The findings present the South’s government with a diplomatic burden amid the U.S.-led efforts to maintain international unity in enforcing sanctions on the communist nation until its full denuclearization. The Korea Customs Office (KCS) said the three firms brought in 35,038 tons of North Korean coal and pig iron, worth a combined 6.6 billion won (US$5.86 million), on seven occasions between April and October last year. They were found to have transshipped the materials at a Russian port and manipulated documents on the country of origin or the type of stuff. The coal was a sort of commission fee for the firms’ role in helping export North Korean goods to other countries via Russia, with a wide web of sanctions against Pyongyang in place, according to the KCS. The pig iron, obtained in exchange for selling Russian coal to North Korea, was brought into South Korea via a paper company in Hong Kong, it added. That means the importers knew that the materials originated in North Korea. But the customs office said it found
no evidence that local banks, which issued letters of credit for them, were aware of such illicit trade. (Yonhap, “N. Korean Coal, Pig Iron Illegally Shipped to S. Korea: Customs Office,” August 10, 2018)

Russia said it has overturned U.S. attempts to expand United Nations Security Council sanctions against North Korea. Russia's foreign ministry said it has been able to block U.S.-proposed sanctions against Russia's Agrosoyuz Commercial Bank, one individual and several institutions, all found in violation of sanctions, Tass news agency reported. (Elizabeth Shim, “Russia Turns down U.S. North Korea Sanctions at U.N.,” UPI, August 10, 2018)

8/11-12/18 North Korea and the United States held their latest working-level talks at the truce village of Panmunjom over the weekend, a diplomatic source said August 14, amid news reports that U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will visit the North again. North Korea's further steps for denuclearization and the issue of formally ending the 1950-53 Korean War were believed to be the agenda of the latest working-level talks between North Korea and the U.S., the source said. North Korea and the U.S. discussed "specific" measures, the source said, declining to elaborate further. Additional working-level talks between North Korea and the U.S. are likely to be held at Panmunjom this week, according to the source. (Yonhap, “N. Korea, U.S. Hold Working-Level Talks at Panmunjom,” August 14, 2018)

8/13/18 President Moon Jae-in of South Korea will visit Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, next month to hold his third summit meeting with that country’s leader, Kim Jong-un, South Korean officials said. A joint statement, released after a meeting of senior officials from North and South Korea, did not specify a date for the visit. It was unclear whether the North Koreans asked Moon to visit Pyongyang in time for the country’s annual national day celebration on September, 9. This year, North Korea is commemorating the 70th anniversary of its founding as a communist state, and it has been trying to invite foreign dignitaries to the country for the occasion. Last week, the North’s Foreign Ministry accused Washington of telling other countries not to send high-level delegations to the celebrations in Pyongyang, which could include a large-scale military parade. No sitting South Korean leader has attended the North Korean anniversary. Last month, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Pyongyang to urge the country to take concrete steps toward denuclearization, including disclosing an inventory of its nuclear weapons and facilities, and dismantling some of them. But North Korea later called the Trump administration’s behavior “gangster-like,” accusing Washington of demanding a “unilateral” denuclearization while offering little in return. North Korea has recently demanded that South Korea and the United States declare an end to the Korean War, as a prelude to negotiating a formal peace treaty to replace the armistice that halted the fighting 65 years ago. During their April meeting, Kim and Moon agreed to push for such a declaration by the end of this year. Pyongyang insists that Washington make the North Koreans feel safe before expecting them to give up their nuclear weapons. It says that by declaring an end to the Korean War, Washington can demonstrate that it is moving away from its hostility toward the North. But American officials have been reluctant to grant such a highly symbolic concession before the North takes more meaningful steps toward denuclearization. South Korean officials are trying to help the two sides find common ground. (Choe Sang-hun, “North and South Agree to Summit on Dismantling Weapons,” New York Times, August 13, 2018) South and North Korea agreed Monday to hold a summit meeting between their leaders in Pyongyang in September. The agreement was made during high-level talks on the northern side of Panmunjom that separates the two Koreas. They, however, did not unveil the date of the meeting. "We agreed to hold an inter-Korean summit within September in Pyongyang" the two Koreas said in a joint press statement issued after the meeting. North Korea's chief delegate, Ri Son-gwon, hinted after the meeting that the two sides agreed on a date but decided not to announce it, only to emphasize that the summit will take place "within September." During today's talks, the two Koreas also discussed what has been implemented since their previous summits, especially on their promised efforts to expand cross-border exchanges and cooperation. They have been at odds with the speed and scope of inter-Korean exchanges, though there have been a flurry of talks on details on cooperation in various areas, including railways, roads and sports. The North has voiced
frustration with the slower-than-expected pace in progress on those fronts. The Seoul government appears reluctant to push for full-blown cooperation with the North, constrained by multilayered sanctions imposed on Pyongyang. Another possible agenda item for the high-level talks is to declare a formal end to the 1950-53 Korean War, which their leaders agreed to complete by the end of this year. The North has called for Seoul to fulfill its promise of declaring an end to the war as soon as possible, while the U.S. has said that the North should take meaningful denuclearization steps first. It was not clear whether the issue was brought up during the latest talks. “We reviewed the implementation situations of the Panmunjom Declaration and held consultations in a sincere manner on matters related to its more active enforcement,” the two sides said after the talks, referring to the agreement reached in the historic April summit. South Korea’s delegation was led by Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon. His North Korean counterpart was Ri, chairman of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country. Also included in South Korea’s four-member delegation were Vice Unification Minister Chun Hae-sung and Nam Gwan-pyo, a senior director from the presidential National Security Office. The North’s delegation included Pak Yong-il, vice chairman of the reunification committee, Vice Railroad Minister Kim Yun-hyok and Pak Ho-yong, vice minister for land and environmental protection. Cho told reporters during a briefing on the outcome of the talks that the two sides discussed much about sanctions and possible cooperation “within the frame” of those restrictions. (Joint Press Corps, Yonhap, “Koreas Agree to Hold Summit in Pyongyang in September,” August 13, 2018)

Joint Press Release of 4th Inter-Korean High-Level Talks: “The South and the North held their fourth Inter-Korean High-Level Talks on the northern side of Panmunjom at the Tongilgak on Aug. 13, 2018, in order to carry out the historic Panmunjom Declaration. The South, together with the North, reviewed progress on implementing the Panmunjom Declaration, and discussed further methods to fulfill the declaration in a sincere manner. Furthermore, the South and the North agreed to hold the scheduled Inter-Korean Summit by September in Pyeongyang. August 13, 2018 Panmunjom”

As a reward for its broader foray into diplomacy, North Korea wants a formal and official declared end to the decades-long Korean War that settled into an uneasy truce in 1953. South Korea wants this, too. But the United States, which first sent military forces to the Korean Peninsula in 1950 and still keeps 28,500 troops there, is not ready to agree to a peace declaration. No doubt the issue will be high on the agenda when the leaders of the two Koreas hold their third summit meeting next month, in Pyongyang. Both want the end of the war to be declared this year with the United States and, possibly, China. And North Korea insists on securing the declaration before moving forward with denuclearization. But there is a range of reasons American officials have refused so far to embrace a formal peace declaration. The Trump administration wants North Korea to first halt its nuclear weapons program — a tough line that could create a divergence between the United States and South Korea, its ally. “You have South Korea moving so quickly on these projects to push for reconciliation with North Korea, and in Washington you have people pushing for denuclearization before anything else happens,” said Jean H. Lee, director of the Wilson Center’s center for Korean history and public policy. “They have very different end games and very different time frames. It’s very problematic.” John Bolton said last week that North Korea had not taken steps necessary for denuclearization, a process that American officials have said should include turning over a list of Pyongyang’s atomic weapons stockpiles, nuclear production facilities and missiles. North Korea has not agreed to do so and, according to Pompeo, is still producing fissile material at plants. Separately, American intelligence officials have concluded that North Korea is continuing to make long-range missiles at a site north of Pyongyang, according to news reports. South Korea wants the United States to give Kim Jong-un, the North Korean leader, something significant — ideally an end-of-war declaration — to build domestic political will for denuclearization. South Korean officials also have noted that North Korea is focused on the order of points made in the joint statement from Singapore. The commitment to denuclearization was third, while the first and second points called on the United States and North Korea to establish new relations and to build “a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.” Joseph Y. Yun, the former senior diplomat on North Korea at the State Department,
said in an interview that Washington and Pyongyang could try for a “declaration-for-declaration” agreement: North Korea would declare its nuclear assets in exchange for the United States’ supporting a declaration to end the Korean War. “The best-case scenario is that Kim Jong-un visits the United Nations with a peace declaration in hand,” said John Delury, a professor at Yonsei University in Seoul who writes on the Korean conflict and Chinese history. Given their skepticism over North Korea’s commitment to denuclearization, American officials said the timeline was much too fast. As always, the wild card is Trump. He might aim for a similar foreign policy extravaganza in the fall, timed to the United Nations assembly and before the crucial November midterm elections in the United States. Although a peace declaration is not the same as a binding peace treaty, it would start the process for one. That would mean talking about how many American troops are needed in South Korea. Before the Singapore meeting, Trump ordered the Pentagon to prepare options for drawing down the troops there now. For some American officials, the troop presence in South Korea is not just a deterrent toward North Korea. It also helps the United States maintain a military footprint in Asia and a grand strategy of American hegemony. The officials also worry that President Moon Jae-in of South Korea might try to push for a lesser American military presence, or a weakening of the alliance, after an end-of-war declaration. “For the United States, an end-of-war declaration or a peace declaration or a peace treaty has always had a broader context,” Yun said. (Edward Wong, “Koreas Want Peace Treaty, but U.S. Balks,” New York Times, August 14, 2018, p. A-6)

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will visit Pyongyang late this month, a source said. It remains to be seen whether he can find a breakthrough in stalled denuclearization talks this time, which will be his fourth visit. "Pyongyang notified Washington of a time slot in late August for Pompeo's visit there," the source in Seoul said. Earlier, White House national security adviser John Bolton said U.S. President Donald Trump formally proposed Pompeo's fourth visit to Pyongyang in a letter to North Korean leader Kim Jong-un last week. U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said on Aug. 9, "I can tell you we continue to have conversations virtually every day, every other day or so with the North Koreans." The diplomatic source added, "The two sides originally discussed the possibility of Pompeo's visit this week, but it seems that Pyongyang delayed the schedule a little." Washington and Pyongyang have been in a tug of war, with the North pushing for a declaration formally ending the Korean War and the U.S. for palpable progress in denuclearization. "It would be politically disastrous if Pompeo comes back empty-handed again," the source said. "He must have judged that he can achieve some results this time."

(Kim Jin-myung, “Pompeo to Visit Pyongyang Late This Month,” Chosun Ilbo, August 14, 2018)

South Korea wants a formal and official declaration to end the 1950-1953 Korean War with the United States, China and North Korea at the upcoming United Nations General Assembly in New York, next month. Seoul communicated this ambitious plan to Washington via diplomatic channels, a senior government official said. "South Korea unofficially sent a message to the United States over an agreement to end the war with North Korea and China. While Washington is reluctant to embrace a formal declaration, it will be ready to do so if Pyongyang presents a roadmap toward denuclearization," the official said. Working-level discussions between Washington and Pyongyang aimed at bringing back momentum to denuclearization talks were still underway, according to the official. He said he was notified that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo would visit North's capital "sometime this month," but added, "Honestly, I don't know if Pompeo's trip will happen as planned." "The key issue is that Washington wants a halt to the North's nuclear weapons programs first as a condition for talks on a permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula. President Moon Jae-in will pass this message to North Korean leader Kim Jong-un during their scheduled third summit in Pyongyang, next month," said a high-ranking diplomatic source. (Kim Yoo-chol, “Seoul Wants U.S., China to Declare End to Korean War,” Korea Times, August 14, 2018)

8/15/18

The Trump administration announced new sanctions on against three organizations and an individual accused of facilitating illicit shipments to North Korea. The companies targeted by the Treasury Department are based in China, Singapore and Russia. The shipments, which violate
sanctions imposed by the United States and the United Nations, include exports of alcohol, tobacco and cigarette products, as well as refined oil products. “Treasury will continue to implement existing sanctions on North Korea, and will take action to block and designate companies, ports, and vessels that facilitate illicit shipments and provide revenue streams to the DPRK,” Steven Mnuchin, the Treasury secretary, said in a statement. “The tactics that these entities based in China, Singapore, and Russia are using to attempt to evade sanctions are prohibited under U.S. law, and all facets of the shipping industry have a responsibility to abide by them or expose themselves to serious risks,” Mnuchin said. He added: “Consequences for violating these sanctions will remain in place until we have achieved the final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea.” The Treasury Department said that the China-based Dalian Sun Moon Star International Logistics Trading Co. and SINSMS Pte. Ltd., its affiliate in Singapore, used falsified shipping documents to export products to North Korea. Profinet, in Russia, is accused of providing fuel services to North Korean shipping vessels to help them avoid oil-related sanctions. The company’s director general, Vasili A. Kolchanov, was also sanctioned. (Alan Rappeport, “U.S. Punishes Companies Helping Kim,” New York Times, August 16, 2018, p. A-9).

President Moon Jae-in of South Korea proposed a bold expansion of economic cooperation with North Korea, a more assertive stand than the United States has taken in offering inducements for the North to begin relinquishing its nuclear weapons, including joint economic zones along the North-South border, a linked rail network and other steps. If implemented, they could significantly ease tensions along the world’s most heavily fortified frontier, which has divided the two Koreas for more than seven decades. But Moon’s proposal, dangled as a lure for the North to start denuclearizing, also raised the risk of going well beyond what his country’s most important ally, the United States, is prepared to do. Moon announced his proposal during a speech commemorating National Liberation Day, the end of Japan’s colonial rule over a then-unified Korea with the Allied victory in World War II. He framed the proposal as a way for both Koreas to move forward. “We must overcome division for our survival and prosperity,” Moon said. “Even though political unification is still far away, building a single economic community first by settling peace and freely traveling back and forth between the two Koreas will become genuine liberation for us.” He also suggested that South Korea should be a leader, not a spectator, in resolving the dispute between North Korea and the Trump administration over the North’s nuclear weapons. “It is important to recognize that we are the protagonists in Korean Peninsula-related issues,” Moon said. “Developments in inter-Korean relations are not the by-effects of progress in the relationship between the North and the United States. Rather, advancement in inter-Korean relations is the driving force behind denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” That appeared to be a subtle but contentious shift in South Korea’s role in the diplomacy around the North’s nuclear weapons. The South and the United States have both said that their relations with the North will develop at roughly the same pace. But Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has said there will be no sanctions relief on North Korea until denuclearization is complete. American officials also have said the signing of a peace treaty with North Korea to replace the armistice that halted the 1950-53 Korean War — a basic demand of Kim’s — will not happen before the North denuclearizes. Moon has bet his political fortunes on resolving the standoff over the North’s nuclear weapons. In his first two meetings with Kim in April and in May, he came away with an agreement to ease military tensions on the border and boost economic cooperation. Both sides have since conducted field studies on linking their rail networks. For weeks, North Korea has been accusing Moon of dragging his feet on implementing the inter-Korean agreements, suggesting that he is doing so at the Americans’ bidding. But if Moon carries inter-Korean relations too far without the North’s denuclearization, he will contradict American policy. His conservative political opponents in South Korea have already accused him of playing into a North Korean strategy of driving a wedge between Seoul and Washington. Today, Moon said economic cooperation with the North could begin in earnest only when “peace is established on the Korean Peninsula along with complete denuclearization.” But he also said he would “build a relationship based on deeper trust between the two Koreas” and “simultaneously lead efforts to promote dialogue on denuclearization between North Korea and the United States.” He reaffirmed that he and Kim want the United States to join them in jointly declaring an end to the Korean War as a confidence-building measure. Washington says the North must start dismantling its nuclear program before that
symbolic gesture, which would precede a formal peace treaty replacing the armistice of 1953, can be made. Moon said linking the two Koreas’ rail networks would make it easier for South Korean exports to reach China, Russia and Europe, and for Russian gas and oil to reach South Korea. His government hopes to hold groundbreaking ceremonies this year for connecting inter-Korean highways as well as railroads, but it is unclear when traffic could actually start flowing across the border. Moon also proposed establishing “special unification economic zones” along the border once military tensions ease further. Two similar joint projects, both in North Korea — a factory park in the border town of Kaesong and a tourism project at Mount Kumgang — were shut down years ago at moments of high tension between the Koreas. Since the April summit, the Koreas have discussed a variety of exchanges, including basketball games and soccer matches. They have also agreed in principle to shut down, on a trial basis, some military guard posts within the heavily fortified Demilitarized Zone along the border, Moon said yesterday. And they plan to open a joint liaison office in Kaesong, home to the defunct factory park. Cheong Seong-chang, a senior analyst at the Sejong Institute near Seoul, said Mr. Moon’s economic vision might look “too idealistic” but that he was being far more aggressive than any of his predecessors about genuinely engaging the North. But not everyone welcomed the latest announcements. “The aspiration to resume inter-Korean projects I found counterproductive,” said Lee Sung-yoon, a professor of Korean studies at Tufts University. “It will please Pyongyang, yes, but only make Washington wary. Moon’s message was, ‘Don’t stand in our way as we try to resume Mount Kumgang and Kaesong.’ ” (Choe Sang-hun, “South Korean Leader Proposes Economic Ties with the North,” New York Times, August 16, 2018, p. A-9)

8/16/18 Bermudez, Pabian and Liu: “Commercial satellite imagery from August 16 of the Sohae Satellite Launching Station, North Korea’s only operational space launch facility, indicates no significant dismantlement activity has taken place at either the engine test stand or the launch pad since August 3. At the vertical engine test stand, while significant progress in tearing down the facility was made from July to early August, no new dismantlement activity is apparent since August 3. The components previously removed remain stacked on the ground.” (Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., Frank V. Pabian and Jack Liu, “Update on North Korea’s Sohae Launching Station,” 38North, August 22, 2018)

8/17/18 North Korea pressed its demand that the United States agree to declare an end to the 1950-53 Korean War, as South Korea’s leader indicated that the American secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, was preparing for his fourth visit to the North. When he met with representatives of political parties in Seoul yesterday, President Moon Jae-in said that negotiations between the United States and North Korea have recently gained “speed,” with Pompeo planning to visit North Korea again, according to Yun So-ha, an opposition leader, who briefed reporters on the meeting. Yesterday, Pompeo said his team was “continuing to make progress” with the North Koreans, and said he hoped that “we can make a big step here before too long.” “We’re continuing to engage in conversation with them about a path forward to a brighter future for the North Koreans,” Pompeo said during a Cabinet meeting at the White House. The latest hitch in negotiations has been over North Korea’s demand that the United States join the two Koreas in declaring an end to the Korean War. Recently, it has renewed its push for a political statement in which the two Koreas and the United States — and perhaps, China too — jointly declare an end to the war, as a prelude to complex negotiations for replacing the armistice with a peace treaty. Moon supports the proposal, arguing that such a statement will help ease tensions and encourage North Korea to denuclearize. But United States officials fear that North Korea may be seeking such a declaration to undermine the rationale for the United States military presence in South Korea without getting any commitment by Pyongyang to relinquish its nuclear weapons. They insist that North Korea take meaningful steps toward dismantling its nuclear weapons program before Washington makes any such concessions. But the North today pushed back. “There is no reason to ignore a declaration to end the war,” said a commentary in Rodong Sinmun. “It is a preliminary and essential process to pave the ground for easing tensions and building permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula.” (Choe Sang-hun, “North Korea Presses U.S. for Treaty Ending War,” New York Times, August 18, 2018, p. A-8)
The government has been facing growing calls internally to overhaul its policy toward North Korea, by allowing talks on possible economic aid to precede the delayed effort to resolve the issue of past abductions of Japanese by Pyongyang, government sources said. The proposed policy shift, which still faces strong opposition in the government, would focus on building mutual trust before paving the way for the resolution of the abduction issue, the sources said. The government is expected to decide how to approach North Korea depending on progress in the ongoing talks between the United States and North Korea on denuclearization of the North, the sources said. A series of meetings have been held at the Prime Minister’s Office since April to discuss Tokyo’s strategy to get Pyongyang to the negotiating table, but no decision has been made. The sources said one of the participants argued over the course of the meetings that Japan needs to foster ties with North Korea through talks on economic cooperation. Infrastructure building and natural resource development are seen as potential areas of such cooperation. But opponents have said such an approach would call into question the seriousness of the Abe administration, which had placed its “highest priority” on the abduction issue, the sources said. The brainstorming comes at a time when expectations are growing for major progress in North Korea’s denuclearization after President Donald Trump met with Kim Jong Un in Singapore in June. (Kyodo, “Japan Eyes Economic Aid to North Korea in Policy Overhaul,” *Japan Times*, August 17, 2018)

Rodong Sinmun commentary: “Handshakes of the top leaders of the DPRK and the U.S. are the greatest event in the present century declaring an end of the most longstanding and acute cold war on this planet. The DPRK and the U.S. will steadily show dramatic events while courageously fulfilling their promises. These were the cheers and excitement of the world when the DPRK-U.S. summit was held and the DPRK-U.S. joint statement issued in Singapore two months ago. It has been over two months since then but a deadlock between the DPRK and the U.S. is turning the seething expectation and hopes of the world people into impatience and disappointment: The current deadlock between the DPRK and the U.S. is clearly attributable to the political scramble in the U.S. Those opposed to dialogue provided the negotiating team with a truncheon called “theory of suspected north Korea’s secret nuclear facilities,” a fiction, driving it to derailing dialogue. President Trump who has a "dream" about world peace, an epoch-making cause, has too many rivals. It is important for the DPRK to improve the relations with the U.S. as soon as possible, but the former thinks that more pressing task is to handle the divided and confusion-ridden U.S. political landscape. The present deadlock of the DPRK-U.S. relations demands a bold decision on the part of President Trump. As President Trump admitted, the "fantastic meeting," realized by no other president in the history of America, could come to success to be greatly cheered and welcomed by the world and American people because he acted with his own decision and will, not wavering by the opposition's offensive nor blindly following his aides' view. Secretary of State Pompeo should not be forced to meet a “miserable destiny” but resolutely smash the opposition's unreasonable and foolish assertions with his own view and courage and display his wisdom and bargaining power in negotiation as the chief of the U.S. diplomacy both in name and reality in order to realize the president's will. The DPRK-U.S. relations can never become a victim of the political scramble in the U.S.” (KCNA, “DPRK-U.S. Ties Can Never Become Victim of Political Scrambled in the U.S.,” August 18, 2018) American negotiators have confronted North Korean officials over “suspected” secret nuclear facilities, according to Rodong Sinmun, which called the Trump administration accusations “fiction” and said they had led to “derailing dialogue” between the two nations. The piece, published over the weekend marks the first indication that American officials have pointed out specific nuclear sites to North Korean negotiators and, presumably, asked Pyongyang to shut them down. (Edward Wong, “U.S. Criticism of ‘Suspected’ Nuclear Sites May Derail Talks, North Korean Media Says,” *New York Times*, August 20, 2018)

Bolton: “MARTHA RADDATZ: President Trump tweeted this weekend that all of the fools that are so focused on looking only at Russia should start also looking in another direction -- China. Just to be clear, have you seen any credible evidence that the Chinese meddled in our elections in the past or are doing so now? Is this a genuine national security concern? BOLTON: Well I can say definitively that it’s a sufficient national security concern about Chinese meddling, Iranian
meddling and North Korean meddling that we’re taking steps to try and prevent it. So -- so all four of those countries, really. RADDATZ: But -- but have you seen anything in the past, specifically to China? BOLTON: Well I’m not going to get into the -- what I’ve seen or haven’t seen but I’m telling you looking at the 2018 election, those are the four countries that we’re most concerned about. …RADDATZ: And I want to turn to North Korea. It’s been more than two months since President Trump and Kim Jong-un met in Singapore. You’ve said North Korea has not taken the necessary steps to denuclearize. In fact, there’s evidence that they may be building another ICBM. So in your view, is North Korea serious about following through with this? BOLTON: Well I think it’s important that they demonstrate seriousness. President Trump has -- believes very strongly, he talks about it frequently that the North Koreans have not tested ballistic missiles or nuclear weapons recently, that they’ve given back the remains of over 50 American service members, trying to identify who they are at this point. And I think Secretary Pompeo will be returning to Pyongyang soon for his fourth visit. RADDATZ: With direct talks with Kim Jong-un? BOLTON: Well that’s what we expect -- (CROSSTALK) RADDATZ: Do you know that yet? BOLTON: That’s what -- that -- I think the timing will be announced at an appropriate point by the State Department. But this is to fulfill the commitment that Kim Jong-un made in Singapore, that he had previously made to the South Koreans and -- and to move on with the process of denuclearization remains our highest priority. RADDATZ: But -- but what does that mean? OK, before the summit, the administration talked about the goal of rapid denuclearization. Secretary Pompeo has now said the ultimate timeline for denuclearization will be set by Chairman Kim at least in part and that we are now practicing patient diplomacy. That sounds a lot like Obama’s. BOLTON: Yes, I -- I think the idea that we’re pursuing the Obama administration policy in North Korea or any of the policies that failed before would contradict what President Trump has said repeatedly. Let me just say what -- (CROSS TALK) RADDATZ: Well let’s go back to what Pompeo just said. BOLTON: Yes, but let’s go back to what Kim Jong-un said which -- which I think is -- is of greatest interest. On April the 27th at Panmunjom, Kim Jong-un met with President Moon Jae-in of South Korea and at that meeting, as President Moon reported to us, President Moon pointed out that the more rapidly North Korea denuclearizes, they sooner could come the benefits of openness to foreign aid from Japan and South Korea, foreign investment from many number of countries. President Moon said let’s get this done in a year. RADDATZ: And so you think within a year -- is that the time frame? BOLTON: And Kim Jong-un said yes. So the one year period that we’ve talked about from the point where North Korea makes the strategic decision to denuclearize is something that the North and South Koreans have already agreed to. And -- and why is that significant? President Trump has gone out of his way to hold the door open for Kim Jong-un, that’s what the Singapore meeting was about. RADDATZ: But how long did you give the North Koreans for their strategic decision to denuclearize? Do they really understand what that means? Should that have been written down? BOLTON: It’s hard to believe they don’t understand it. Secretary Pompeo has done extraordinary follow up diplomacy after the Singapore meeting. As I say, we expect that’s going to resume in the near future. It’s a hard task, I don’t envy him, but he’s worked very hard at it to pursue President Trump’s goal of getting North Korea denuclearized. RADDATZ: And we’ll be patient for how long? BOLTON: I think we’re -- we’re counting on North Korea following through on the commitments that they’ve made.” (ABC News “This Week,” White House National Security Adviser John Bolton, Transcript, August 19, 2018)
Hundreds of South and North Koreans torn apart by the 1950-53 Korean War met for the first time in over six decades in a tearful, long-dreamed-of family reunion on Monday. Eighty-nine South Koreans, mostly in their 70s and older, met about 180 long-separated family members, including brothers, sisters and other relatives living in North Korea, at Mount Kumgang, a scenic resort on the North’s east coast. Some of them were so frail that they were in wheelchairs and supported by others during the meeting that lasted for two hours from 3 p.m. The meeting was the first session of reunions planned during their three-day stay that will end on August 22. On the second day, the families will be granted more time to meet, helping them become closer. They will see each other again Tuesday morning and have lunch together in their hotel rooms, the first time the separated families will have had such a private meeting since the start of the reunion event. They will have six meetings totaling 11 hours by the 22nd, according to the unification ministry, which handles inter-Korean affairs. In subsequent reunions planned to take place August 24-26, 83 North Koreans will also meet their relatives found to be alive in the South. More than 300 South Koreans will travel to the venue later this week for the event. The two Koreas have organized 20 rounds of face-to-face family reunions since the first-ever inter-Korean summit in 2000. Some 57,000 South Koreans are waiting to be reunited with their families who might be living in the North. (Yonhap, “War-Separated Families of Koreas Meet for First Time in over 6 Decades,” August 20, 2018)

When Kim Jong-un visited a hydroelectric dam under construction last month, he reportedly “flew into a rage” after learning why the dam was still unfinished after 17 years of work. The dam, central to Kim’s efforts to alleviate his country’s chronic power shortages, suffered from a lack of workers, equipment and materials, Kim is said to have found, and he learned that officials overseeing the project hadn’t even visited the construction site. “What makes me angrier is that these officials will never fail to miss the opportunity to show their shameless faces and take credit when a ceremony is held to mark the completion of a power plant,” Kim was quoted by KCNA as saying. “I am speechless.” The reports in the North Korean state news media about Kim’s anger were a jarring contrast to their typical portrayals of such visits, which show Kim being mobbed by his adoring subjects. Since late June, Kim has devoted almost all of his public activities to visiting factories, farms and construction sites, rather than the military units and weapons test sites that he frequented last year. And instead of boasting of his country’s military prowess, he is lashing out at poor management at the sites he visits, highlighting his intense focus on fixing his economy. Kim’s message is directed as much at the United States as at his people, experts in North Korean politics said, since his pledge to deliver economic prosperity depends on persuading Washington to ease damaging international sanctions. Over the weekend, Kim said his people were engaged in “a do-or-die struggle” against “brigandish sanctions,” which he said caused “a serious setback” to his economy. “What’s clear is that Kim Jong-un is desperate to ease sanctions and find his own ways of boosting production and improving the lives of his people,” said Koh Yu-hwan, a professor of North Korean studies at Dongguk University in Seoul. “At the same time, he is shifting the blame to his underlings by criticizing lazy officials.” By showing himself focused on the economy, rather than on weapons programs, Kim may be signaling that he is willing to negotiate away his nuclear weapons if Washington offers the right incentives, Professor Koh said. But deep skepticism persists that Kim will ever give them up or that the United States will provide the kind of rewards like a peace treaty ending the Korean War that the North demands. The logjam between North Korea and the United States is hampering South Korea’s efforts to expand economic and other ties with the North. In pushing economic development, Kim has a lot at stake as he seeks to cement his power over a country that suffered a devastating famine in the 1990s and...
has only recently seen the emergence of a nascent, aspirational middle class. “North Koreans are now as materialistic, greedy and unsatisfied as their comrades in the Soviet Union and East Germany once were, and as are most of us in the West,” wrote Rüdiger Frank, a North Korea expert at the University of Vienna. “North Korea has begun playing the capitalists’ game, and it has gone much further than most European socialist countries ever went.” In 2012, in his first public speech as North Korean leader, Kim pledged that his people would “never have to tighten their belt again.” The next year, he supplanted his father and predecessor Kim Jong Il’s “military-first” policy with his byungjin, or parallel advance, approach of building a nuclear arsenal and the country’s economy simultaneously. As he rapidly built up North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs, Kim also modified its socialist economy by allowing more than 400 markets, supplementing the state rations and government-run stores that used to be his people’s sole sources of goods. He also granted more autonomy to factories and collective farms. But the sanctions over his weapons programs have derailed recent economic progress. While North Korea’s economy grew an average 1.77 percent annually between 2012 and 2015, thanks largely to market activities, according to Kim Byung-yeon, a professor of economics at Seoul National University, in 2017 it contracted at its sharpest rate in two decades — shrinking 3.5 percent, according to the South Korean Central Bank. In his New Year’s Day speech, Kim said, “I spent the past year feeling anxious and remorseful for the lack of my ability.” In steering the country from nuclear brinkmanship to diplomacy, he hopes to build trade ties and ease the pressure of sanctions. In April, he announced an end to his byungjin policy, explaining that he had completed one of the two parallel goals: building a nuclear arsenal. Now, he said, North Korea would focus all national resources on rebuilding the economy. Analysts in South Korea have since wondered: Does that mean that Kim is willing to bargain away his nuclear missiles in exchange for economic and security concessions from the United States and its allies? And is the Trump administration willing to test Kim’s intentions by engaging him with a give-and-take? “What’s clear is that the pieces of the puzzle won’t come into place until we see improvements in relations between the United States and North Korea and the easing and lifting of sanctions,” said Hwang Jae-jun, a North Korea specialist at the Sejong Institute, a research think tank in South Korea. In North Korea, the top leader uses his heavily publicized “field guidance” trips — like the visit to the troubled dam — to establish his priorities. When Kim was expediting his nuclear and missile programs last year, he visited weapons facilities and missile test sites, and hosted banquets for weapons engineers. In contrast, almost all of the 30 field guidance trips Kim has made since late June were to factories, farms and construction sites. On July 17, Rodong Sinmun, published 12 pages, double its normal size, devoting the first nine pages to pictures and articles about Kim’s visits to factories and farms. Last week, North Korean media published photos of Kim stripped down to an undershirt and sweating profusely while visiting a fish-pickling factory during the country’s wilting heat wave. (North Korean leaders often conduct their field trips during extreme weather to show their dedication, foreign analysts have noted.) Despite such propaganda efforts, however, Kim may be more vulnerable to economic crises than his predecessors, experts like Frank say, as outside goods and information have begun flowing into North Korea — thanks partly to Kim’s own reforms. (Choe Sang-hun, “As Talks Stall, Kim Hones in on Prosperity,” New York Times, August 21, 2018, p. A-1)

The Trump administration announced a series of sanctions targeting Russia, including ships that are delivering Russian oil to North Korea despite ongoing sanctions and marine companies that are supplying Russia’s military. The ships, based in Vladivostok and operating for Primorye Maritime Logistics Co. and Gudzon Shipping Co., have defied international sanctions against North Korea by engaging in ship-to-ship transfers of oil to North Korean ships, which then bring the contraband into North Korean ports. The marine companies were sanctioned for doing business with a Russian company Divetechnoservices that the Trump administration had sanctioned on June 11 over its links to Russia’s Federal Security Service, or F.S.B., the main security and intelligence agency in the country. “The Treasury Department is disrupting Russian efforts to circumvent our sanctions,” said Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin in a news release. “Today’s action against these deceptive actors is critical to ensure that the public is aware of the tactics undertaken by designated parties and that these actors remain blocked from the U.S.
Carlin: “Kim Jong Un is in the midst of a complex juggling act. He has to keep at least four crucial, long-term initiatives in the air, and he cannot afford to drop any of them. Roughly speaking, Kim’s concerns seem to be the following: Improving relations with the US, ROK and China; Launching economic reforms, including a major overhaul of the Cabinet; Revamping the ingrained habits and mindsets in the central and provincial bureaucracies; and Keeping the Korean People’s Army (KPA) happy and occupied. How extensive the scenario planning for such a complicated and intertwined set of policy goals has been we can’t know, but despite the impression that they are impulsive and short-sighted, in many ways, the North Koreans tend to be meticulous and long-range in their approach. The evidence we do have suggests planning started at least in 2017 and possibly as early as the May 2016 Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK) Congress. In a sense, there were a series of preliminary, positioning moves earlier this year, but the opening gun to launch the entire process was the April 2018 Party plenum, at which Kim declared his two-line (nuclear and economic) byungjin policy a success and that it had now given way to a new strategic line: “Everything for the economy.”

Summits with China, the ROK and the US followed in short order. At that point, Kim turned to internal matters, aiming his attention to the Cabinet. Harsh public criticism began in early July—not long after the Singapore summit—and has been repeated several times over the past month. In the sharpest, most devastating barb to date, in an article on August 17 in the Rodong Sinmun (in Korean), Kim noted that progress in constructing a newly planned, extensive hot springs facility in South Pyongyang could proceed quickly: “...only when it is carried out not by the cabinet, ministries, and central institutions which always complain about circumstances in doing anything but by the people’s army, the creator of the people’s happiness and the explorer of civilization....we had better assign everything to the people’s army—from providing a construction force to the supply of materials—so that it can transform the hot spring area at the highest level and excellently and can then present it to the state by 10 October next year.” While the criticism here is aimed at central institutions, in other statements Kim has taken the full range of officials—central, provincial and local—to task. This appears to be more than a simple, transitory campaign of the “pull up your socks” variety, and it would not be a surprise to see a major reshuffle of Cabinet personnel—including the prime minister—later this year. For Kim’s economic plans to work, it will need not just a change in the external environment but also wholesale changes in how people take responsibility for their work, something up to now the system has encouraged rhetorically but rarely in practice. As the above quote suggests, Kim is throwing roses at the army at the expense of the Cabinet. In part, that may be because at an enlarged meeting of the Central Military Commission in May he took the military down a peg in its overall status in the regime, warning that priorities had changed, that the party’s new strategic line was mandatory for everyone—including the KPA—and, presumably, that roles and resources would have to be adjusted accordingly. There is nothing new in the North Korean military’s involvement in construction projects; what is new is for Kim so openly to suggest the army now has an expanded role in the overall process because of ineptness on the part of civilian entities. In a reflection of the new priorities, Kim has made sure that the chair on the party’s Politburo Presidium normally reserved for a military official is glaringly vacant. He also has made only one appearance at a combat military unit or military related activity so far this year. Last year at this time it was around 15. Such a shift is no doubt delicate. Apart from dealing with the egos he has probably bruised, Kim has to figure out how to keep the military occupied and contributing to the economic goals. He could decide to downsize the army, but if he does, he then must deal with tens of thousands of discharged, unemployed soldiers. Here are recent signs that Kim sees trouble ahead for the U.S.-part of his initiatives. An extraordinary article in Rodong Sinmun on August 18 absolves not only President Trump, but also Secretary Pompeo and, indeed, the entire US negotiating team from blame for the failure of the July negotiations, suggesting that “oppositional factional forces” in the U.S. were the culprit. That criticism is clearly aimed at John Bolton, though it never mentions him by name. Beyond Bolton, however, the article for the first time raises the larger issue of the president’s embattled overall political position: “Congress is tackling the president’s feet, the judicial branch is grabbing him by the collar, and news media are bashing him. In the past]...infighting between vested interests inside US politics did more damage than
public and private messages are in sync, which is the easiest case for US government analysts to prepare for another visit by the US Secretary of State. This is tricky because sometimes these public and private messages are in sync, which is the easiest case for US government analysts to

President Trump made the ‘fantastic meeting’ come true, something that no other president in US history was able to do, and earned cheers from the world and great support from the public because, as the president himself said, he acted according to his decision and wish, while standing firm against the opposition factions’ offensives and taking what he hears from his advisors with a grain of salt. Secretary of State Pompeo, for his part, must stick with his principles and guts instead of getting forced into ‘an unfortunate fate,’ sternly smash the opposition factions’ unjust and foolish claims, and exercise wisdom and negotiating skills as the top diplomat of the United States in name and substance to make the president’s wish come true.” This lays it on pretty thick, unabashedly so, and the question is, why? The fact that this argument, putting the failure of the July talks not on the US per se but rather on hostile forces within the US, appeared in Rodong Sinmun and was played for the domestic audience on Pyongyang radio, raises the possibility that it is part of an internal discussion (“debate” may be too strong a word) about how to deal with the U.S. The implicit logic of the quote below from the article is that by being overly critical after the July talks and creating the impression that they were a failure, the North played into the hands of those in the U.S. who were looking for just such an outcome: “When the DPRK-US high-level talks ended fruitlessly as they wanted, the opposition factions gloatingly malign the DPRK-US Joint Statement again by saying that ‘nothing has been gained other than empty denuclearization pledges’ and attacked the Trump administration, demanding a U-turn toward a hard line against the DPRK.” Thus, the article implies it would be more sensible to look for every way to make the next round of talks “successful,” denying the opponents of talks within the US ammunition for attacking the president. Whether that means the irascible Kim Yong Chol will be given strict orders to behave himself at the talks no matter how much he has to grit his teeth (or, indeed, if he will finally be replaced as the lead negotiator) remains to be seen. One issue that has recently appeared as a serious bone of contention between Washington and Pyongyang has been the timing of a declaration on the end of the Korean War. The August 18 article appears to try to play down the whole thing, shrugging off any statement on the end of the war as “merely a political declaration.” That potentially is double-edged. It minimizes the significance of such a declaration if the US finally agrees to it, but also gives the North room to move toward a compromise position if that proves necessary and useful. By contrast, the July 7 Foreign Ministry spokesman’s statement put considerable emphasis on how important that declaration was: “The U.S. side never mentioned the issue of establishing a peace regime on the Korean peninsula which is essential for defusing tension and preventing a war.” It took the position that it would even backtrack on the issue it had agreed on to end the status of war under certain conditions and excuses. As for the issue of announcing the declaration of the end of war at an early date, it is the first process of defusing tension and establishing a lasting peace regime on the Korean peninsula, and at the same time, it constitutes a first factor in creating trust between the DPRK and the U.S. This issue was also stipulated in Panmunjom Declaration as a historical task to terminate the war status on the Korean peninsula which continues for nearly 70 years. Well before Singapore, DPRK commentary and official statements had shifted to positive treatment of the US President. That was even a hallmark of the July 7 Foreign Ministry spokesman’s statement that was highly critical of the US position but noted that the North “still cherished good faith in President Trump.” For his part, the president has remained laudatory toward Kim Jong Un in his public statements. It may be that the North has decided that this virtuous circle of praise by the leaders is a crucial element for keeping the process afloat. In some ways, the easiest interpretation is that this article is meant to be read in conjunction with the North’s position in recent, behind the scenes US-DPRK contacts in preparation for another visit by the US Secretary of State. This is tricky because sometimes these public and private messages are in sync, which is the easiest case for US government analysts to
 Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is making a bold and risky push to reinvigorate a diplomatic effort with North Korea that is struggling to make progress amid increasingly belligerent rhetoric from Pyongyang. Inside the Trump administration, frustration mounts as officials debate how bad the situation really is and what to do about it. When Pompeo arrives in Pyongyang next week, alongside his freshly appointed special envoy Stephen Biegun, he will be under severe pressure to show tangible evidence that his diplomacy is producing real results. If Pompeo’s trip is a failure,
skeptics inside the administration and around Washington will push for a change in tactics to acknowledge the reality that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is not living up to his promises. It will be the most significant trip of Pompeo’s diplomatic career. Despite his public optimism, President Trump privately has been expressing frustration with the negative publicity surrounding his North Korea diplomacy, according to administration officials. This week, the International Atomic Energy Agency expressed “grave concern” in a new report that claims Pyongyang is continuing to develop its nuclear capabilities, despite Kim’s pledge to denuclearize. But Pompeo has few tools to induce more concessions from Kim. And if he takes a harder line, he risks blowing up the negotiations altogether. “Pompeo is stuck,” said one senior administration official who was not authorized to speak. “He’s a prisoner of championing a policy that’s based on what the president would love to see happen, but not based on reality and the facts on the ground.” In anticipation of Pompeo’s trip, Trump sent a letter to Kim. Officials briefed on the letter said it implored Kim to take steps to advance diplomacy while also urging him not to take any more negative steps that might jeopardize this opportunity — what officials called a carrot-and-stick message. Even the decision to send the letter was a matter of dispute within the Trump team. National security adviser John Bolton, who has taken a hard line internally, argued against sending the letter. Bolton and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis have also argued against giving Kim a new concession in the form of a declaration officially ending the Korean War. The Pentagon declined to comment, and a National Security Council spokesman did not respond to requests for comment. That confusion leaves Pompeo with the difficult task of reversing the downward trend in the diplomacy without having anything new to offer. If the trip is another failure, internal critics and some in Congress will push for more pressure on North Korea, more sanctions, a resumption of U.S.-South Korea military exercises, and other measures to show Kim he can’t jerk around the United States. The argument against these measures is that they could create a rift in the U.S.-South Korea alliance and risk sinking the whole process — with the blame falling on the U.S. government. There are some positive signs. Biegun, though not a North Korea expert per se, is a highly experienced professional who will hopefully add some regularity to U.S. negotiations with Pyongyang. Having the secretary of state fly halfway around the world every time there’s a problem isn’t sustainable. Pompeo may also be working other angles we just don’t know about. Unlike Trump, Pompeo has never said he believes Kim is sincere, only that the United States must test that sincerity. Time is almost up for North Korea to pass or fail that test. Pompeo must not return from his fourth trip to Pyongyang empty-handed. (Josh Rogin, “Pompeo’s Moment of Truth,” Washington Post August 24, 2018 p. A-18)

Korea Asia-Pacific Peace Committee (KAPPC) spokesman’s statement: “...It has been 108 years since the Japanese gangsters cooked up "Korea-Japan Annexation Treaty", illegal document for invasion, and usurped the sovereignty of Korea. Had the Japanese invaders not stretched their dark tentacles to Korea, there would not have occurred such a tragedy in which the Korean nation has suffered the misfortune and pain for more than seven decades, being divided into the north and the south. ...The Japanese reactionaries, however, have now gone more and more impudent, far from apologizing and reflecting on their hideous past crimes. ...What is all the more intolerable is that the Abe group is adding new crimes to the piles of the hideous past crimes, far from atoning for them. While shelving their cursed past crimes, the Japanese reactionaries are talking about the "solution of the issue of abductees" as if they are interested in improving the DPRK-Japan relations. This is the height of craftiness. While keeping mum about the hideous crime that took the lives of millions of the Koreans, they are hyping the issue of a few "abductees". This absurd claim against common sense and appropriateness is just the occult art peculiar to Japs to transform themselves into 'victim' though they are just sinful assailants. Japan overheated with militarist frenzy has to keenly realize that it can never go to the future, with their crime-woven past left pending. At a time when the new trend for peace created on the Korean peninsula has massive impact on the world political situation and there witnesses a drastic change in the relations of dynamics in the region, only Japan is being treated like an outcast. This is just disgrace and tragedy invited by itself. Japan has to clearly understand that without atonement for its past crimes it can never take even one step toward the future.” (KCNA, “No Future for Japan without Atonement for Past: KAPPC,” August 23, 2018)
President Trump abruptly called off a trip to North Korea by his secretary of state, citing a lack of progress in nuclear disarmament talks and acknowledging for the first time that his diplomatic overture to the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, had run into trouble. Trump said the negotiations had been hindered by a lack of support from China, which he blamed on its bitter trade dispute with the United States. High-level talks with Pyongyang would not resume, he said, until the United States and China resolved those issues. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and his newly appointed special envoy were scheduled to travel to North Korea next week to continue talks that have stalled over Pyongyang’s refusal to fully declare its nuclear inventory and Washington’s reluctance to declare an end to the Korean War. But after meeting with Pompeo, Trump issued a stream of quarrelsome Twitter posts this afternoon, pulling the plug on the trip and expressing frustration with a diplomatic process that only two months ago he declared had solved the problem of a nuclear North Korea. Trump’s warm words for Kim suggested that Trump was open to another meeting with the North Korean leader, the kind of dramatic encounter the president could use to break a deadlock. But Trump’s explicit linkage of North Korea to trade talks with China could complicate matters. Lower-level negotiations between Washington and Beijing ended yesterday with no signs of progress, raising the odds that Trump will impose billions of dollars of additional tariffs on Chinese goods in the coming weeks. With most analysts expecting the relationship between China and the United States to get worse before it gets better, Trump has set a high bar for resuming high-level talks with North Korea. The tweets carried an echo of Trump’s handling of Pompeo’s predecessor, Rex W. Tillerson, last October. After Tillerson promoted his efforts to open a channel to North Korea, the president tweeted that he was “wasting his time trying to negotiate with Little Rocket Man.” By all accounts, Pompeo has a much better relationship with Trump than Tillerson did. He has been in sync with him on the negotiating strategy with North Korea, and White House officials said that Pompeo was with the president when he sent the tweets. Trump’s cancellation of the trip mirrored his letter to Kim in May, in which he pulled out of a planned summit meeting with him in Singapore after a series of disagreements. “You can only run this play so many times,” said Evan S. Medeiros, a former senior Asia adviser to President Barack Obama. “It is much less likely to work this time. In June, Kim wanted the summit; now he can take or leave a nuclear deal.” Eliot A. Cohen, a military historian who worked for President George W. Bush, said that there is some speculation that Biegun convinced Trump that now was not the time for Pompeo to visit Pyongyang. But Cohen said that Biegun would certainly want to go himself. Victor D. Cha, who negotiated with North Korea for Bush, said the decision to scrap the trip reflected the White House’s desire not to be boxed in by North Korea’s key demand: that the United States accept a declaration formally ending the Korean War. In the coming weeks, Kim is expected to meet with other leaders, including President Xi Jinping of China and President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia — all of whom are likely to throw their support behind a peace treaty. South Korea also favors a move toward peace. But the United States is not willing to take that step that without extracting significant concessions from North Korea. Pompeo has pushed the North Koreans to declare their nuclear weapons and missiles and sent a timetable for relinquishing them. Trump’s assessment that China is no longer playing a helpful role in squeezing Pyongyang is accurate, analysts said. Since 90 percent of North Korea’s foreign trade goes through China, Beijing’s recalcitrance means the administration cannot return to its policy of “maximum pressure,” which relied on the economic and diplomatic isolation of Pyongyang. “The U.S. took the pressure off prematurely and got little or nothing in return,” said Tom Donilon, who served as national security adviser to Obama. “It will be very difficult to rebuild an effective sanctions pressure campaign — which requires the cooperation of partner countries who have moved on.” There was no immediate reaction from
President Moon Jae-in of South Korea. But Trump’s decision is a huge setback for Moon, complicating the South Korean’s own plan to visit Pyongyang next month for his third summit meeting with Kim, as well as his plan to open South Korea’s first liaison office in the North. No date has been set for that meeting, but South Korean officials have said that Moon wanted to meet Kim after a visit to the North by Pompeo. Moon, who has faced criticisms from the conservative opposition that his government was moving too quickly in its overtures to the North and opening a potential rift with Washington, had planned to build upon a potential breakthrough between Pyongyang and Washington during a Pompeo visit by advancing economic and other ties between the two Koreas. (Mark Landler and Gardiner Harris, “Trump Cancels Pompeo’s Visit to North Korea,” *New York Times*, August 25, 2018) The cancellation came after a top North Korean official sent a secret letter to Pompeo that convinced both he and Trump the visit was not likely to succeed. Pompeo received the letter from Kim Yong Chol, vice chairman of North Korea’s ruling Workers’ Party Central Committee, on Friday morning, and showed it to Trump in the White House, two senior administration officials confirmed. The exact contents of the message are unclear, but it was sufficiently belligerent that Trump and Pompeo decided to call off Pompeo’s journey, where he was set to introduce his newly announced special envoy, Stephen Biegun, to his North Korean counterparts. White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told CNN that Pompeo was in the room Friday afternoon when Trump tweeted he was cancelling Pompeo’s trip because Trump felt “we are not making sufficient progress with respect to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” Reporters also spotted Andrew Kim, a top CIA Asia official who has traveled with Pompeo to Pyongyang, heading into the West Wing. Officials also declined to say how the letter was transmitted, but North Korea has been increasingly communicating through its U.N. mission, known as the “New York Channel.” Privately, Trump and Kim Jong Un have been exchanging a series of letters, some couriered by Pompeo himself. Trump’s latest letter, which North Korea has now responded to, encouraged the Kim regime to make more progress on denuclearization while warning against further backsliding. “I don’t know that the president would ever admit that it’s over,” one senior administration said. “But if the North Koreans don’t move the ball forward, Bolton will argue to Trump, ‘You don’t have to admit you were wrong, but we need to start escalating against them to force them to keep their commitments.’” (Josh Rogin, “Why Trump Cancelled Pompeo’s Trip to Pyongyang,” *Washington Post*, August 27, 2018)

Bolton: “Despite plans for another Pompeo trip to North Korea, at the end of August, just before he was due to depart for Pyongyang, the North Koreans warned that Pompeo would not see Kim Jong Un on this trip, and shouldn’t even bother coming unless he was bringing completely new proposals, including the end-of-war declaration. They basically warned denuclearization was not on the agenda, but Pompeo wanted to ignore the threat, and tweet that he was looking forward to meeting Kim Jong Un. Unexpectedly, Trump said Pompeo shouldn’t go at all. Pence and Pompeo argued back, pushing for the trip, but Trump was still deciding how to send the message. He ultimately reverted to the comfortable Twitter mode, and, as he did so often, he began dictating a tweet. ‘What do you think of that, John?’ he asked, and I immediately said, ‘I agree. No way Mike should go to Pyongyang in the face of [all] that.’ Pence agreed we should show strength rather than weakness, and in short order, the tweets went out.” (Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened*, p. 108)

South Korea’s Foreign Ministry urged Washington and Pyongyang not to walk away from the negotiating table despite the unexpected cancellation of U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s planned trip to North Korea. South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha spoke to Pompeo by telephone today and expressed regret over the cancellation of the trip while calling for continued talks on peace and North Korea’s nuclear program, according to the ministry. “Rather than reading into each and every turn in the situation, it is more important to focus diplomatic efforts on the faithful execution of what has been agreed in the United States-North Korea summit and the inter-Korean summit, while maintaining the momentum for talks on the long-term outlook,” the ministry said in a statement. Japanese Foreign Minister Kono Taro expressed appreciation for Pompeo’s “prompt communication” of the decision by telephone and said the two countries would continue to work together to take “specific actions” to achieve the
deeds.” (KCNA, “an almighty weapon in the past and attain its sinister intention. The U.S. should ponder over its thinks that it can browbeat someone through trite “gunboat diplomacy” which it used to employ as units while having a dialogue with a smile on its face. The U.S. wou

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submarine belonging to the U.S. Navy, transported Green Berets, Delta Force and other special change of direction. Prior to the exercise, it was disclosed that the Michigan, the nuclear confirm that the drill would be the drill aimed at “the infiltration into Pyongy

staged a drill of flying 1 200 km to the Philippines through air transport. The radio said one can

Rodong Sinmun commentary: “According to a south Korean radio, U.S. special units in Japan staged a drill of flying 1 200 km to the Philippines through air transport. The radio said one can confirm that the drill would be the drill aimed at “the infiltration into Pyongyang” in case of change of direction. Prior to the exercise, it was disclosed that the Michigan, the nuclear submarine belonging to the U.S. Navy, transported Green Berets, Delta Force and other special units present in Okinawa, Japan to the Jinhae naval base of south Korea in late July or early in August. …It was extremely provocative and dangerous military moves to mar the hard-won atmosphere of the peace on the Korean peninsula and the dialogue between the DPRK and the U.S. and prevent the implementation of the Singapore DPRK-U.S. Joint Statement. …Such acts prove that the U.S. is hatching a criminal plot to unleash a war against the DPRK and commit a crime which deserves merciless divine punishment in case the U.S. fails in the scenario of the DPRK’s unjust and brigandish “denuclearization first.” We cannot but take a serious note of the double-dealing attitudes of the U.S. as it is busy staging secret drills involving man-killing special units while having a dialogue with a smile on its face. The U.S. would be sadly mistaken if it thinks that it can browbeat someone through trite “gunboat diplomacy” which it used to employ as an almighty weapon in the past and attain its sinister intention. The U.S. should ponder over its deeds.” (KCNA, “Rodong Sinmun Blasts U.S. Special Units’ Drill,” August 25, 2018)
North Korea has expelled a Japanese man detained for allegedly breaking the law during a recent tour of the country, state-run media and a diplomatic source in Japan said as the two neighbors continue their hot-and-cold relationship. In a terse two-line statement released late today, KCNA said Japanese national Sugimoto Tomoyuki was freed on humanitarian grounds after he was detained for breaking an unspecified law while visiting the country. The diplomatic source, quoted August 27 by Kyodo News, confirmed Sugimoto’s release and said he had been deported to China, where Japanese officials were questioning him and conducting a health check. A source in China close to North Korea told Kyodo that Sugimoto was expected to be moved to Beijing later. Tokyo and Pyongyang do not have diplomatic relations and Japan often conducts its diplomacy with the North via its embassy in Beijing and its consul general in Shenyang, a Chinese city close to the border with North Korea. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide had said earlier yesterday that he was aware of the KCNA announcement, but pointedly refused to answer any related questions, including whether Sugimoto is safe, or on the prospects and timing of his return. “Given the nature of the matter, I will refrain from comment,” Suga, the government’s top spokesman, told a regular news conference. Sugimoto, who media reports said is believed to be a 39-year-old videographer from Shiga Prefecture, was detained on suspicion of shooting video footage of a military facility when he visited the western port city of Nampo with a tour group, reports citing Japanese government officials said earlier this month. Nampo is home to a major naval base, shipyard and missile factory. “Tomoyuki Sugimoto, who visited the DPRK as a Japanese tourist recently, was kept under control by a relevant institution to be inquired into his crime against the law of the DPRK,” the KCNA statement said, using the acronym for the North’s formal name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. “The relevant institution of the DPRK decided to leniently condone him and expel him from the DPRK on the principle of humanitarianism,” it said. (Jesse Johnson and Osaki Tomohiro, “North Korea Expels Detained Japanese Tourist as Neighbors’ Hot-and-Cold Relationship Continues,” Japan Times, August 27, 2018)

Sneider: “After last week, it would be easy to believe that Washington’s North Korea policy is in a state of chaos. Last Thursday, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo named a new special envoy on North Korea and announced they were heading together to Pyongyang for high level talks. Little more than 24 hours later, President Donald Trump, in a series of tweets, cancelled the visit. Beneath the disarray, however, a certain order could be found. Based on conversations held this past week in Washington with senior administration officials, including two members of the North Korea negotiating team, as well as former national security officials who are consulted by Secretary Pompeo and the National Security Council, a broad consensus emerges. Interestingly, it is almost completely in sync with the views held by senior Japanese officials. The foundation of this consensus is a profoundly skeptical view of the possibility of achieving “final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea,” the goal reiterated by new special envoy Steve Biegun. While there were some differences concerning exactly what might be achieved in the talks with Pyongyang, not a single official dealing with North Korea said he believes this ultimate aim is reachable. The only possible exception is the President himself. The second pillar of consensus is a deep concern that the South Korean government of Moon Jae-in, which has driven the opening to North Korea, is no longer bound by the need to move in tight coordination with Washington. Some even fear the alliance itself may be in jeopardy. As for China, the national security officials I met all tend to take a jaundiced view of Beijing’s role. They see China as eager to use North Korea as a tool to drive the U.S. off the Korean peninsula. For now, they believe it still supports Washington’s diplomacy, including maintaining large-scale economic sanctions, even if it is not ready to sharpen its pressure on the North Korean regime. Finally, the spoken, and unspoken, aim of most professionals implementing North Korea policy is to hold off President Trump from meeting North Korean leader Kim Jong Un again. They worry about a repeat of the June spectacle in Singapore when Trump made significant concessions that undercut their attempts to seriously negotiate with the North. Beneath the chaos, emanating mostly from the Oval Office, a four-sided containment policy exists – containment of North Korea, of South Korea’s Moon administration, of China, and, most of all, containment of Donald Trump. Inside the national security bureaucracy, there are no illusions that the suspension of testing of missiles and warheads by the North Koreans represents a move towards abandoning their nuclear capability. “The North
Koreans are liars,” a veteran of previous talks with Pyongyang told me. “I am not expecting happy results on denuclearization,” a senior official who has participated in the talks said. Every attempt to move to the specifics of denuclearization, including the July visit by Secretary Pompeo, has gone nowhere. North Korean officials refused to discuss concrete steps such as a declaration of North Korean nuclear facilities. Instead the North Koreans keep referring to the Singapore declaration and insisting they reached agreement with Trump to move first towards an ‘end to hostilities,’ beginning with dumping the existing armistice agreement that is part of the foundation for the U.S. military presence in South Korea. Indeed, when Pompeo tried to press the case for denuclearization steps, his North Korean counterpart Kim Yong Chol held up a cell phone and taunted him – “why don’t you call your president?” National security officials insist that even if the results are limited, the diplomatic process is still worthwhile to prevent a return to President Trump’s war threats of last year. At the same time, they are trying hard to keep the economic sanctions pressure in place and prevent China, South Korea and Russia from breaking ranks. The negotiators were ready to offer Pyongyang a “declaration for declaration” compromise when Pompeo visited again. In this deal, the U.S. would offer a “political declaration” of the end of the war in exchange for North Korea’s declaration of its nuclear facilities. “It will only be a statement of objective fact that the end of the war had occurred and would not be a substitute for a peace treaty,” a senior official told me. The State Department has pushed this bargain, but the Pentagon worries this will give the North Koreans leverage to undermine the security alliance with South Korea. Despite their skepticism about the negotiating process, “both would take that over anything the President would do,” a former senior official in previous Republican administrations who is in close contact with this administration told me. Still only hours before the President cancelled the Pompeo trip, a senior U.S. official predicted to me that North Korea would reject the declaration for declaration deal, confident they can get what they want from another Kim-Trump summit. Pompeo, he told me, “is going not knowing if he is getting something.” The North Koreans are just waiting to meet Trump again. “Their chances of success increase exponentially every time they see the President,” he said. “It is a mistake for Pompeo to go.” Inside the national security bureaucracy, there is growing alarm over relations with South Korea. On the surface, President Moon and his government continue to support U.S. diplomacy and reinforce its messages to Pyongyang. But things are starting to shift, with Seoul telling administration officials that the nuclear issue is basically between the U.S. and North Korea and that they want to separate their engagement with the North from progress on that issue. “We have a big problem coming with South Korea,” a senior official involved in the talks told me. “It has reached the point where the South Koreans are determined to press ahead. They no longer feel the need to act in parallel with us.” Moon is planning a visit next month to Pyongyang. He is eager to proceed with projects such as rail and pipe lines that will run from South, through the North, to Russia and China, as he outlined in a recent address. Some officials warn that the U.S. is prepared to sanction South Korea if it proceeds. They believe Moon will not risk the domestic political cost of showing a visible gap with the U.S., particularly as his popular support is starting to soften. But others worry that a tough response may just deepen the split. Even without breaking the United Nations resolutions, South Korea can provide massive supplies of food aid if the UN declares there are serious food shortages this fall. Contrary to Trump’s claim that China has eased pressure on North Korea, security officials all agree that the Chinese continue to enforce the economic sanctions, particularly on large scale flows of energy and food. They do report some softening on controls over border trade and the flow of hard currency through Chinese banks. On September 9, Chinese leader Xi Jinping will stand next to Kim and watch a parade of North Korean might in Pyongyang. State Department officials remain hopeful that the Chinese need to be seen as a responsible power may yield more North Korean concessions on the nuclear issue. But there is no evidence Xi is insisting Kim make significant new steps. “China is simply pressing North Korea to keep the process going,” says the Republican former national security official. “That is all they care about.” Privately, senior officials do not echo the President’s claim that Beijing is retaliating for tariffs. “We always knew that there was only so far they would go,” says a senior official responsible for China policy. “They are cool customers.” The President’s abrupt decision to cancel the negotiation team’s visit to Pyongyang came after a one-on-one meeting with Pompeo. It was the President himself who pushed for this visit, having dispatched a letter to Kim asking him to receive Pompeo. According to senior officials, Kim had agreed, unlike in July, to receive the Secretary. Pompeo,
who prides himself on his ability to manage his relationship with the President, was ready to go but he was concerned about a repeat of the unproductive and embarrassing July experience. It is possible Pompeo himself pushed for the cancellation. “Trump really wants to meet Kim Jong Un again,” says the former official who has been consulted by the administration. “He thinks that he alone can solve it, based entirely on his personal relationship with Kim Jong Un. I don’t think Pompeo wants a summit because there is nothing he can deliver.” As the President stated in his cancellation tweet, he himself is still looking forward to that meeting. Deeper inside the administration, there is a clear understanding of the challenge facing them. “The bureaucracy is unifying to protect the world from Trump,” the former official told me. “They do not conceal their complete frustration and alarm with Trump.” End game? Where does this go? Trump’s volatility, exacerbated by his mushrooming domestic political crisis, makes this highly unpredictable. We may see a return to U.S.-North Korea talks following the visits of Moon and Xi to Pyongyang this month. Or we could see a dramatic split in our alliance with Seoul – something senior Japanese officials are warning Washington about on an almost daily basis. Or we could go back to the brink of war. Fasten your seatbelts.” (Daniel Sneider, “Behind the Chaos of Washington’s Korea Policy,” Tokyo Business Today, August 27, 2018)

State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert insisted “there is progress being made” on denuclearization, even as she reiterated President Donald Trump’s August 24 twitter complaints the North Korean regime appeared to be dragging its feet. Nauert read a statement from Pompeo suggesting he remained committed to the diplomatic push. “Despite the decision to delay my trip to Pyongyang, America stands ready to engage when it is clear Chairman Kim stands ready to deliver on the commitments that he made at the Singapore,” the Secretary of State said. “The United States, like the rest of the world, is looking forward to North Korea’s compliance” with denuclearization. Pressed to explain Trump’s decision to cancel Pompeo’s trip, Nauert refused to confirm a Washington Post report that the catalyst was a letter from a top Kim deputy. The Post story said Pompeo received a harshly worded missive August 24 from Kim Yong Chol, vice chairman of North Korea’s ruling Workers’ Party Central Committee. (Deidre Shesgreen, “Trump Administration: North Korean Nuclear Talks Haven’t Stalled Despite Nixed Trip,” USA Today, August 29, 2018)

Nauert: “AP usually starts, so – good to see you. ...Q: After the cancellation of Pompeo’s trip, is the diplomatic effort there in trouble? And then I was also wondering if you could give us some further details about why the trip was canceled. There were reports that it was canceled following the receiving of a letter from Kim Yong-chol, and I was just wondering if you could confirm that.

MS NAUERT: Sure. So let me take your second question first. You know we often don’t get into the detail about our private diplomatic conversations, but I can tell you that the President and his national security team, which obviously included Secretary Pompeo – and I want to make this clear, too, that Ambassador Bolton, the national security advisor, was a part of these conversations; there were some inaccurate reports that he was not; he happened to be on the phone on a secure call participating in this conversation as well. The entire national security team discussed this. In their judgment, they made the judgment that now is not the right time to travel. The President agreed with that, and that is when the President made the decision to send out some tweets announcing that decision. Q: All right. And the diplomatic effort? MS NAUERT: Yeah. So the diplomatic effort is still ongoing. I know a lot of people are interested in sort of where this stands. The President overall remains very clear-eyed about the challenges and difficulties ahead of us. We have long said, the Secretary has long said, that this wouldn’t be easy from the start, and it would be – could be a somewhat lengthy process. Overall, sometimes we move forward; sometimes we stand right where we are. We look forward to future negotiations when the time is right. Hey, Lesley. Q: Has the Secretary spoken to his North Korean counterparts in recent days to explain it? And there’s reporting that this letter was rather – it had a belligerent tone, quite aggressive. Can you confirm any of that? I mean, is that the reason why? MS NAUERT: I can’t confirm that. The Secretary, the President, the national security team made the decision that now is not the right time to travel. Q: So have you been in touch with – MS NAUERT: That’s a good question; I don’t know the answer to that. I can go back and ask that
question. Hi. Q: I guess the decision to go was announced on Thursday, was taken also with a
green light or in accordance to what was decided within the NSC and with the President. So what
happened between Thursday and Friday that made them change their mind? Because it was the
same people deciding to go, and then decided not to go. MS NAUERT: And some of these would
just fall under – and I know it’s not fun for all of you to not get what you see as a sufficient
answer, but some of these are just private diplomatic conversations, and they made the decision
that now – then was not the right time to travel. ... Q: Secretary Mattis this morning said or
warned that he wasn’t planning to suspend other drills in the region anymore. But he said I will
have to discuss with State Department to see how the negotiations are going and so on. Would you
-- would the State Department advise Secretary Mattis to keep on suspending the drills, or he can
resume them? MS NAUERT: Well, I think we would hew very closely to what the President and
also what the Department of Defense wanted to do. Secretary Pompeo and Secretary Mattis speak
about these things; we’re very closely coordinated. Also, part of this is having conversations
with the South Koreans and our allies as well. So if we have any changes to that posture, we’ll
certainly let you know. But I think DOD did a very fulsome briefing today, so I’d refer you back
to some of what they said. Q: Heather -- MS NAUERT: Hey, Rich. Q: Have there been any
communications between the State Department and North Korea since those tweets came out? MS
NAUERT: That’s a question that Lesley just asked. I don’t have the answer to that, but I’ll see if I
can get it for you. Q: Okay. Thank you. And in the end of the President’s tweet messages
canceling this trip from the Secretary, he said he looked forward to seeing Kim Jong-un soon.
Prior to this, were there discussions about the potential for another meeting between the two? MS
NAUERT: I don’t have anything for you on that. That would be more of a White House question
at this point. Q: And just making clear, people were asking about the content of the letter. Can you
comment on the existence of that letter? MS NAUERT: I cannot confirm a letter, and I
certainly can’t confirm the content of any diplomatic conversations. And when I say
communications, that also encompasses any kind of talks that we would have about those types of
things, okay. Hi, Janne. Q: Hi. Thanks, Heather. Usually on North Korea immediately response
about these issues. But this time, they not talking anything or have you heard from any mentions
about cancelations or -- MS NAUERT: Have – I’m sorry. Start – have I heard any mentions about
-- Q: Yeah. The Secretary’s visit North Korea cancelations, about how did you expect North
Korea going to be response about the cancelation? Did you ever contact UN North Korean
delegations? MS NAUERT: Well, we – I mean, we certainly expect the North Korean
Government to adhere and to go along with the pledges and promises that they made at the
Singapore summit, in accordance to what the agreed to with the President. I have a statement
from the Secretary that he provided me earlier today, which I’d be happy to give to you, his
take on the situation there. He says: Despite the decision to delay my trip to Pyongyang,
America stands ready to engage when it is clear that Chairman Kim stands ready to deliver
on the commitments that he made at the Singapore summit to President Trump to
completely denuclearize North Korea. The world is united behind the need for Chairman
Kim to fulfill that commitment. Every member of the United Nations Security Council voted
to call upon North Korea to abandon all nuclear weapons, existing nuclear programs, and
other weapons of mass destruction. The goal of final, fully verified denuclearization of North
Korea, as agreed to by Chairman Kim, is the world’s goal. The United States, like the rest of
the world, is looking forward to North Korea’s compliance with these resolutions, which will
enable Chairman Kim to provide a brighter future for his own people. And for folks who
need a little nighttime reading, those UN Security Council Resolutions 2371, 2375, and 2397 –
they lay them out very clearly. So when you hear other governments or other individuals
criticizing the United States, that the United States is perhaps upending these negotiations, I would
point you back to these unanimous UN Security Council resolutions, which clearly lay out the
world’s unanimous expectations of the North Korean Government to denuclearize and all the other
things we just mentioned. I can read for you those resolutions if you like. Q: No thanks.
(Laughter.) MS NAUERT: No? Not today. Okay. Another time. All right. Q: The letter -- MS
NAUERT: Hey, Kylie. Q: Hi. So you said now is not the time for the trip. Is the State Department
and Pompeo still committed to making a trip to North Korea at some point in the near future or
potentially never again? MS NAUERT: I think that’s entirely a hypothetical. We stand ready to
talk when the North Koreans stand ready to do so and we think it can be productive. Q: How
else could it be done that – sorry. Q: Well, and you also spoke specifically about the President’s tweet, which cited no progress on denuclearization, so -- MS NAUERT: No. Actually, he said we feel that they are not making sufficient progress. There’s a big difference there. Q: So they are making -- MS NAUERT: We feel that they’re not making sufficient progress. There is progress being made. Q: On denuclearization? MS NAUERT: The Secretary is not just hopping on a plane and flying to North Korea for his health. He is going there to have serious, substantive talks. Those talks have, obviously, occurred. Many of you have been on those trips with us. But in the President’s view and in the national security team’s view, sufficient progress with respect to denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula was not being made. Q: And one last question. MS NAUERT: Yeah. Q: Ambassador Sung Kim was also at the White House on Friday. And I’m just curious, why was he here in Washington? Was he here to meet Mr. Biegun? What was the genesis of that trip? MS NAUERT: I actually can’t confirm that Sung Kim was here, if Ambassador -- Q: There was a photo at the White House. MS NAUERT: Okay. I did not – I have not seen that picture. Q: Okay. MS NAUERT: I don’t know why he was here, other than that he’s an important part of the team and has advised the Secretary and the overall team on the effort regarding North Korea. And in terms of our Special Representative Steve Biegun, we’re thrilled to have him on board. Okay. Hi, Conor. Q: Just a couple follow-ups on this. MS NAUERT: Yeah. Q: Ambassador Haley said today that it’s possible North Korea has changed its mind on its commitment to denuclearization. Is that a view that the Secretary shares as well? MS NAUERT: I haven’t asked the Secretary that question. All we know is that Chairman Kim has made certain commitments to the President at the Singapore summit. Q: And then just one more. MS NAUERT: Yeah, sure. Q: A close ally of the Secretary, Senator Marco Rubio, also said today – he tweeted that talks have failed. Just get your reaction to that? Obviously, this is someone that the Secretary is -- MS NAUERT: Yeah, you know I tend not to comment on things that other world leaders or even U.S. politicians would say. I would certainly say that when you look at some of the things that have taken place in the last year: One, we’re in a very different spot today than we were one year ago, where there were ballistic missile launches, where there were nuclear tests. We all remember very well what last summer looked like and the fear that many Americans felt at that time. Today, we are in a very different place. Two, we are in conversations and have been in negotiations with this government that we have not had any kind of real relationship with for just about a decade. Now, the fact that we’re having conversations, I would call that progress, and I would call that diplomatic progress, and that’s exactly what we do out of this building. The maximum pressure campaign – the world came together to impose sanctions against North Korea. When we were just at ASEAN, we heard so many of those ASEAN nations thanking the United States and thanking President Trump for his leadership on this issue. Were it not for the UN Security Council resolutions and for the maximum pressure campaign, Chairman Kim would not have gotten to this point where he is willing and open to having conversations with the United States Government. You recall when President Moon of South Korea first came here, I think it was back in March or perhaps it was early April, and he stood just outside the door of the White House and he thanked this administration for its efforts with that economic pressure campaign. So those are just a few ways – I can go on and on – about the repatriation of remains, I can remind folks of the three Americans that we brought home just a few months ago. Secretary Pompeo’s – I think it was his tenth day on the job – I would call that tremendous progress and would take issue with anyone who would claim that we have not made progress on this front. I’ve got to move on to some other issues, and I have to – I have to cut the briefing short today. Yeah. Q: President Moon is supposed to meet with Kim Jong-un next month in North Korea. Given your past comments saying that – pointing to his comments that there can be no progress on inter-Korean relations without progress on denuclearization, would you call on him to cancel that meeting? MS NAUERT: No, I think I would just go back to what President Moon has said in the past, that those things have to take place that has to take place. The denuclearization has to take place. He’s been very clear about that. We continue to have good, frank discussions with our allies, both the Republic of Korea and Japan. Q So he shouldn’t cancel until there’s been more progress? MS NAUERT: Look, I would just go back to what he has said in the past, the importance of denuclearization. Said, go right ahead. Q: Has there been any progress on -- MS NAUERT: I’ve got to move on to other things. I think I just announced that, I discussed that, about denuclearization. Said. Q: There’s been progress on denuclearizing or -- MS NAUERT: We are
With US-South Korean military drills back on the table and the cancelation of a top-level summit in Pyongyang, Washington is toughening its stance as it negotiates with North Korea. Today, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said the Pentagon is not planning to suspend any more military drills on the Korean peninsula. "We took the step to suspend several of the largest military exercises as a good faith measure," Mattis told reporters. "We have no plans to suspend any more." Carefully calibrating his words, Mattis would not say when exercises would resume, apparently leaving some wiggle room for North Korea. "We are going to see how the negotiations go, and then we will calculate the future, how we go forward," Mattis told Pentagon reporters. The next large-scale US-South Korean drills, known as Key Resolve/Foal Eagle, are set for next spring. Still, Pompeo said Washington remains ready to engage with North Korea. It will do so "when it is clear that Chairman Kim stands ready to deliver on the commitments that he made at the Singapore summit to President Trump to completely denuclearize North Korea," he said in a statement read aloud by his spokeswoman. (Thomas Watkins and Francesco Fontemaggi, “U.S. Toughens Stance as N. Korea Talks Stumble,” AFP, August 29, 2018) President Donald Trump on August 29 said that he stands by his decision to suspend joint military exercises with South Korea, blaming China once again for undermining denuclearization negotiations with North Korea. In a series of tweets that began, “Statement from the White House,” Trump said that North Korea “is under tremendous pressure from China" because of “major trade disputes” between the U.S. and Chinese governments. The statement said “there is no reason at this time to be spending large amounts of money on joint U.S.-South Korea war games,” an echo of Trump’s decision after a June 12 summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un in Singapore to suspend joint military drills as long as the two sides are negotiating a nuclear deal in good faith. It continued, “Besides, the President can instantly start the joint exercises again with South Korea, and Japan, if he so chooses. If he does, they will be far bigger than ever before.” (Sarah Kim, “On Joint Drills, Trump Contradicts Mattis,” JoongAng Ilbo, August 31, 2018) President Trump, who in June suspended the exercises after meeting with the North’s leader, Kim Jong-un, reaffirmed his misgivings on August 29, saying he saw “no reason at this time to be spending large amounts of money on joint U.S.-South Korea war games.” Trump has objected to the cost of the American military presence in South Korea since he was a presidential candidate. Those persistent complaints, along with his often-confusing stance on the alliance, have unsettled many South Koreans, some of whom fear that Trump could strike a deal with North Korea that would leave their security compromised. "We sometimes wonder, 'Is he really the president of our ally?'” said Moon Seong-mook, a retired general affiliated with the Korea Research Institute for National Strategy, a conservative think tank in Seoul. “He is so confusing. Is he really the shrewd negotiator he says he is, with us missing the method behind his madness, or is he just plain impulsive?” About 60 percent of the officers of the combined South Korean-United States Forces Command, which coordinates the joint drills, are set to leave for other posts in a year because of routine rotations, according to Kim Min-seok, a former Defense Ministry spokesman who is now a columnist on military affairs at the JoongAng Ilbo. After two years, Kim wrote in June, 90 percent of the officers will have been replaced, meaning that few would be left with experience in conducting joint exercises, if they have not resumed by then. “If war breaks out in a situation like this, it is inevitable that there will be great impediments in combat operations,” he wrote. At the same time, American negotiators have begun demanding that South Korea contribute much more to the cost of the United States military presence, citing the expense of the drills as a major factor, according to officials familiar with the ongoing talks. There has been no definitive estimate of how much the drills cost. But South Korean news media have put the combined figure for both countries at $72 million a year, rising sharply if more aircraft carriers or long-range bombers than usual are deployed, as they were last year. In a survey published this month by South Korea’s National Assembly Research Service, more than 53 percent of the respondents said it was a mistake to suspend the exercises. Conservative South Koreans, in particular, worry that Trump, eager to strike a nuclear deal, might bargain away joint military drills permanently, thus weakening the rationale for keeping American troops in South Korea. That outcome would leave South Koreans feeling extremely vulnerable,
given the North’s conventional weapons pointed at Seoul, and its 1.2 million-strong army, which analysts say is one of the world’s largest. Cheon Seong-whun, an analyst at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul, said that Trump, in his negotiations with North Korea, was making the mistake of treating the North’s nuclear weapons program and Washington’s alliance with South Korea as bargaining chips of “equal value.” “Even if North Korea gives up its nuclear weapons — I doubt it will — what about the North’s other weapons of mass destruction, like biological and chemical weapons, and its massive standing army?” Cheon said. “The ending of joint exercises is an integral part of North Korea’s strategy to weaken the South Korea-U.S. alliance and drive out the American troops from South Korea.” Some of its joint exercises with South Korea are conducted largely through computer simulations. For others, thousands of American military personnel based in Japan and the United States, as well as American aircraft carriers and submarines, join the forces based in South Korea to rehearse a counterattack against North Korean invasion. These exercises have also helped the United States project its military prowess in East Asia, where China is fast expanding its military might. The drills with the South Koreans are among the largest joint field exercises the United States stages with an ally abroad. North Korea has long insisted that it would not relinquish its nuclear weapons program unless the United States ended its “hostile policies.” It has cited the joint military drills as a prime example of such American hostility, calling them rehearsals for invasion and using them as a pretext for bolstering its totalitarian control of its people. North Korea has often responded to the joint exercises with its own massive military drills. But Pyongyang has found it increasingly difficult to do so, especially since the economic collapse and famine endured the North in the 1990s. Its military, like the rest of the country, is plagued by a lack of spare parts and fuel. Some analysts in South Korea say that ending the drills could help Kim persuade his people, especially hardline generals, to accept denuclearization and focus on rebuilding the North’s economy. “Whenever there was a major joint military exercise in South Korea, the North Korean economy was virtually paralyzed for two or three months, as people and factory workers were mobilized for civic defense drills,” said Kim Yong-hyun, professor of North Korean studies at Dongguk University in Seoul. (Choe Sang-hun, “Pause in Joint Exercises Worries South Koreans,” New York Times, August 31, 2018, p. A-4)

8/29/18

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Donald J. TrumpVerified account @realDonaldTrump STATEMENT FROM THE WHITE HOUSE President Donald J. Trump feels strongly that North Korea is under tremendous pressure from China because of our major trade disputes with the Chinese Government. At the same time, we also know that China is providing North Korea with...

Donald J. TrumpVerified account @realDonaldTrump ...considerable aid, including money, fuel, fertilizer and various other commodities. This is not helpful! Nonetheless, the President believes that his relationship with Kim Jong Un is a very good and warm one, and there is no reason at this time to be spending large amounts...

Donald J. TrumpVerified account @realDonaldTrump ...of money on joint U.S.-South Korea war games. Besides, the President can instantly start the joint exercises again with South Korea, and Japan, if he so chooses. If he does, they will be far bigger than ever before. As for the U.S.-China trade disputes, and other...

Donald J. TrumpVerified account @realDonaldTrump ...differences, they will be resolved in time by President Trump and China’s great President Xi Jinping. Their relationship and bond remain very strong.

It’s all China’s fault, at least according to President Trump, who again blamed Beijing for the impasse in negotiations with Pyongyang over its nuclear and missile program. But several experts said the real problem lies much closer to home, in Trump’s casual approach to negotiations with the North Koreans, and the vague, verbal promises exchanged at his meeting with the North Korean leader in Singapore in June. Vox reported today that Trump told Kim Jong Un in Singapore that he’d sign a declaration to end the Korean War soon after their meeting, citing multiple sources familiar with the negotiations. Since then, the Trump administration has repeatedly asked Pyongyang to first dismantle most of its nuclear arsenal. That explains the current stalemate in negotiations, Vox reported. “If that’s true, that’s why the North Koreans are dragging their feet,” said Robert Kelly, a professor of political science at Pusan National
University in South Korea. “That’s Trump’s blunder.” North Korea believes Trump made the same promise — to declare an end to the war — to Kim Yong Chol, a top North Korean official close to Kim Jong Un, at the White House on June 1 — 11 days before the summit, Vox also reported. “The bill comes due,” tweeted Vipin Narang, an associate professor of political science at MIT. “This was exactly the risk of Trump freelancing in Singapore: making promises to Kim Jong Un (and earlier Kim Yong Chol) that the Administration could not and would not deliver on.

“Things may quickly heat back up, and this one is squarely on Trump,” he added. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, by contrast, has asked Pyongyang to surrender 60 to 70 percent of its nuclear warheads in six to eight months, according to Vox, explaining why he was greeted with such hostility in North Korean state media. Trump’s decision to call off Pompeo’s latest trip to Pyongyang came after the North Koreans warned in a letter to Pompeo last week that talks with the United States risked falling apart, as first reported by the Washington Post’s Josh Rogin.

“They basically don’t think we’re doing enough,” a senior U.S. official told Reuters. He said that the tone of the letter was “if you’re not willing to give something, then don’t come.” Rogin said the idea of declaring an end to the war faced significant internal opposition within the administration, particularly from national security adviser John Bolton and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis. Suh Hoon, director of South Korea’s National Intelligence Service, told a closed-door parliamentary hearing yesterday that Pompeo’s trip was canceled over the competing demands from the two sides. “As determined by the NIS, he is unable to go because North Korea’s demand for the end-of-war declaration clashed with the U.S. urging that denuclearization be declared first,” Suh was quoted as saying by lawmaker Kim Min-Ki. In July, North Korea’s Foreign Ministry issued a statement underlining how important it considered a declaration of an end to the war in “defusing tension and establishing a lasting peace regime on the Korean peninsula,” as well as creating trust between the two nations. “President Trump, too, was more enthusiastic about this issue at the DPRK-U.S. summit talks,” an unnamed spokesman was quoted as saying. A similar statement in August complained that the United States had issued a “unilateral and gangster-like demand for denuclearization” while threatening to “backtrack on the issue it had agreed on to end the status of war under certain conditions and excuses.” It also mentioned Trump’s alleged enthusiasm for the step. South Korean efforts to convince Washington and Pyongyang to move simultaneously on the two steps have so far foundered, the Atlantic reported this week. Pusan National University’s Kelly said Trump had offered the North Koreans a huge amount in Singapore, including the suspension of military exercises with South Korea, without getting concrete promises in return. His lack of understanding of the issues, and his lack of attention to detail has finally “collided with the reality of North Korea,” Kelly said. “They are not going to completely denuclearize ever. Nobody actually believes that. They took years developing these weapons, they are not going to give them up because Donald Trump says some stuff on Twitter.” When he called off Pompeo’s planned visit last week, Trump had blamed a lack of progress toward denuclearization, but also said China was not helping as much as in the past, because of the trade dispute between Beijing and Washington. It was a theme he returned to today. “I would imagine the trade war with China isn’t helping,” Kelly added. “I would imagine the Chinese aren’t being helpful and that probably hurts at the margins, but the real problem is the incompetence of the Trump administration.” Meanwhile, the breakdown in talks has forced the government in Seoul to recalibrate, experts said. South Korea media have reported on mounting speculation that the proposed opening of a joint inter-Korea liaison office inside North Korea, supposed to take place in August, might be delayed — although the government has only said that consultations are still underway. Seoul will also have interpreted comments from Mattis that the United States had only suspended some military exercises with South Korea — not its entire program — as a warning “not to get ahead of itself in cooperation with the North,” said Shin Beom-chul, director of Center for Security and Unification at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul. “Despite wanting to speed up diplomacy with Pyongyang, Seoul cannot but moderate the pace in this situation,” Shin said, adding that President Moon Jae-in was also bound to take a “more prudent approach” toward deeper economic cooperation with the North when he visits Pyongyang in September. (Simon Denver; “Trump Is Blaming China for North Korea Impasse, But Real Fault May Lie Closer to Home,” Washington Post, August 30, 2018) Why did Trump cancel the visit? Two reports from the Washington Post and CNN seem to provide an answer: North Korea sent a very angry letter to Pompeo. The letter reportedly came from the secretary of
state’s North Korean counterpart, Kim Yong Chol, who is very close to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, although it’s unclear how precisely it got to Pompeo. The message was clear: The US had shown no real willingness to sign a peace treaty to end the Korean War. North Korea, it seems, is very unhappy. Because “the US is still not ready to meet [North Korean] expectations in terms of taking a step forward to sign a peace treaty,” the North Korean official wrote, the current negotiations are “again at stake and may fall apart.” Mintaro Oba, a former State Department official who focused on North Korea, told me the letter shows “a mix of genuine discontent over the direction of talks and the standard North Korean negotiation tactic of raising tensions when it suits their interests.” The letter was probably intended to convince the Trump administration that their current approach won’t work, without blowing up the talks completely or offending the president, Oba continued. “Judging by the president’s response,” he said, “the North Korean letter did just that.” Pompeo reportedly showed the letter to Trump in the Oval Office on August 24, and was in the room when the president tweeted about the trip’s cancellation. (Alex Ward, “Here’s the Real Reason Trump Cancelled Pompeo’s North Korea Trip,” Vox, August 29, 2018)

Japan and North Korea had a "secret" meeting in Vietnam in July without informing the United States, the Washington Post reported yesterday. The talks were held between Kitamura Shigeru, head of Japan's Cabinet Intelligence and Research Office, and a senior North Korean official in charge of reunification, Kim Song Hye, the newspaper said. Senior U.S. officials expressed irritation that Japan was not forthright about the meeting, despite Washington's near-constant updates to Tokyo on its dealings with North Korea, it said. Officials in Tokyo have acknowledged that to negotiate the return of Japanese abductees in North Korea, they cannot rely solely on the United States to lobby on Japan's behalf, according to the paper. Today in Tokyo, Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide declined to comment on the report. (Kyodo, “Japan, North Korea Had Meeting in July without Telling U.S.: Report,” August 29, 2018)

Plans for a South Korean train to travel to Sinuiju for a joint South and North Korean inspection of railway conditions in the North were reportedly put on ice after the UN Command refused to grant permission. The South Korean government’s position is that the project in question does not represent an area subject to UN or US sanctions against North Korea. Critics have been vocal in proclaiming that Washington’s interference in inter-Korean cooperation efforts to implement the terms of the April 27 Panmunjom Declaration have reached the point of infringing on sovereignty. The commander of the UN Command also serves as US Forces Korea commander. According to accounts from multiple government and other sources acquainted with the inter-Korean railway cooperation effort, the South Korean government gave notice on August 23 of its plans to bring a train in and out of North Korea as well as the associated staff, but was denied approval by UN Command. The initial plan had been to have the South Korean train (six cars and a locomotive) depart from Seoul Station and travel to Sinuiju at the far northern end of the Gyeongui (Seoul-Sinuiju) railway line in North Korea, with South and North Korea conducting a joint inspection on the North Korean stretch of the line between Kaesong and Sinuiju. According to the armistice agreement, the UN Command has authority to grant or refuse approval on individuals and items passing over the Military Demarcation Line (MDL). As a reason for refusing approval, the command reportedly cited the fact that the South Korean government had not observed the deadline for prior notification. Authorities are required to notify each other 48 hours in advance in the case of plans for passage over the MDL in either direction and 24 hours in advance by military hotline for “transit plans.” While the armistice agreement requires notification between military authorities to take place between the UN Command and North Korean military, the South Korean military has followed a practice of discussing and obtaining approval on matters from the UN Command and informing North Korea, due to the latter’s unwillingness to engage with the UN Command. But with the matter of “prior notification deadlines” previously approached in a more flexible way in light of political conditions or the urgency of situations, many observers are saying the UN’s grounds for denying approval are mere excuses. “In reality, the UN Command’s approval authority has been a formality, and the practice has been to substitute it with notification from the South Korean military,” said a source familiar with the handling of duties related to normal passage over the MDL by South Korean personnel after the 2004 opening of the Kaesong
Industrial Complex. “The only conclusion you can reach is that the US government is making a big deal about the prior notification deadline because it wants to stop this project from going ahead,” the source suggested. The UN Command did not respond to related inquiries. (Lee Je-hun, “UN Command Blocks Inspection Plans for Inter-Korean Railway,” Hankyore, August 30, 2018)
Field surveys by South and North Korea on their railways are not subject to international sanctions on the North, a unification ministry official said August 31, a day after it was reported that the United Nations Command has recently turned down Seoul’s request to move equipment needed for such a survey across the border. "The joint survey on railways in South and North Korea is not subject to sanctions," Lee Eugene, a deputy spokeswoman of the ministry, said during a regular press briefing. "(We) will have close consultations with the U.S. and the international community with regard to various inter-Korean cooperation projects moving forward." (Yonhap, “2 Koreas Joint Survey on Railways Not Subject to Sanctions: Official,” August 31, 2018)

The South Korea government announced that it will raise its defense budget 8.2 percent on-year in 2019, the largest expansion since 2008. The Ministry of National Defense said it has proposed a budget of 46.7 trillion won ($42 billion) for next year. Of the total, the ministry plans to spend 15.3 trillion won on boosting defense capabilities, an increase of 13.7 percent from the previous year, while setting aside 31.3 trillion won for running military forces, an on-year growth of 5.7 percent. (Nam Kyung-don, “S. Korea Intends to Increase defense Budget 8.2% Next Year,” Korea Herald, August 29, 2018)

Sigal: “The United States cannot get some of what it wants without giving North Korea some of what it wants. Yet that is precisely what Washington has been trying to do—and predictably getting nowhere, as President Trump acknowledged by postponing Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s latest mission to Pyongyang. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis tried to increase pressure on the North by announcing, “We have no plans at this time to suspend any more exercises.” While he clarified that no decision had yet been made, he also noted, “We are going to see how the negotiations go, and then we will calculate the future, how we go forward.” Washington is insisting that Pyongyang fulfill its commitment at the Singapore Summit to “work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” without addressing its own commitments at that summit “to establish new U.S.-DPRK relations,” and “to build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean peninsula.” Policymakers opposed to negotiations have disclosed intelligence that North Korea is continuing to produce fissile material and missiles, as if it is obliged to stop without any deal. While the Trump administration demanded that the North move first, reportedly by providing a complete inventory of its nuclear material and production facilities, the North countered with the demand that Washington join South Korea in declaring an end to the Korean War. The declaration would commit to initiating a peace process that would include military confidence building measures to reduce the risk of deadly clashes in the contested waters of the West (Yellow) Sea and the Demilitarized Zone and culminate in a formal peace treaty. The administration contends that the North wants the peace declaration before taking steps to denuclearize, but as North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho told ASEAN foreign ministers in early August, “We believe that a method involving the balanced, simultaneous, step-by-step implementation of all terms in the Joint Statement, preceded by the establishment of trust, is the only realistic means of achieving success.” He emphasized the North’s “unswerving resolution and commitment to responsible, good-faith implementation of the Joint Statement,” and the “unacceptability of a situation in which we alone are the first to move unilaterally.” His statement is just the latest indication that a deal is possible if the United States is prepared to accept a peace declaration. Seeking a nuclear inventory in return will only initiate a long period of uncertainty, however, with little benefit to the US and allied security while Washington tries to verify that inventory and while North Korean manufacture of fissile material and missiles runs free. A better starting point for Washington to seek is a suspension of the production of plutonium, highly enriched uranium, and intercontinental- and intermediate-range missiles, along with a declaration of the locations of related production sites. Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula depends less on maintaining maximum pressure than on addressing what Kim Jong Un wants in negotiations. Contrary to the conventional wisdom about the end of the US alliance with South Korea, the abandonment of the nuclear umbrella, the withdrawal of US forces, a Marshall Plan, or even
written security assurances, what Kim wants is an end to US enmity—what the North Koreans call the US “hostile policy”—and reconciliation. Based on what North Korean diplomats have been telling US officials and ex-officials for years, this entails the normalization of political and economic relations, a “peace regime” on the Korean Peninsula, and ultimately, an alliance like the one the United States has with the ROK, one that would be backed by a continuing US troop presence on the peninsula. Most experts assume that the North has no intention of giving up its nuclear weapons. That is mere speculation. There is no way to know for sure whether or not Kim is willing to keep his pledge to disarm and what he will want in return. Diplomatic give-and-take with concrete proposals for reciprocal steps is the only way to find out. Dismantling production facilities and verifying disarmament will take years. So will convincing steps toward reconciliation. Only then will Kim reveal his willingness to give up his weapons.” (Leon V. Sigal, “All Take and No Give Won’t Work with North Korea,” 38North, August 29, 2018)

8/30/18

President Moon Jae-in replaced several key ministers in the priority areas of defense and education, both of which are the subject of reform as a main policy agenda. But Moon left the key portfolios in his economic and foreign affairs teams unchanged. Defense Minister Song Young-moo will be replaced by Jeong Kyeong-doo, chairman of the Republic of Korea Joint Chiefs of Staff. The replacement of the defense minister comes amid the government's much-touted military reform drive. But the array of modernization plans and restructuring raise doubts about its financial feasibility and efficiency in improving the country's defense posture. "The defense chief nominee Jeong has a rich experience and solid knowledge of defense policies. The nominee prefers to think differently and pursue change. More importantly, Jeong has been committed to complete given tasks," Kim said. (Kim Yoo-chul, “President Replaces Five Ministers,” Hankyore, August 30, 2018)

North Korea remains determined to maintain the momentum of dialogue with the United States despite a recent hiccup, South Korea's top envoy in Washington said. Ambassador Cho Yoona-jed dismissed a view that Pyongyang and Washington are shifting back to a confrontation after months of diplomatic engagement. "North Korea's intention of maintaining dialogue momentum is certain," he told South Korea's Washington correspondents. He was referring to "various speculations" driven by media after President Donald Trump called off Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's trip to Pyongyang this week. Trump cited lack of "sufficient progress" in diplomatic efforts to denuclearize the North. Skepticism has since grown about Trump's approach toward the communist nation despite his talk of a good relationship with its leader Kim Jong-un. The ambassador pointed out the North knows that there will be no easing of sanctions and economic cooperation without continued negotiations and improved ties with the United States. "Accordingly, it will maintain dialogue and improve relations with the US anyhow," he stressed. The North has kept mum publicly on the cancellation of Pompeo's visit, which apparently reflects its prudent stance, Cho added. On a possible rift between the allies over Seoul's plan to open an inter-Korean liaison office in North Korea's border city of Kaesong, he said related news reports are "overblown." Advancing denuclearization talks is a shared core task of the two sides, he said, adding Seoul and Washington are in close consultations on the North Korea issue. The State Department's spokesperson Heather Nauert also said earlier the allies may have "minor disagreements," but the notion of a conflict is simply overblown. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Wants to Continue Talks with U.S.: Amb. Cho,” Korea Herald, August 31, 2018)

The State Department is extending the ban on US citizens traveling to North Korea for another year, according to a State Department official. The ban, which was set to expire Sept. 1, restricts U.S. passport holders from traveling to or through North Korea. However, the official said that "individuals who wish to travel to or within North Korea for extremely limited purposes," and whose travel is in the US national interest, can apply for a "special validation" from the State Department. "The safety and security of US citizens overseas is one of our highest priorities," the spokesman said. The State Department's guidance says trips to North Korea might be in the U.S. national interest if the traveler is a journalist and the purpose of the trip is to report on the country. Exceptions will also be made for representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross.
or the American Red Cross traveling on an officially sponsored mission, or if a trip is justified by "compelling humanitarian considerations." Exceptions will also be made if the trip "is otherwise in the national interest," a category that might include diplomats working on negotiations with Pyongyang to give up or reduce its nuclear program. The ban was put in place in September 2017 after the death of US student Otto Warmbier. (Jamie Crawford and Nicole Gaouette, “U.S. Extends Ban on Americans Traveling to North Korea,” CNN, August 30, 2018)

South Korean President Moon Jae-in will send a special envoy to North Korea next week to arrange his scheduled summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and also discuss ways to move forward the stalled denuclearization of the communist state, Seoul's presidential office Cheong Wa Dae said today. The special envoy will travel to Pyongyang on September 5, Cheong Wa Dae spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom said, without elaborating on the duration of the trip. Moon has yet to name his special envoy, he added. Seoul made the proposal to send a special envoy to North Korea early today, the Cheong Wa Dae spokesman said. North Korea accepted the offer in a telegram sent in the afternoon. The two Koreas agreed to hold a meeting between Moon and Kim in Pyongyang before the end of next month during high-level dialogue earlier this month, but no follow-up discussions have been held since. "The special envoy will discuss a wide range of issues, including the specific date for the South-North Korea summit, development of the South-North Korean relationship, denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the establishment of peace on the Korean Peninsula," the spokesman told a press briefing. (Yonhap, “Moon to Send Special Envoy to N. Korea Next Week for Summit Preparation,” August 31, 2018) President Moon Jae-in on September 2 named his top security adviser as a special envoy to North Korea. Chung Eui-yong, head of the presidential National Security Office, will head a five-member delegation to the communist state that is set to leave for Pyongyang in three days. The delegation includes Suh Hoon, chief of the National Intelligence Service (NIS); Vice Unification Minister Chun Hae-sung; Yun Kun-young, presidential secretary for state affairs; and Kim Sang-gyun, a senior NIS official. It will be Chung's second trip to North Korea in less than six months as he headed the same five-member delegation to Pyongyang in early March. (Yonhap, “Moon Names Chief Security Adviser as Special Envoy to N. Korea,” September 2, 2018)

Park Kyung-seo, head of the South Korean Red Cross, said that officials from the South and North Korean Red Cross had discussed having 500 South Korean members of families divided by the Korean War visit Mt. Kumgang this coming November to hold their ancestral rites. "If this event goes well, we’re planning to look into holding the ceremony in Pyongyang next year," Park added. “We had a discussion with the North Koreans about putting together a group of around 500 South Korean divided family members to visit their hometowns for three days in November,” Park said in an earlier interview with the Voice of America (VOA). “If the visit to Mt. Kumgang in November is a success, we’re thinking of sending groups to other sites as well. We’re also planning to organize a three-day visit to Pyongyang by South Korean divided family members next spring,” Park said. (Yoo Kang-moon, ““South and North Red Cross Discuss Having 500 South Koreans Visit NK to Hold Ancestral Rites, Hankyore, September 2, 2018)

A joint liaison office will open "early this month" in Kaesong, North Korea, as agreed upon by the two Koreas, according to National Security Office chief Chung Eui-yong. The establishment was confirmed when Chung mentioned it during a three-way meeting among presidential officials, Cabinet members and ruling Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) lawmakers at Cheong Wa Dae, Saturday. The liaison office is expected to open in the Kaesong Industrial Complex on September 5 when Moon's special envoys will visit Pyongyang to discuss a third summit scheduled for later this month. (Yi Whan-woo, “Inter-Korean Liaison Office to Open This Week,” Korea Times, September 2, 2018)

Chinese President Xi Jinping will not travel to North Korea this weekend to join celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the country’s founding and instead dispatch a top aide, China’s state media reported. Li Zhanhui, a member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo under the Communist Party Central Committee and chairman of the rubber-stamp parliament, will head a delegation to
Offering an olive branch to President Trump, Kim Jong-un told a South Korean envoy that he wanted to denuclearize North Korea before Trump’s current term ends in early 2021, the envoy said on September 6. Expressing frustration over what he called Washington’s failure to negotiate in good faith, Kim told the envoy, Chung Eui-yong, that he still had confidence in Trump. He said he had never spoken badly of the American leader, even to his closest aides, since the two met in Singapore on June 12, according to Chung. The president responded on Twitter early September 6, “Kim Jong Un of North Korea Proclaims ‘unwavering faith in President Trump.’ Thank you Chairman Kim. We will get it done together!” At a televised news conference in Seoul, Chung said Kim had voiced frustration that his commitment to nuclear disarmament, which he expressed when he met with Moon in April and with Trump in June, was not taken seriously by much of the world. Kim said that while North Korea had already taken important steps toward denuclearization, Washington was not doing enough in return, Chung said. “He strongly expressed his will to take more active steps for denuclearization if the actions North Korea has already taken are matched by corresponding measures” from the United States, Chung said. “He made it clear that his trust in President Trump remains — and will remain — unchanged, even though there have recently been some difficulties in negotiations between the North and the United States,” Chung said. “He said he wished he could eliminate 70 years of hostile history with the United States, improve North Korea-U.S. relations and realize denuclearization within the first term of President Trump.” Chung said Kim gave him messages to relay to Washington, which officials said were being sent to his American counterpart, John Bolton, Trump’s national security adviser. Chung did not reveal their contents, except to say that Kim wanted Washington’s assurances that he had not made a mistake when he committed to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Taken at face value, Kim’s remarks, as relayed by the South Korean envoy, signaled that North Korea was willing to strike a denuclearization deal personally with Trump, who has been more eager to engage North Korea than any of his predecessors. They also suggested Kim could accept the rapid denuclearization the Trump administration has sought — for the right incentives. Kim has not offered to provide a full inventory of nuclear weapons and fissile materials, as Washington has demanded. Nor has Kim offered any detailed plan for disarmament. (Choe Sang-hun, “Kim Says He Is Devoted to Disarming by 2021,” New York Times, September 7, 2018, p. A-10) North Korean leader Kim Jong-un met with a special delegation of South Korean President Moon Jae-in. "The special delegation met with Chairman Kim Jong-un to deliver the personal letter (from Moon) and exchange their opinions," Seoul's presidential office Cheong Wa Dae said in a brief statement. The statement came hours after Chung Eui-yong, top security adviser to Moon and head of the presidential National Security Council, arrived in the North on what is still expected to be a one-day trip. "The special delegation is scheduled to leave (Pyongyang) after attending a dinner," Cheong Wa Dae spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom said, adding it was not clear who would host the dinner. Cheong Wa Dae spokesman said the outcome of the delegation's trip to Pyongyang will be released Thursday, considering their late return. He said he did not have any information when asked if the delegation could stay overnight, only saying they were originally scheduled to return home on the day. Chung is heading a five-member delegation that includes the head of the National Intelligence Service, Suh Hoon, and Vice Unification Minister Chun Hae-sung. Chung earlier said he hoped to meet with the North Korean leader during his one-day trip to Pyongyang but that no such arrangements had been made. The North Korea trip by Moon's special envoy is largely aimed at making arrangements for what would be a third inter-Korean summit between Moon and Kim. "First, the delegation will seek to set a specific date for the South-North summit that the countries have already agreed to hold in Pyongyang in September," Chung told a press briefing Tuesday. "Second, it will discuss ways to develop South-North Korean relations by implementing the Panmunjom Declaration," he added. The South Korean officials, however, were also expected to work to remove an apparent stumbling block in denuclearization talks between the United States and North Korea. "The special delegation also plans to hold discussions on ways to completely denuclearize (the peninsula) and establish lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula," Chung said. Chung, who said he will be delivering a personal letter from Moon to Kim, noted he may also convey the United States' stance to the communist North. "We are always closely
communicating with the United States. We are also sharing information related to the visit by the special delegation to North Korea and holding close discussions,” he has said. Chung’s trip comes amid concerns over a possible discrepancy between the speed of development in inter-Korean ties and progress in denuclearization efforts, especially following a third Moon-Kim summit. Many in South Korea and the US believe any development in the South-North Korean relationship followed by increased economic cooperation between the two Koreas may weaken or even remove the North’s need or willingness to denuclearize in exchange for security guarantees, as well as economic support from the United States and its allies. In a telephone conversation with President Trump late yesterday (Seoul time), Moon said improvements in inter-Korean ties will only assist efforts to denuclearize the North. "(Moon) insisted that an improvement in the South-North Korean relationship and reduced tension on the Korean Peninsula will contribute to complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and establishment of permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula,” Cheong Wa Dae spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom said of the Moon-Trump talks. Chung said an improvement in inter-Korean relations may even help salvage the stalled denuclearization negotiations between the US and the North. "We believe development in South-North Korean relations may be a force driving the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and that we may tow negotiations on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through development in the South-North relationship if necessary," he said yesterday. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Leader Kim Meets with S. Korea Special Delegation,” Korea Herald, September 5, 2018)

_Rodong Sinmun_ signed commentary: “The publication of the historic Panmunjom declaration in April excited the whole world, and the U.S. gave its hearty support to it. However, its eye and facial expression toward the Korean peninsula are dim and twisted and its attitude towards the inter-Korean relations is so cold. The U.S. must realize that the more the inter-Korean relations improve, the better way the U.S. would have, and if things of other countries and nations go well, its things would also go well. In view of the prestige of the DPRK in the international politics and the geo-political position of the Korean peninsula, the inter-Korean relations can be termed a key link in the chain of the world politics, and if the knot in the inter-Korean relations is untied, it will not be bad but good for the U.S. To try to block the path the north and the south paved with much effort, in disregard of that obvious principle, will only make the U.S. conduct awkward. The U.S. moves to check the improvement of the inter-Korean relations further awaken all Koreans in the north and the south. They come to cherish the belief and truth that the Korean nation would achieve nothing if it depends on the outsiders displeased with everything good for it and reads their face, and that there would be no reunification and peace without independence. The engine for the development of the inter-Korean relations exists inside the Korean nation and the speed of its acceleration also hinges on the timetable set by the nation itself. As the path being taken by the north and the south with their concerted efforts is just the one of justice and truth, no force can block it, and if the masters stand in the van of the advance, the world will follow them. One will feel refreshed when his bunged up nose is open. If the U.S. takes a broad view of matter and shows the conduct befitting a superpower, it will better its position and make the world feel far more convenient.” (Rodong Sinmun, “Improvement of Inter-Korean Relations Is Good for U.S.”) September 5, 2018)

KCNA: “Kim Jong Un, chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the DPRK and supreme commander of the Korean People's Army, received the members of a special envoy delegation of south Korean President Moon Jae In who visited Pyongyang on Wednesday at the building of the headquarters of the WPK Central Committee. Glad to meet Jong Ui Yong, chief of the State Security Office of Chongwadae, So Hun, director of the National Intelligence Service, Chon Hae Song, vice-minister of Unification, Kim Sang Gyun, vice-director of the National Intelligence Service, and Yun Kon Yong, chief of the State Affairs Planning Office of Chongwadae, on a visit to Pyongyang as the members of the special envoy delegation of President Moon Jae In, Supreme Leader of our Party, state and army Kim Jong Un warmly welcomed their visit to Pyongyang. Kim Yong Chol, vice-chairman of the C.C., WPK, was on hand. The Supreme Leader had a photo session with the members of the delegation. The members of the delegation extended the greetings of sincere gratitude to Kim Jong
Un for being so kind to meet them so quickly though he was very busy with the state affairs. Jong Ui Yong, special envoy, courteously conveyed a personal letter of President Moon Jae In to the Supreme Leader. After reading the personal letter the Supreme Leader expressed his thanks to the President for sending the good personal letter which expressed a firm will to wisely overcome many challenges in the future, too, and open a bright future of our nation while appreciating the fresh advance in the relations between the north and the south. The Supreme Leader said he fully supports and sympathizes with the President’s determination and that he remains unchanged in his determination to strive hard to bring the fellow countrymen better results at an early date, bearing in mind the mission before the nation and its expectation. He, availing himself of the opportunity, asked the special envoy to convey his warm greetings to the President. The Supreme Leader said that he was proud of the fact that thanks to the sincere efforts and bold decisions he made with strenuous efforts and deep thought together with President Moon Jae In, dramatic moments and good agreements which no one could ever think of were achieved this year, setting right the north-south ties that had been derailed and had remained tragic for years and making significant and excellent successes oriented toward national reconciliation and peace. He said that he highly appreciates and always feels grateful to President Moon Jae In for his sincerity and hard-work for the DPRK-U.S. summit, the first of its kind in history. He said he is pleased over the fact that technical contacts in various fields were made between the north and the south, the reunions of separated families and relatives were realized and north-south military talks and the work of setting up a joint liaison office progressed well after the historic Panmunjom meeting, adding that we should value all these successes which the north and the south made hand in hand and keep advancing without deviation the north-south ties that have definitely entered the new orbit of peace, the orbit of reconciliation and cooperation. He exchanged wide-ranging opinions with the special envoy delegation over the schedule for the Pyongyang summit meeting due in September and its topics, and came to a satisfactory agreement with it. He also talked with it candidly over many issues arising in accelerating the development of the north-south relations and preserving peace and stability of the Korean peninsula. Noting that it is our fixed stand and his will to completely remove the danger of armed conflict and horror of war from the Korean peninsula and turn it into the cradle of peace without nuclear weapons and free from nuclear threat, he said that the north and the south should further their efforts to realize the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The talks between the Supreme Leader and the special envoy delegation of President Moon Jae In proceeded in a compatriotic and warm atmosphere.” (KCNA, “Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un Meets Special Envoy of S. Korea,” September 6, 2018)
than the criminal charges in ensuring that Park cannot travel far outside North Korea and outing officials said. The sanctions are unlikely to have much effect on Park and are a less powerful tool the government. He actually appeared to work for North Korea’s accounts to Park or Chosun Expo Joint Venture, the company he worked for that American financial institution that does business in the United States had direct, formal relations with North Korea and did not communicate with its reclusive government. "The North Korean government, through a state sponsored group, robbed a central bank and citizens of other nations, retaliated against free speech in order to chill it half a world away, and created disruptive malware that indiscriminately affected victims in more than 150 other countries, causing hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars’ worth of damage,” John C. Demers, the head of the Justice Department’s National Security Division, said in a statement. “These charges will send a message that we will track down malicious actors no matter how or where they hide,” he added. Park, who also went by the alias Pak Jin Hek, is unlikely to see the inside of an American courtroom. The United States has no direct, formal relations with North Korea and did not communicate with its reclusive government ahead of the charges. Adding him to the Treasury Department’s sanctions list means that no official would not directly answer when asked whether he was briefed in advance. The complaint against Park was filed under seal on June 8, just four days before Trump and Kim held a historic summit meeting in Singapore. The complaint made no mention of the United States-chaired attacks on North Korea’s missile program, ordered by President Barack Obama months before the Sony attack. And it omitted the source of some of the weapons in the WannaCry attack, which were leaked or stolen from the National Security Agency, though the United States has not publicly conceded that. “The North Korean government, through a state-sponsored group, robbed a central bank and citizens of other nations, retaliated against free speech in order to chill it half a world away, and created disruptive malware that indiscriminately affected victims in more than 150 other countries, causing hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars’ worth of damage,” John C. Demers, the head of the Justice Department’s National Security Division, said in a statement. “These charges will send a message that we will track down malicious actors no matter how or where they hide,” he added. Park, who also went by the alias Pak Jin Hek, is unlikely to see the inside of an American courtroom. The United States has no direct, formal relations with North Korea and did not communicate with its reclusive government ahead of the charges. Adding him to the Treasury Department’s sanctions list means that no financial institution that does business in the United States can also do business with or provide accounts to Park or Chosun Expo Joint Venture, the company he worked for that American officials said was a front for the government. He actually appeared to work for North Korea’s Reconnaissance General Bureau, the country’s closest equivalent to the C.I.A., intelligence officials said. The sanctions are unlikely to have much effect on Park and are a less powerful tool than the criminal charges in ensuring that Park cannot travel far outside North Korea and out
him as a state-sponsored hacker. “The currency of cyberhackers, whether individuals or nation
states, is their anonymity,” said David Hickton, the former United States attorney in Pittsburgh
who oversaw a groundbreaking case against members of the Chinese military accused of
cyberattacks. “Unmasking them has value in and of itself.” From 2015 through 2018, they
attacked banks to amass funds for North Korea, according to the complaint. They infiltrated
Bangladesh Bank in 2016 by sending malware-ridden emails to employees, a practice known as
phishing, and eventually gained access to computers connected to the global banking
communication system. They directed the Federal Reserve Bank of New York to transfer money
from Bangladesh Bank to accounts in other Asian countries, stealing $81 million. Only because an
alert official at the reserve bank noticed that the word “foundation” was spelled “fandation” did
the transaction get additional scrutiny, and it was halted before more than an additional $900
million was transferred, the complaint said. Over the same time, the North unsuccessfully targeted
American defense contractors, including Lockheed Martin, with spear-phishing emails, in which
malicious files or links are sent in a seemingly innocuous message. The complaint also made clear
that the malware turned into an unguided missile — in which the British health care system used
outdated Microsoft operating systems that turned out to be especially vulnerable. It acknowledged
that some of the code, originally from the National Security Agency, was published by a group
calling itself the Shadow Brokers. But the code’s American roots went unmentioned in the
complaint — in essence, an extension of the American government’s position that the North,
rather than the American code makers who lost their weapons, bore complete responsibility for the
attack. North Korea operated relatively freely in China, according to the com-
plaint. Chosun Expo
Joint Venture helped fund North Korean hacking organizations by doing legitimate programming
work from an office in Dalian, China, a coastal city near North Korea. Some customers knew the
employees “were North Korean computer programmers connected to the government,” the
complaint said. Park, who worked there from 2011 to 2013, and his colleagues were overseen by a
company manager and North Korean political attaché, the Justice Department said. Even though
the Justice Department made clear that many North Koreans were involved in the attacks, only
Park was charged because the government apparently believed it had evidence to convict only him
beyond a reasonable doubt, said John Carlin, the former head of the Justice Department’s National
Security Division. “In order to get admissible evidence,” Carlin said, “prosecutors have to work
through any issues the intelligence community might have.” (David E. Sanger and Katie Benner,
“U.S. Alleges Economic Attack, Charging North Korean Hacker, New

The English version of the Panmunjom Declaration circulated to the United Nations member
countries is causing a controversy as it stated that the two Koreas “agreed to declare the end of war
this year.” Unlike the original text, which says, “During this year … South and North Korea
agreed to actively pursue trilateral meetings involving the two Koreas and the United States, or
quadrilateral meetings involving the two Koreas, the United States and China with a view to
declaring an end to the War,” the English version is firmly stating that two Koreas will declare an
end to the War within the year. Some people in the diplomatic circle express concern that altering
the phrase in the English version in the intention of N
orth Korea ahead of the upcoming inter-
Korean summit could negatively affect cooperation between the United States and South Korea,
especially when Washington is maintaining its principle not to declare an end to the War unless
North Korea takes concrete steps toward denuclearization. The Article 3, section 2 of the English
version of the Panmunjom Declaration, which the two Koreas submitted jointly to the United
Nations on Thursday, states that both parties (South and North Korea) “agreed to declare the end
of war this year.” The English version mentions replacing the armistice with a peace agreement or
holding a trilateral or quadrilateral meeting in a separate sentence, using the word “promote.”
This is different from the English version of the Panmunjom Declaration circulated by Cheong Wa
Dae right after the inter-Korean summit on April 27. It said the two Koreas “agreed to actively
pursue” trilateral or quadrilateral meeting to declare an end to the War within the year just like it is
written in the original text. The English version of the Panmunjom Declaration submitted to the
United Nations is particularly controversial as it is almost the same as the English version written
by North Korea. The Korean Central News Agency wrote in its English edition that “The north
Toloraya: “Given the current difficulties in US-DPRK talks, imagining what a sustainable security system on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia more broadly looks like seems a bit premature, if not an outright pipe dream. Even under the most optimistic scenario, the denuclearization process will be years in the making. However, for the success of the ongoing talks, it is important to start exchanging ideas about possible security futures even at this early stage. Furthermore, it is important to understand and evaluate Pyongyang’s thinking about how a future peace and security system for the peninsula might look, especially since the North Koreans have principles and priorities for this end state that differ from the views of its adversaries. Combining bilateral and multilateral arrangements could help with the reconciliation of these differences; it will be difficult, but these challenges can be overcome. Kim Il Sung and the insular group of elites around him came to power with a healthy degree of suspicion and mistrust of outsiders, the result of their experience in waging years of guerrilla warfare. They had what British scholar Aidan Foster-Carter termed a “peasant mentality,” that is, the idea that in an isolated peasant community, everything that is good for the society is good, even if you commit a crime. Even though Kim Jong Un has broader experience in the world and a more modern outlook, he still cannot ignore the ruling class—an elite tied together with blood relations and common ancestry, birthplaces and heritage. In fact, this is an aristocratic power establishment that is more united by opposition to a common enemy than what is normal for an average governing dynasty. These “aristocrats” know well that if the regime collapses they will not survive. These elites have vivid memories of fighting the bloodiest per capita war in history—at least 10 percent of the population perished—and almost suffering extermination at the hands of their enemies; they also look at the US toppling of regimes in Iraq and Libya with a great deal of fear. Their collective memory has taught them not to trust anybody, to show no fear, to not ask for mercy from its perceived adversaries, and to be extremely risk-averse in making decisions that could threaten their survival. So, how would these people see peacemaking? It is unreasonable to expect that North Korea will “trust” their erstwhile enemies and believe that if they surrender their nuclear life insurance policy they will get all the benefits after their ultimate sacrifice. Quite the contrary. They are convinced that the only guarantee of regime survival is force and a balance of power. The US has done little to dispel these beliefs and fears either before or after the Singapore Summit. Indeed, Pyongyang resents the US administration’s approach to talks that is based on the presumption that a superpower may benevolently forgive the past misdeeds of a criminal and give it a chance for a better life. The North sees it the other way around: their relentless struggle of many years has forced the leader of the strongest nation on earth to sit down at the same table with their leader and ask, “What can I do for you?” How can North Korea be disabused of its conviction that only force matters? How can Pyongyang be persuaded that it can give up the nuclear card—their “treasured sword”—for something intangible? It may seem like the whole peace process is doomed. But achieving a durable peace is not an impossible task. Unraveling the
security situation on the Korean Peninsula is a complex matter, especially figuring out where to start. The core questions to be addressed include: Who has to make peace with whom? And is the goal to build a new peace regime or reconfigure previous arrangements? Getting clarity on these fundamental issues is essential both for understanding who should be at the table and determining the proper sequencing. The general premise that emerged early in the current round of interactions with North Korea is that a new “peace regime” should “replace” the Armistice Agreement of July 27, 1953, and therefore the same countries should set up this system in a “successor document.”

However, I do not agree with that logic. In fact, it was North Korea that first suggested such an approach, presuming it was at war only with the US and wanting to “make peace” with Washington by changing the Armistice into a permanent peace declaration. Only later did Pyongyang agree to the participation of South Korea and China (“three or four states”) to help move the process along. However, this 65-year old document was signed only by “military Commanders of both sides” who, in accordance with Article IV of the Armistice Agreement, “recommend[ed] to the governments of the countries concerned on both sides that, within three (3) months…a political conference of a higher level…be held…to settle through negotiation the questions of the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Korea, the peaceful settlement of the Korean question, etc.” Nowhere does it specify that the governments to be convened were necessarily the same as the signatories of the Armistice Agreement. As is well known, the subsequent April 1954 Geneva Conference (with the participation of the US, the USSR, France, China, and North and South Korea) failed. In June 1956, the US unilaterally abrogated Article 13(D) of the Agreement and introduced (in 1958) tactical nuclear weapons to South Korea, thus violating the Agreement. North Korea, in turn, declared it would no longer abide by the Armistice Agreement at least 6 times, in 1994, 1996, 2003, 2006, 2009, and 2013. Therefore, it is questionable whether the Agreement remained effective after such substantive breaches. Consequently, I do not believe there is a compelling reason why a new peace regime should somehow be related to the 1953 Armistice Agreement, which was not signed by the relevant governments now trying to replace it (South Korea was not included at all) and was obviously of temporary nature. Instead, a new peace regime, or, rather, a security and cooperation system, should be set through all-encompassing dialogue and negotiations—bilateral and multilateral—among the parties concerned to find a sustainable solution. In building a new cooperative system, the result will invariably need to be a multilateral solution. While the failures of Six-Party Talks (2003-2008) may be seen as advising the opposite, the forum did work to maintain peace on the peninsula for several years. Even despite setbacks, it still resulted in several instances of North Korea freezing and even entering early stages of dismantling its nuclear program. If it were not for these talks, North Korea might have passed the “point of no return” in nuclear development several years earlier. The problem was not the multiparty format, but the unclear agenda and priorities of the talks: the US saw it as centered only on denuclearization, while North Korea was focused on its broader security concerns. If it had been a strictly bilateral arrangement, the negotiations would have likely broken down much faster. The calculus for the usefulness of the multiparty format is also determined by the need to create a “safety net” if and when agreements are reached. The example of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action for Iran shows, that even if the US (or another party) withdraws from the deal, the participation of other countries can keep the agreement alive and help prevent the situation from sliding to a catastrophe. While the US and North Korea are the main actors in this conflict, other countries in the region are deeply and historically involved in Korean Peninsula affairs. Any outcome for the two Koreas will have complex political, economic and security implications for different parties in the region. Should those legitimate concerns not be taken into consideration, neglected factions have enormous potential to undermine or disrupt such arrangements. Therefore, any agreement reached should be endorsed and undersigned by the relevant stakeholders in order to increase their sustainability and durability. At the end of the day, achieving peace and denuclearization is not simply a bilateral matter. A cast of stakeholders will likely have to play some role in implementing the eventual agreements. Those parties will need to be engaged in the negotiation process in some way before agreements are finalized. Several stages, combining bilateral and multilateral approaches, would be necessary to build a cooperative security system for the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. These steps include the following. Phase 1. Ending the Korean War The first step might be a non-binding US-North Korea peace declaration—a recognition of the existing reality of the absence of
direct military conflict and statement of general principles that would guide future relations. Such a declaration would symbolize the commitment of the two sides to reconciling and finding solutions to other problems, such as denuclearization. It would not put much of a burden on the US, as it would essentially reaffirm previous bilateral documents. While for North Koreans it would be a vivid sign—tangible proof of a change in attitude by the US establishment and confirmation to Pyongyang “doves” that they are moving in the right direction. The idea of a North-South declaration and/or trilateral or quadrilateral declaration on the “end of war” is less obvious. First and foremost, both North and South Korea reject the legitimacy of the other state and claim rights over one another in their respective constitutions. Therefore, how can a document signed between them and the US government have legal standing? Moreover, North and South Korea have already signed a number of such bilateral agreements and resolutions—from the North-South Korea Joint Statement on July 4, 1972, to reconciliation agreements of 1991-1992, to inter-Korean summit declarations—which have had no legal or sustainable impact on the nature of inter-Korean relations. That said, another declaration would certainly not hurt. What the two Koreas might consider instead of repeating the same formulation as previous ones, is sign or adopt some kind of statement in support of and welcoming a US-North Korea declaration on the end of war. That may be done simultaneously as the US-North Korea agreement is negotiated, or within that short period of time. It would be highly symbolic but a signal that both sides were ready to formally end the war. Phase 2. Normalization of US-DPRK Relations After the issue of ending the Korean War has been addressed, the US-DPRK bilateral process should become the central element of moving forward. With a tangible manifestation of improved relations between the US and North Korea, the focus can shift to establishing in detail, the terms of denuclearization and road to normalization. However, while bilateral negotiations are underway, other stakeholders must monitor and endorse the process as moderators and “providers of guarantees” for the fulfillment of subsequent agreements between the US and North Korea. Their first step might be a declaration among the relevant parties expressing the ability and readiness to facilitate denuclearization and peace processes on the Korean Peninsula. This may include the actors that participated in the Six-Party Talks, but could draw in others as well. A symbolic and visible way to do it is perhaps a joint declaration by these countries’ Ministers of Foreign Affairs, produced as a result of a meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly; the UN Secretary-General also may take part in it as well. A UN General Assembly Resolution of support of these efforts would also be useful. Phase 3. Parallel Tracks of Bilateral and Multilateral Negotiations After such a declaration is signed, bilateral and multilateral formats should be combined. While the issue of US guarantees and US-DPRK normalization could be discussed bilaterally, the concern of denuclearization will need the participation of several parties. For instance, the actual process of dismantling and liquidating North Korea’s nuclear weapons program—as it is not under the mandate of IAEA—would require the cooperation of nuclear powers (namely the US, Russia and China). A “P3+DPRK” Working Group could be established to arrange logistics, services for dismantlement, nuclear safety inspections, verification measures, and so forth. The issue of regional security and peace should also be discussed in a multilateral format; this working group may be based on the former Six-Party Talks structure on establishing a peace and security mechanism (which agreed on a document to this effect). To facilitate this process, it would be useful to establish an institutional arrangement (secretariat) for supervising and monitoring these talks. Phase 4. Providing Multilateral Guarantees At the final stage, the relevant parties could adopt a politically and legally binding multilateral treaty (e.g., “On Security and Cooperation in Northeast Asia”). It can be combined with legally binding deals between the former adversaries in the Korean War. Another option—or maybe the continuation of the process after a multilateral declaration or agreement—is a set of bilateral, legally binding treaties between each of the relevant parties, which would regulate the relations between them in the context of the Korea issue. From a political point of view, a Heads of States Joint Statement may conclude such a diplomatic process. The Heads of State could make it, for example, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, also with the participation of the UN Secretary-General. Such agreements should be built upon the existing bilateral (and multilateral) pacts. For instance, a new agreement between the US and South Korea should be based on their basic alliance treaty and later bilateral documents, although some amendments would be needed. Then, say, Russia and China, for example, could sign a short agreement with one another in which they welcome the results of
the talks, support deals between the US, North Korea and South Korea, as well as other parties and vow to help preserve these obligations and use all possibilities (e.g., bilateral political consultations, coordination in the UN, etc.) to promote peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. Similarly, North Korea, South Korea, China and Russia could sign separate addendums to their existing bilateral basic treaties, reflecting their rights and obligations under the new political environment. While some agreements would come by harder than others, there would be no need to wait—different ones could enter in force immediately after signing (a form, not requiring ratification, should be used). All these treaties can then be deposited in the UN and circulated. To be sustainable, these agreements would need supervision and guarantees for implementation which can be provided by other members of the multiparty structure and also may involve monitoring by the UN. That means a monitoring mechanism (such as a UN committee or a Six-Party “Secretariat,” or both) would watch how the arrangements are kept and report accordingly to the UN and other institutions and to the leadership of all the countries. In this process, a “Northeast Asia Security and Cooperation Organization” (NEASCO) may emerge. At a later stage, it might become a venue charting the plans for multilateral and bilateral cooperation and integration. That might sound a daunting and perplexing endeavor, but there is no rush because denuclearization will, in any case, take several years to achieve and the peace process could develop gradually even in the case of success. Not many of us may live long enough to see such a rosy picture become a reality, but some ideas for how to get there should start to be presented to the actors involved in peace processes now to at least to find out what their reaction may be.” (Georgy Toloraya, “Designing a New Peace and Security System in Korea,” 38North, September 7, 2018)

Thousands of North Korean troops followed by artillery and tanks paraded through Pyongyang as the nuclear-armed country celebrated its 70th birthday, but it refrained from displaying the intercontinental ballistic missiles that have seen it hit with sanctions. Instead leader Kim Jong Un showed off his friendship with China, raising the hand of President Xi Jinping’s envoy as they saluted the crowd together afterwards. The DPRK was proclaimed on September 9, 1948. Such set-piece dates are a mainstay of the North's political calendar, and have for years been opportunities to demonstrate progress in its quest for a missile capable of delivering a nuclear warhead to the United States. But too militaristic a display this time might have risked upsetting the recent diplomatic dalliance on the peninsula, after Kim's Singapore meeting with President Donald Trump in June and his third summit with the South's President Moon Jae-in due in Pyongyang later this month. After a 21-gun salute, dozens of infantry units marched through Kim Il Sung Square, some in night-vision goggles or wielding rocket-propelled grenade launchers, as the current leader -- the founder's grandson -- looked on from a rostrum. Li Zhanshu, one of the seven members of the Chinese Communist party's Politburo Standing Committee, the country's most powerful body, sat next to him, the two of them occasionally exchanging comments. Armored personnel carriers, multiple rocket launchers and tanks followed, with biplanes flying overhead in a '70' formation. At one point jets trailing red, white and blue smoke -- the colors of the North Korean flag -- roared above the Juche Tower, the stone monument to Kim Il Sung's political philosophy. Finally came the missiles, the traditional climax of the parades. But the only ones on show were short-range battlefield devices, the Kumsong-3 anti-ship cruise missile, and the Pongae-5 surface-to-air weapon. (Sebastian Berger, “North Korea Holds 70th Anniversary Parade, without ICBMs,” AFP, September 9, 2018)

Trump tweet: “North Korea has just staged their parade, celebrating 70th anniversary of founding, without the customary display of nuclear missiles. Theme was peace and economic development. "Experts believe that North Korea cut out the nuclear missiles to show President Trump its commitment to denuclearize.” @FoxNews  This is a big and very positive statement from North Korea. Thank you To Chairman Kim. We will both prove everyone wrong! There is nothing like good dialogue from two people that like each other! Much better than before I took office.”

North Korea’s national spectacle over the weekend featured a performance of the popular Chinese folk song “Love My China” and pleased President Trump by not parading nuclear missiles,
showing that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is no diplomatic dunce. By including the song and literally holding hands with a top Chinese official during a weekend of celebrations marking the 70th anniversary of North Korea’s founding, a smiling Kim sent a clear message of comradely friendship to Beijing. And by excluding nuclear-related hardware from a huge parade held today, the young North Korean leader also sent a message that Trump immediately interpreted as “a big and very positive statement” on denuclearization. Kim knows that Beijing worries he is getting too close to Trump, while Washington continues to fret that China is acting as a spoiler. A multiplayer chess game is now being played in Northeast Asia, revolving around North Korea. South Korea’s pro-engagement president, Moon Jae-in, who will travel to Pyongyang next week, is trying to keep the momentum going in the diplomatic process he kicked off at the beginning of the year. Japan’s conservative government, meanwhile, is poised to return to a harder line if—or when, as it would say—the current denuclearization effort falls through. Kim is trying to play the parties off against each other, said John Delury, a China specialist at Yonsei University in Seoul. “When Kim makes a move like this, it gives him a lot of leverage over Seoul and Washington,” he said. Despite all the ups and downs since their June meeting, Trump is hoping that Kim will make good on their agreement to work toward the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, a hope made apparent in his tweets today thanking “Chairman Kim.” But Trump is also holding China’s feet to the flames to make it happen by linking the North Korean problem with the trade war festering between Beijing and Washington. Trump has cited China’s role in propping up North Korea as part of the rationale for imposing punishing tariffs on the Chinese. “Always blaming China for negatively influencing North Korea’s stance,” Hu Xijin, editor in chief of the Global Times, Beijing’s main foreign affairs newspaper, said Monday when retweeting the American president. “Now North Korea behaves better, shouldn’t China be given credit?” For his part, Chinese President Xi Jinping, who has met with Kim three times this year, appears to want to return to an equilibrium in which North Korea is quiet and he can concentrate on expanding China’s international economic influence. That is where China’s and North Korea’s interests collide, however, analysts say. Kim, having achieved a credible nuclear program, is now moving on to the second track in the two-track strategy he laid out in 2013: economic development. The economy was front and center at the weekend’s celebrations, with parade floats extolling “economic construction” and scientific advancement. Xi did not attend the celebrations, perhaps to avoid antagonizing Trump during a tense period in the trade war, but instead sent a close aide as a special representative. Li Zhanchu, the third-ranking official in China’s Communist Party, was greeted with cheering crowds when he arrived in Pyongyang and was given the place of honor at today’s parade. He also delivered a warm letter from Xi to Kim. “Comrade chairman” Kim has achieved important results in “social and economic development,” Xi wrote. “I’m really pleased to see all this,” Xi said, adding that he was “willing to work hand in hand” with Kim to “benefit both countries.” The show of unity continued Monday. Communist Party ties have been “totally restored,” the Global Times declared. The big question now is what happens with the sanctions imposed last year, both unilaterally and through the United Nations, as part of Trump’s “maximum pressure” campaign. “China’s position is that, because North Korea has started to participate in denuclearization negotiations with a positive attitude, the international community should ease some sanctions on North Korea,” said Xuan Dongri, director of the Institute of Northeast Asia Studies at Yanbian University, near the Chinese border with North Korea. The United States should agree to ease sanctions to “establish a relationship of trust,” he said. Reports from the border suggest that trade has been returning this year, although it is not appearing in official statistics. That would make sense, experts said, given that China has never believed that sanctions are the right way to deal with North Korea anyway. Regardless, relations between Beijing and Pyongyang will continue to improve if North Korea makes progress on denuclearization, said Jin Qiangyi, a North Korea expert also at Yanbian University. “This is not just a political issue; it’s crucial for the economic ties between North Korea and the three northeastern provinces of China,” he said, referring to a region with a large ethnic Korean population and an economy reliant on trade with North Korea. But there can be no large-scale economic cooperation between China and North Korea until the sanctions are lifted, Jin said. Indeed, said Adam Cathcart, an expert on Chinese-North Korean relations at Leeds University, for all the effusive language in the Chinese media, there were no indications that Xi was going to help Kim with the economic development he now desperately needs if he is going to adhere to his promise to improve the standard of living. There has been no mention of investment
The White House said that talks are underway with North Korea over setting up a second summit meeting between President Trump and leader Kim Jong Un, as the two sides seek to put stalled nuclear negotiations back on track. Press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters that Kim requested the follow-up to the historic Singapore summit in June in a “warm, very positive letter” to Trump delivered in recent days. “It’s something that we want to take place and are already working on making that happen,” Sanders said, although she emphasized that no decisions have been made regarding timing or a venue. The president has reacted positively to Kim’s recent overture, boasting at a rally in Montana late last week that Kim had “said some terrific things about me.” “He said very strongly that we want to denuclearize North Korea during President Trump’s tenure,” Trump told supporters at the event in Billings, citing reports from South Korean emissaries who had visited Pyongyang and met with Kim last week. Sanders said the White House would not release a copy of Kim’s letter without Pyongyang’s permission. She cited North Korea’s decision not to include ballistic missiles in a military parade in Pyongyang over the weekend as a sign that the Kim regime was taking steps not to antagonize the United States. “The recent parade in North Korea, for once, was not about their nuclear arsenal,” Sanders said. “The president has achieved tremendous success with his policies so far. And this letter was further evidence of progress in that relationship.” In a tweet yesterday, Trump described Kim’s decision not to display ballistic missiles as a “big and positive statement,” adding that there is “nothing like good dialogue from two people that like each other!” But other White House aides struck more cautious notes Monday. National security adviser John Bolton said the administration is “still waiting for them” to take significant action. Among other things, the United States is seeking a detailed declaration from the North over the size of its nuclear and ballistic missile arsenals. “The possibility of another meeting between the two presidents obviously exists,” Bolton said, “but President Trump can’t make North Korea walk through the door he’s holding open. They’re the ones that have to take the steps to denuclearize, and that’s what we’re waiting for.” Foreign policy analysts warned, however, that Kim’s willingness to meet with Trump was not a signal that Pyongyang would move forward with serious! efforts to denuclearize. Rather, they said, Kim’s goal is to convince Trump to sign onto a deal that would declare a formal end to the Korean War, without giving up significant concessions. “Kim Jong Un has shown himself to be very skilled in manipulating Trump through flattery and empty promises,” said Sue Mi Terry, a Korea expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Kim “watches everything that happens closely, [Trump’s] domestic troubles and everything else, and they smell an opportunity.” Asked if Beijing deserves some credit for Kim’s outreach to Trump, Sanders replied: “The president deserves the credit in this process. He’s been the lead voice and the one that put the initial pressure on North Korea. . . . Frankly, we’d still like to see them step up and do more.” South Korean officials said after meeting with Kim that the North Korean leader pledged to denuclearize by 2020, when Trump would face a reelection effort. Analysts suggested the timeline signals that Kim believes he needs to lock in a peace treaty before Trump leaves office because a successor is less likely to engage in such negotiations. “Kim has concluded he needs to make a deal with Trump,” Terry said. “He’s the only person who would get to a peace treaty. It’s the one and only opportunity for North Korea to achieve the thing they always thought they needed to have.” (David Nakamura and Felicia Sonmez, “White House Says Talks Have Begun with North Korea for Another Meeting between Trump and Kim Jong Un,” Washington Post, September 10, 2018)

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un offered to dismantle his nuclear weapons program within two years when he met with South Korean President Moon Jae-in last spring, according to U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton. Kim made the proposal during his first meeting with the South Korean leader in April. He then backed down and accepted Moon’s counterproposal to denuclearize within a year. "He said we can do it in two years," Bolton said in a speech to the Federalist Society. "Moon Jae-in said to Kim Jong-un -- and President Moon told this to President
Prime Minister Abe Shinzo and Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed on a road map for joint economic activities in five priority areas on and around the northern territories. At their two-and-a-half-hour meeting in the Russian Far East city of Vladivostok, the two leaders also decided to send a public-private team to the islands in early October to conduct a detailed survey needed for putting the initiative into action. The dispatch of such a mission was scheduled last month, but was postponed due to bad weather around the islands. The five priority areas are aquaculture, greenhouse vegetable cultivation, the development of tours utilizing the islands’ features, wind power generation and garbage reduction. The roadmap specifically calls for accelerating work to launch sea urchin farming and strawberry cultivation at an early time. Japan aims to leverage the joint economic activities for making progress in the efforts to resolve the territorial issue and negotiations on concluding a bilateral peace treaty. At a joint press conference after the bilateral summit, Putin, referring to the peace treaty negotiations, said that Moscow is ready to seek a solution acceptable to people of the two countries. Abe said, “We’re determined to bring an end to the issue.” Abe and Putin also discussed an eight-point economic cooperation plan, including the development of the Far East region. They also exchanged 10 new documents, including one on the effectuation of a bilateral tax treaty aimed at preventing double taxation. Following Russia’s recent moves for military buildup on the northern territories, Abe told Putin that Tokyo will send Adm. Kawano Katsutoshi, chief of staff at the Japanese Self-Defense Forces’ Joint Staff, to Russia in October to help the two nations deepen mutual trust in the security field. (Jiji, “Abe, Putin Agree on N. Territories Road Map,” Yomiuri Shimbun, September 12, 2018) Russian President Vladimir Putin made a surprise proposal to Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo September 12, saying that their countries should conclude a post-World War II peace treaty "without any preconditions" by the end of the year. "An idea has just come into my mind," Putin said at a regional economic forum in Vladivostok, which was also attended by Abe. "Let’s conclude a peace treaty before the end of this year, without any preconditions." Putin also said he "was not joking" about his proposal. But Abe, who was sitting on the same stage, did not provide any response during the forum. The two countries have not signed a peace treaty due to a territorial dispute over a group of islands off Japan's northernmost main island of Hokkaido. The Russian leader said he wanted to clinch the peace treaty first and then continue to discuss the territorial issue with Abe as "friends," during a question and answer session of the forum’s plenary meeting. Putin and Abe took up the sovereignty row during their 22nd bilateral meeting two days ago in the Russian Far East port city. In Tokyo, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide told a press conference that the Russian leader did not make any such proposal during the bilateral meeting with Abe. The top government spokesman also said Japan will not change its position of seeking to resolve the issue of the islands’ sovereignty, before concluding the peace treaty with Russia. (Kyodo, “Putin Proposes Peace Treaty Conclusion with Japan by Year-end,” September 12, 2018)

Carlin: “On September 6, 2018, North Korean media reported what amounts to a new formulation on the nuclear issue from Kim Jong Un: “Noting that it is our fixed stand and his will to completely remove the danger of armed conflict and horror of war from the Korean peninsula and turn it into the cradle of peace without nuclear weapons and free from nuclear threat, he said that the north and the south should further their efforts to realize the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.” In one sense, the underlined portion would seem to be nothing more than a repetition, in new words, of the term “denuclearization.” Kim’s public remarks on the nuclear issue, however, are never so simple. They are carefully considered. The introduction of a new formulation is more than simple word choice. It is meant to signal something important. To understand this point, it’s useful to look at recent history. In July 2017, at the time of the first successful launch of a Hwasong-14 intercontinental ballistic missile, Kim declared that: “[The] DPRK would neither put its nukes and ballistic rockets on the table of negotiations in any case nor flinch even an inch from
the road of bolstering the nuclear force chosen by itself unless the U.S. hostile policy and nuclear threat to the DPRK are definitely terminated.” This formulation was generally taken by outside observers to be a repetition of the DPRK position that it would not negotiate over its nuclear and missile programs. In fact, read correctly, it was a major public signal of just the opposite, that Kim would—at some point—be open to negotiations on the nuclear issue. Beginning in March 2018, Kim has, in fact, done just that: moved to put both the DPRK nuclear and missile programs “on the table.” This point is not easily understood or accepted. Suspicion of the DPRK is so great that virtually nothing the North says or does registers except in a negative way. As a result, too many observers fail to grasp that Kim’s public utterances are not wordsmithing or substituting definitions for substantive progress. There are a thousand and one interpretations of how Kim’s remarks could be meant to throw sand in the eyes of multiple players. Yet it is well to bear in mind that any negotiation, and especially one with the DPRK, has to start with an understanding of what the terms—specifically the most central terms—mean. In this regard, it is crucial to understand that the term “denuclearization” has always been problematic for the North Koreans internally. Is the term a description of a process or of an endpoint? Crucially, did use of the term at the start of negotiations commit the North to a final outcome even before the details of a deal had been worked out? Put another way, from Pyongyang’s perspective, by agreeing to “denuclearization” at the outset, is it committing itself to an endpoint, or is it accepting a process that will proceed alongside and in tandem with steps by the US? This tyranny of definition has, to a lesser degree, bedeviled Washington as well. Is denuclearization the “complete, irreversible, verifiable” end to the North’s nuclear and missile programs? Is it the “final, fully verified” end to these programs?

In the US-DPRK Joint Statement signed at the June 2018 Singapore Summit, the North was careful not to commit itself to an endpoint but to a process, “Reaffirming the April 27, 2018 Panmunjom Declaration, the DPRK commits to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” This was not a dodge so much as a reaffirmation that the North was committing itself specifically to a process that (unstated in the summit declaration, though made abundantly clear elsewhere) was dependent on simultaneous, or at least “synchronous,” action on Washington’s part to address Pyongyang’s concerns. So, how does Kim’s new public formulation—a “cradle of peace without nuclear weapons and free from nuclear threat”—change, or inform, or from Washington’s standpoint, possibly improve the situation? With the new announcement, Kim has more precisely defined—both internally and externally—what “denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula” means to Pyongyang, and thus how the North intends to use the term in future discussions with Washington. Theoretically, although the proposition remains to be tested, once the diplomatic process develops real traction, it means that Kim Jong Un has publicly opened the way for the talks to aim for what the US might describe as a “full” and “final” end to the North’s nuclear weapons program—i.e., zero nuclear weapons and total dismantlement of the infrastructure support of a nuclear weapons program. Another proposition that remains to be probed is whether and to what extent Kim’s recent announcement is meant to give him additional maneuver room in dealing with Washington’s demands. At the same time, the current formulation makes clear again that, as far as Pyongyang is concerned, this US goal can only be achieved in its total context—a Korean Peninsula “without nuclear weapons AND free from nuclear threat.” There is much speculation, so far all without foundation, on what the meaning of “free from nuclear threat” would be. It remains to be defined in negotiations yet to get underway. Time is short for the process to move far enough and substantively enough to withstand what could turn out to be a major shock in US politics as a result of the upcoming midterm elections. As of mid-August, Pyongyang made clear it understood the president’s perilous political situation. There are some signs that it is discussing internally and attempting to prepare for what may come in the post-election environment, though, as in October 2000 when it delayed sending Vice Marshal Jo Myong Rok as a special envoy to Washington until only a few weeks before the US elections. It may again be too little, too late.” (Robert Carlin, “Kim Jong Un’s New Formulation,” 38North, September 10, 2018)

9/11/18

The new U.S. special envoy on North Korea said it’s important to maintain the momentum of dialogue with North Korea despite some difficulties. “We have some hard work to do,” Stephen Biegun said at the outset of talks with South Korea’s top nuclear envoy Lee Do-hoon in Seoul.
"But we also have a tremendous opportunity" created by back-to-back summits among the leaders of the U.S. and the two Koreas, he added. "We need to do everything we can to make the most of this moment of opportunity." Biegun mentioned a proverb saying, "The beginning is half done." "And this is the beginning," he added. "So what we need to do is to finish the job." In a meeting later in the day with Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon who handles relations with North Korea, Biegun expressed his support for South Korea's efforts to deepen inter-Korean relations. "I very much share your resolve that we need to find a path way to the future on the Korean Peninsula that allows inter-Korean relations to deepen as much as possible," he said. He arrived here yesterday as part of his first Northeast Asia tour as the special representative that will also take him to Beijing and Tokyo. The Foreign Ministry said later its officials used Biegun's visit as a chance to help the U.S. side better understand Seoul's plan to open an inter-Korean liaison office in the border town of Kaesong. The government is preparing to hold the launch ceremony on September 14 amid reports that the Trump administration is concerned about possible negative impact on U.N.-led sanctions on Pyongyang. "South Korea and the U.S. have constantly consulted each other on the opening of the liaison office," spokesman Noh Kyu-duk said at a press briefing. The meetings between the South Korean diplomats and Biegun are believed to have served as a good opportunity to deepen "understanding" on the matter, he added. Noh's comments suggest that Washington has okayed the establishment of the formal communication channel that has been delayed for weeks. (Lee Chi-dong, “Biegun: Let’s Seize Chance to Achieve Denuclearization,” September 11, 2018)

The North and South Korean militaries have attempted to engage in “operational arms control” at a preliminary level going beyond the stage of merely building mutual trust, South Korean senior officials said at the Seoul Defense Dialogue. Seoul and Pyongyang have had “concrete consultations” on the issue of “prohibiting all hostile acts against each other by land, air, and sea to fundamentally eliminate risk factors of war,” Director of presidential National Security Office Chung Eui-yong said. In his keynote speech, Chung also reiterated that the two Koreas have discussed the transformation of areas on the disputed western maritime border — the so-called Northern Limit Line (NLL) — into a peace zone, as part of follow-up measures to implement the Panmunjom Declaration. Conflicts in the area have continued over the years in what the North describes as “hot spot waters in the West Sea.” These clashes have resulted in, among others, the two battles of Yeonpyeong in 1999 and 2002, as well as the sinking of the ROK warship Cheonan and the bombardment of Yeonpyeong Island by the North in 2010. “There have been concrete consultations over the issue of establishing a maritime peace zone on the west coast to prevent accidental military clashes and guarantee safe fishing activities,” Chung told participants. “I would say that the two Koreas are going beyond military trust-building, and are in effect attempting to engage in a preliminary level of operational arms control.” Operational arms control regulates the operations of military forces by adjusting the level and scope of troop deployment while structural arms control is the advanced staged, regulating the types and amounts of weapon systems. In his speech, Chung said the two Koreas agreed during the visit to Pyongyang by special envoys last week to “conclude the ongoing discussions on comprehensive military cooperation” at the fifth inter-Korean summit. Last week saw the South Korean defense ministry cite the demilitarization of the Joint Security Area (JSA), joint recovery operations (JRO) in the demilitarized zone (DMZ), and the withdrawal of guard posts within the DMZ on a trial basis as items on the agenda for the summit. The two Koreas today kicked off the working-level military talks in the truce village of Panmunjom to discuss “practical issues necessary to conclude a comprehensive agreement on the military sector.” Chung said both sides are expected to “work towards an agreement on mutual trust-building and prevention of armed conflict” at the third meeting between South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, which is scheduled to take place between September 18 and 20 in Pyongyang. The ROK national security advisor emphasized the North and South Korean military made “subsequent progress in multiple discussions aimed at reducing military tensions,” including general-level military talks in June and July. Seoul and Pyongyang withdrew loudspeakers along the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) in accordance with the Panmunjom Declaration in May, and restored military communication lines on the west and east coast in July and August respectively. Chung reiterated alleviating military tensions between the two Koreas is the “basic premise and the very
environment for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula” and will accelerate the process. “As tension is reduced further and further, the claims that prosperity will gain strength.” Speaking at the Seoul Defense Dialogue, South Korean Vice-Minister of National Defense Suh Choo-suk also reiterated Seoul and Pyongyang have discussed operational arms control. “We are currently discussing measures for a preliminary level of operational arms control, and we will implement them once we reach the agreement,” Suh said, adding that this should be preceded by the ceasing of all hostile acts. “We also prepare to proceed with consultations over the operation and scale of military forces gradually and in phases in accordance with the progress of denuclearization and the establishment of a peace regime on the Korean peninsula.” Elaborating, Suh said the two Koreas agreed to “achieve arms control in stages depending on the progress of easing military tensions and building military confidence in a substantive manner” in the Panmunjom Declaration. “Therefore, our military has prepared necessary measures for arms control considering a change in security environment on the Korean peninsula and surrounding areas and the implementation of actions for military confidence-building between the South and the North,” he said. The vice defense minister said the South Korean military will still “maintain a firm readiness posture in response to threats to national security,” however. (Dayyum Ji, “Two Koreas Open Talks on ‘Operational Arms Control’ at an Entry Level: Seoul,” NKNews, September 13, 2018)

The United States imposed sanctions on a China-based tech firm, its North Korean CEO and a Russian subsidiary, accusing them of moving illicit funding to North Korea in violation of U.S. sanctions. The new sanctions target China-based Yanbian Silverstar Network Technology Co, its North Korean chief executive Jong Song Hwa, and a Russian-based sister company, Volaysys Silver Star, the U.S. Treasury Department said in a statement. “These actions are intended to stop the flow of illicit revenue to North Korea from overseas information technology workers disguising their true identities and hiding behind front companies, aliases, and third-party nationals,” Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in a statement. (Reuters, “U.S. Imposes North Korea-Related Sanctions on Chinese, Russian Tech Firms, September 13, 2018)

South Korean President Moon Jae-in said North Korea should relinquish its nuclear materials and weapons so that denuclearization talks can go forward. Moon stressed that what Pyongyang had done so far was aimed at ending its capacity to make “nuclear weapons of the future” during a luncheon meeting with a special group of advisers on North Korea policy that included a number of former unification ministers and North Korea experts at the Blue House. “North Korea promised complete denuclearization, and it has taken practical steps to follow through on that promise,” said Moon during the meeting, citing the North’s decision to demolish the Punggye-ri nuclear testing site and dismantle the Sohae missile engine testing site, as well as its suspension of nuclear and missile tests since November of last year. Moon said these steps were the equivalent of a pledge to give up its ability to develop nuclear weapons and missiles not yet made. “So to speak, the North has already taken measures to dismantle nuclear weapons for the future,” he said. It now needs to take steps to relinquish nuclear capability it currently has as demanded by the United States, Moon said. “What North Korea needs to do now is to not only dismantle nuclear weapons of the future but also relinquish nuclear weapons, material, facilities and related programs that it has at its disposal now,” he said. (Kang Jin-kyu, “Moon Advises North to Give up Its Nukes,” JoongAng Ilbo, September 14, 2018)

9/14/18

South and North Korea launched their joint liaison office, securing a platform for round-the-clock communication that is expected to help foster cross-border exchange and ease tensions. The liaison office was launched in the North's border town of Kaesong, with around 50 people each from the two Koreas attending the opening ceremony. The move is a follow-up on an agreement that the leaders of the two Koreas reached in their April summit to run such an office on hopes that the office will serve as a communication channel to help facilitate inter-Korean cooperation on various fronts. "The inter-Korean joint liaison office is a channel for round-the-clock communication in the new era of peace." South Korea's Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon said in a congratulatory speech. "From today, South and North Korea can have direct consultations
In a chilling account of how close the Korean Peninsula came to war last year, Pulitzer-winning American journalist Bob Woodward recounts in his new book that H.R. McMaster, the former U.S. national security adviser, argued that if the United States was going to attack North Korea, it was better to do it earlier. Just one month into his presidency, Trump was said to have asked for a new plan for a pre-emptive military strike on North Korea in February 2017 from Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Dunford was reportedly shaken by the question and said more intelligence was needed. Others, like McMaster, were said to have argued internally in the White House that, if Trump was going to attack, it was better to do it early before the North improved its missiles and nuclear weapons. On July 3, 2017, North Korea successfully tested its first intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), a Hwasong-14 that could possibly put U.S. mainland in range, alarming Washington because the Pentagon had been confident Pyongyang would not have such capability for at least two years. Military contingency plans at that point included possible strikes in North Korea, which ranged from “limited pinpoints to an all-out attack,” and even a leadership strike to take out Kim Jong-un. At one point during a national security meeting in 2017, Sen. Lindsey Graham, a republican of South Carolina, proposed to McMaster that the Chinese government should assassinate Kim Jong-un and “replace him with a North Korean general they control.” Operation Plan (Oplan) 5027, the Pentagon’s top-secret contingency war plan in response to an attack, was for regime change in North Korea. Oplan 5015 was a more refined war plan that included strikes on the leadership, namely Kim Jong-un. The U.S. Air Force was said to have run simulated air strikes from October 17 to 19, 2017, in the Missouri Ozarks, a region that has topography similar to North Korea’s, according to the book. Trump on January 2 sent out his now famous tweet that he, too, had a nuclear button, one that actually works and is “bigger” and “more powerful” than Kim’s. Ahead of sending out that tweet, Trump was quoted as telling Rob Porter, a staff secretary at the time, that Kim was a “bully” and that the “way to deal with those people is by being tough,” adding he was going to “outfox” the North Korean leader. Woodward writes that Trump even proposed sending a tweet declaring that he was ordering all U.S. military dependents out of South Korea, an act that would likely be read in North Korea as a signal that the United States was preparing for war. The tweet never went out. On December 3, after another North Korean ICBM test, Sen. Lindsay Graham advocated removing U.S. troops’ families from South Korea in an interview. The book says that, the following day, McMaster was informed that Ri Su-yong, a vice chairman of the North’s ruling Workers’ Party Central Committee and director of the committee’s International Affairs Department, told intermediaries “that the North would take the evacuation of U.S. civilians as a sign of imminent attack.” Hence, withdrawing the dependents of American troops should be “one of the last cards to play,” and the possible tweets were described by Woodward as having “scared the daylights out of the Pentagon leadership,” Defense Secretary James Mattis and Dunford. Graham, in a change of heart, was said to have advised Trump in a phone call in January that a decision to withdraw U.S. troops’ families is “hard to go back” on, and that it would “rock the South Korean stock market and the Japanese economy.” When asked by Trump if he should delay such an evacuation, Graham, who has been a hard-liner on the North, was quoted as telling him, “I don’t think you should ever start this process unless you’re ready to go to war.” At the beginning of the year, there had been escalated concerns in Seoul that the Trump administration was preparing a so-called bloody nose strike on North Korea. The book describes the mercurial whims of Trump, with the president demanding that the U.S.-led Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system be relocated to Portland, Oregon, angered that the United States had paid for it while South Korea provided the land. In the prologue of the book, Gary Cohn, then Trump’s top economic adviser and former president of Goldman Sachs, is described as having swiped from the president’s desk in the Oval Office a letter from Trump addressed to South Korean President
Moon Jae-in terminating the Korea-U.S. free trade agreement (FTA) last September. In a White House National Security Council meeting on January 19 of this year, Trump asked the point of maintaining a massive U.S. military presence on the Korean Peninsula. Mattis and Dunford briefed Trump on the benefits of the alliance with South Korea, a stable democracy and the 11th largest economy in the world with a GDP of $1.5 trillion, the same as Russia’s. This meeting, arranged by McMaster, came after Trump was described as having badgered South Korean President Moon Jae-in, whom he disliked, in phone conversations threatening to terminate the Korea-U.S. FTA and criticizing the trade deficit and the cost of stationing 28,500 U.S. troops in South Korea. At one point, Mattis told the president, “We’re doing this in order to prevent World War III.” He was said to have explained that without the intelligence capability and the forward deployment of the U.S. troops, the risk of war would vastly increase, and without such assets, the “only option left is the nuclear option.” (Sarah Kim, “‘Fear’ Shows How Close Korea Came to War,” JoongAng Ilbo, September 14, 2018)

South Korea plans to conduct the first test flight of its locally developed booster engine at the end of next month, the ICT ministry said as part of a long-term effort to produce the Korea Space Launch Vehicle-2 (KSLV-2), a three-stage rocket. The single-stage rocket, with a 75-ton thrust engine, developed by the Korea Aerospace Research Institute (KARI) is set to be launched between October 25 and October 31 from the Naro Space Center in Goheung, South Jeolla Province, the Ministry of Science and ICT said. It said the launch date has been set after examining all variables and that related countries and agencies, such as the International Civil Aviation Organization and International Maritime Organization, will be notified in advance “Barring any unforeseen developments, the launch should take place on the primary date of Oct. 25,” the ministry said. The rocket will fly for about 10 minutes, during which the performance of the new engine, control system and other parts will be monitored, the ministry said. It is expected to attain a sub-orbital altitude of over 100 kilometers some 160 seconds after launch and reach its apogee 300 seconds into the flight, before hitting international waters between South Korea’s Jeju Island and Japan’s Okinawa Island. KARI said it has already carried out 91 engine combustion tests so far, with the rocket burning for up to 260 seconds. (Yonhap, “South Korea to Test Rocket in Oct.,” September 16, 2018)

Carlin: “In what appears to be an authoritative-level article in Rodong Sinmun on September 15, Pyongyang has strongly reasserted its commitment to a new relationship with the US and to the process of denuclearization. Cast as criticism of “US conservative politicians,” the article can also be read as an attack on opponents within the North. No doubt as it is intended to do, the article gives Kim Jong Un more space to maneuver in dealing with the US and with South Korea, especially in the upcoming summit with ROK President Moon Jae-in. The article cites the important new Kim Jong Un formulation from a few days ago: “When our respected and beloved supreme commander met a South Korean special delegation a while ago, he clearly stated again that it is our resolute position and his own will to completely remove the risk of armed clash and the fear of war from the Korean Peninsula and make this land a peaceful place without nuclear weapons or nuclear threat.” The article then deploys a formulation designed to signal (internally as well as externally) that this top-level commitment is unshakeable, no matter what the vicissitudes of the process: “Doing what we say we will do and seeing what we have started through to the end is our mettle and our temperament.” Rather than fall back into typical warnings about how the process is sliding backwards because of critical voices in the US (or, the author implies, even in the North), the article portrays things as moving irrevocably ahead: “The DPRK-US relationship has already shaken off the wrongful habits and prejudice of the past and entered a new historic track. Those who are like bubbles expelled by the powerful current of a great river will not make the people of the two countries of North Korea and the United States unable to do what they are to do, or make the driving force of improving relations weaken, by putting out sophistry and tugging on the hind legs.” The article is in line with the approach the author (Cho Nam Chin/Jo Nam Jin) has taken in other recent commentaries in terms of warm treatment of President Trump, even directly citing the President’s “thanks” to the North for its positive actions thus far. Moreover, on the key issue of the timing of an end of war declaration, the article avoids claiming that the
President has already committed himself but suggests he has left the way open: “President Trump has stated thus far he wants to maintain a good relationship with us; we have not heard him saying that he will not do a declaration of the end of war as long as the North does not take additional denuclearization measures.” Not only does the article portray the end of war declaration as a key “starting point” for moving ahead on denuclearization, but it also suggests a declaration is linked to the North’s economic development, i.e., an important factor in allowing Kim Jong Un to move ahead with his new economic policies: “With the danger of war constantly looming, it is not possible for us to unilaterally abandon the nuclear weapons that guarantee our sovereignty, right to exist, and right to develop.” (Robert Carlin, “More DPRK Signals on Denuclearization,” 38North, September 17, 2018)

President Moon Jae-in of South Korea arrived in Pyongyang for his third summit with Kim Jong-un, North Korea’s leader, to work toward a common goal: fashioning a political statement this year declaring the end of the Korean War. Such a declaration, although not a legally binding treaty, could carry far-reaching repercussions, helping North Korea escalate its campaign for the withdrawal of American troops from the South, analysts said. For that and other reasons, the United States has strong reservations about such a breakthrough. A smiling Kim hugged Moon after he stepped off his plane in the Pyongyang International Airport. As the two leaders later moved to their cars after inspecting a military honor guard, a crowd of North Koreans shouted “hurrah!” while fervently waving plastic flowers and “Korea-is-one” flags that showed an undivided Korean Peninsula. They then took an open convertible through the city, happily waving to throngs lined up along the route chanting “reunification of the fatherland!” For decades, North Korea has made a peace treaty a central demand in its negotiations with Washington over ending its nuclear weapons program. When he met Kim in April for their first summit meeting, Moon agreed to push for the United States, and perhaps China too, to join the two Koreas in a joint end-of-the-war declaration this year, as a confidence-building prelude to negotiating a formal peace treaty. “It will be a political statement expressing a common will to end hostile relations and peacefully coexist,” Moon said in July. Moon’s government says that such a declaration will encourage North Korea to denuclearize by lessening its fear of the American intentions. Kim, for his part, said he was willing to denuclearize during President Trump’s first term — but only if Washington takes “simultaneous” reciprocal actions, starting with an end-of-war declaration, according to South Korean envoys who met recently with Kim. But Washington insists that North Korea has often cheated in past negotiations, and first wants the North to take more concrete steps toward denuclearization — such as submitting a full list of its nuclear weapons and fissile materials for verification — before being rewarded. As Moon begins his three-day visit to Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, one of his primary aims will be to help narrow the differences between Washington and Pyongyang. Moon says he has been asked by both sides to work as a “chief negotiator.” If he can successfully break the stalemate by mediating a give-and-take exchange between the United States and North Korea, it could lead to a second summit between Trump and Kim. But if Moon fails, it could again escalate tensions on the peninsula, analysts say. But critics warned that by pushing for an end to the war in haste, Moon risked opening a “Pandora’s box.” Kim Sung-han, a former vice foreign minister of South Korea who teaches at Korea University in Seoul, the South’s capital, said that if the United States merely gets North Korea to freeze its nuclear program in return for an end-of-war declaration, it will have given up too much. “That will lead to North Korea escalating its campaign to disband the United Nations Command and undermine the South Korea-U.S. alliance, instead of focusing on denuclearization,” he said. “We will end up in a situation where the tail wags the dog.” Gen. Vincent K. Brooks, head of the United Nations Command and American Forces in South Korea, has said that the allies must sort out with North Korea what an end-of-the-war declaration “means” and “what it doesn’t mean.” If the leaders of the United States and the two Koreas declare an end to the war, the United Nations Command will lose its “political” reason to exist, Suh Jae-jung, a Korea expert at the International Christian University in Japan, said during a forum in Seoul last week. But it would still keep its “legal” rationale for existence until a formal peace treaty is signed. South Korean officials say that the United Nations Command will remain in force until such a peace treaty is signed and that its military alliance with the United States will remain intact regardless of North Korea’s denuclearization. When Kim Jong-un met Moon’s envoys this month,
he said the declaration would have “nothing to do with weakening the South Korea-U.S. alliance and withdrawal of American troops from South Korea,” according to one of the envoys, Chung Eui-yong, Moon’s national security adviser. But not all are convinced. An early end-of-the-war declaration will only help Kim cement his rule at home by advertising it as “another great victory in the confrontation with the Americans,” said Cheon Seong-whun, an analyst with the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul. North Korea will also use the declaration to demand reductions in the American troops and the scale of joint exercises with South Korea, turning the alliance into “a paper tiger” before the North has completely denuclearized, he said. “North Korea will highlight the discrepancy: ‘Why do the American troops remain in Korea now that the war has ended?’” Cheon said. (Choe Sang-hun, “South Korean Leader Arrives in North; U.S. Is Wary,” New York Times, September 18, 2018, p. A-7) **Because this is not an issue that could be resolved by us taking the lead, I will have frank discussions with North Korean leader Kim on finding a middle point between the North’s demand for ending hostile relations with the U.S. and regime security and the U.S.’s demand for denuclearization steps,** Moon said on yesterday. (Kang Jin-kyu, “Kim, Moon Embrace in Pyongyang at Start of Inter-Korean Summit,” JoongAng Ilbo, September 18, 2018) North Korea gave a warm welcome to South Korean President Moon Jae-in when he arrived at Pyongyang Sunan International Airport on September 18. North Korean military gave their first gun salute to a South Korean leader, and the head of the honor guard referred to Moon as “Your Excellency Mr. President.” Both occurrences were unprecedented. (Park Byong-su, “North Korea Gives Unprecedented Welcome to Moon,” Hankyore, September 18, 2018)

KCNA: “Kim Jong Un, chairman of the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK) and chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), warmly greeted President Moon Jae In visiting Pyongyang for the historic north-south summit, at Pyongyang International Airport on Tuesday [September 18]. Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un came out to the airport with his wife Ri Sol Ju. Seen at the airport were Kim Yong Nam, member of the Presidium of the Political Bureau of the C.C., WPK and president of the Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly of the DPRK; Choe Ryong Hae, member of the Presidium of the Political Bureau of the C.C., WPK, vice-chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the DPRK and vice-chairman of the C.C., WPK; Kim Yong Chol and Ri Su Yong, vice-chairmen of the C.C., WPK; Ri Yong Ho, minister of Foreign Affairs; Army General Kim Su Gil, director of the Korean People’s Army General Political Bureau; Army General No Kwang Chol, minister of the People’s Armed Forces; Kim Nung O, chairman of the Pyongyang City Committee of the WPK; Ri Son Gwon, chairman of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country; and Cha Hui Kim, chairman of the Pyongyang People’s Committee. The plane carrying President Moon Jae In and his party touched down at Pyongyang International Airport at 10 a.m. Kim Jong Un and his wife Ri Sol Ju greeted President Moon Jae In and his wife Kim Jung Sook. Kim Jong Un warmly welcomed Moon Jae In’s Pyongyang visit. Moon Jae In expressed his deep thanks to Kim Jong Un for warmly greeting him at the airport. Schoolchildren presented bunches of flowers to Moon Jae In and his wife. Arriving together with Moon Jae In were Jong Ui Yong, chief of the State Security Office of Chongwadae, Jo Myong Gyun, minister of Unification, Kang Kyong Hwa, minister of Foreign Affairs, Song Yong Mu, minister of Defense, To Jong Hwan, minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Kim Hyon Mi, minister of Land and Transport, Kim Yong Chun, minister of Oceans and Fisheries, So Hun, director of the Intelligence Service. Kim Jae Hyon, minister of the Korea Forest Service, Ju Yong Hun, head of the Presidential Security Service, Kim Hyon Chol, adviser to the president for economic affairs, Kim Jong Chon, chief protocol secretary of Chongwadae, Yun Kon Yong, chief of the State Affairs Planning Office of Chongwadae, and Kim Ui Gyom, spokesman for Chongwadae, as official entourage and personages of various circles as special entourage and journalists. There was a ceremony of welcoming Moon Jae In. Moon Jae In, together with Kim Jong Un, reviewed an honor guard of the services of the Korean People’s Army (KPA) amid the firing of 21-gun salute. Kim Jong Un and Moon Jae In mounted the reviewing stand to review the march-past of the honor guard of the KPA services. Kim Jong Un and Moon Jae In waved back to the warmly cheering crowds, walking past them. The car carrying Moon Jae In headed towards the Paekhwawon State Guesthouse, escorted by motorcycles. Along the route, more than 100 000 citizens welcomed with compatriotism Moon Jae In and his party visiting
Pyongyang for historic north-south summit. Kim Jong Un got on an open limousine with Moon Jae In at the entrance to Ryonmot-dong. Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un with President Moon Jae In waved back to the cheering crowds. The open limousine carrying the top leaders arrived at the Paekhwawon State Guesthouse. Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un together with Ri Sol Ju guided President Moon Jae In and Kim Jung Sook to the lodging place. Employees of the guesthouse presented bouquets to President Moon Jae In and his wife and warmly welcomed them.” (KCNA, “President Moon Jae In Arrives to Visit Pyongyang,” September 19, 2018)

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The two leaders assessed the excellent progress made since the adoption of the historic Panmunjom Declaration, such as the close dialogue and communication between the authorities of the two sides, civilian exchanges and cooperation in many areas, and epochal measures to defuse military tension.

The two leaders reaffirmed the principle of independence and self-determination of the Korean nation, and agreed to consistently and continuously develop inter-Korean relations for national reconciliation and cooperation, and firm peace and co-prosperity, and to make efforts to realize through policy measures the aspiration and hope of all Koreans that the current developments in inter-Korean relations will lead to reunification.

The two leaders held frank and in-depth discussions on various issues and practical steps to advance inter-Korean relations to a new and higher dimension by thoroughly implementing the Panmunjom Declaration, shared the view that the Pyeongyang Summit will be an important historic milestone, and declared as follows.

1. The two sides agreed to expand the cessation of military hostility in regions of confrontation such as the DMZ into the substantial removal of the danger of war across the entire Korean Peninsula and a fundamental resolution of the hostile relations.

   ① The two sides agreed to adopt the “Agreement on the Implementation of the Historic Panmunjom Declaration in the Military Domain” as an annex to the Pyeongyang Declaration, and to thoroughly abide by and faithfully implement it, and to actively take practical measures to transform the Korean Peninsula into a land of permanent peace.

   ② The two sides agreed to engage in constant communication and close consultations to review the implementation of the Agreement and prevent accidental military clashes by promptly activating the Inter-Korean Joint Military Committee.

2. The two sides agreed to pursue substantial measures to further advance exchanges and cooperation based on the spirit of mutual benefit and shared prosperity, and to develop the nation’s economy in a balanced manner.

   ① The two sides agreed to hold a ground-breaking ceremony within this year for the east-coast and west-coast rail and road connections.

   ② The two sides agreed, as conditions ripe, to first normalize the Kaesong industrial complex and the Mt. Kumgang Tourism Project, and to discuss the issue of forming a west coast joint special economic zone and an east coast joint special tourism zone.

   ③ The two sides agreed to actively promote south-north environment cooperation so as to protect and restore the natural ecology, and as a first step to endeavor to achieve substantial results in the currently on-going forestry cooperation.

   ④ The two sides agreed to strengthen cooperation in the areas of prevention of epidemics, public health and medical care, including emergency measures to prevent the entry and spread of contagious diseases.

3. The two sides agreed to strengthen humanitarian cooperation to fundamentally resolve the issue of separated families.

   ① The two sides agreed to open a permanent facility for family reunion meetings in the Mt. Kumgang area at an early date, and to promptly restore the facility toward this end.

   ② The two sides agreed to resolve the issue of video meetings and exchange of video messages among the separated families as a matter of priority through the inter-Korean Red Cross talks.
4. The two sides agreed to actively promote exchanges and cooperation in various fields so as to enhance the atmosphere of reconciliation and unity and to demonstrate the spirit of the Korean nation both internally and externally.
   ① The two sides agreed to further promote cultural and artistic exchanges, and to first conduct a performance of the Pyeongyang Art Troupe in Seoul in October this year.
   ② The two sides agreed to actively participate together in the 2020 Summer Olympic Games and other international games, and to cooperate in bidding for the joint hosting of the 2032 Summer Olympic Games.
   ③ The two sides agreed to hold meaningful events to celebrate the 11th anniversary of the October 4 Declaration, to jointly commemorate the 100th anniversary of the March First Independence Movement Day, and to hold working-level consultations toward this end.

5. The two sides shared the view that the Korean Peninsula must be turned into a land of peace free from nuclear weapons and nuclear threats, and that substantial progress toward this end must be made in a prompt manner.
   ① First, the North will permanently dismantle the Dongchang-ri missile engine test site and launch platform under the observation of experts from relevant countries.
   ② The North expressed its willingness to continue to take additional measures, such as the permanent dismantlement of the nuclear facilities in Yongbyon, as the United States takes corresponding measures in accordance with the spirit of the June 12 US-DPRK Joint Statement.
   ③ The two sides agreed to cooperate closely in the process of pursuing complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

6. Chairman Kim Jong Un agreed to visit Seoul at an early date at the invitation of President Moon Jae-in.

September 19, 2018

Agreement on the Implementation of the Historic Panmunjom Declaration in the Military Domain: “Based on the common understanding that easing military tension and building confidence on the Korean Peninsula is integral to securing lasting and stable peace, South and North Korea reached a comprehensive agreement on the following with a view to fully implementing the historic ‘Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula’ in the military domain.

1. South and North Korea agreed to completely cease all hostile acts against each other in every domain, including land, air and sea that are the source of military tension and conflict.
   ① The two sides discussed various measures to prevent armed conflict in every domain, including land, air and sea. The two sides agreed to consult and resolve all matters that may lead to military conflict in a peaceful way and preclude the use of military force under any circumstance. The two sides agreed to refrain from any action to infiltrate, attack or occupy each other’s area of jurisdiction by any means or method. The two sides agreed to have consultations on matters including large-scale military exercises and military buildup aimed at each other, various forms of blockade, interdiction and obstruction of navigation as well as reconnaissance activities against each other through the ‘Inter-Korean Joint Military Committee’. The two sides agreed to continue to have consultations on various implementation measures related to the ‘Panmunjom Declaration’, in which both sides agreed to realize phased arms reduction, in accordance with alleviation of military tension and confidence building.
   ② The two sides agreed to cease various military exercises aimed at each other along the Military Demarcation Line from November 1, 2018. On ground, the two sides agreed to cease all live-fire artillery drills and field training exercises at the regiment level and above within 5km from the MDL. At sea, the two sides agreed to cease all live-fire and maritime maneuver exercises within the zone north of Deokjek-do and south of Cho-do in the West Sea, and within the zone north of Sokcho and south of Tongcheon in the East Sea. The two sides also agreed to install covers on the barrels of coastal artillery and ship guns and close all gunports within the zones. In the air, the two sides agreed to ban tactical live-fire drills involving fixed-wing aircraft, including the firing of air-to-ground guided weapons within the designated No Fly Zones in the eastern and western regions of the MDL.
The two sides agreed to designate No Fly Zones for all aircraft types above the MDL, effective from 1 November, 2018, in the following way: For fixed-wing aircraft, No Fly Zones will be designated within 40km from the MDL in the East (between MDL Markers No. 0646 and 1292) and within 20km from the MDL in the West (between MDL Markers No. 0001 and 0646). Other No Fly Zones will be designated in the following way: for rotary-wing aircraft, within 10km from the MDL; for UAVs, within 15km from the MDL in the East and 10km from the MDL in the West; for hot-air balloons, within 25km from the MDL. However, when the employment of aircraft becomes necessary such as in the cases involving fire-fighting, ground & maritime rescue, medical evacuation, weather observation and farming support, aircraft will be permitted to fly subject to prior notification to the other side. The No Fly Zones mentioned above do not apply to commercial aircraft (including cargo planes).

The two sides agreed to take measures to prevent any accidental military clash at all times in every domain, including land, air and sea. To this end, the two sides agreed to apply a five-step procedure (Initial warning broadcast _ Secondary warning broadcast _ Initial warning fire _ Secondary warning fire _ Military action) on ground and at sea, and a 4-step procedure (Warning radio & signal _ Interdiction flight _ Warning fire _ Military action) in the air. The two sides agreed to implement the above revised procedures from November 1, 2018.

The two sides agreed to solve all military issues through peaceful consultations by maintaining permanent communication channels in order to prevent at all times any accidental military clash in every domain, including land, air and sea and by immediately notifying each other when an abnormal situation arises.

2. South and North Korea agreed to devise substantive military measures to transform the Demilitarized Zone into a peace zone.

The two sides agreed to completely withdraw all Guard Posts (GP) that lie within 1km of each other as a preliminary measure to withdrawing all GPs within the DMZ. [Annex 1]

The two sides agreed to demilitarize the Joint Security Area. [Annex 2]

The two sides agreed to proceed with a pilot project of an Inter-Korean Joint Operation to Recover Remains within the DMZ. [Annex 3]

The two sides agreed to continue consultations on military assurance measures related to joint survey and excavation of historical remains within the DMZ.

3. South and North Korea agreed to take military measures to prevent accidental military clashes and ensure safe fishing activities by turning the area around the Northern Limit Line in the West Sea into a maritime peace zone.

The two sides reaffirmed the agreement related to the “prevention of accidental military clashes in the West Sea”, signed during the 2nd Inter-Korean General-level Military Talks on 4 June, 2004 and agreed to fully restore and implement it.

The two sides agreed to establish a maritime peace zone and a pilot joint fishing zone in the West Sea. [Annex 4]

The two sides agreed to fully guarantee the safety of personnel and vessels that enter the maritime peace zone and the pilot joint fishing zone.

The two sides agreed to devise and implement inter-Korean joint patrol measures in order to deny illegal fishing and to ensure safe fishing activities for South and North Korean fishermen in the maritime peace zone and the pilot joint fishing zone.

4. South and North Korea agreed to devise military assurance measures necessary for invigorating exchanges, cooperation, contacts and visits.

The two sides agreed to establish military measures to ensure passage, communication and customs in the East and West Transportation Corridors.

The two sides agreed to devise military assurance measures to connect and modernize eastern/western railways and roads.

The two sides agreed to establish a plan regarding issues related to permitting the use of Haeju Passage and Jeju Strait for North Korean vessels through consultations at the Inter-Korean Joint Military Committee.

The two sides agreed to devise military assurance measures for the shared use of Han River (Imjin River) Estuary. [Annex 5]

5. South and North Korea agreed to devise various measures for mutual military confidence building.
The two sides agreed to continue consultations regarding the installation and operation of direct communication lines between the respective military officials.

The two sides agreed to have detailed consultations to resolve the issues concerning the composition and operation of the Inter-Korean Joint Military Committee.

The two sides agreed to fully implement all agreements reached between inter-Korean military authorities, and to regularly examine and assess the implementation progress.

6. This Agreement is effective from the date of exchange of the signed documents, following the procedures required for ratification from each party.

Revisions and additions to the Agreement are permitted subject to agreement between both parties.

Two copies of the Agreement have been made with equal effect.

19 September 2018 Republic of Korea Democratic People’s Republic of Korea Minister of National Defense Minister of People’s Armed Forces Song, Young Moo Korean People’s Army General No Kwang-chol

[Annex 1]
Withdrawal of Guard Posts (GP) within the DMZ

1. The agreement is reached to completely withdraw all guard posts within the DMZ according to the following phases:
   ① Phase 1 : Withdrawal of all firearms and equipment
   ② Phase 2 : Withdrawal of all personnel on duty
   ③ Phase 3 : Complete destruction of all facilities
   ④ Phase 4 : Mutual verification

2. Various measures for the withdrawal of all guard posts from the DMZ will be implemented through close mutual coordination.

3. Historical landmarks, remains and artifacts that lie within the DMZ will be restored to their original state and be managed as joint assets of the Korean people.

4. The 11 guard posts that lie within 1km of each other in the DMZ from each side will be withdrawn as a preliminary measure.
   ① The 11 guard posts from each side that will be withdrawn are as follows :
   - Eastern region
     GPs from each side in between MDL Markers No. 1273 and 1278
     GPs from each side in between MDL Markers No. 1123 and 1135
     GPs from each side in between MDL Markers No. 0799 and 0808
   - Midlands
     GPs from each side in between MDL Markers No. 0652 and 0660
     GPs from each side in between MDL Markers No. 0679 and 0683
     GPs from each side in between MDL Markers No. 0717 and 0724
   - Western region
     GPs from each side in between MDL Markers No. 0023 and 0027
     GPs from each side in between MDL Markers No. 0034 and 0043
     GPs from each side in between MDL Markers No. 0155 and 0166
     GPs from each side in between MDL Markers No. 0212 and 0216
     GPs from each side in between MDL Markers No. 0233 and 0240
   ② Withdrawal of the above 11 guard posts will be completed by December 31, 2018.

[Annex 2]
Demilitarization of the ‘Joint Security Area in Panmunjom’

1. As a first step, a trilateral consultative body between South Korea, North Korea and the United Nations Command (UNC) will be established to consult and implement measures to demilitarize the Joint Security Area in Panmunjom.
   ① South, North and UNC (hereafter referred to as “The three parties”) will remove all mines in the Joint Security Area in Panmunjom within 20 days, beginning on October 1, 2018.
   ② The three parties will completely withdraw guard posts, personnel and firearms within 5 days after the minesweeping is completed in the Joint Security Area in Panmunjom.
   ③ The three parties will withdraw unnecessary surveillance equipment from the Joint Security Area in Panmunjom, install any necessary surveillance equipment through consultations, and share related information with each other.
The three parties will jointly verify the completion of the measures to demilitarize the Joint Security Area in Panmunjom over 2 days.

The three parties will consult and decide on various issues such as the composition, mission and operation method of a joint administrative body that will be established after the demilitarization of the Joint Security Area in Panmunjom.

2. The Joint Security Area in Panmunjom will be managed after demilitarization in the following way:
   1. Establishment of guard duty personnel and guard posts
      - Guard duty will be carried out by up to 35 unarmed personnel from each side.
      - The shift work of the personnel and issues related to patrol will be decided by each side unilaterally and notified to the other party.
      - Guard duty personnel from both sides will wear a 15cm wide yellow armband with the words “Panmunjom Civil Police” written in blue on his/her left arm.
      - A new Southern guard post will be installed at one end of the ‘Panmunjom Bridge’ in Northern Panmunjom; A new Northern guard post will be installed in the area near the entry check point of Southern Panmunjom. South and North Korean personnel will be on duty side-by-side.
   2. Building management
      - Each side will manage the buildings on its side of the Joint Security Area in Panmunjom.
      - In case a building in the Joint Security Area in Panmunjom requires repair or construction, such work will go ahead subject to approval by the Joint Administrative Body.
   3. Visits
      - Visits to the Joint Security Area in Panmunjom will be permitted between 0900 and 1700 hours.
      - Freedom of movement is allowed for visitors and tourists within the Joint Security Area in Panmunjom.

[Annex 3]

Pilot Inter-Korean Joint Remains Recovery Project within DMZ

1. Designation of Joint Remains Recovery Site and minesweeping
   1. Site designation for joint recovery of remains
      - The site for the pilot joint remains recovery project is set between MDL Markers No. 0489 and 0497 in Cheolwon, Gangwon Province, setting the MDL as the standard. The end coordinates for the site are as follows: North : a) NL 38° 17_35_ EL 127° 06_52_South : c) NL 38° 17_26_ EL 127° 07_33_.
      - All guard posts and obstacles within the joint remains recovery site must be withdrawn.
   2. Minesweeping
      - All mines and explosives within the site for the pilot joint remains recovery project are to be completely removed between October 1 and November 30, 2018.
      - The two sides will each carry out minesweeping operations from each end of the DMZ and work in the direction of the MDL.
      - The two sides will conduct minesweeping operations for 4 hours each day from 1000 to 1200 hours and from 1500 to 1700 hours. The hours may be reduced or extended according to each circumstance.
      - The two sides will install markers around the border of the mine-cleared area within the site designated for pilot joint remains recovery project and notify each other accordingly.
      - The use of the equipment and material necessary for minesweeping will be mutually coordinated.
      - Any remains that are recovered during minesweeping operations will be exhumed and be jointly identified, consulted and processed.

2. Establishment of an inter-Korean road within the joint remains recovery site
   1. A 12m-wide road will be constructed between South and North Korea within the pilot joint remains recovery site in order to facilitate seamless progress in the joint efforts to recover the remains within the DMZ.
   2. Minesweeping will take place from each end of the DMZ towards the MDL prior to road construction. The road will be connected along the MDL.
   3. The use of the material and equipment necessary for road construction, including excavators, will be mutually coordinated.
   4. Personnel necessary for construction, quantity of equipment and its identification and the working hours are to be decided unilaterally and notified to each other.
If any personnel or vehicle needs to cross the MDL for the purpose of road construction, prior notification should be provided to the other side.

The construction of road must be completed by December 31, 2018.

3. Composition and operation of the Joint Remains Recovery Team

1) Composition of the Joint Remains Recovery Team
- The two sides will establish a joint investigation team and a site command team, each with 5 members and headed by a colonel-level official.
- The Joint Remains Recovery Team will be comprised of personnel numbering 80 to 100 from each side.
- The two sides will complete the composition of the Joint Remains Recovery Team and notify each other by the end of February, 2019.

2) Operation of the Joint Remains Recovery Team
- The joint investigation team and the site command team will jointly consult and resolve any practical issue that may arise with regards to the pilot joint remains recovery project within the DMZ.
- Joint remains recovery operations at the pilot site will take place from April 1 to October 31, 2019.
- In consideration of the seasonal climate, working hours for remains recovery at the pilot site will be from 0900 to 1200 hours and from 1500 to 1800 hours. If needed, the hours may be reduced or extended subject to agreement from both sides.

4. Safety assurance and joint management

1) Any action that violates the personal safety of personnel from the other side is prohibited during the joint remains recovery process.
2) Any material or equipment that may threaten personal safety such as weapons and explosives is not allowed into the joint remains recovery site.
3) Any action that provokes the other side in the joint remains recovery site is prohibited.
4) In case a natural disaster occurs within the joint remains recovery site, the two sides will establish damage repair plans and cooperate accordingly.
5) Once joint remains recovery is completed, each side will manage its own area and road between the MDL and its end point of the DMZ. Issues regarding the use of roads will be decided in the future through consultations.

[Annex 4]

Preventing Accidental Military Clashes, Establishing a Maritime Peace Zone and Ensuring Safe Fishing Activities in the West Sea

1. Establishment of a maritime peace zone

1) Scope of the maritime peace zone
The scope of the maritime peace zone will be determined in consideration of the factors including geographic location of the islands under the jurisdiction of each side, density of passage of vessels and fixed sea routes. Specific boundary lines will be confirmed through consultations at the Inter-Korean Joint Military Committee.

2) Rules pertaining to entry into the maritime peace zone
1) Only unarmed vessels are allowed entry into the maritime peace zone. If the entry of naval ships is unavoidable, it can enter the zone subject to prior notification to and subsequent approval of the other side.
2) The number of vessels operating in the maritime peace zone will be decided by the two sides through consultations. The plans for entry and operation of vessels within the maritime peace zone must be notified to the other side 48 hours prior to its entry.
3) Entry hours are as follows: from April to September, 0700 to 1800 hours; from October to March, 0800 to 1700 hours. The entry hours may be revised through mutual consultations.

3) Rules pertaining to activities within the maritime peace zone
1) Vessels from the South must not cross the Northern boundary line and vessels from the North must not cross the Southern boundary line. All activities are limited to those of peaceful nature. Vessels that commit hostile acts in the other side’s waters, outside the peace zone, must be restrained immediately. After the matter is reported to the other side, the vessel will be dealt with following inter-Korean consultations.
② For the purpose of identification within the maritime peace zone, vessels from both sides must hoist a 900mm wide, 600mm long Korean Peninsula flag. Vessels from the South must hoist the flag on the left of the mast and vessels from the North on the right of the mast.

③ Any words and actions that may provoke the other side, including psychological warfare, are not allowed within the maritime peace zone.

④ If an accidental clash occurs between civilian vessels in the maritime peace zone, each side must immediately withdraw all of its vessels from the zone, resolve the matter through either inter-Korean military communication lines or inter-Korean working-level military talks, and establish meticulous plans to prevent any recurrence.

4) Humanitarian cooperation in the maritime peace zone

If individuals, vessels, naval ships and aircraft enter the maritime peace in force majeure conditions such as engine failure, distress or misnavigation resulting from deterioration of weather, each side must immediately notify the other through communication means at its disposal. When such emergency situation arises within the maritime peace zone, necessary measures must be taken through mutual cooperation.

5) Utilization of the maritime peace zone

The two sides agreed to continue to explore options for peaceful utilization of the zone, including marine survey, joint survey and passage of civilian vessels in accordance with the principle of easing military tension, confidence building as well as public management and interest.

2. Establishment of a pilot joint fishing zone

1) Scope of the pilot joint fishing zone

The pilot joint fishing zone will be established in between PY-do (South) and Jangsan-got (North). Specific boundary lines will be finalized through consultations at the Inter-Korean Joint Military Committee.

2) Operation of the pilot joint fishing zone

① Vessels that wish to operate within the pilot zone must submit an entry request form 2 days (48 hours) prior to the planned entry, including the name of organization, name of the captain (representative), crew list, vessel name, entry route and date of operation.

② Responsible agencies must notify the other side the result of its review of the request form 1 day (24 hours) prior to departure. If entry of a vessel is denied, the agency must also notify valid reasons for denial.

③ Responsible agencies may allow vessels to remain within the pilot fishing zone for up to 5 days, if the vessel had requested permission for consecutive fishing operations for a certain period.

④ Vessels entering the pilot joint fishing zone must use the mutually approved route and will be controlled by fishery guidance boats from each side.

⑤ If, in the future, the joint fishing zone is expanded within the maritime peace zone, entry regulations for South and North Korean fishing vessels will be implemented through mutual consultations.

3. Joint patrol to deny illegal fishing vessels and ensure safe fishing activities

1) Organization of the Inter-Korean Joint Patrol Team

① The two sides will establish an ‘Inter-Korean Joint Patrol Team’ composed of maritime coast guard boats (patrol boats). The joint patrol boats must be 250 tons or below.

② 3 joint patrol boats will be assigned to each side (total of 6), but the number may be adjusted subject to agreement.

③ The boats that belong to the Inter-Korean Joint Patrol Team must hoist a 900mm wide, 600mm long yellow flag on the top of the mast.

2) Mission of the Inter-Korean Joint Patrol Team

① The Inter-Korean Joint Patrol Team interdicts illegal fishing vessels from third countries that attempt to enter the maritime peace zone through the pilot joint fishing zone, and controls and deals with them through close coordination.

② The Inter-Korean Joint Patrol Team controls the order among fishing vessels from the South and the North as well as fishery guidance boats that enter into the pilot joint fishing zone.

③ The Inter-Korean Joint Patrol Team rescues vessels drifting due to engine failure, distress and deterioration of weather, and returns them in accordance with humanitarian principles.

3) Operation of the Inter-Korean Joint Patrol Team
Patrol boats of the Inter-Korean Joint Patrol Team will be prohibited from entering the joint fishing zone. However, in case of emergency such as distress and rescue of personnel within the fishing zone, the patrol boats may enter upon notification to the other side.

Joint patrol will take place on a date agreed by both sides in consideration of the fishing schedule and interdiction of illegal fishing vessels from third countries.

Joint patrol will take place in principle during the day (April-September: 0800-1800 hours, October-March: 0900-1700 hours). Each side must notify its patrol team’s schedule to the other 24 hours in advance. Any situation that arises during the night is to be resolved through consultations between the two sides.

Joint patrol route follows around the outer boundary of the joint fishing zone either clockwise or anti-clockwise, depending on mutual agreement.

The Inter-Korean Joint Patrol Team follows each of its own superior authority’s command. Communications and call signs between patrol boats will adhere to the ‘June 4 Agreement’ of 2004.

The two sides will refrain from any provocative comment or action during joint patrol. In the event of a contingency, the patrol boat must be immediately separated and the matter must be resolved through mutual consultations.

[Annex 5]

Military Assurance for the Joint Use of Han (Imjin) River Estuary

1. Establishment of a joint utilization zone
   1) The zone within the Han (Imjin) River Estuary stretching 70km long; in the South, from the Eastern end point of the Gimpo peninsula to the south western end point of Gyodong-do, and in the North, from Kaesong-si Pannum-kun Imhanri to Hwanghaenam-do Yeonan-kun Haenam-ri will be designated as the joint utilization zone.
   2) All practical military issues arising from within the joint utilization zone will be dealt with through consultations between the two sides.

2. Joint survey
   1) Field survey of the joint utilization zone will be carried out jointly by the end of December, 2018.
   2) The joint survey team will be composed of 10 people from each side, including subject matter experts.
   3) The use of equipment, hardware and vessels required for the joint survey will be subject to mutual cooperation.
   4) Any comment or action that may provoke the other side is prohibited among the site survey crew. They may not carry any explosives, weapons or live rounds.
   5) In case of an emergency such as a natural disaster during the joint survey, the team may anchor at a nearby location under the other side’s jurisdiction, and the safety and comfort of the team members must be ensured.

3. Military assurance measures within the joint utilization zone
   1) A list that includes the relevant information on the personnel and vessel (type, length and weight, purpose of entry, size of crew, cargo on board) due to enter the joint utilization zone must be notified to the other side 1 day in advance via the Western inter-Korean military communication line.
   2) Check points for both sides in mutually agreed upon locations within the joint utilization zone will be established, where personnel and vessels will be inspected.
   3) All vessels sailing through the joint utilization zone will not be allowed to approach within 100m of the other side’s boundary line.
   4) In consideration of the seasonal influence on visual identification capability, passage hours for vessels in the joint utilization zone will be as follows: 0700 to 1900 hours from April 1 to September 30, and 0800 to 1800 hours from October 1 to March 31.
   5) No personnel or vessel that sails through the joint utilization zone is allowed to carry surveillance and reconnaissance equipment, explosives, other weapons or live-rounds.
   6) Any comment or action that may provoke the other side will be prohibited in the joint utilization zone.
North Korean leader Kim Jong-un agreed to take additional steps for denuclearization, in an apparent gesture to restart its stalled talks with the United States. The agreement came in a historic summit between Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in held at the state guesthouse Paekhwawon in Pyongyang. "The North has agreed to permanently shut down its Dongchang-ri missile engine testing facility and missile launch pad under the participation of experts from related countries," Moon said in a joint press conference with Kim after the summit, broadcast live in Seoul. The North also agreed to take additional steps, such as the permanent shutdown of the Yongbyon nuclear facility, depending on the United States' corresponding measures, he added. "The South and the North discussed denuclearization steps for the first time," Moon said. Kim said he and Moon agreed to remove all nuclear weapons and threats from the Korean Peninsula. "The September declaration will open a higher level for the improvement in relations (between the South and the North) ... and bring closer the era of peace and prosperity," Kim said of his agreement signed with Moon after their two-day talks in Pyongyang. The North's offer to take additional denuclearization steps despite any signs of reward from the U.S. is apparently aimed at restarting its denuclearization talks with the U.S. Possibly signaling a breakthrough, Trump welcomed the outcome of the inter-Korean summit in a Twitter message. "Kim Jong Un has agreed to allow nuclear inspections, subject to final negotiations, and to permanently dismantle a test site and launch pad in the presence of international experts," he wrote. It was not clear what Trump meant by nuclear inspections. Moon's top security adviser, Chung Eui-yong, insisted the outcome of the latest inter-Korean summit will lead to a resumption of U.S.-North Korea talks. "Based on the outcome of the summit this time, I expect the North-U.S. negotiations to somewhat speed up, and we also hope a North Korea-U.S. summit will be held at an early date," he told reporters in Pyongyang. Moon is set to visit the United States September 24 for a bilateral summit with the U.S president. There, he will likely brief Trump on the outcome of his talks with the North Korean leader, and also seek to broker a resumption of the U.S.-North Korea denuclearization talks. The agreement signed by the leaders of the two Koreas in Pyongyang also called for steps to further improve inter-Korean ties. The sides have agreed to begin the work to reconnect their severed railways and roads across the heavily fortified border before the year's end. Also, the countries will reopen their joint industrial park in the North's border town of Kaesong and tourism programs to the North's Mount Kumgang as soon as "conditions are met," the agreement said. To further promote reconciliation, the divided Koreas have agreed to soon establish a new joint facility for more frequent and freer reunions of families separated since the end of the Korean War. In a separate agreement signed by their defense chiefs, the Koreas also agreed to a wide range of steps aimed at further reducing military tension on the Korean Peninsula. Such steps include setting up a 10-kilometer buffer zone along their border where all artillery drills or regiment-level field maneuvers will be prohibited, according to the military agreement. In their joint declaration, the leaders said the countries have also agreed to quickly launch a joint military committee to review their implementation of such tension-reducing measures and to enable round-the-clock communication to prevent future conflicts. The two Koreas will continue to jointly take part in international sporting events, including the upcoming 2020 Olympic Games, the leaders said in their Pyongyang declaration. They will also seek to jointly host the 2032 Summer Olympic Games. The North Korean leader said he has agreed to visit Seoul in the near future. Moon said the near future, barring unforeseen conditions, meant before the year's end. Following their summit and joint press conference, Moon and Kim continued their dialogue over lunch at Pyongyang's famous cold noodle restaurant, Okryukwan, according to officials in Seoul. Moon is scheduled to return home tomorrow after taking a joint excursion with Kim to North Korea's Mount Paekdu. (Byun Duk-kun, “Kim Agrees to Additional Denuclearization Steps in Summit with Moon,” Joint Press Corps-Yonhap, September 19, 2018)
Kim Jong-un, North Korea’s leader, told South Korea’s president on Wednesday that he would commit to some concrete steps toward denuclearization — including an offer to “permanently dismantle” facilities central to fuel production for nuclear warheads. But he made no promises to relinquish his nuclear weapons or missiles. Kim’s commitments fell far short of what American officials have demanded — a complete abandonment of the North’s nuclear and missile programs. Nonetheless, President Trump welcomed the agreements, reached during Kim’s summit meeting in North Korea with President Moon Jae-in of South Korea, as “very exciting.” Speaking on the South Lawn of the White House, Trump told reporters that when he came into office “people thought we were going — it was inevitable — we were going to war with North Korea.” Despite Trump’s insistence that he remained tough on North Korea, three outcomes from the meeting between Moon and Kim suggested the White House had softened its position. Moon is pushing toward a peace declaration — a formal end to the 1950-53 Korean War — that the United States will almost certainly join. Kim, only in his mid-30s but clearly a canny negotiator, has used the relationship with Moon to sidestep the American demand that he surrender all his nuclear capabilities first, and then negotiate. Instead, he is demanding reciprocal, step-by-step concessions from Trump — so far unspecified — and holding on to his nuclear weapons at least until he gets those allowances. And finally, the Trump administration seems resigned to the idea that the “complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization” that it once deemed as necessary in the next year is more likely to take at least a few years. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said as much Wednesday in a congratulatory statement to Moon and Kim. He used it to invite the North Koreans to meet his new special representative for North Korea, Stephen Biegun, in Vienna, “at the earliest opportunity,” to start denuclearization negotiations “to be completed by January 2021.”

The agreements signed by Moon and Kim seemed aimed more at reducing tensions along their shared border than moving quickly toward denuclearization. Kim also promised to visit Seoul, the South Korean capital his government has often threatened to destroy in a “sea of fire.” He would be the first North Korean leader to make such a trip. More significant was his promise to dismantle a missile engine-test facility and missile launch pad essential to the country’s development of intercontinental ballistic missiles. The North said it would also invite outside experts to watch. But those facilities were used to develop the technology. The missiles are produced elsewhere. Before he agrees to go further, Kim has demanded “corresponding” measures from the United States, presumably starting with a formal declaration ending a war halted by a truce 65 years ago. It is unclear what else he may demand, including a permanent end to military exercises with South Korea or a withdrawal of American forces. “What Kim is offering so far is to shutter sites that are pretty costless — doing enough to keep Trump appeased,’’ said Vipin Narang, a political-science professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who follows North Korea’s nuclear program. “He’s avoiding giving up anything meaningful — actual weapons, fissile material and missiles.” But Kim did propose to “permanently dismantle” the Yongbyon nuclear complex, the heart of his country’s nuclear program for the past four decades, among other steps — if his other conditions are met. The Yongbyon offer could prove significant. North Korea is believed to have produced its plutonium there. Yongbyon also houses a centrifuge plant that produces highly enriched uranium, an alternative fuel for atomic bombs, though Western analysts suspect that North Korea has centrifuge plants elsewhere. North Korea has mothballed Yongbyon before, only to restart it when negotiations with Washington stalled. The offers Kim made today — as well as actions he has already taken, such as a moratorium on nuclear and missile tests and the destruction of the North’s underground nuclear test site — indicated that he was willing to partly curtail his ability to produce more nuclear warheads and ICBMs. But the offers say little about his existing arsenal. Kim’s ultimate goal, analysts say, is to make the Trump administration complacent enough to ease sanctions in return for a freeze — not dismantlement — of North Korea’s nuclear weapons programs. “No matter how hard I look, I can find no real progress in denuclearization in today’s announcements,” said Cheon Seong-whun, an analyst at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul. **South Korean officials cautioned that Kim and Moon excluded from their official agreements some ideas they had discussed, leaving them for negotiations between the North and the United States.** Moon, who is scheduled to brief Trump September 24 in New York, sounded optimistic. So did Trump, who has been preparing for a second meeting with Kim despite the reservations of hardline White House aides. “Based on the discussions we had here, the leaders of South Korea and the United States will be able to discuss
ways of expediting denuclearization talks between the North and the United States,” Chung Eui-yong, Moon’s national security adviser, told South Korean reporters in Pyongyang. “We hope that a summit meeting between the North and the U.S. will take place soon.” During a lunch today of cold buckwheat noodles, a North Korean delicacy, Moon surprised Kim with a gift: the coin the White House had issued in commemoration of Trump’s June summit meeting with Kim, as well as the South Korean coins celebrating the inter-Korean meeting in April. But the highlight of Moon’s trip came this evening, when he became the first South Korean leader to address a large North Korean audience. In a speech interrupted by thundering applause from 150,000 North Koreans who filled Pyongyang’s May Day Stadium, Moon extolled the “indomitable courage” of North Koreans in overcoming the famine of the 1990s, and he praised Kim’s effort to rebuild the economy. “We Koreans are exceptional, we are tenacious, we are peace-loving,” Moon said. “And we must live together.” (Choe Sang-Hun and David E. Sanger, “New Nuclear Promises from Kim Fall Short of U.S. Demands,” New York Times, September 20, 2018, p. A-9)

Pompeo statement: “The United States congratulates President Moon Jae-in and Chairman Kim Jong Un on the successful outcome of their summit meeting in Pyongyang. We welcome President Moon and Chairman Kim’s reaffirmation of the Singapore joint statement of complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, including the permanent dismantlement of all facilities at Yongbyon in the presence of U.S. and IAEA inspectors. We also welcome Chairman Kim’s decision to complete the previously announced dismantlement of the Tongchang-ri site in the presence of U.S. and international inspectors as a step toward the final fully verified denuclearization of North Korea, as agreed by Chairman Kim at the Singapore summit with President Trump. On the basis of these important commitments, the United States is prepared to engage immediately in negotiations to transform U.S.-DPRK relations. This morning, I invited my counterpart Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho to meet in New York City next week where we are both already scheduled to be in attendance at the United Nations General Assembly meeting. Likewise, we have invited North Korean representatives to meet our Special Representative for North Korea, Stephen Biegun, in Vienna, Austria at the earliest opportunity. This will mark the beginning of negotiations to transform U.S.-DPRK relations through the process of rapid denuclearization of North Korea, to be completed by January 2021, as committed by Chairman Kim, and to construct a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.” (DoS, Press Statement, Secretary State Michael R. Pompeo, Washington, September 19, 2018)

Trump: …” Q (Inaudible) Kim Jong Un? THE PRESIDENT: We had very good news from North Korea, South Korea. They met, and we had some great responses. I got a tremendous letter from Kim Jong Un. As you know, it was delivered three days ago. We’re making tremendous progress with respect to North Korea. Prior to becoming President, it looked like we were going to war with North Korea, and now we have a lot of progress. We’ve gotten our prisoners back. We’re getting our remains back. They continue to come in. A lot of tremendous things. But very importantly, no missile testing, no nuclear testing. Now they want to go and put a bid in for the Olympics. No, we have a lot of very good things going. Remember this: Prior to my coming into office, a lot of people thought we were going — it was inevitable — we were going to war in North Korea. And now we’re — the relationships, I have to tell you, at least on a personal basis, they’re very good. It’s very much calmed down. Q (Inaudible) Kim Jong Un says he wants reciprocal measures. THE PRESIDENT: Well, we’ll see what he’s looking at. We’ll see. But in the meantime, we’re talking. It’s very calm. He’s calm. I’m calm. So we’ll see what happens. … Q Will you be meeting with Kim Jong Un soon? THE PRESIDENT: We will be.” (White House Press Office, Remarks by President Trump before Marine One Departure,” South Lawn, September 19, 2018)

The militaries of the two Koreas agreed to establish a no-fly zone in the heavily fortified Demilitarized Zone across the border with North Korea, pledging to prevent cross-border hostilities. In a document signed by South Korea’s Defense Minister Song Young-moo and his North Korean counterpart No Kwang-chol, both sides also pledged to establish a stretch of “buffer zone” inside the DMZ and waters near the Northern Limit Line, a de facto maritime border in the West Sea. Inside these restricted areas, the militaries of the two Koreas will be prohibited from
conducting artillery drills and massive field exercises, the agreement said. The measure will take effect on Nov. 1. “Following the agreement, the DMZ and NLL region will turn into an area of peace, where not a single sound of artillery fire will be heard,” South Korea’s Ministry of National Defense said in a statement. The two Koreas also agreed on a series of measures to “practically disarm” the DMZ and the joint security area controlled by the two Koreas and the US-led United Nations Command. They agreed to pull back 11 guard posts from the DMZ and to remove land mines near the Joint Security Area. The measures are aimed at preventing accidental skirmishes and enhancing mutual trust -- a pledge made at the April summit between President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un in the border village of Panmunjom. In the Panmunjom Declaration, Moon and Kim agreed to prevent any form of hostile activities against each other in all cross-border areas, including land, air and sea. The two leaders pledged to establish a “permanent peace regime” on the Korean Peninsula. “We signed the agreement on military issues to bring an end to the decades-old history of confrontation and hostilities,” North Korean leader Kim said after the signing of the Panmunjom Declaration, to which the military agreement is appended. According to the agreement, the two Koreas’ artillery drills and maneuvering exercises are prohibited within 5 kilometers from the Military Demarcation Line, which bisects the two Koreas. Regarding the no-fly zone, fixed-wing aircraft are banned from flying too close to the MDL, with the exception of rescue missions and natural disasters. The restricted airspace covers a 40-kilometer-wide area from the east part of the MDL and 20 kilometers from the west part of the land border. While the two Koreas agreed to establish a “peace area” near the NLL, Seoul’s Defense Ministry said the disputed maritime border was not brought up during the negotiations. Although the NLL is considered the de facto maritime border by South Korea, North Korea has never accepted it. “Our position will never change on the NLL,” a senior defense official told reporters, requesting anonymity due to the sensitivity of the issue. “The NLL was never an agenda item for discussion. … We will continue to have discussions with North Korea.” Some analysts said designating a no-fly zone above the DMZ could unnerve the U.S. and restrict its reconnaissance abilities inside the border region, whose southern parts are controlled by the US-led United Nations’ Forces. “I’m not sure whether the UNC, I mean U.S. forces, would agree to such an agreement,” said Kim Dae-young, a military analyst at the Korea Research Institute for National Strategy. “If the two Koreas try to push the deal without consultation with the U.S, it’s a bad idea.” The Defense Ministry official said consultations are underway with the UNC, highlighting that establishing a no-fly zone would not weaken the allies’ surveillance abilities to monitor North Korea’s military movement. (Yeo Jun-suk & Joint Press Corps, “Two Koreas Agree to Establish ‘No-Fly Zone’ in DMZ,” Korea Herald, September 19, 2018)

Moon Jae-in: “Fellow Koreans in the North, the South and abroad, A Korean Peninsula free of war has begun to take shape. The South and North agreed today to eliminate all risks that could lead to war from all parts of the Korean Peninsula. A joint inter-Korean military committee will be formed to enable constant consultations on implementing military-related agreements. Even though the sounds of artillery fire of the Korean War were silenced by the 1953 Armistice Agreement, war has continued to haunt our lives for the past 65 years. Young lives have been lost needlessly, and invisible walls have arisen between neighbors. By turning the Korean Peninsula into a permanent peace zone, we will now be able to restore normalcy in our lives. Our society can be reshaped into a nation that exists solely for the people as we depart from the privilege, corruption and disregard for human rights that have been spawned by the threat of war and ideological confrontation. What I have to tell you today floods my heart with emotion. For the first time, South and North Korea have agreed on measures for denuclearization. This is an extremely meaningful accomplishment. The North has agreed to permanently shut down an engine test site and missile launch pad in Dongchang-ri, in the presence of experts from the countries concerned. Contingent upon corresponding measures by the United States, the North will also carry out further measures such as the permanent dismantlement of the Yongbyon nuclear facility. These are delightful and thankful actions for all Koreans. Complete denuclearization is not far away. Going forward, North and South Korea will closely consult and cooperate with the United States and the international community to achieve denuclearization once and for all. Our role now has become critical. The trust and support of the people are more desperately needed than ever. Fellow Koreans in the North and South, Following the
announcement of the Panmunjom Declaration, a grand change is taking place on and around the Korean Peninsula, which can be seen as a historic development. For the first time in history, the two leaders of North Korea and the United States sat together for talks and announced an agreement. North Korea pledged to completely halt further nuclear and missile tests and has kept that promise. South Korea and the United States suspended large-scale joint military drills. In Kaesong, a joint liaison office has been established. A new era has dawned, enabling the two Koreas to discuss issues at any time. Though it really seems like a dream, it is definitely taking place before our eyes. The Korean people’s yearning for peace and prosperity has never ceased even for an instant. Though the progress seems rapid, it has not been rapid at all. These developments are finally unfolding before us as a result of longstanding desires and preparations. The shared sentiments of 80 million Koreans have opened a way for peace. We will have to sincerely follow this path we have paved and take substantive steps by finalizing complete denuclearization. Today in Pyeongyang, Chairman Kim and I agreed to further enhance exchanges and cooperation between the South and North and to develop concrete plans for a balanced economic growth of the Korean people. The South and North will hold a groundbreaking ceremony for the reconnection of railroads and roads on the eastern and western coastal regions within this year. If favorable conditions materialize, the operation of the Kaesong Industrial Complex and tourism at Geumgangsan Mountain will be normalized. Environmental cooperation on the Korean Peninsula and healthcare and medical services coordination aimed at preventing the influx and spread of infectious diseases will be able to start immediately. Priority will be placed on restoring the Geumgangsan reunion center and enabling letter exchanges and video-conference reunions. We agreed to cooperate on a bid to jointly host the 2032 Summer Olympics. We also decided to make concrete preparations for joint events to mark the 100th anniversary of the March First Independence Movement. In October, a Pyeongyang art troupe will come to Seoul. The “Coming of Autumn” performance will bring South and North Korea even closer. I invited Chairman Kim Jong Un to visit Seoul, and Chairman Kim agreed to come before long. Here, “before long” has an implication that it would be within this year barring extraordinary circumstances. Chairman Kim’s visit to Seoul would be the first by a North Korean supreme leader, and it is expected to become a monumental milestone in inter-Korean relations. Fellow Koreans in the North, the South and abroad, Today, Chairman Kim has clearly shown the way to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and we have agreed on the vision of freeing the Peninsula from nuclear weapons, nuclear threat and war. We have lived up to the expectations of all Koreans and the world. I profoundly respect the determination and actions by Chairman Kim. Inter-Korean relations will continue without interruption. Now, I look forward to North Korea and the United States resuming their dialogue soon, based on the achievements of this Pyeongyang summit. North Korea and the United States have repeatedly reaffirmed mutual trust by exchanging personal letters between their two leaders. We promise that we will also do our best to help the two sides hold another summit as soon as possible and find a middle ground to reach an agreement. This past spring, the seeds of peace and prosperity were sown on the Korean Peninsula. And today, this autumn in Pyeongyang, the fruits of peace and prosperity are maturing. Thank you.” (Unofficial translation) *(Korea Herald, “President Moon Jae-in’s Speech at Joint Press Conference,” September 19, 2018)*

*Rodong Sinmun:* “Three months have passed since the DPRK-U.S. summit and talks in Singapore and the adoption of the joint statement. The international community wished the DPRK-U.S. joint statement be implemented successfully, the extreme hostile relations between the DPRK and the U.S. that have been the sharpest confrontation be put to an end as soon as possible and durable peace and security be settle in the Korean peninsula and the region. The dialogue between the DPRK and the U.S. has been stalemated. The U.S. is totally to blame for the deadlocked DPRK-U.S. negotiations. The U.S. is stubbornly insisting on the theory of “dismantlement of nukes first” which was rejected in the past DPRK-U.S. dialogues, saying that other issues may be discussed only after the “complete, verifiable and irretrievable dismantlement of nukes” of the DPRK, while failing to show its will for confidence building including the declaration of the end of war which it had already pledged. The U.S. is demanding unilateral and gangster-like claim forcing the DPRK to act without showing its movement. The conservative politicians of the U.S. are taking the lead in persisting in such gangster-like logic. For implementation of the DPRK-U.S.
9/20/18

President Moon Jae-in of South Korea urged the United States to declare an end to the Korean War as an incentive for North Korea to denuclearize, a call that could put the Trump administration in a bind as it tries to revive stalled talks with Kim Jong-un, the North’s leader. “He again and again reaffirmed his commitment to denuclearization,” Moon said at a news conference in Seoul, the South’s capital, after returning from North Korea. “He said he wanted to achieve complete denuclearization as soon as possible and focus on economic development.” To “ expedite denuclearization,” Moon said, Kim also hopes to meet Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, and to hold a second meeting with President Trump as soon as possible. One of the first steps Kim wants to take before moving toward denuclearization, Moon said, is to secure a joint statement declaring an end to the 1950-53 Korean War, which was halted only with an armistice. American and South Korean analysts express fear that such a declaration would give Kim reason to demand that the United States withdraw its 28,500 troops from the South while North Korea is still a nuclear-armed state. But Moon said it would be merely a “political statement,” and that it would not affect the status of American troops in South Korea or his country’s alliance with the United States. “I confirmed with Chairman Kim that his concept of the end-of-war declaration is the same as mine,” Moon said. The South Korean leader said he would discuss making such a declaration by the end of the year when he meets with Trump in New York on September 24 for the annual United Nations General Assembly session. Earlier on Thursday, Moon and Kim ascended Paekdusan, a still-active volcano near North Korea’s border with China that reaches more than 9,000 feet and looms large in the history and imaginations of Koreans on both sides of the border. Paekdusan, sometimes called Mount Paektu in English and known as Changbaishan in Chinese, is the mythical birthplace of the Korean people. In South Korea, the national anthem opens with a reference to Paekdusan, and walls of government offices are decorated with panoramic pictures of Cheonji. Each year, thousands of South Koreans go on pilgrimages to the mountain, which straddles the North’s border with China. Barred from traveling to North Korea, they climb the Chinese side of the mountain, some carrying South Korean flags, to the evident annoyance of Chinese border patrol. Moon’s visit to the North was met with cautious optimism in Washington. “We had very good news from North Korea, South Korea,” Trump said on yesterday. “We’re making tremendous progress with respect to North Korea.” However, South Korean conservatives fear that Moon’s overtures toward rapprochement have been made at the expense of securing a deal to end the North’s nuclear weapons program. Moon and Kim yesterday signed a series of agreements that Choi Jong-un, Moon’s secretary for arms control, called a “de facto nonaggression treaty.” Both sides agreed to create no-fly and no-hostility zones and to stop live-fire drills along their land and sea border. They also agreed to disarm Panmunjom, the truce village in the heavily fortified Demilitarized Zone, where North Korean troops fired a hail of bullets at a North Korean soldier who defected to the South last year. Moon and Kim also agreed to open a facility near Mount Kumgang, in the southeastern part of North Korea, where relatives separated by the Korean War could hold regular reunions, and they said they would make a joint bid to host the 2032 Olympics. But Moon was accused by critics of being more interested in cultivating Pan-Korean unity than in removing the North’s nuclear weapons. North Korea proposed to “permanently dismantle” its main nuclear complex, but only if Washington took “corresponding” measures, and the statement lacked concrete steps like submitting an inventory of the North’s nuclear assets and then disassembling them under international inspection. “This is an empty statement lacking any real measures for denuclearization of the North,” said Yoon Young-seok, a spokesman for the main conservative opposition in the South, Liberty Korea Party. “The no-fly zones along the border would seriously undermine our military’s ability to operate reconnaissance flights and gather visual intelligence on the North.” Officials in Moon’s government say that improved relations with the North are an important first step toward denuclearization. “This is no small progress,” said Lee Do-hoon, South Korea’s top nuclear negotiator. “I think this is proof of what our government has explained all
along, that improvement in inter-Korean relations can lead to progress between the North and the United States.” (Choe Sang-hun, “South Korean Chief Tells U.S. to Declare War Over,” New York Times, September 21, 2018, p. A-11) North Korean leader Kim Jong-un is ready to accelerate denuclearization of his country in exchange for security guarantees from the United States and wants to hold a second summit with U.S. President Donald Trump at an early date. South Korean President Moon Jae-in said today. Moon also said his government seeks to declare a formal end to the Korean War before the year's end, and that he will bring up the issue when he meets Trump in New York next week. "Chairman Kim expressed his wish to finish complete denuclearization at an early date and focus on economic development,” Moon said of his meeting with the North Korean leader in Pyongyang. Moon said he also had an additional message from Kim for the U.S. president. “Among what we discussed, there are items that we did not include in the joint declaration,” he said, referring to his joint declaration with Kim issued yesterday in Pyongyang. “I plan to deliver such messages in detail to the U.S. side should I visit the United States and hold a summit again with President Trump in the future,” he added. His office Cheong Wa Dae has said he and Trump will hold a bilateral summit on September 24 (New York time). Those items discussed with Kim but not laid out in the Pyongyang declaration included an agreement to hold talks between the countries’ parliaments, Moon said. The president said he and Kim dedicated nearly the entire first day of his three-day trip to discuss ways to completely denuclearize the Korean Peninsula and restart the stalled North Korea-U.S. dialogue. "However, specific ways to denuclearize and corresponding measures basically are an issue that need to be discussed between the North and the U.S.,” he said, apparently renewing his call for an early resumption of U.S.-North Korea talks. Washington seemed to have complied when its Secretary of Defense Pompeo said earlier that the U.S. is "prepared to engage immediately in negotiations to transform U.S.-DPRK relations." The U.S. offer to resume its negotiations with the North comes after Kim offered to take additional denuclearization steps. In his summit with Moon, the North Korean leader agreed to permanently dismantle his country’s only missile engine test facility and launch pads in Dongchang-ri in the presence of international experts. Kim also offered to dismantle the country’s key nuclear facility in Yongbyon should the U.S. take corresponding measures. The president noted many in South Korea and the U.S. feared the move may weaken the South Korea-U.S. alliance, along with the rationale for keeping tens of thousands of U.S. troops in South Korea. He said it could not be further from the truth. “The idea of a formal end to the war that we use is the declaration of an end to the war that (the sides) agreed to sign in the same year they signed the (Korean) armistice 65 years ago. The concept that we use is that we will first make a political declaration of an end to the war and use that as a starting point for efforts to sign a peace treaty, and sign a peace treaty when North Korea achieves complete denuclearization,” Moon said. "A declaration of an end to the war is a political declaration that says we will end our hostile relations,” he said, adding Kim also shared the idea. (Byun Duk-kun, Koh Byung-joon, Song Sang-ho, “N. Korea Ready to Denuclearize, Hopes for 2nd Summit with U.S.: Moon,” Yonhap, September 20, 2018) South Korean President Moon has stated in a press conference that “the term ‘permanent shutdown of the Yongbyon Nuclear Complex’ used by North Korea in the September Pyongyang Declaration has the same meaning as the verifiable and irreversible closure sought by the U.S.” He went on to say “Chairman Kim Jong-un made it clear that he hoped to invite US State Secretary Mike Pompeo to North Korea and hold a second North Korea-US summit in the near future so that the denuclearization process can be implemented quickly.” Moon stressed that “a second North Korea-US summit is necessary,” adding, “If the two leaders are able to overcome the deadlock through a second summit, denuclearization talks can proceed at a faster pace.” Upon returning to Seoul Air Base in Seongnam, Gyeonggi Province, on September 20 after the three-day visit to Pyongyang, Moon held a press conference at the Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP) press center in which he reported the results of the summit to the South Korean public. “Some of the [denuclearization] issues discussed [with Chairman Kim] were not included in the agreement [the Pyongyang Declaration],” Moon revealed. “We spent a lot of time talking about ways to get talks between North Korea and the US back on track, which are currently at a standstill. When I meet with President Trump [during the UN General Assembly on Sept. 24] I plan to speak to him about the details of this.” In particular, Moon stated that Kim “wished to finish the process of complete denuclearization as soon as possible and focus on economic development. He reaffirmed his commitment to denuclearization several times.” Moon went on to say, “I hope that the US will
be able to put itself in North Korea’s shoes, considering the North’s commitment and stated position and resume talks at an early date.” Referring to Kim’s willingness to permanently close the Yongbyon nuclear facility, Moon added, “In that case, both South Korea and the U.S. need to take measures to put an end to hostile relations with North Korea.” He stressed that such measures “should be adopted in a balanced manner between North Korea and the U.S.,” and suggested that one important measure for achieving this is officially declaring an end to the war before the end of the year. “Because the end of war declaration is a political declaration that signals the cessation of hostilities, it is a way of sending trust towards North Korea,” Moon stated. “Declaring an end to the war before the end of 2018 is our goal, and I aim to discuss this during my upcoming meeting with President Trump.” The president added “The Singapore Declaration [adopted during the June 12 North Korea-U.S. summit] represents agreement in principle,” stressing the need for a second North Korea-U.S. summit. “If the two leaders are able to reach an agreement [through a second meeting] on working-level negotiations to determine the timeline for denuclearization and the reciprocal measures that each side will implement, it will lead to more effective progress on denuclearization.” (Lee Je-hun, “Moon Says Shutdown of Yongbyon Amounts to CVID Sought by U.S.,” Hankyore, September 21, 2018) North Korean leader Kim wants Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to visit Pyongyang soon. He also hopes to hold a summit with President Donald Trump at an early date to accelerate the denuclearization process. “Chairman Kim Jong-un has again and again affirmed his commitment to denuclearization,” Moon said. “He expressed his wish to finish complete denuclearization as soon as possible and focus on economic development.” Moon said. Kim’s agreement to allow international experts to observe the “permanent dismantling” of a missile engine test site and launch pad amounts to the same thing as “verifiable and irreversible” dismantling of the facilities, he said. Moon said that more is going on behind the scenes, but details could not be disclosed. “We (Moon and Kim) exchanged opinions verbally,” he said. “Among what we discussed, there are things we did not include in the joint declaration. I plan to convey such messages in detail to the US side during my visit to the U.S.” Pompeo said on Fox News after the inter-Korean summit that the US and North Korea are making progress. “I talk to my counterparts there with some frequency,” Pompeo said on Fox News late yesterday. “It doesn’t get reported. I’m glad about that; I’m glad we’re able to keep that quiet. And so we’re making the progress that we need.” Moon reaffirmed his push to bring a formal end to the 1950-53 Korean War within the year, saying it is a “political declaration” and Kim shares such an understanding. “The concept that we are using when we say ‘end-of-war declaration’ is … that we will first make a political declaration of an end to the war and use that as a starting point for efforts to sign a peace treaty, and normalize North Korea-US relations when North Korea achieves complete denuclearization,” Moon said. “As I talked with Chairman Kim during my visit to North Korea, he was thinking about the end-of-war declaration in the same way,” he said. “It is a political declaration of an end to the war and our hostile relations.” Moon also addressed concerns that the end-of-war declaration might give Kim rationale to request for the dissolution of the United Nations Command and removal of US troops stationed in South Korea to deter the North. “With the end-of-war declaration, peace negotiations to sign a peace treaty will begin. A peace treaty will be achieved at the final stage of complete denuclearization,” he said. “Until then, the existing armistice will be in place, so the status of the United Nations Command or need for the stationing of the US troops in South Korea are not at all affected. Those matters can be discussed after the peace treaty is signed and peace is established.” He added, “Especially, the U.S. troops in South Korea are currently stationed here on the basis of the U.S.-North Korea-US alliance, so it has nothing to do with the end-of-war declaration or peace treaty and (is) entirely up to the decision by South Korea and the US. Kim agreed to that,” he said. (Ock Hyun-ju, “Key Points of Kim’s Commitments Explained by Moon,” Korea Herald, September 21, 2018) DoS Briefing: “Q: Yeah, just a point of clarification on yesterday’s statement. Secretary Pompeo said that the – he welcomed Chairman Kim’s decision to allow U.S. and IAEA inspectors in this dismantlement, but I don’t think that was specifically in the joint statement. So could you clarify if North Korea has given any guarantees that U.S. inspectors would be allowed to inspect? MS NAUERT: So President Moon and also Chairman Kim did talk about inspectors, of course. Having IAEA inspectors and United States inspectors be a part of anything is really just a shared understanding. Anytime you have a nuclear situation like this,
where there is a dismantlement, the expectation is that IAEA inspectors would be a part of that. So that would just be normal course of doing business. We have that shared understanding with the countries. ... Q: But it wasn’t specifically in the document that President Moon and Kim Jong-un signed, and the Secretary said it was. MS NAUERT: We have had conversations with that government, with the Government of North Korea, and that is our mutual understanding. That is also the understanding between the Republic of Korea and North Korea, and that was one of the things that was discussed, according to my understanding of it, over the past few days. Again, we look forward to getting a more formal, thorough readout from the Republic of Korea as soon as we can sit down with them face to face.” (DoS Briefing, Spokesperson Heather Nauert, September 20, 2018)

KCNA: “Kim Jong Un, chairman of the Workers’ Party of Korea and chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the DPRK, said goodbye to President Moon Jae In making his way home after the successful historic north-south summit meeting and talks. Supreme Leader of the Party, state and army Kim Jong Un and his wife Ri Sol Ju greeted President Moon Jae In and his wife Kim Jung Sook at Samjiyon Airport on Thursday afternoon. Present at the airport were Kim Yong Chol, vice-chairman of the WPK Central Committee, Army General No Kwang Chol, minister of the People's Armed Forces, Ri Son Gwon, chairman of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country, Ri Sang Won, chairman of the Ryanggang Provincial Committee of the WPK, and Ri Song Guk, chairman of the Ryanggang Provincial People's Committee. There was a ceremony of seeing off Moon Jae In. Moon Jae In together with Kim Jong Un exchanged warm farewell with Moon Jae In. Moon Jae In and his party boarded the plane, amid warm send-off by people of Samjiyon County. Kim Jong Un and his wife Ri Sol Ju warmly saw off Moon Jae In and his wife. The historic September Pyongyang meeting and talks between the top leaders of the north and the south marked an epochal turning point in further consolidating the valuable achievements made by the north and the south and developing with added speed the north-south ties along the new orbit of peace, orbit of reconciliation and cooperation so as to open the heyday of the great cause of reunification.” (KCNA, “Moon Jae In and His Party Leave Samjiyon; Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un Sees off Moon Jae In at Samjiyon Airport,” September 21, 2018)

The Pentagon is poised to begin recovering the remains of more American troops killed in North Korea as soon as next spring, but U.S. officials are still negotiating the terms after Pyongyang made several unreasonable requests, a senior U.S. defense official said. The requests included a large sum of money, eight ambulances and other items, said Kelly K. McKeague, the director of the Defense Department agency collecting the remains of U.S. prisoners of war and U.S. troops who went missing in action. The operations would be carried out jointly with North Korean troops and mark a new form of progress between the nations that the Trump administration can tout while attempting to negotiate North Korea’s denuclearization. McKeague described North Korea’s most recent repatriation proposal as “out of sorts” but sounded a note of optimism that a deal will be reached. However, ambulances are not necessary because the United States deploys medics as part of the missions. “We have medics on station,” he said. “So, that would be something we would push back and say, ‘Not possible.’ ” The Pentagon has sent North Korea at least $22 million since 1990 while recovering 629 remains, according to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency that McKeague leads. Defense officials said they are willing to reimburse North Korea for costs associated with recovery but will not pay for remains themselves. The new repatriation talks began after Secretary of State Mike Pompeo allowed the Pentagon to pursue discussions with North Korean officials, McKeague said. The recovery agency reached out to North Korea’s mission at the United Nations in New York, and hopes to meet with North Korean officials in a neutral third-party country in October. The military was able to quickly identify the remains of the first two quickly because their skulls and clavicles were present, allowing the agency to use dental records and a technique matching clavicles to X-rays of missing service members, McKeague said. President Trump announced on Twitter on Thursday that the two soldiers who have been identified are Army Master Sgt. Charles H. McDaniel, 32, of Indiana and
Army Pfc. William H. Jones, 19, of North Carolina. The Army notified the soldiers’ families this week. Trump is expected to speak about the recovery effort on Friday as the White House marks National POW/MIA Recognition Day. It could take significantly longer to identify the remains of other service members in the group; the process is often painstaking and takes years. Separately, the Koreas have reached an agreement that will allow South Korea to launch a mission in October from the demilitarized zone between the countries to recover South Korean remains. McKeague said it is unlikely that any three-party repatriation missions will be launched. “The North Koreans were very explicit and said that they are going to talk to the South Koreans bilaterally,” he said, “And they talk to the United States bilaterally.” (Dan Lamothe, “U.S. Ready to Recover More Remains from North Korea,” Washington Post, September 21, 2018, p. A-10)

9/21/18

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he hoped for a second summit between Trump and Kim “before too long” to press ahead with efforts to denuclearize North Korea. “There’s still a little bit of work to do to make sure that the conditions are right and that the two leaders are put in the position where we could make substantial progress” toward the denuclearization of North Korea, Pompeo said in an interview with Fox News. “I’m hoping I’ll be back in Pyongyang before too long to make some more progress,” he said. “And if that’s the case, I’m very hopeful that Chairman Kim and President Trump will get a chance to meet in the near future as well.” Still, Trump said he won’t rush into any deal with Kim. “Let’s see what happens,” he said at Friday’s rally. “I’m in no rush.” (AFP-Jiji, “Trump Holds onto Diplomatic ‘Success’ with North Korea,” Japan Times, September 22, 2018)

9/23/18

U.S. intelligence officials have long doubted the sincerity of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and his representatives when it comes to abandoning their nuclear capabilities, but CIA Director Gina Haspel said today there may be reason for hope. “There does seem to be a suggestion that Kim Jong Un, Chairman Kim, understands and wants to take steps to improve the economic plight of the North Korean people,” Haspel told an audience at the University of Louisville, her first public appearance since being confirmed as the spy agency’s director in May. Haspel reaffirmed the long-standing U.S. intelligence view that North Korean officials see the country’s nuclear weapons program as "essential to their regime's survival,” noting that getting Pyongyang to change course will still be a tough sell. "The regime has spent decades building their nuclear weapons program," she said. "The North Koreans view their capability as leverage and I don't think that they want to give it up easily.” She added, "We're certainly in a better place than we were in 2017 because of the dialogue we've established between our two leaders, the president and Kim Jong Un.” (Jeff Seldin, “U.S. CIA Director: Indications N. Korea Serious about Giving up Nukes,” VOA, September 24, 2018)

When President Trump made his first visit to the United Nations last year, he ridiculed North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-un, as a suicidal “rocket man” and threatened to “totally destroy” his country. He also vowed to rip up the Iran nuclear deal, which he called an “embarrassment to the United States.” For Trump’s advisers, the biggest risk at the United Nations General Assembly this year is the reverse of what it was last year: not that he will be dangerously undiplomatic, but that he will be overly enthusiastic about engagement with wily adversaries. Far from restraining Trump’s belligerent tendencies, his senior aides are engaged in a quiet effort to avoid a direct encounter with Iran’s leader that he would be unprepared to handle or concessions that they fear could undermine their effort to keep pressure on North Korea. Either of those possibilities would rattle Trump’s aides, who are uniformly hawkish about Iran and North Korea, and favor squeezing those countries over talking to them. A meeting with President Moon Jae-in of South Korea tomorrow also looms large, since Moon is likely to press him to make concessions to keep the talks with Kim going. The South Korean leader is pressing him to accept a declaration that would formally end the Korean War. 65 years after hostilities were halted by an armistice. That is a cherished objective for Kim, who views it as a way to end North Korea’s diplomatic isolation. Trump’s aides have been trying to head off such a gesture, arguing that the United States gave up enough when Trump suspended joint military exercises with South Korea — which he referred to as “war games,” embracing North Korea’s terminology. They fear that another concession to Kim
Would feed the narrative that the North Korean leader is playing Trump. Kim believes he now has a sympathetic partner in the White House who held a summit with him against the counsel of his advisers, and agreed to a statement at Singapore, which by all measures was weak and failed to advance the U.S. policy of final, fully verified denuclearization,” Jung H. Pak, a former C.I.A. mission director for North Korea who is now a scholar at the Brookings Institution, wrote last week. Some American officials fear that Trump may already have committed to sign such a declaration when he met with Kim in June in Singapore. But because there are no comprehensive notes from those meetings, a senior intelligence official said there was no certainty about what Trump had said. Kim is pushing for another meeting with Trump, and the president is receptive. But he was likely to get a message of caution from another source: Prime Minister Abe Shinzo of Japan, with whom he had dinner in New York today. Japan shares the skepticism of White House aides about North Korea. When Abe visited him in Palm Beach, Fla., in April, Trump spoke enthusiastically about an end-of-war declaration. “People don’t realize that the Korean War has not ended,” he said. “It’s going on right now.” Abe looked on, expressionless. (Mark Landler and David E. Sanger, “U.N. Saw Fiery Trump in 2017; Now Aides Fear He’ll Play Nice,” New York Times, September 24, 2018, p. A-1)

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Trump: “We’re having a very important set of discussions today, tomorrow, and the next day. We’ve been having them for quite some time since you first gained office. ...We’ve had terrific talks on trade. And we’ll be signing, in a little while, a very important trade agreement with South Korea and the United States. And I think it’s a very exciting event. It was a long time in coming, and it’s a basic redoing of the agreement that was done before, which was a very unfair agreement for the United States. And I think that President Moon and myself, we’re very happy. It’s great for South Korea. It’s great for the United States. It’s great for both. We also talked, obviously, about North Korea, where we’re making tremendous progress. Chairman Kim has been really very open and terrific, frankly. And I think he wants to see something happen. So we have done — I think, mutually, we’ve done very well with respect to North Korea. And we’ll be discussing that during the next couple of days. We’ll be certainly discussing it now. ... MOON: (As interpreted.) Well, thank you, Mr. President. It’s a pleasure to see you again, four months after our meeting in Washington, in May. Thanks for your support. I had a great trip to Pyongyang. We reached a good agreement between the two Koreas, and achieved progress on denuclearization of North Korea. There was also a message from Chairman Kim that he wanted me to convey to you, and I’m very pleased to have this opportunity to meet you and give you a readout of the discussions I had with Chairman Kim Jong Un immediately after returning from Pyongyang. I hope it will contribute to the efforts to achieve complete denuclearization and peace on the Korean Peninsula, as well as to the U.S.-North Korea dialogue at your second summit with Chairman Kim. In particular, it’s hugely significant that Chairman Kim personally expressed his commitment to denuclearization in front of the world media, and that I highlighted once again the denuclearization agreement reached with Chairman Kim in front of 150,000 citizens of Pyongyang. Now, North Korea’s decision to relinquish its nuclear program has been officialized to a degree that not even those within North Korea can reverse. Thanks to your bold decision and new approach, we are in the process of solving a problem that no one has been able to solve in the decades past. I’d like to thank you for this, Mr. President. And Chairman Kim also repeatedly conveyed his unwavering trust and expectations for you, while expressing his hope to meet you soon to swiftly conclude the denuclearization process with you, because you are, indeed, the only person who can solve this problem. I look forward to seeing the U.S.-North Korea summit take place, and wish you a great success. As for the revision of the free trade agreement between our two countries, I believe that it’s significant because it means that our alliance is being expanded to the economic realm as well. And I’m very pleased that we have revised this agreement to achieve a freer, a fairer, and more mutually beneficial agreement. And through this agreement, I hope that the bilateral economic ties will be promoted even further. TRUMP: ...We’ll be having a second summit with Chairman Kim in the not too distant future. Our Secretary of State will be dealing with that subject. Mike Pompeo has been in touch with them, and we’ve been in touch with them. And I think within a fairly — pretty short period of time, that will be announced and it will be location to be determined. But we’re both very much looking forward to having it. It will be between North Korea and the United States. It will be similar to the format we had before,
President Trump thrust his commitment to an “America First” foreign policy back onto the United Nations General Assembly. But in his second address on this diplomatic stage, he sounded as eager to claim credit for his achievements after 20 months in office, as he was to disrupt the world order. If. Trump had changed, so had his audience. This time, emissaries from around the world listened quietly as Trump fulminated at foes like Iran and failing states like Venezuela. They nodded as he singled out an enemy-turned-partner, Kim Jong-un of North Korea, expressing optimism for a diplomatic opening that would have seemed far-fetched even a year ago. But when Trump declared, “In less than two years, my administration has accomplished more than almost any administration in the history of our country,” the crowd broke into mumbles and laughter. Briefly disconcerted, the president smiled and said, “I did not expect that reaction, but that’s O.K.”

Trump still commands the world stage and he is still capable of upending American foreign policy with a single tweet. But after a year of such bombast, many in the audience at the United Nations treated him almost as a source of levity, not fear. There is also evidence that foreign leaders are more willing to push back. Speaking after Trump, President Emmanuel Macron of France said the Paris climate accord had survived despite America’s decision to pull out. In a not-so-subtle slap at Trump, he proposed that countries refuse to sign trade deals with those who do not comply with the accord. Yesterday, France joined Germany and Britain — as well as the other signatories, Russia, China, and Iran — in recommitting to the Iran nuclear accord, repudiated by Trump in May. They did so even as Trump urged Europe to isolate Iran and warned of draconian new sanctions that would penalize America’s allies for not cutting off commercial ties with the Iranians. Trump’s warm words for Kim were a 180-degree shift from 2017, when he said the North Korean leader was on a suicidal collision course with the United States. That showed he is open to radical shifts in approach, based on his idiosyncratic view of personal diplomacy and his self-avowed skill as a dealmaker in spotting opportunities. As he did last year, Trump relied on his senior domestic adviser, Stephen Miller, for much of the speechwriting. The national security adviser, John R. Bolton, an even more ardent proponent than Trump of the virtues of sovereignty, also injected themes. In his own speech at a conference today, Bolton alluded to the frequent description in Iran of the United States as the “Great Satan.” “If you cross us, our allies, or our partners,” Bolton said, “if you harm our citizens, if you continue to lie, cheat, and deceive, yes, there will indeed be hell to pay.” Critics said Trump’s triumphalist tone provoked the derisive reaction. “If you’re boastful, and in the most improbable ways, it’s just becomes outlandish,” said Nicholas Burns, a senior diplomat under President George W. Bush. “It was a sad moment for American leadership.” The president expressed resentment toward a familiar array of perceived malefactors: allies, who he said did not pay their fair share for military defense; trading partners, who he said exploited unfair agreements that harmed American workers; and oil producers, whom he accused of gouging the United States and other customers. “OPEC and OPEC nations are, as usual, ripping off the rest of the world, and I don’t like it,” Trump said. “Nobody should like it.”

Trump also assailed countries, like China, that use industrial planning in their economies to undercut competitors on trade. The United States, he said, was systematically renegotiating what he called unfair trade deals and striking back against China’s theft of intellectual property, predatory licensing agreements and the dumping of goods in the American market under President Xi Jinping. “I have great respect and affection for my friend President Xi, but I have made clear that our trade imbalance is just not acceptable,” he said. “China’s market distortions, and the way they deal, cannot be tolerated.” America’s other great strategic rival, Russia, went unmentioned by Trump, except for a reference to what he described as Germany’s dependence on Russian energy.
That was also Trump’s only mention of Germany, a staunch ally, though he praised its neighbor, Poland, which has an increasingly autocratic government, for its construction of a pipeline in the Baltic Sea to diversify its energy supply. The president singled out India, Saudi Arabia, Israel and Poland as worthy partners: nations that he said had distinctive traditions and cultures, patriotic societies and a fierce commitment to independence. (Mark Landler, “Trump at U.N.: Scorn for Iran, Praise for Kim,” *New York Times*, September 25, 2018, p. A1)

Trump UNGA speech: “With support from many countries here today, we have engaged with North Korea to replace the specter of conflict with a bold and new push for peace. In June, I traveled to Singapore to meet face to face with North Korea’s leader, Chairman Kim Jong Un. We had highly productive conversations and meetings, and we agreed that it was in both countries’ interest to pursue the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Since that meeting, we have already seen a number of encouraging measures that few could have imagined only a short time ago. The missiles and rockets are no longer flying in every direction. Nuclear testing has stopped. Some military facilities are already being dismantled. Our hostages have been released. And as promised, the remains of our fallen heroes are being returned home to lay at rest in American soil. I would like to thank Chairman Kim for his courage and for the steps he has taken, though much work remains to be done. The sanctions will stay in place until denuclearization occurs. I also want to thank the many member states who helped us reach this moment — a moment that is actually far greater than people would understand; far greater — but for also their support and the critical support that we will all need going forward. A special thanks to President Moon of South Korea, Prime Minister Abe of Japan, and President Xi of China.” (White House transcript, President Trump’s Speech to the U.N. General Assembly, September 25, 2018)

The next commander of the U.S. Forces Korea cast doubt on an inter-Korean military deal that would result in the withdrawal of soldiers from the demilitarized zone. Gen. Robert Abrams told the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services that all activities in the DMZ are under the jurisdiction of the UN Command, which the USFK commander also heads. President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un last week agreed to withdraw 11 guard posts each from the DMZ by year’s end and disarm the Joint Security Area in the border truce village of Panmunjom. But it seems consultation with the U.S. has not gone smoothly. Abrams said military talks can go on between the two Koreas, but the process should be "brokered, adjudicated, observed and enforced" by the UN Command. Last week, a Defense Ministry source said, “We negotiated the matters 52 times through three different channels. But Pentagon spokesman Christopher Logan said on Sep. 19 that the U.S. Defense Department will "thoroughly review" the military pact. Moon told the Council on Foreign Relations in New York that "it's up to the two Koreas to reduce military tensions caused by conventional weapons," though the denuclearization process should depend on steps to be taken by the North and the U.S. "A basic step was taken by the two Koreas in the joint declaration in Pyongyang to reduce military tensions," Moon added. "If the declaration is implemented properly, it'll be possible to take a next step to reduce North Korea's long-range artillery pieces... and more threatening weapons later." Some of the steps in the cross-border agreement could require UNC approval, such as joint use of the lower tributary of the Han River and joint excavation of the remains of soldiers who died during the Korean War inside the buffer zone, but not a 20-40 km no-fly zone near the DMZ, because the UNC has jurisdiction only inside the DMZ. A military source said the UNC is very prickly about any incursions into its jurisdiction. For instance, one South Korean government official was unable to travel to North Korea last month to inspect North Korean railways because the UN Command prohibited him from crossing the military demarcation line. But considering the atmosphere within the Trump administration, which is in favor of engagement with North Korea, the UNC could be instructed to give the South some leeway. A UNC source said, "The U.S. military will find it difficult to oppose the policies of the U.S. president. If U.S.-North Korea talks progress smoothly and progress is made in denuclearization, there is a strong chance of authorization" for the inter-Korean military deal. A Defense Ministry official here insisted there is no discord. "The ministry has held close negotiations with the UN Command about the deal, including the mutual dismantlement of guard posts on a trial basis," the official said. "The current head of the UN Command," Gen. Vincent
Brooks, "also expressed support for the deal." Meanwhile, Abrams told senators that any inter-Korean peace treaty would be a direct agreement between the two sides and not invalidate the armistice approved by the UN Security Council. Abrams also predicted that massive joint South Korea-U.S. military exercises will be staged next spring as scheduled. He said the suspension of the exercises has caused "degradation" to military readiness on the Korean Peninsula. This also contradicts his predecessor, who earlier said there was no weakening of preparedness since smaller-scale exercises are continuing. (Jeong Woo-sang, Cho Yi-jun, and Yu Yong-weon, “Next USFK Chief Casts Doubt on Inter-Korean Military Deal,” Chosun Ilbo, September 27, 2018)

In response to concerns about discord in South Korea-U.S. relations due to military agreements between North and South Korea, the Ministry of National Defense (MND) hit back, reaffirming that "South Korea is in close consultation with the U.S." The agreement to prevent accidental clashes between the two Koreas abruptly led to speculation of conflict between South Korea and the U.S., and this appears to be due to the ambiguous attitude of U.S. authorities combined with exaggerated reports from some conservative media outlets. The incident that directly triggered speculation was remarks made on September 25 by General Robert B. Abrams, who is nominated to become the new commander of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) and United Nations Command (UNC). During a Senate hearing to vet his position, Abrams stated, “All activities in the DMZ are under the jurisdiction of the UN Command, so the removal of GPs (Guard Posts) would have to be approved by the UN Command,” stressing the fact that the UNC retains jurisdiction over the DMZ as a signatory to the Armistice Agreement of July 1953. Some Korea’s conservative media outlets reported that this statement represented a challenge to the inter-Korean agreement to remove 11 GPs within the DMZ, raising the possibility of disharmony between South Korea and the U.S.

However, the South Korean Ministry of National Defense was quick to quell such concerns. Upon learning of Abrams’ statement on September 26, the ministry sent a text message to the press corps covering the MND saying, “The entire process of reaching the military agreement was conducted in close consultation with the UN Command.” Following this, Defense Ministry Spokesperson Choi Hyun-soo added, “While the new Minister of National Defense [Jeong Gyeong-du] was receiving a briefing on September 24 about the demilitarization of the Panmunjom JSA, Lt. Gen Wayne D. Eyre of the Combined Forces Command was present and made it clear that ‘the US agrees with the inter-Korean military agreement and will provide full support,’” even specifying the details of the conversation. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether speculation about South Korean-U.S. discord will quickly subside, as the official position of U.S. authorities on the inter-Korean military agreement remains unclear. In response to a request from RFA for a statement on the inter-Korean agreement, U.S. Department of Defense Spokesperson Christopher Logan declined to clearly address the issue, stating, “I’m not going to comment on any specific items in the agreement or speculate on what will happen.” While the U.S. has no reason to oppose an agreement aimed at preventing accidental military clashes, this reflects the contradictory attitude of the Department of Defense, which is more concerned with its own military interests. The military agreement mixes areas which are unrelated to the U.S. armed forces or the UN Command with other items that require cooperation, agreement or prior consultation with the US armed forces (the UN Command). For example, some matters, including pulling GPs from within the DMZ, are effectively carrying out the provisions in the Armistice Agreement, and accordingly do not require agreement from the UN Command. On the other hand, forming a consultative body that consists of both Koreas and the UN Command for the purposes of demilitarizing the Panmunjom JSA would be impossible without agreement from the UN Command. The fact that the formation of a trilateral consultative body was included in the agreement is evidence that such confirmation had already been obtained from the UN Command. This demonstrates that speculation about South Korea-U.S. discord is likely to have been exaggerated. Furthermore, matters such as expanding the no-fly zone near the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) would require prior or at least subsequent approval from the USFK. “The fundamental goal of the inter-Korean military agreement is preventing accidental military clashes and easing tensions,” said a senior official from the MND. “This is identical to what the US is seeking. This issue was discussed with the U.S. prior to the inter-Korean agreement, and we will continue to consult with the U.S. to implement its provisions.” (Park Byong-su, “South Korean Defense Ministry Reiterates That Inter-Korean Military Agreements Have No Effect on SK-U.S. Alliance,” Hankyore, September 28, 2018) “The U.S.’s effort to revitalize the UNC goes
Prime Minister Abe Shinzo shifted his stance of applying pressure on North Korea to holding dialogue with Pyongyang in his speech at the United Nations General Assembly. “Breaking the mold of mutual distrust with North Korea, I am prepared to make a fresh start and come face to face with Chairman Kim Jong Un,” Abe said. “I will do all I can to remove the long-standing postwar structure from Northeast Asia.” With Pyongyang refraining from launching ballistic missiles and conducting nuclear tests, Abe said: “I am holding the biggest interest in changes in North Korea. Now, North Korea is at a crossroads, where it can seize a historic opportunity or miss it.” In his speech last year at the U.N. General Assembly, Abe urged the international community to continue putting the squeeze on North Korea, saying, “What’s necessary is not dialogue but pressure.” (Nikaido Yuki, “Abe’s Speech Omits Pressure in Referring to North Korea,” Asahi Shimbun, September 26, 2018)
October? **POMPEO:** I don't know when the summit will take place. We - it may happen in October, but more likely sometime after that. It takes a little while to put these together, and we want to make sure we've got the conditions just right so the two leaders can be successful.

**Q:** South Korean President Moon Jae-in said that he was going to deliver a secret message from Kim Jong-un, the North Korean leader, to President Trump. What was in that message? **POMPEO:** So the messages that we've been receiving from Chairman Kim have been very consistent. They are that he is intent on denuclearizing, he understands that, he understands the scope of that and what that means. He's been very consistent in his commitment to delivering on that promise. We need to find our way forward to achieve that for the world. It's great. I'm here at the UN this week. These are UN Security Council resolutions that are being enforced. **Q:** But it's a lot of words at this point and I know you have been clear. You have set key demands. I mean, has the North declared their stockpile yet? No, right? I mean, have they set a timetable to give up these weapons? No. Have they agreed to inspectors? What steps have they taken to show proof that they are going to denuclearize? **POMPEO:** Norah, I've been pretty consistent. I've also been consistent about the other item, which is I'm not going to talk about the conversations, the negotiations each day, the twists and turns. What we're going to do is we're going to continue the good work we have. We're going to make sure there's no more missile tests, no more nuclear tests. We're going to continue to work on getting American remains back, we're going to continue to work towards denuclearization, and it will take a while. There will be a process to this. President Trump's been clear about that and clear-eyed about that since the very beginning. **Q:** The South Korean president gave an interview to Fox News's Bret Baier, and in that he said that the North Korean leader will allow in inspectors, would be willing to verification. Is that true? **POMPEO:** Yes. **Q:** And have any U.S. or international inspectors been inside North Korea? **POMPEO:** So we're working our way towards making sure that this verification that we have talked about since the beginning - and many have been skeptical, Norah - we've talked about this verification from the beginning. We're not going to buy a pig in a poke. We're going to get this right, we're going to deliver on this commitment that Chairman Kim has made to the world, and then there's going to be a brighter future for the North Korean people, and there'll be a more peaceful world. That's what the President talked about yesterday in his UN speech and there will be a wonderful outcome if we can get that. **Q:** And do you envision at this next summit with the North Korean leader that there could be an opportunity to sign a declaration to the end of the Korean War? **POMPEO:** It's hard to know. I don't want to prejudge precisely where we'll end up, but make no mistake about it, there is real progress being made and we're going to continue to work at it until the point in time where, as the President says - we could be wrong, it may not happen - but until such time as we conclude we can't get this done, we're going to continue to drive to achieve the - continue the progress which we've already made.” (DoS, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s Interview with Norah O’Donnell of CBS News, Lotte New York Palace Hotel, New York City, September 26, 2018)
countries friendly to the North. Ri’s brisk moves on the sidelines of the U.N. assembly this year are in sharp contrast with his abstention from public activities in New York last year when there were no reports of Ri having contacts with China and Russia in New York during the U.N. General Assembly. Watchers say North Korean leader Kim Jong-un’s successive summit diplomacy with South Korea, the U.S. and China appears to have widened the North’s diplomatic horizon on international stages like the U.N. assembly. Indeed, Ri was given special protocol and even treated like a head of state when he landed at a New York airport on September 25. One day after his arrival in New York, the North Korean foreign minister held talks with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, apparently to discuss the latter’s fourth visit to Pyongyang and prepare for the second summit between Kim and President Donald Trump. The meeting itself between the top diplomats of North Korea and the U.S. on the sidelines of the U.N. assembly was seen as exceptional. Pompeo said after the talks that he accepted Kim’s invitation to go to Pyongyang in October. On the same day, Ri held separate meetings with Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. According to the watchers, Pyongyang has sought to take advantage of its alliance with China and Russia in its ongoing denuclearization negotiations with the U.S. Beijing and Moscow have also sought to maintain their influence on the North in the process of its improvement of relationship with the U.S., they note. In particular, China and Russia have persistently called for easing U.N. sanctions on the North since Kim’s first summit with Trump in Singapore in June. Ri’s meeting with Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono later also drew attention amid Tokyo’s moves to prevent it being isolated from the denuclearization talks. The foreign ministerial talks between North Korea and Japan were held for the first time since August 2015. Kono said he contacted Ri, instead of holding talks, on the sidelines of a regional security forum in Singapore in August. It remains to be seen whether Ri will hold talks with his South Korean counterpart, Kang Kyung-wha, in New York. (Yonhap, “N. Korea’s Foreign Minister Engages in Brisk Diplomacy at U.N.,” September 27, 2018)

President Trump said that he has years to reach an agreement with North Korea to rid the country of nuclear weapons, reversing the position he took a year ago that Pyongyang had to disarm rapidly. “I don’t want to get into the time game,” he said at a news conference late in the day, after serving as chairman of a United Nations Security Council meeting on nuclear proliferation. “I got all the time in the world,” Trump said. “I don’t have to rush it.” Trump’s statement came despite satellite photographs and other evidence that have led American intelligence agencies to conclude that North Korea continues to produce nuclear fuel and fabricate it into weapons. American officials estimate that the country now has between 20 and 60 nuclear weapons, and the number may be rising. But Trump argued that the halt in nuclear and missile testing by North Korea — and a series of private letters exchanged with Kim Jong-un, the country’s leader — had taken the urgency out of the disarmament issue. “If it takes two years, three years or five months,” Trump said, suggesting that the timeline for North Korea to surrender its nuclear weapons was flexible. Trump suggested that the North had been defanged, contending that his diplomatic efforts with Kim were succeeding where others had failed. “If I wasn’t elected, you would have had a war” with the North, Trump said. He contended that in his private conversations with President Obama before taking office, Obama told him that the United States had been on the brink of war with North Korea. “He said to me that he was very close to going to war,” Trump said. Obama’s aides say that while the former president had explored many military options, he concluded that the risks to South Korea, which shares the Korean Peninsula with the North, were simply too big. But Trump said that relations between the two countries had turned around during his presidency, adding that he had received two letters from Kim, demonstrating “his feelings for wanting to get this done.” “They’re incredible letters,” Trump said. “He wants to make a deal. I want to make a deal.” The challenge for Trump is that he has yet to win a freeze on nuclear production and weapons from North Korea. Without that freeze, the country’s arsenal could continue to expand, potentially creating an even larger problem — exactly what Trump criticized his predecessors for doing. Trump argued that he had made no concessions to North Korea by engaging in diplomacy, and he defended his decision to suspend joint military exercises with South Korea as a cost-saving measure that benefited the United States. “I didn’t give anything,” Trump said. “I gave nothing. What did I give?” The military exercises — “I call them military games,” Trump said — could be
Trump: “Q: You’re getting letters from Chairman Kim [Jong Un]. Why do you need a second summit with the North Korean leader so and what do you -- what would it be for? TRUMP: Because I like him. So I received two letters from Chairman Kim. At some point, I’ll, you know, give these letters. They’re incredible letters. They’re -- they’re letters that are magnificent in the sense of his feeling for wanting to get this done. I really believe he wants to get it done. I may be wrong. I heard somebody on a certain network last night, I won’t mention which one, say, why has president trump given so much to North Korea? I said, wait a minute. I asked Sarah Huckabee, please call this person. I gave nothing, other than I met. What did I give them? I didn’t do what Obama did, give $1.8 billion in cash to get back four hostages. I got back our hostages. I haven’t paid them anything. I haven’t paid them ten cents. But he wants to make a deal and I would like to make a deal. We actually have a very good relationship together. A lot different than the last time he was at the United Nations. That was a little bit rough. Don’t forget, that time they said, oh, Trump is saying these horrible things. He’s going to get us into a war. You are going to have a war if I wasn’t elected, you would be in a war. And President Obama essentially said the same thing. He was ready to go to war. You would have had a war and you would have lost millions, not thousands. You would have lost millions of people. Seoul has 30 million people, 40 miles and 30 miles from this very dangerous border. If I wasn’t elected, you would have had a war. President Obama thought you had a good war. You know how close he was to pressing the trigger for war? Millions of people. With me, nobody is talking about nobody is talking about that. We have a very good relationship. He likes me, I like him. We get along. He wrote me two of the most beautiful letters. When I showed one of the letters -- just one -- to Prime Minister Abe, he said, this is actually a groundbreaking letter. This is an incredible -- this is a historic letter. And it is a historic letter. It’s a beautiful -- it’s a beautiful piece of art. And I think we’re going to make a deal. Will we make a deal, Steve? I don’t really know. But I think we’re going to. In the meantime, and I have said it -- I don’t want to bore you. No rockets, no missiles, no nuclear tests. You know, for over a year. Where you haven’t seen. Before I got here, everybody in this room thought you were going to war. And then what happened, it was funny. They said, he was terrible! He was so rough with Chairman Kim! Kim Jong-un. He was so rough! It’s terrible. Well, I had a great meeting with President Putin. And on that one, they said, he was too soft with President Putin. I had a great meeting. It lasted for two hours. We discussed everything. Ukraine, Syria, Israel and Israel’s protection. We had a great meeting. They wanted me to end up in a boxing match. And you know what, if I was killer-tough with president Putin, they would have said, he was too tough. You can’t win with these people, but you keep going. And in the meantime we -- Q: How long do you think it will take North Korea -- TRUMP: Steve, I don’t want to get into the time game. You know why? I told Mike Pompeo. I said, Mike, don’t get into the time game. We stopped him. They’re taking down plants, they’re taking down a lot of different testing areas. They’re going to take down some more. You’ll be hearing about that very soon. I don’t want to go ahead of myself. But you’ll be hearing about it soon. They have no interest right now in testing nuclear. You know, we had a case just about when I was coming into office, you’ll remember it, where there was a massive -- they thought it was an a mountain moved over an inch-and-a-half. We’re talking about mountains. North Korea is very mountainous. Beautiful land. Beautiful. This mountain actually shifted. It shifted. And somebody thought it was and then they found out, no, this was nuclear testing. Shifted a mountain. I’m talking about serious stuff. Serious size. When I came in and certainly before I came in, and even at the beginning of my -- because when I was having rhetorical contact -- you know, contests earlier, I guess you could call it, with chairman Kim, which we both smile at now and we laugh at. But everybody thought that was a horrible thing. We’ve had many presidents who were unable to do anything. Anything at all. With North Korea. We now have a good relationship. We have a good relationship. And most importantly, all of the things that you’ve been hearing about, the horror stories. In my opinion, they’re gone. Now, could they start up again? Yes. I’m a deal guy. Could they start? Yeah. Could be we don’t work it out.
think -- I have it right here. I think that what we've done behind the scenes, which nobody really knows about, and I don't blame you for not knowing about. Personal letters, private letters. But saying they want to get it done. We know much more than the media for a change. Much more. But if you saw what's going on behind the scenes, I think you would be very impressed. We were a country going to war. I really believe that President Obama would admit that he said it's by far his biggest problem. When I sat with him prior to going to office, going into office, he said to me, that's by far the biggest problem. And he said to me that he was very close to going into war. And millions of people -- not -- you know, they say, oh, thousands of people. No, no, not thousands. Millions of people would have been killed. And that could have left -- you're right next to China. That could have been a World War very easily. Right now we're in a great position. I don't want to play the time game. I told Mike Pompeo, don't let them do that to you. I haven't given anything. And all of a sudden, we got back, it was a few weeks ago. I think we were back like two-and-a-half months from the summit, which was a great success. And people are screaming, what's taking so long? I said, oh, I get it. You've got to understand the media. I've been dealing with the media all my life. Too much. Too much. They're screaming, and I saw that. And our guys were -- and not Mike, but our guys were being, oh, well, we're working this fast. I said, I've got all the time in the world. I don't have to rush it. There's no -- you know, cessation of sanctions. We've got the sanctions on. I didn't take any sanctions off. I did see a reporter last night, a guy I like, personally, a lot. And he asked a question to President Moon [Jae-in] of South Korea. He said, why did the president give so much? I didn't give anything. I gave nothing. What have I given? Other than some time. Yes, I flew to Singapore. We had a meeting. Now, giving would be if I took the sanctions off. I didn't want to do -- if you ask General [James] Mattis for a year-and-a-half, I said why don't we stop these ridiculous, in my opinion, the military, I call them the military games. If I told you how much those games cost, and frankly, I told South Korea, you should be paying for these games. We pay for them. They say, well, we fly the planes in from a short distance away. I said, where is that? Guam. Oh, huh. How long a trip is that? Seven hours. Oh, great. We're flying these massive bombers. I've wanted to stop this for a long time. I consider that an asset. But we have done -- we're saving -- by the way, just for the taxpayer -- we're saving a fortune. And if we need them, we can start them up immediately. If I think we need them, I'll start them before the generals will start them. The fact is, this reporter said that. I said, what have we done? I haven't given anything. And we're really on to the cusp. I think we're really going to do something that's going to be very important. But we're not playing the time game. If it takes two years, three years, or five months. Doesn't matter. There's no nuclear testing, and there's no testing of rockets.” … Q. You talk about this friendship you have with Xi Jinping, and yet, essentially, what you did today is accused his government — THE PRESIDENT: That's right. Q — of interfering in our internal affairs — THE PRESIDENT: That's right. Q — subverting our Democratic process, and doing it to hurt you, the Republican Party — THE PRESIDENT: Doing it to help them. Q — and your backers. THE PRESIDENT: You know what? Yeah. Doing it to help them. Q So how can a guy who does that be your friend? THE PRESIDENT: I think that we are able to — and maybe he's not anymore. I'll be honest with you, I think we had a very good friendship. I think we had a very good relationship; we understand each other. They are doing studies on Donald Trump. They're trying to figure it all out because this has never happened to them before. It's never happened. Think of it, you've never seen — you've covered very well — you've never seen this happen. They're having big problems. I don't want them to have problems, but they got to make a fair deal. Just like Canada has got to make a fair deal. I believe that he and I have a very good chemistry together. And I can tell you that about many leaders. I can also tell you a few where I don't feel I'll ever have a chemistry with them. I don't want to have a chemistry with them. And for those people, I'll have Pompeo, Nikki, Bolton, Jared. I can go — our general; I'll have our general. Or if they can't do it, I'll have Sarah Huckabee do it. Right? But for the most part, I have very good — very good with Prime Minister Abe. Very good with President Moon. By the way, what President Moon said last night — I know you won't report it — but Bret Baier interviewed him last night and he asked him about me. I can't say — because you would say I'm too braggadocio — but what he said about me last night was an unbelievable thing. “ Couldn't have happened without President Trump, and it never would happen without President Trump. And nobody else could do it.” You know, I mean, you'll take a look. But I will tell you, China is very special. Very special. They're incredible people.
It’s an incredible country. What they’ve done is unbelievable. (White House Press Office, Press Conference by President Trump, Lotte New York Palace Hotel, New York City, September 26, 2018)

KCNA: “The foreign ministers’ meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was held at the UN Headquarters on September 26. Present were foreign ministers and delegates of NAM member states, including the DPRK, and observer delegations. DPRK Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho, who is heading the delegation of the DPRK, made a speech at the meeting. He said that at present, the active promotion of the Culture of Peace presented itself as a matter of vital importance more so now than ever in the building of a just and peaceful new world. He went on: The Culture of Peace contains the meaning of building a world of peaceful coexistence where diverse political, economic systems and cultural traditions command mutual respect; therefore, it is recognized as an important matter directly linked with world peace. Unfortunately the efforts of the NAM member states to establish the Culture of Peace have encountered grave challenges in the prevailing complicated state of international affairs. Forces that seek world hegemony pretend to extend their so-called ”support” for the Peace Culture in public, but in reality they are going against it. The current situation developments call on all the member states to raise their vigilance against such maneuvers and resolutely safeguard the NAM Purposes and Principles, and the UN Charter that focus on respect for sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs and peaceful settlement of disputes. Noting that the government of the DPRK, as a member state of the NAM, has made consistent efforts for the strengthening and development of the movement in conformity with its founding goals and the principles of its action, he said: The DPRK government will continue to remain true to the noble ideals and principles of the NAM and fulfill its responsibility and mission so as to further consolidate the solidarity and unity and strengthening and development of the movement and expand the friendly and cooperative relations among member states.” (KCNA, “Speech of DPRK FM at NAM Foreign Ministers’ Meeting,” September 28, 2018)

The top nuclear envoys from South Korea and the United States have convened three meetings during the 73rd United Nations General Assembly in New York to discuss issues on North Korea, South Korean representatives to the United Nations said. Lee Do-hoon, South Korea's top nuclear envoy, met with U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun from Wednesday to Thursday, according to the South Korean Permanent Mission to the UN. Lee and Biegun reportedly talked about achievements from the 3rd inter-Korean summit in Pyongyang and a recent summit between South Korean President Moon Jae-in and US President Donald Trump, as well as ways to lead North Korea’s denuclearization and establish lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula. They also reportedly touched on U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's plan to visit Pyongyang next month and a possible second summit between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. The meetings between the two envoys were held after Pompeo revealed that he invited North Koreans to meet Biegun in Vienna, Austria, at the ”earliest opportunity.” "What’s really important at this point is that the U.S. and North Korea should quickly meet and have working-level talks (in Vienna),” a high-ranking South Korean official said on condition of anonymity. “They’re currently waiting for answers, and the venue and the date will be finalized quickly, once preparations are all set.” (Yonhap, “S. Korea, U.S. Nuclear Envoys Meet 3 Times in N.Y. to Discuss NK Issues,” Korea Herald, September 29, 2018)

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that the world stands at the “dawn of a new day” in relations with North Korea but that international sanctions must remain in place and vigorously enforced if diplomatic efforts to get the country to denuclearize are to succeed — a position that faced resistance from China and Russia. Chairing a special session of the U.N. Security Council, Pompeo said President Donald Trump’s diplomatic breakthrough with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has led to a point where the nuclear threat from the country can be resolved. But the “unprecedented diplomatic opening” would close unless the pressure from sanctions is kept up. “Until the final denuclearization of the DPRK is achieved and fully verified, it is our solemn collective responsibility to fully implement all U.N. Security Council resolutions pertaining to
North Korea,” he said, using the initials for the country’s formal name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. Pompeo said the U.S. has evidence that U.N. sanctions, particularly those restricting North Korean oil imports and coal exports, are being violated and he demanded that U.N. members ensure they are respected. “Enforcement of U.N. Security Council sanctions must continue vigorously and without fail until we realize final, fully verified denuclearization,” Pompeo said. China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi, whose country is North Korea’s main ally, agreed that the sanctions “remain valid,” but he said the resolutions provide for them to be modified based on North Korea’s compliance and the council should consider doing so. “China believes that the Security Council may consider invoking in due course this provision in order to encourage (North Korea) and other relevant parties to move denuclearization further ahead,” he said. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Moscow believes that it’s “very important” for the Security Council to regularly discuss “whether it’s advisable to review various restrictions against DPRK as it moves towards giving up its nuclear weapons.” He stressed that negotiations are “a two-way street” and steps by the DPRK toward gradual disarmament “should be followed by easing of sanctions.” The Security Council must not become “a hindrance” to dialogue between the two Koreas, Lavrov said, and he suggested that the council committee monitoring sanctions against the DPRK should consider applications for exemptions from sanctions “to carry out projects of inter-Korean cooperation which Pyongyang and Seoul have agreed to.” Lavrov criticized Western nations for “stubbornly” ruling out any positive signal from the Security Council on the positive steps taken by Pyongyang so far. He said Russia will circulate a council resolution that would have the council “send a clear signal in support of the positive momentum on the situation around the Korean peninsula.” China and Russia also said they share with North and South Korea a desire to produce a document that would declare an end to the Korean War, which ended with an armistice and not a formal peace treaty. The Trump administration has balked at signing such a declaration without significant progress on denuclearization, such as North Korea submitting a complete inventory of its nuclear and ballistic missile facilities that could be used by international inspectors to verify they have been dismantled. China’s Wang said “the recent positive developments on the peninsula are exactly what China has been working for over the years. He stressed that peace on the peninsula is essentially about security and “the key is to address the legitimate security concerns of all parties in an appropriate and balanced manner.” Trump, Pompeo and other U.S. officials have repeatedly reported progress in the denuclearization discussions with the North, but there has been little visible evidence of that to date. (Associated Press, “U.S. Seeks to Keep North Korea Sanctions; China, Russia Object,” Yomiuri Shimbun, September 27, 2018)

Pompeo at U.N.: “Time and time again over the past quarter century, the United Nations has made it clear: the world cannot accept a nuclear-armed North Korea. That’s not just the United States position. That is the world’s position. Past diplomatic attempts to halt North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic missile development were unsuccessful. But now we’re at the dawn of a new day. Since taking office, President Trump has led the international pressure campaign that has resulted in the first significant diplomatic breakthrough in decades. During President Trump and Chairman Kim’s historic Singapore summit, Chairman Kim committed to work towards the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The two leaders share a common personal understanding of what must take place for the transformation of the United States-DPRK relations. The United States continues to engage with North Korea to implement the commitments made in Singapore. Yesterday, I had a very positive meeting with Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho to discuss how we can move forward on all four commitments in the Singapore joint statement. We also discussed a second summit between President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong-un. We must not forget what’s brought us this far: the historic international pressure campaign that this council has made possible through the sanctions that it imposed. Until the final denuclearization of the DPRK is achieved and fully verified, it is our solemn collective responsibility to fully implement all UN Security Council resolutions pertaining to North Korea. President Trump has made abundantly clear that if Chairman Kim follows through on his commitments, a much brighter future lies ahead for North Korea and its people, and the United States will be at the forefront of facilitating that bright future. We want to see that time come as quickly as possible. But the path to peace and a brighter future is only
through diplomacy and only denuclearization. That means any other path North Korea may choose will inevitably lead to ever-increasing isolation and pressure. It is imperative for members of the United Nations to take that to heart. Enforcement of UN Security Council sanctions must continue vigorously and without fail until we realize the fully, final, verified denuclearization. The members of this council must set the example on that effort, and we must all hold each other accountable. Particularly, we must all be accountable to enforce Resolution 2397, which lowered the annual cap on refined petroleum imports to North Korea. The United States has assessed – and we can say in no uncertain terms – that the cap of 500,000 barrels has been breached this year. We continue to see illegal imports of additional refined petroleum using ship-to-ship transfers, which are clearly prohibited under the UN resolution. As UN Security Council members, we must convey to the captains of these ships, to their owners, and anyone else involved in these transfers that we are watching them and that they must cease their illicit activity. We must all be accountable for cutting off North Korea’s illegal coal exports, which provide funds that go directly to its WMD programs. And we must be accountable, too, for curbing the number of North Korean laborers permitted within our borders. The United States is troubled by recent reports that North Korea, including members of the Security Council, are hosting new North Korean laborers. This violates the spirit and the letter of the Security Council resolutions that we all agreed to uphold. And while sanctions remain part of the total approach we are pursuing to rid the Korean Peninsula of nuclear weapons, I want to finish on a positive note. We are well into a diplomatic process, and we hope – indeed, we want – to see this through to a successful end. I’m pleased that, based upon recent exchanges between President Trump and Chairman Kim, that the President has directed me to travel to Pyongyang next month to meet with Chairman Kim and to accelerate that process. I want to reiterate that the future can be very bright for North Korea if it makes good on its commitment to final, fully verified denuclearization. It will lead to the positive transformation of the U.S.-DPRK relations, to greater prosperity for the North Korean people, and to an enduring peace. In our vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific, nations are strong, sovereign, connected, prosperous, and at peace. But that vision for the region will never be complete if we fail to bring about this transformation on the Korean Peninsula. The Korean people, the region, and the world will never realize the full promise of the future if we do not seize this unprecedented diplomatic opening for peace. I said at the beginning of my statement that we are at the dawn of a new day in the world’s relationship with North Korea. We do not yet know what that day will bring, but we are hopeful that the current breakthrough in diplomacy will yield a brighter future for North Korea and a safer world for all of us.” (DoS, Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo, Remarks at a Meeting on the DPRK with Members of the UN Security Council, United Nations, September 27, 2018)

The foreign ministers of Japan and North Korea held talks for the first time in three years amid expectations that Pyongyang may start taking concrete steps toward denuclearization and engage in more dialogue. Foreign Minister Kono Taro told reporters that he sat down with North Korean counterpart Ri Yong Ho for about 20 minutes at U.N. headquarters, without giving further details. The meeting in New York, where the 73rd session of the General Assembly is underway, came a day after South Korea’s presidential office revealed that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un expressed during last week’s inter-Korean summit in Pyongyang his preparedness to engage in direct talks with Japan at an “appropriate time.” “I have been debriefed that it was a substantial sit-down-style meeting,” Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide told a regular news conference in Tokyo. But Suga also said he would refrain from disclosing what the two foreign ministers discussed. Kono is believed to have conveyed Japan’s stance that economic assistance will come after North Korea takes action to dismantle its missile and nuclear programs and tackles the abduction issue, and following the normalization of bilateral relations. Prime Minister Abe Shinzo has expressed a willingness to meet with Kim to resolve the long-stalled issue over Japanese who were abducted by North Korean agents in the 1970s and 1980s. “To settle the abduction issue, it is necessary for Japan and North Korea to talk directly,” said a senior Japanese diplomat. Yesterday, South Korean President Moon Jae-in told Abe that during the inter-Korean summit he touched on the importance of improving ties with Japan and that Kim, in response, voiced readiness to do so by resuming talks with Tokyo when an opportune time arises. It was the first time since August 2015 that a foreign ministerial meeting has taken place between Japan and North Korea, according
to Japan’s Foreign Ministry. Those talks were held between Kishida Fumio and Ri Su Yong. (Kyodo, “Japanese and North Korea Foreign Ministers Hold First Talks since 2015,” Japan Times, September 27, 2018)

Siegfried S. Hecker, a renowned U.S. nuclear scientist, hailed North Korea's recent conditional offer to shut down its main Yongbyon nuclear complex as "remarkable," despite skepticism that the closure may do little to contribute to its eventual disarmament. "One of the remarkable things about what President Moon Jae-in came back with is that he said (North Korean leader) Kim Jong-un agreed that he will dismantle the Yongbyon nuclear complex," Hecker, a senior fellow at the Center of International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University, said during a lecture in Seoul. "I find that hard to believe because they have several things in there that I know they pride enormously. They may well be willing to shut down the reactor, the five-megawatt, down," he added. Detractors, however, discounted the offer to close the nuclear complex, saying that the facilities there are already "outdated" or "of little strategic value." Hecker's evaluation of the summit agreement was different from that of the skeptics. "Yes, (the facilities in the Yongbyon compound) are old, but they are functional ... They can be operated. That reactor could still operate," he said. "We know that there are other uranium facilities besides Yongbyon, and since we don't know where they are, that is going to take time ... But uranium is not as dangerous as plutonium. Plutonium is more important," he added. Hecker also said that the operation of the North's nuclear facilities has continued. "They are making more plutonium. The reactor is operating. It stops every now and then because that is the way the reactor operates ... For the most part, the operation has continued throughout," he said. "The centrifuges ... You don't shut down centrifuges ... They go 24/7. Those are still operating. That doesn't surprise me at all because they haven't said yet that they would actually shut those down," he added. Asked about U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton's past mention of the proposal to ship out the North's nuclear weapons to the Oak Ridge nuclear facility in Tennessee as part of a swift denuclearization process, the scientist balked. "Even if (the North) would agree, I don't want their weapons. Do you want to be anywhere close to the plane or ship that's carrying those bombs when you don't know how they were designed and how safe they are?" he said. "That is most dangerous thing in the world to do. Only those people who designed and built the weapons should disassemble the weapons. We have no business disassembling and taking their weapons. We know how to dismantle ours. Russians know how to dismantle their own," he added. In response to a question concerning a flurry of projections on a potential timeline for the North's denuclearization, Hecker said the most important part is "politics." "How do you persuade them to do this? You have to persuade them that it is an unnecessary burden. As long as it is a treasured sword, they are not going to give it up," he said. "How long does it take to convince them? I don't know. If once you can convince them, then to actually get to the point where you demilitarize ... My suggestion is to convert from military to civilian (use of nuclear power)," he added. Hecker has advocated for a 10-year roadmap to "halt, roll back and eliminate" the North's nuclear program under a "cooperative conversion" program according to which the North would be persuaded to convert their nuclear program to civilian purposes. He also painted a positive outlook for building trust with the North, particularly in the scientific research field. "Is it impossible (to build trust)? No. You can imagine that we had (a hostile) U.S.-Soviet relationship. There was no trust. There was animosity," he said. "Scientists have a much easier time to have trust. The reason for that ... If you work with the other scientists, they have the scientific capability, and immediately have respect. And when you have respect, it is easier to develop trust." (Yonhap, “U.S. Nuclear Expert Hails N.K. Offer to Close Yongbyon Nuke Complex as ‘Remarkable,’” September 27, 2018)

Exemptions to international sanctions on North could be applied “flexibly in short-term, tactical areas according to the situation,” a senior South Korean government official said. Meeting with South Korean correspondents in New York, the senior official responded to a question on Seoul’s position regarding Washington’s emphasis on keeping North Korea sanctions in place. “The position that the sanctions framework is to be kept in place until we are confident about North Korea’s complete denuclearization is the shared position of the US and South Korea governments,” the official replied. “But while we are working to proceed in the same direction in
the broader framework, it is not realistic to proceed mechanically at the same speed,” the official added. “Rather than the loosening of sanctions, our administration is requesting exemptions or exceptions to sanctions for areas necessary to carry out the inter-Korean cooperation efforts specified in the April 27 Panmunjom Declaration.” The same official said that the “resumption of Kaesong Industrial Complex [operations] and tourism at Mt. Kumgang would be possible once the international community is satisfied with North Korea’s denuclearization measures and sanctions have been lifted.” “Things like surveys in connection with railway and road projects or the establishment of a permanent office for divided family reunions are unrelated to sanctions, as they do not offer economic benefits to North Korea.” On the issue of North Korea-U.S. denuclearization talks, the official said, “We do not anticipate that nuclear reporting and verification will follow a ‘step-by-step’ approach.” “For example, if North Korea shuts down its nuclear facilities at Yongbyon, they would be dismantling a huge portion,” the official added. “If North Korea shuts down its Yongbyon nuclear facilities for certain under observation by the IAEA and inspectors, it would result in that much more trust between North Korea and the U.S., which could be used as a basis for a process of adopting other measures.” The official’s remarks were read as suggesting that substantial initial steps such as dismantlement of the Yongbyon facilities – as opposed to reporting of North Korea’s full nuclear capabilities – could provide the starting point and impetus for future North Korea-US talks. In a September 21 interview with the KBS network, Minister of Foreign Affairs Kang Kyung-wha said, “The traditional denuclearization process and sequence could change.” “We need inspections and a verification process, but I think the question of whether that has to come in the early stages could be a bit different this time,” she said. The same senior official also said the South Korean and US governments were in agreement on a declaration ending the Korean War – which North Korea has demanded as a means of improving its ties with the US and ensuring its regime’s security – being a “political declaration.” “After mention of an end-of-war declaration was included in the Panmunjom Declaration, it looks like the U.S. needed some time to consider the impact it would have in a legal sense on the armistice system,” the official said. “But now the U.S. amply understands our government’s position,” the official added, suggesting the U.S. shares the view that an end-of-war declaration would hold no implications in terms of the withdrawal of US Forces Korea, the standing of the UN Command, or weakening of the South Korea-US alliance. Speaking on the same issue, another government official said, “North Korea and the U.S. need to agree on the weight they attach to Yongbyon’s denuclearization and an end-of-war declaration. They have to put everything on the negotiating table and work on connecting them.” For this reason, the first senior official said that US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s scheduled Pyongyang visit next month “will be the most important event on the schedule going ahead.” The senior official reported that Kang had had a closed-door meeting with Pompeo on the afternoon of Sept. 26 shortly after Pompeo’s meeting with North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho. (Hwang Joon-bum, “South Korea Requests Exemptions to Sanctions at U.N. General Assembly,” Hankyore, September 29, 2018)

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“Without any trust in the United States, there will be no confidence in our national security, and under such circumstances there is no way we will unilaterally disarm ourselves first,” the North Korean foreign minister, Ri Yong-ho, told the United Nations General Assembly. Even so, hours later at a rally, President Trump praised the two countries’ improved relations, to the point of saying he and the North Korean leader “fell in love.” “I was really being tough, and so was he,” Trump said today of Kim Jong-un. “And we would go back and forth.” He added, to laughter from the crowd in Wheeling, W.Va.: “And then we fell in love, O.K.? No, really. He wrote me beautiful letters, and they’re great letters. We fell in love.” “We’re going to have another meeting,” Trump said at the rally. “Chairman Kim would like to have another meeting.” The United States has called for North Korea to surrender all of its nuclear capabilities before other issues can be negotiated. The North insists it needs reciprocal concessions from the United States, including the lifting of crippling economic sanctions and an official declaration that the 1950-53 Korean War has ended. Speaking to world leaders who had gathered for the General Assembly, Ri expressed a “firm determination to turn the Korean Peninsula into a land of peace” but said the American-backed sanctions were a “hostile policy.” The question of declaring an official end to the Korean War has exposed a potential gap between Seoul and Washington. Ri also took aim at the United
North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho took a swipe at the United States over its continued push for international sanctions against his country, warning that Pyongyang will never unilaterally abandon its nuclear weapons if it cannot trust Washington. Addressing the U.N. General Assembly, he said North Korea is “unwavering” in its commitment to denuclearization and called on the United States to make good on promises made at the historic summit between President Donald Trump and the North’s leader, Kim Jong Un, in Singapore in June. Ri said North Korea has taken “significant goodwill measures” such as halting nuclear and ballistic missile tests and dismantling a nuclear test site. The United States, however, has not shown “any corresponding response,” he said, noting that Washington still insists on strictly enforcing U.N. sanctions on the country and is opposed to Pyongyang’s call for declaring a formal end to the Korean War. “The perception that sanctions can bring us on our knees is a pipe dream of the people who are ignorant about us. But the problem is that the continued sanctions are deepening our mistrust,” Ri said.

“The reason behind the recent deadlock is because the U.S. relies on coercive methods which are lethal to trust-building,” he noted. Pompeo told the U.N. Security Council two days ago that it is necessary to strictly enforce U.N. sanctions on North Korea until “we realize the fully, final, verified denuclearization.” As for a declaration to formally end the Korean War, the United States is apparently wary of agreeing without major moves by North Korea toward dismantling its nuclear arms program. The North Korean foreign minister contrasted Pyongyang’s relations with Washington with the rapid progress made in inter-Korean relations through three summits this year, most recently last week. “The recent dramatic improvement of the North-South relations and the atmosphere of cooperation clearly show how decisive the role of trust-building can be,” he said. “If the party to this issue of denuclearization were South Korea and not the U.S. the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula would not have come to such a deadlock,” he added. To bring about denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, Ri pointed to the need for the United States and North Korea to put behind them their acrimonious relations. “It is our position that the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula should also be realized along with building peace regime under the principle of simultaneous actions, step by step, starting with what we can do and giving priority to trust-building,” he said. "If the DPRK-U.S. joint statement becomes a victim of the domestic politics of the U.S., then the greatest victim of the subsequent unpredictable consequences will be the U.S. itself as a whole," Ri said, citing the document jointly issued after the Singapore summit. In talks with South Korean President Moon Jae In in Pyongyang last week, North Korean leader Kim pledged to permanently dismantle his country's major nuclear complex if the United States takes reciprocal actions. On Wednesday, Trump said he will announce the timing and location of his next meeting with Kim, chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea, North Korea's ruling party, in the "very near future." Speaking at a news conference in New York, Trump said he and Kim have "a very good relationship." "He likes me. I like him. We get along," the president said, noting he received two letters from Kim recently. "I think we're going to make a deal." (Kajita Takehiko and Seana K. Magee, “N. Korea’s Ri Assails U.S. over Int’l Sanctions,” Kyodo, September 29, 2018)
neighboring countries and hence made a turning point for dramatic easing of tension in the Korean peninsula. He went on: The vital factor in consolidating the peace and security in the Korean peninsula is to thoroughly implement the DPRK-U.S. Joint Statement adopted in June at the historic DPRK-U.S. summit in Singapore. The primary task for effectively implementing the DPRK-U.S. Joint Statement should be bringing down the wall of mistrust between the two countries which has existed for several decades; and to do so the DPRK and the U.S. should direct their first efforts to building trust. **It is our position that the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula should also be realized under the principle of building peace regime and simultaneous action, step by step, starting with what we can do first and giving priority to building of trust.** However, we do not see any corresponding response from the U.S. The reason behind the current deadlock is because the U.S. clings to authoritarian methods which are lethal to trust-building method. The recent dramatic improvement of the North-South relations and the atmosphere of cooperation evidently show the decisive role of trust building. The political oppositions in the U.S. make it their daily business to slander the DPRK claiming that our Republic cannot be trusted with the sole purpose of attacking their political opponent and they are enforcing the administration to make unreasonable unilateral demand to our side aimed at impeding the smooth progress of the dialogue and negotiations. Creating mistrust towards the dialogue partner while only clinging to authoritarian methods is not helpful in building trust; on the contrary it only increases mistrust. One part of the spirit of the DPRK-U.S. summit in Singapore is getting rid of the stereotyped way of thinking and finding a completely new way of solving the issues. At this critical juncture, the U.S. should make a foresighted judgment that faithful fulfillment of its commitment in Singapore is, in the end, for the best national interests of the U.S. and should seek new method for solving the DPRK-U.S. relations. Only then there will be positive prospects for the DPRK-U.S. Joint Statement. If the DPRK-U.S. Joint Statement falls victim to the domestic politics of the U.S., the greatest victim of the subsequent unpredictable consequences would be the U.S. itself. Solving the DPRK-U.S. relations and issues in the Korean peninsula should be the key topic in achieving theme of this session: "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: Global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies". The implementation of the DPRK-U.S. Joint Statement is a common responsibility of the DPRK and the U.S.; at the same time the UN also has its role in implementing the statement. The UN Security Council that was once so eager to express "concern" to the tense situation in the Korean peninsula keeps silence even now about the precious momentum for peace in the Korean peninsula which has been achieved in this year; this is incomprehensible in any way. Worse still, the UNSC is taking very concerning stand by rejecting the proposal by some of its member states to issue presidential statement that welcomes the DPRK-U.S. summit and the Joint Statement. The UN should really apply the theme of this session to its actual activities and hence get rid of the stigma that "UNSC=U.S." as early as possible.” (KCNA, “Ri Yong Ho Calls for Thoroughly Implementing DPRK-U.S. Joint Statement,” September 30, 2018)

North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho showed up at a meeting of pro-Pyongyang Korean Americans in New York. Ri, who was in New York for the UN General Assembly, took time out to attend a meeting of the Korean American National Coordination Council in a high-end Chinese restaurant, according to Japan’s TBS News on October 1. Founded in 1997, the organization maintains close relations with the North Korean regime but describes itself as a charity promoting exchanges with the North. (Kim Jin-myung, “N. Korean FM Attends Pro-Pyongyang Party in U.S.,” Chosun Ilbo, October 2, 2018)

Troops from North and South Korea began removing some landmines along their heavily fortified border, the South’s defense ministry said, in a pact to reduce tension and build trust on the divided peninsula. Project details were agreed during last month’s summit in Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, between its leader, Kim Jong Un, and South Korean President Moon Jae-in. In a statement, the ministry said the two sides agreed to remove all landmines in the so-called Joint Security Area (JSA) in Panmunjom within the next 20 days, with military engineers performing the hazardous task on the South Korean side. There was no immediate confirmation from North
Korea that its troops had begun the process. In April, the neighbors announced their intention to turn the DMZ - long a symbol of tension and division - into a “peace zone”. They have already dismantled propaganda loudspeakers and some guard posts along the border. Demining projects are also set to begin today in Gangwon province in South Korea’s east, to allow teams to search for the remains of soldiers killed in the war, the ministry added. (Joori Roh and Josh Smith, “North, South Korea Begin Removing Landmines along Fortified Broder,” Reuters, October 1, 2018)

The U.S. needs to better understand that joint military exercises between South Korea and the U.S. are for mutual interests, a South Korean official said, refuting President Donald Trump’s calls on Seoul to pay for the military drills. “It is true that the joint military exercises are helpful for (South Korea’s) security, but the joint military exercises are not benefitting South Korea unilaterally and they are rather mutually beneficial for both countries,” the official from the Foreign Ministry said. It is “customary” for countries participating in joint military exercises to pay their own share of costs for the drills, according to the official. His remarks came after Trump renewed pressure on South Korea to pay a bigger share of the US’ defense costs, questioning why the US is “subsidizing” its allies’ military. “We have a tremendous trade deficit with you, and we’re defending you and we’re subsidizing your military with a massive amount of money. I said it to South Korea,” Trump said at a recent press conference in New York, citing the U.S. troops’ stationing in South Korea. “These are very wealthy countries. I said, why aren’t you reimbursing us for our costs?” At the heart of Trump’s belief that the U.S. is shouldering the costs of defending its allies appears to be South Korea-U.S. joint military drills, which he suspended following his summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un in June. “If I told you how much those (military) games cost, and frankly, I told South Korea, you should be paying for these games. We pay for them,” he said. The allies are currently negotiating over how to shoulder the financial burden for the maintenance of some 28,500 US troops stationed in South Korea, with Washington pushing Seoul to dramatically increase its share of the costs by adding a new category -- operational support costs. Since 1991, South Korea and the U.S. have held talks to draw up a “special-measures” agreement on how the allies share the cost of stationing U.S. Forces Korea here in three sectors -- payroll, construction and logistics -- to support its stable presence against North Korea’s military threats. The operational support category suggested by the U.S. is believed to include elements such as the costs of deployment of U.S. strategic assets here. South Korea has rejected the creation of the new category. Seoul is paying around 960 billion won ($864 million) this year under the current agreement, which is set to expire this year. Seoul and Washington began a new round of negotiations in March to reach the new agreement. They have held a total of seven meetings, but the two countries still remain “far apart” on the total amount of money South Korea should pay to support the stationing of the US troops here, the official said. “South Korea and the US plan to focus our efforts on adjusting differences in our stances based on a shared understanding that there should be no absence of sharing costs for the stable stationing of the US Forces Korea,” the official said, adding they hope to reach an agreement within the year. “Our stance remains firm that the substance of the agreement cannot be sacrificed despite a lack of time.” (Ock Hyun-ju, “S. Korea Refutes U.S. Calls to Pay for Joint Drills,” Korea Herald, October 1, 2018)

KCNA Commentary: “Some Korean issue experts of America are recently spouting such rubbish that the U.S. should force the DPRK to not only notify its nuclear program and have it verified but also dismantle its Yongbyon nuclear facility and missile facility in return for the U.S. response to its call for a war-end declaration. The issue of the war-end declaration should have been resolved half a century ago, under an armistice agreement. It is also the most basic and primary process for the establishment of new DPRK-U.S. relations and peace mechanism on the Korean peninsula, to which the U.S. was also committed. In actuality, the issue of the war end had already been proposed by the U.S. first during the Bush II administration more than one decade ago. As specified in the "Declaration for Development of North-South Relations and Peace and Prosperity" adopted on October 4, 2007 and the "Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Reunification in the Korean Peninsula" on April 27 last, it is the matter to which the U.S. and other relevant parties paid more attention than the DPRK. The end of war, which meets the
interests of not only the DPRK and the U.S. but also the countries in Northeast Asia wanting peace of the Korean peninsula, is not just a gift from a man to another at all. Furthermore, it can never be a bargaining chip for getting the DPRK denuclearized. Now that the DPRK and the U.S. are aspiring after the establishment of new relations true to the spirit of the June 12 DPRK-U.S. joint statement, it is quite right to put an end to the belligerent relations between them. But, if the U.S. doesn't want the end of war, the DPRK will also not particularly hope for it. As far as the Yongbyon nuclear facility is concerned, it is just a core one for the nuclear program of the DPRK, as recognized by the U.S. and other countries of the world. Out of its fixed stand to remain true to the joint statement made at the DPRK-U.S. summit, the DPRK clarified in the "September Pyongyang joint declaration" that it is willing to continuously take such additional steps as eternal dismantlement of the Yongbyon nuclear facility if the U.S. takes a corresponding measure. The DPRK is taking substantial and crucial steps to implement the joint statement made at the DPRK-U.S. summit, but the U.S. is still trying to subdue someone by resorting to sanctions, oft-repeating the story about escalation of sanctions pressure on the DPRK. Worse still, those called experts on the Korean issue are orchestrating a farce of putting a price on the issue which should have been settled 60 odd years ago. Whoever is truly interested in the settlement of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula should approach it with a proper understanding of the historical origin and essence of the nuclear issue of the Korean peninsula.” (KCNA, “War End Is Not Gift: KCNA Commentary,” October 2, 2018)
North Korea’s hacking operations to gather intelligence and raise funds for the sanction-strapped government in Pyongyang may be gathering steam. U.S. security firm FireEye raised the alarm today over a North Korean group that it says has stolen hundreds of millions of dollars by infiltrating the computer systems of banks around the world since 2014 through highly sophisticated and destructive attacks that have spanned at least 11 countries. It says the group is still operating and poses “an active global threat.” Yesterday, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security warned of the use of malware by Hidden Cobra, the US government’s byword for North Korea hackers, in fraudulent ATM cash withdrawals from banks in Asia and Africa. It said that Hidden Cobra was behind the theft of tens of millions of dollars from teller machines in the past two years. In one incident this year, cash had been simultaneously withdrawn from ATMs in 23 different countries, it said. North Korea has previously denied involvement in cyberattacks, and attribution for such attacks is rarely made with absolute certainty. It is typically based on technical indicators such as the Internet Protocol, or IP, addresses that identify computers and characteristics of the coding used in malware, which is the software a hacker may use to damage or disable computers. But other cybersecurity experts tell the Associated Press that they also see continued signs that North Korea’s authoritarian government, which has a long track record of criminality to raise cash, is conducting malign activity online. “The reality is they are starved for cash and are continuing to try and generate revenue, at least until sanctions are diminished,” said Adam Meyers, vice president of intelligence at CrowdStrike. “At the same time, they won’t abate in intelligence collection operations, as they continue to negotiate and test the international community’s resolve and test what the boundaries are.” CrowdStrike says it has detected continuing North Korean cyber intrusions in the past two months, including the use of a known malware against a potentially broad set of targets in South Korea, and a new variant of malware against users of mobile devices that use a Linux-based operating system. FireEye says APT38, the name it gives to the hacking group dedicated to bank theft, has emerged and stepped up its operations since February 2014 as the economic vise on North Korea has tightened in response to its nuclear and missile tests. Initial operations targeted financial institutions in Southeast Asia, where North Korea had experience in money laundering, but then expanded into other regions such as Latin America and Africa, and then extended to Europe and North America. In all, FireEye says APT38 has attempted to steal $1.1 billion, and based on the data it can confirm, has gotten away with hundreds of millions in dollars. It has used malware to insert fraudulent transactions in the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication or SWIFT system that is used to transfer money between banks. Its biggest heist to date was $81 million stolen from the central bank of Bangladesh in February 2016. The funds were wired to bank accounts established with fake identities in the Philippines. After the funds were withdrawn they were suspected to have been laundered in casinos. The Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a Washington think tank, said in a report today that North Korea’s cyber capabilities provide an alternative means for challenging its adversaries. While Kim’s hereditary regime appears to prioritize currency generation, attacks using the SWIFT system raise concerns that North Korean hackers “may become more proficient at manipulating the data and systems that undergird the global financial system,” it says. Sandra Joyce, FireEye’s head of global intelligence, said that while APT38 is a criminal operation, it leverages the skills and technology of a state-backed espionage campaign, allowing it to infiltrate multiple banks at once and figure how to extract funds. On average, it dwells in a bank’s computer network for 155 days to learn about its systems before it tries to steal anything. And when it finally pounces, it uses aggressive malware to wreak havoc and cover its tracks. “We see this as a consistent effort, before, during and after any diplomatic efforts by the United States and the international community,” said Joyce, describing North Korea as being “undeterred” and urging the US government to provide more specific threat information to financial institutions about APT38’s modus operandi. APT stands for Advanced Persistent Threat. (Associated Press, “N. Korea Said to Have Stolen a Fortune in Online Bank Heists,” Korea Herald, October 4, 2018)

A group of South Korean government officials, politicians and civic and religious leaders visited North Korea to take part in an event to jointly celebrate the anniversary of the 2007 inter-Korean summit. A delegation of 160 people led by Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon and ruling Democratic Party (DP) leader Lee Hae-chan embarked on a three-day trip earlier in the day to
Pyongyang, taking the western direct air route across the border. Following the approximately one-hour flight, the delegation arrived at an airport in the North's capital and were greeted by Ri Son-gwon, chairman of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country, and other North Korean officials. "Welcome to Pyongyang. This will be a pleasant trip," Ri told the delegation, according to pool reports. "As we cannot imagine a tree without a root, the June 15, October 4, April 27 and September declarations in Pyongyang themselves ... will serve as a standard for reunification," Ri added, referring to summit agreements the leaders of the two Koreas have reached in 2000, 2007 and this year. Tomorrow, the delegation will take part in the first-ever joint event to celebrate the 11th anniversary of the 2007 summit held in Pyongyang between then-South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun and then-North Korean leader Kim Jong II. The leaders adopted the October 4 Declaration after the summit, which called for the two Koreas to cooperate on building mutual trust, easing tensions and fostering inter-Korean economic cooperation. "We will make this trip to Pyongyang in the spirit of the October 4 Declaration," Unification Minister Cho told reporters before leaving for the North. "The government authorities together with political parties, municipal government officials and civic groups will return after creating a chance to solidify inter-Korean reconciliation, cooperation and peace." On the sidelines, Cho, who is in charge of inter-Korean affairs, is expected to meet with his North Korean counterpart, Ri Son-gwon, to discuss follow-up measures to the agreement their leaders reached in their September summit in Pyongyang. It is not clear yet whether the delegation will have a chance to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. (Joint Press Corps-Yonhap, “South Korean Delegation Visits Pyongyang for Anniversary Celebration,” October 4, 2018)

The United States imposed sanctions on a Turkish company and several individuals for their alleged violation of sanctions against North Korea. The Department of the Treasury said it is targeting SIA Falcon International Group for attempting to trade in weapons and luxury goods with North Korea in breach of United Nations sanctions against Pyongyang. Also being sanctioned are the firm's CEO, Huseyin Sahin; general manager, Erhan Culha — both Turkish nationals — and a North Korean diplomat. Ri Song-un, economic and commercial counselor at the North Korean embassy in Mongolia, negotiated trade deals involving weapons and luxury goods with SIA Falcon officials in Turkey earlier this year, the Treasury said. (Yonhap, “U.S. Imposes N.K.-Related Sanctions on Turkish Firm, Individuals,” October 5, 2018)

Japan has reportedly decided not to attend an international naval event to be held in South Korea next week, amid a dispute over its plan to raise the Rising Sun Flag widely seen as a symbol of Japan’s military aggression here. Japan notified South Korea of the decision this morning. It will instead send a delegation to a symposium to be held as part of the Jeju International Naval Fleet Review from Oct. 10-14, according to a local media outlet, which quoted an unnamed government source. The decision came amid controversy in South Korea over Japan’s plan to hoist the Rising Sun Flag, which South Koreans often compare to Nazi symbols such as the swastika, at the upcoming naval event. The presidential office received some 250 petitions calling on the government to ban Japanese warships flying the flag from entering South Korean territory. A ruling party lawmaker even proposed a related bill. Apparently mindful of public outcry over the Rising Sun Flag, the Navy earlier requested all 15 countries participating in this year’s naval fleet review to raise their own national flags as well as the national flag of South Korea, not their military flags. However, Japan had said it would hoist the flag, calling the request “unacceptable.” Japan’s Defense Minister Onodera Itsunori said it is obligatory for the Maritime Self-Defense Force Ships to raise the military flag under the domestic law, and it is also an exterior mark to express the warship’s nationality under the international treaty. Kawano Katsutoshi, chief of staff of Japan’s Self Defense Forces, called the hoisting of the flag a matter of national pride. (Ock Hyun-jin, “Japan Opts out of Naval Event over Flag Row with S. Korea,” Korea Herald, October 5, 2018)

A Seoul court sentenced former President Lee Myung-bak to 15 years in jail for corruption, making him the fourth ex-South Korean leader to be criminally convicted. In the live televised trial, the court found the 76-year-old former leader guilty of bribery, embezzlement and other
increased reliance on behind Department's tactical office in Vietnam in mid-first of its type in about three months. Kitamura met with Kim Song Hye, head of the United Front discussed how the abduction issue should be solved between Japan and North Korea."

meeting took place, a senior Japanese government official told Kyodo News that "I heard they department is an intelligen the United Front Department of the Workers' Party of Korea, according to the sources. The Intelligence and Research Office, met with North Korean officials, including a senior figure from the only one to have been kept at arm's length since Kim began a string of diplomatic engagements during his way to a refueling stop in Alaska, Pompeo said his mission was "to make sure that we understand what each side is truly trying to achieve" and how "each side is seeking to approach that, and how we can deliver against the commitments that were made."

"Each side has to develop sufficient trust so they can take the actions necessary to get to the end," he said, adding he was also trying to set up the next Trump-Kim summit. "So we hope to, at least — I doubt we will get it nailed — but begin to develop options for both location and timing for when Chairman Kim will meet with the president again," he said. "Maybe we will get further than that." He declined to be drawn into specifics of the negotiations. But North Korea has indicated this week that it may also demand an easing of sanctions. In an editorial on October 4, Rodong Sinmun, argued that the United States should not focus on maintaining sanctions but instead on building confidence between the two nations “with a sincere attitude.”

"The U.S. invented the sanctions against the DPRK under unreasonable pretexts and tries to keep them at a time when the pretexts are removed," it wrote, accusing Washington of “brigandish and frivolous” misbehavior. Washington and Pyongyang, it wrote, are “kindling a glimmer” of hope for the improvement of bilateral ties. "It is high time that each side makes efforts towards trust-building.”

10/6/18

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo arrived in Tokyo, where he is expected to meet Prime Minister Abe Shinzo before heading to Pyongyang to continue talks over North Korea's nuclear and missile program. Pompeo is expected to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Pyongyang, as he tries to set the stage for another summit between Kim and President Trump. Speaking in the plane on his way to a refueling stop in Alaska, Pompeo said his mission was “to make sure that we understand what each side is truly trying to achieve” and how “each side is seeking to approach that, and how we can deliver against the commitments that were made.” “Each side has to develop sufficient trust so they can take the actions necessary to get to the end,” he said, adding he was also trying to set up the next Trump-Kim summit. “So we hope to, at least — I doubt we will get it nailed — but begin to develop options for both location and timing for when Chairman Kim will meet with the president again,” he said. “Maybe we will get further than that.” He declined to be drawn into specifics of the negotiations. But North Korea has indicated this week that it may also demand an easing of sanctions. In an editorial on October 4, Rodong Sinmun, argued that the United States should not focus on maintaining sanctions but instead on building confidence between the two nations “with a sincere attitude.”

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10/6-8/18

A top Japanese intelligence official close to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had a secret meeting with North Korean counterparts in early October in Mongolia, sources familiar with bilateral ties have said. The meeting in the Mongolian capital of Ulan Bator could be consistent with Abe’s stated desire to arrange a summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un after he receives assurances about progress on the long-standing issue of abductions of Japanese nationals by Pyongyang in the 1970s and 1980s. Among major countries dealing with the North Korean nuclear issue, Japan is the only one to have been kept at arm’s length since Kim began a string of diplomatic engagements this year. In addition to holding talks with Chinese, South Korean and U.S. leaders, During his visit to Mongolia from around October 6 to 8, Shigeru Kitamura, who heads Japan's Cabinet Intelligence and Research Office, met with North Korean officials, including a senior figure from the United Front Department of the Workers' Party of Korea, according to the sources. The department is an intelligence organ mainly focused on South Korean affairs. Admitting that the meeting took place, a senior Japanese government official told Kyodo News that "I heard they discussed how the abduction issue should be solved between Japan and North Korea." It is believed that the contact between intelligence authorities representing Tokyo and Pyongyang is the first of its type in about three months. Kitamura met with Kim Song Hye, head of the United Front Department's tactical office in Vietnam in mid-July. The latest revelation sheds light on Abe's increased reliance on behind-the-scenes communications with North Korea, using intelligence

charges. He was ordered to pay 13 billion won (US$11.5 million) in fines and forfeit 8.2 billion won. Lee, president from 2008-2013, was arrested on March 22 and indicted on April 9. Prosecutors demanded 20 years in prison on 16 counts of charges. The court convicted him of seven charges. The court ruled that he embezzled 2.46 billion won from DAS, an auto parts company at the center of the scandal. It concluded, on the basis of testimony by Lee’s close aides, that he is the de facto owner of the company, disguising it as his brother's company. Lee denied the allegation he was the real owner of the company. The court also ruled he accepted 5.9 billion won in bribes from Samsung Electronics Co. in the form of retaining fees for DAS. Samsung paid the money seeking a presidential pardon for Chairman Lee Kun-hee, who was jailed for tax evasion, it said. Lee was also found guilty of receiving about 2.4 billion won in bribes from a financial company chief, a former intelligence agency chief and a former lawmaker. The court said he caused a 400 million won loss to the state by receiving inappropriate money from the state intelligence agency's special activities fund. But the court did not recognize it as bribery. The court dismissed power abuse and tax evasion charges filed by the prosecution. (Yonhap, “Former President Lee Gets 15 Years in Jail for Corruption,” October 5, 2018)
DoS Readout: “Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo held productive discussions with Chairman Kim Jong-un in Pyongyang Sunday. They discussed the four elements contained in the U.S.-DPRK Singapore Summit Joint Statement signed by President Trump and Chairman Kim. They also discussed the upcoming second summit between President Trump and Chairman Kim and refined options for the location and date of that next summit. Secretary Pompeo was joined by Special Representative Stephen E. Biegun and Chairman Kim was joined by Kim Yo-jong, First Vice Director of the Korean Workers’ Party Central Committee. Secretary Pompeo and Chairman Kim also agreed to instruct their respective working-level teams to meet soon to intensify discussions on the key remaining issues to deliver on the Singapore Summit Joint Statement. In addition, Chairman Kim invited inspectors to visit the Punggye Ri nuclear test site to confirm that it has been irreversibly dismantled. President Trump looks forward to continuing to build upon the trust established with Chairman Kim in Singapore and anticipates meeting again soon.” (Spokesperson Heather Nauert, Readout of Secretary Pompeo’s Meeting in Pyongyang, DPRK, October 7, 2018)

Pompeo, Biegun: “Q: So how close are you guys on the logistics for a second summit? SECRETARY POMPEO: Pretty close. Q: Like, so an announcement should be -- POMPEO: Hard to know. Hard to know. Sometimes that last issue is hard to close. But we’re getting pretty close. Yeah. Q: Okay. You want to -- POMPEO: And most importantly, both the leaders believe there’s real progress that can be made, substantive progress that can be made at the next summit, and so we’re going to get it at a time that works for each of the two leaders in a place that works for both of them. We’re not quite there yet, but we’ll get there. Q: Are you at a point, though, where you think it needs the top – in other words, you could – you’re not going to – it’s not – you’re not in a position now to be able to get that done? It’s got to go to the very highest level? Is that where we are? POMPEO: So a couple things that came out of this. One is – and I’ll let Steve maybe make a comment here too – we will be – what’s the right way? We will be having more frequent and higher-level working group discussions than we’ve had in some time on a set of issues. So that was important good news. I think Steve’s counterpart will be Choe Son-hui. And we think – we think that’s important too. So we’ll have a chance to meet here in between the summit date as well. So we really hope we can deliver some good outcomes when the summit takes place. But we do think, right, this is a place where, ultimately, some of these big, difficult issues have to be resolved by the nations’ most senior leaders, and we’re hoping to have those presented in a way that the two leaders can resolve them when they get together. Q: All right. Last one from me. But is this kind of like the Vienna invitation that you – in your statement from -- POMPEO: Yeah, it’s consistent with what we were seeking to do there. Q: But not necessarily Vienna for -- POMPEO: Who knows. Q: No, not for the summit, but I mean -- POMPEO: Yeah. No, no, I’m – that’s what I’m saying. I don’t know where those – I mean, Steve, you want to say anything about it? Yeah. BIEGUN: Sure. Good morning. The – so last night I issued an invitation to my counterpart to meet as soon as possible. We’re actually working on specific dates and location, and I was reassured to see today in the KCNA statement that the DPRK likewise has fully endorsed the idea that working-level talks will begin as soon as possible. So talks for the sake of talks, obviously, are no great accomplishment, but we actually have a full range of issues now to talk about too. When you combine the commitments that came out of the joint statement between the North and South in – from the Pyongyang summit as well as the issues that Secretary of State Pompeo and Chairman Kim discussed yesterday, we’re starting to see a first wave of actions we can take on all four pillars of the Singapore Communiqué, for sure, but that’s specifically on the issue of denuclearization as well. So we’re very much looking forward to that. Some of that is actually not even going to be about the threshold question of whether we can do this. It’s more the modalities of how we do this, and we’re looking forward very quickly to work that out with our DPRK counterparts, and really begin in earnest the process of denuclearization to fill the vision the President and Chairman Kim had from Singapore. Q: Can I ask a quick follow-up on the Trump-Kim summit? Will – are you guys ruling out Pyongyang as a location for that? I

authorities rather than the Foreign Ministry. (Kyodo, “Japan and North Korea Intelligence Officials Held Secret Meeting in Mongolia in October,” October 19, 2018)
ask because North Koreans yesterday mentioned that to me as a place they’d like to see it happen. And will it happen in the next month? POMPEO: Can’t answer either of those questions. Q: No? Okay. And then I guess a follow-up on the statement that Heather put out last night. Do you guys have a date for when international nuclear inspectors will be allowed onto the Punggye-ri location? POMPEO: As soon as we get it logistically worked out, Chairman Kim said he’s ready to – ready to allow them to come in, and there’s a lot of logistics that will be required to execute that, but when we get them we’ll put them on the ground. Q: And in terms of forward movement on the summit between Moon and Kim Jong-un, they agreed that international inspectors would be allowed onto the – which one was it? POMPEO: Punggye-ri. Yeah. And the missile engine test site. ... So we’re hopeful that’ll occur as well. Q: The Yongbyon site? SECRETARY POMPEO: You need to go back and reread. You -- Q: No, they said international inspectors would be allowed into the Yongbyon site if the U.S. took corresponding measures. POMPEO: Fair enough. Yeah. Q: So is there any forward movement on that? POMPEO: We don’t have any comment on the – again, we’re not going to talk about where we are in these negotiations except for things we have agreed to release with the North Koreans. QUESTION: Okay. Q: Could I ask you, Mr. Secretary, you mentioned you would bring up the abductee issue with Chairman Kim. Is -- POMPEO: Yep. We – we raise third-country issues each time we travel. The importance of making sure that we resolve all the issues, right – one of the key pillars of the statement between Chairman Kim and President Trump was that we would have better relationships, confidence-building measures. We would fundamentally change the nature of North Korea’s relationship with the rest of the world. And so there are many issues, including the abductee issue, that will need to be addressed in order to achieve that. And I think Chairman Kim understands that fully. Q: A follow-up on some of the questions about inspectors. Has it been decided which organization is going to -- POMPEO: I don’t have any comment on that. Q: Who is the counterpart? I’m sorry, maybe I missed it. Who is going to -- BIEGUN: Well, we – this is all completely up to the North Koreans. They decide who sits across the table from us, but we have reason to believe it’ll be Choe Son-hui, the vice minister of foreign affairs. Q: Who is a known quantity? BIEGUN: Mm-hmm, a very experienced negotiator, well known to our side, and somebody who we think can deliver good results for Chairman Kim and President Trump both. Q: I’m sorry, was she not there yesterday? BIEGUN: No. Q: Okay. MS NAUERT: We’re heading to China today. Any questions about that? Does anybody have anything on China? Q: Are you planning to meet with Xi Jinping? POMPEO: No, I won’t be meeting with him today. I’ll be meeting with my two counterparts, Wang Yi, the foreign minister, and Yang Jiechi. Q: And do you expect them to raise the full gamut of their unhappiness with the administration, or is this just going to be a North Korea thing? POMPEO: No, it’ll be a much broader discussion than that. I expect they’ll also raise the issues that they’re happy with – lots of places we find overlap in our interests as well – and we’ll explore all the places we’re working well together and all the concerns that each country has. Q: Are you worried about the Chinese and Russians’ meeting with North Korea in any way hurting the advancement that you can make in your discussions with North Korea? POMPEO: Chairman Kim was very clear yesterday in our conversation about the things that we need to do between the United States and the DPRK. That’s what we’re focused on. Q: And ahead of your meeting with Prime Minister Abe, you spoke about wanting to synchronize the countries on the situation in North Korea. Have – in the last two days, I mean, have you found that the U.S., South Korea, and Japan are on the same page or are there areas of concern or disagreement that you’re encountering? POMPEO: I’ve never been involved in an international discussion where there weren’t differences of view, not only between governments but inside of governments, lots of thoughts. But if you look at the approach, we are in lockstep with each of those two countries in terms of how we approach achieving the results that everyone is aimed at. And so there’ll be tactical places where we’ll have debate and disagreement. That is a necessary component of getting to the best deliverable. But with respect to our relationships with the Republic of Korea and Japan on this issue, I have found that we are in lockstep on the most important issues and how to approach them. Q: I saw a couple of Japanese officials last night, so have you already briefed them? BIEGUN: I did. Q: You did. And some officials were expecting that most likely you would fly back to Tokyo. BIEGUN: Well, we’re moving on to Beijing, and from there we’re flying directly back to Washington, D.C. I’ve made a point to both our South Korean and our Japanese allies that I will be available before and after every discussion so that we’re in complete
alignment and have full transparency between us on the discussions. Just for scheduling purposes, the Japanese – my Japanese counterparts were kind enough to fly here yesterday evening, and we had a late-night meeting where we went through the full gamut of discussions so that we can achieve exactly what the Secretary said, which is we stay on the same page on the big, important issues, and we are. **POMPEO:** I should mention, so you can see from Steve’s first trip with me to Pyongyang and the work that he’s done already in advance of this, he is going to be at the very center of not only managing the relationship with North Korea and achieving the ends we are, but also making sure that we’re working with not only with the Republic of Korea and Japan, but there are many countries that have a deep interest – China, others. **Q:** Russia. **POMPEO:** Russia – that have deep interests in this set of issues. And Steve is going to take the responsibility to be working directly for me as the point person, making sure that we are communicating well, fully coordinated, we’re taking on information from them so that we don’t have disconnects between our allies and others with interests in making sure that denuclearization proceeds as quickly as possible. **Q:** It sounds like not very much sleep for you in the next couple months. **BIEGUN:** He’s the boss. **Q:** Critics are going to say you guys came here, you didn’t accomplish anything new on denuclearization itself. What’s your response to that? Did you just come to set up the Trump-Kim summit? **POMPEO:** On the process we made significant progress, we’ll continue to make significant process, and we are further along in making that progress than any administration in an awfully long time.” (DoS, Remarks by Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo and Special Representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun, Grand Hyatt Hotel Seoul, South Korea, October 8, 2018)

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he had a "good trip" to North Korea, meeting with its leader, Kim Jong-un, today and making progress in diplomatic efforts to denuclearize the country. Later, the office of President Moon Jae-in of South Korea, who was briefed by Pompeo on his North Korea trip, said that the United States and the North had agreed to hold a new summit meeting between their leaders as early as possible. The two sides are expected to soon hold working-level talks to set the details of the planned meeting, such as the date and venue, said Yoon Young-chan, a spokesman for Moon. In Pyongyang, Pompeo held a two-hour meeting with Kim, followed by a 90-minute luncheon hosted by the North's leader. "It's a very nice day that promises a good future for both countries," Kim said through an interpreter from the dining table. Pompeo said: "We had a great, great visit this morning. President Trump sends his regards. And we had a very successful morning, so thank you." An American official who accompanied Pompeo said today that the trip was "better than the last time," referring to the secretary's trip there in July, according to a pool report. But the official, who was not identified, added, "It's going to a long haul." Later today, Pompeo arrived in South Korea, where he told Moon and other officials that he had had a "good, productive conversation" in North Korea. Pompeo posted a photo of himself with Kim on his Twitter account. "Had a good trip to #Pyongyang to meet with Chairman Kim," he wrote. "We continue to make progress on agreements made at Singapore Summit," referring to the meeting between Kim and President Trump in June. "As President Trump said, there are many steps along the way, and we took one of them today," Pompeo said. "It was another step forward. So this is, I think, a good outcome for all of us." His meeting with Kim provided him with an opportunity to ensure that the two nations are on the same page in their understanding of Kim's commitment to work toward the "denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula." Yoon said that during Pompeo's trip to Pyongyang, the secretary of state and Kim had discussed the steps that North Korea would take toward denuclearization, as well as "corresponding" measures that Washington would undertake as incentives for the North. The two sides also discussed sending American officials to monitor the North Korean steps. Yoon did not disclose further details. North Korean officials who dined with members of Pompeo's entourage in a separate room had said that it would be great if Trump visited Pyongyang for a second summit meeting with Kim. They also asked American officials about the midterm elections in the United States. One of them, Kim Song-hye, called Trump "generous" and "a leader," and said the two countries "wouldn't be here without Trump." But there is no sign that North Korea has changed its decades-old negotiating strategy, which often involves making pledges that it fails to carry out. Speaking to the United Nations General Assembly last month, its foreign minister, Ri Yong-ho, said that although his government's commitment to denuclearization was "solid and firm," there was "no way" his country would unilaterally disarm.
unless Washington took steps to demonstrate that it is no longer a threat. Noting continuing
American hostility, Ri cited Washington’s campaign to escalate sanctions against the North and its
refusal to declare an end to the Korean War, which was only halted with a truce. But Washington
stressed that it will keep sanctions as leverage until North Korea denuclearizes. It also insisted that
the North first start the denuclearizing process by submitting a full inventory of its nuclear
program and agreeing to intrusive inspections to verify that no warhead or fissile materials are
hidden. Past nuclear talks between North Korea and the United States had fallen apart over how to
verify that the North had owned up to all its nuclear activities. If the United States insisted that
North Korea provide a full nuclear inventory and submit to time-consuming verification first, the
negotiations will derail again as they did in the past, some analysts warned. "Going down that road
is a dead end," Siegfried S. Hecker, a former director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, who
has visited North Korea several times, said during a lecture in Seoul on September 27. Instead, he
said the two sides must start with risk-reduction steps, like dismantling the Yongbyon complex,
and leaving the difficult and time-consuming verification to a later phase of denuclearization,
when the two sides have gained mutual confidence in each other. Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-
wha of South Korea also raised the idea of leaving inspection and verification to a later stage in
marks he made during an interview with the national broadcaster KBS on September 21. (Choe
Sang-hun, “U.S. and North Korea Agree to New Summit Meeting, South Korea Says,” New York
Times, October 7, 2018)

Kim Jong Un refused to submit a list of North Korea’s nuclear sites and inventory as requested by
Secretary of State Mike Pompeo during their talks in Pyongyang, instead demanding a declaration
to end the 1950-53 Korean War and the lifting of economic sanctions, Japanese, U.S. and South
Korean sources with knowledge of U.S.-North Korean talks have told Yomiuri Shimbun. Pompeo
asked Kim to submit at least part of the nuclear list, a request the North Korean leader rejected,
according to sources. “If we submit the list without first building mutual trust, the United States
would only call it untrustworthy and demand we submit the list once again. If that were to happen,
we would end up having a battle,” Kim was quoted as saying. Kim insisted that it is necessary for
the two countries to forge a relationship of trust before North Korea takes steps toward
denuclearization. “If a trusting relationship can be built between North Korea and the United
States through a declaration of the end of war, our denuclearization process will accelerate fast
enough to eliminate U.S. concerns,” Kim added. The North Korean leader also insisted that the
United States lift economic sanctions against his country as a response to sincere steps Pyongyang
has taken, such as the return of the remains of some of the U.S. servicemen who fought in the
Korean War, according to sources. Pompeo said his country could not accede to a declaration of
the war’s end when North Korea had promised only to dismantle its nuclear facility in Yongbyon,
northwest North Korea, in the Pyongyang joint statement on September 19. The secretary of state
demanded North Korea abandon all its programs for weapons of mass destruction, including
biological and chemical weapons. He also said the United States would take steps North Korea
considers reasonable — such as a declaration to end the Korean War — only if Pyongyang’s
nuclear warheads, intercontinental ballistic missiles and mobile launch pads are either dismantled
or moved outside the country, even if only a little, according to sources. Pompeo also called for
North Korea to allow U.S. experts and International Atomic Energy Agency officials to inspect the
Yongbyon site, because records of its nuclear activities should be examined before the facility is
dismantled. In response, Kim suggested that whether to accept inspections of the Yongbyon site
should be discussed at working-level talks between the two countries, according to the sources.
(Toyoura Junichi, “Kim Won’t Submit N-Weapons List Yet,” Yomiuri Shimbun, October 15,
2018) Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on October 8 North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was
ready to allow international inspectors into the North’s nuclear and missile testing sites, one of the
main sticking points over an earlier denuclearization pledge. Pompeo, who met Kim during a short
trip to Pyongyang on Sunday, said the inspectors would visit a missile engine test facility and the
Punggye-ri nuclear testing site as soon as the two sides agree on logistics. “There’s a lot of
logistics that will be required to execute that,” Pompeo told a news briefing in Seoul before
leaving for Beijing. The top U.S. diplomat also said both sides were “pretty close” to agreement
on the details of a second summit, which Kim proposed to President Donald Trump in a letter last
month. “Most importantly, both the leaders believe there’s real progress that can be made,
Kim Jong Un,” Noh Ji-chol made a very big impression on President Trump and Secretary Pompeo,” said a former high-ranking official in the South Korean government. There was another scene that epitomizes Kim Jong-un’s all-out effort. One of the North Koreans sitting alongside Kim during his meeting with Pompeo was his younger sister Kim Yo-jong, first vice director of the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK) Central Committee. Kim Yo-jong was not personally involved in the negotiations during Pompeo’s first three trips to North Korea. In related photographs that ran on the first page of the October 8 issue of Rodong Sinmun, Kim Jong-un was sitting with Kim Yo-jong on his left and an interpreter on his right. On the other side of the table, Pompeo is sitting with Special Representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun on his left and CIA Korea Mission Center Chief Andrew Kim on his right. “I’ve been informed that Kim Jong-un and Mike Pompeo spent five and a half hours together. During the morning and afternoon meetings, there were apparently only three people in the room [representing North Korea]; Kim Jong-un, Kim Yo-jong and an interpreter,” said Blue House spokesperson Kim Eui-kyum. Missing from the meeting room this time around was Kim Yong-chol, North Korea’s WPK vice chairman and director of the WPK United Front Department. Kim Yong-chol was only present for the luncheon at the Paekhwawon Guest House. Whereas Kim Yong-chol is a typically crafty and ideological bureaucrat who has been dealing with the nuclear issue since the early 1990s, Kim Yo-jong is Kim Jong-un’s own flesh and blood, which gives her a completely different status and role. Kim Yo-jong clearly demonstrated her unlimited access during the first three summits between her brother and South Korean President Moon Jae-in. In addition, Pompeo had let his dissatisfaction with Kim Yong-chol as a negotiating partner be known in a variety of ways. Some observers even believe that Kim Yong-chol’s replacement represents a reprimand for the severe deadlock between the two sides that followed the breakdown in negotiations during Pompeo’s third visit to North Korea. “I think that Kim Jong-un’s decision to include Kim Yo-jong at the meeting and to leave out Kim Yong-chol made a very big impression on President Trump and Secretary Pompeo,” said a former high-ranking official in the South Korean government. One interesting development in connection with this was an article in the October 8 issue of Rodong Sinmun that said that Kim Jong-un and Pompeo had “traded interesting ideas [over lunch] about further enhancing communication and engagement between the two sides in order to develop North Korea-US relations and for the success of the North Korea-US summit.” The topics discussed could have ranged from the mundane (increasing exchange in various fields) to the fraught (setting up a liaison office), as well as the critical question of who will be responsible for North Korea-US negotiations. (Lee Je-hun, Noh Ji-won and Seong Yeon-cheol, “Pompeo Basically Spent Entire Time in Pyongyang with Kim Jong Un,” Hankyore, October 9, 2018)
KCNA: “Kim Jong Un, chairman of the Workers’ Party of Korea and chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Sunday received Mike Pompeo, secretary of State of the United States of America on a visit to the DPRK. Kim Jong Un, Supreme Leader of our party, state and army, warmly greeted Mike Pompeo and gladly exchanged greetings and had a photo taken with him at the Paekhwawon State Guesthouse. He warmly welcomed the U.S. secretary of State’s visit to the DPRK and spoke highly of him, recalling how he worked energetically for the historic DPRK-U.S. summit and the development of relations between the two countries while visiting Pyongyang several times. Then he had a talk with the secretary of State. Kim Jong Un estimated that progress is being made in implementing the June 12 joint statement agreed upon at the first DPRK-U.S. summit talks. He expressed his gratitude to President Trump for making sincere effort to this end, asking Mike Pompeo to convey his regards to Trump. Together with Mike Pompeo, Kim Jong Un appreciated the positively developing situation on the Korean peninsula, explained in detail the proposals for solving the denuclearization issue and matters of concern of both sides and exchanged constructive opinions. There was an exchange of stands of the top leaderships of the two countries on the issues arising in holding the second DPRK-U.S. summit talks to be followed by an in-depth discussion of them. The Supreme Leader expressed his will and conviction that a great progress would surely be made in solving the issues of utmost concern of the world and in attaining the goal set forth at the last talks with the projected second DPRK-U.S. summit talks as an occasion. There was an agreement on the issue of holding the working negotiation for the second DPRK-U.S. summit talks as early as possible, and relevant procedure-related issues and ways were also discussed. Kim Jong Un expressed satisfaction over the productive and wonderful talks with Mike Pompeo at which mutual stands were fully understood and opinions exchanged. He hosted a luncheon at the Paekhwawon State Guesthouse where the U.S. delegation stays. Exchanged at the luncheon were views on issues of great interest such as further activating the communication and contact and visit between the two sides for the success of the DPRK-U.S. summit and the development of the DPRK-U.S. relations. Expressing the belief that the dialogue and negotiations between the DPRK and the U.S. based on the deep confidence between the top leaders of the two countries would continue to develop favorably in the future, too, and a good program for the 2nd DPRK-U.S. summit talks would be provided sooner or later, the Supreme Leader said good-bye to the U.S. secretary of State.” (KCNA, “Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un Meets U.S. Secretary of State,” October 8, 2018)

Prime Minister Abe Shizo told the Financial Times he opposed any withdrawal of U.S. forces from the Korean peninsula as part of a deal to scrap North Korea’s nuclear weapons. “It is my understanding that there is no such idea in the minds of the U.S. side nor in the mind of President Trump,” he said. “The presence of U.S. forces in Korea is, I believe, a very important element for the peace and stability of East Asia.” (Lionel Barber and Robin Harding, “Abe Invites U.K. ‘with Open Arms’ to Join Pacific Trade Pact after Brexit,” Financial Times, October 8, 2018, p. 1)

Kim Jong-un, the leader of North Korea, which has been condemned as one of the worst suppressors of religious freedom in the world, has invited Pope Francis to visit his country, South Korea’s government said. The invitation will be relayed by South Korea’s president, Moon Jae-in, a Roman Catholic, when he visits the Vatican for two days next week to seek the pope’s help in easing tensions on the divided Korean Peninsula, said Kim Eui-kyeom, Moon’s spokesman. “If the pope visits Pyongyang, we will give him a rousing welcome,” Kim told Moon, according to Moon’s spokesman. There was no immediate comment from the Vatican on whether Francis would accept the invitation, but it is considered highly unlikely. Improvable as such a visit may sound, this is not the first time North Korea has tried to invite a pope. In 1991, as the Soviet bloc began disintegrating, North Korea campaigned to invite Pope John Paul II to Pyongyang to help ease its deepening diplomatic isolation, according to a memoir by Thae Yong-ho, a North Korean diplomat who defected to South Korea in 2016. The government even found an older woman who still held on to her Catholic beliefs from the days before the Communists took over at the end of World War II. The woman, who still practiced her faith in secret, was taken to the Vatican to meet the pope, Thae said. But the North eventually abandoned its campaign for fear that such a visit might fan religious zeal in the hermit nation, he added. Francis has shown interest in helping build
President Donald Trump announced that his second summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un will be after the US midterm election on November 6. Speaking to reporters on a flight to Iowa for a political rally, Trump said: “It’ll be after the midterms. I just can’t leave now.” Trump elaborated by saying that he’s currently too busy campaigning for the midterm election. Earlier in the morning, Trump also announced that three to four places were under consideration as venues for his second North Korea-U.S. summit with Kim Jong-un. “We’re setting that [second summit] up right now,” Trump told reporters at the White House this morning. “That was part of the reason that [Secretary of State] Mike [Pompeo] was going over [to Pyongyang] to meet [Kim],” he added. On the venue for the second summit, Trump said, “[First summit venue] Singapore was fantastic, but we'll probably do a different location.” “We're talking about three or four different locations. Timing – won't be too far away,” he continued. When asked whether he might invite Kim to his Florida resort Mar-a-Lago, Trump replied, “He'd probably like that. I'd like that, too.” “But we'll see,” he added. Reporters also asked if the two might meet on U.S. soil, to which Trump replied, “I don't want to embarrass anybody by asking.” “I think eventually we're going to have lots of meetings on U.S. soil and on their [North Korea’s] soil, by the way,” he continued. “That's a two-way street – on their soil, also,” he said. At the same time, Trump also said, “I think that the country of North Korea is going to be a very successful country. I think it's going to be incredibly economically successful. And I want to make it that way.” His message was seen as hinting at a possible “shuttle diplomacy” process of travel back and forth between the two sides if their relationship improves. U.S. media previously reported North Korean officials as indicating during Pompeo’s Pyongyang visit on October 7 that they hoped Trump might visit Pyongyang for the second summit. Other reports in the foreign press suggested the US preferred the idea of holding the summit in a third country in Europe. (Hwang Joon-bum, “Trump Says Next Summit with Kim Jong Un Will Be after U.S. Midterm Election,” Hankyore, October 10, 2018)
controversy is expected after South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha admitted that US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had expressed his displeasure with the military agreement that was reached during the third inter-Korean summit last month. During a hearing of the parliamentary audit by the National Assembly’s Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee at the Foreign Ministry office, in the main government complex in Seoul, Kang responded in the affirmative when asked whether Pompeo had expressed strong displeasure about the inter-Korean military agreement in a phone call with Kang after the inter-Korean summit. “He had a number of questions since he hadn’t been adequately briefed,” Kang added. In response to a report by Nihon Keizai Shim bun that Pompeo had used strong language in the phone call, Kang said she “wouldn’t define it as strong language.” After Kang’s response led to speculation that the U.S. had expressed dissatisfaction about the results of the military agreement, South Korea’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained that the phone call in question had occurred before the inter-Korean summit. “This didn’t involve a single phone call. There was an understanding about what this means [in a subsequent phone call],” said a senior official at the Ministry. There was presumably some touchiness when opinions were being shared prior to the inter-Korean summit about the content of the military agreement, which dealt with such matters as the UN Command. When Rep. Lee Su-
hyeok, a lawmaker with the Democratic Party, asked toward the end of the hearing whether South Korea and the US had done enough to exchange opinions about the military agreement ahead of time, Kang said, “There had definitely been adequate consultation.” While explaining the content of her phone call with Pompeo after the inter-Korean summit in Pyongyang, Kang related that Pompeo “expressed his congratulations and his gratitude for President Moon’s efforts, which produced the results of the Pyongyang Summit.” This was a belated explanation of reports in the foreign press that Pompeo had been “infuriated” by the inter-Korean military agreement. Kang also courted controversy by changing her story about the possibility of lifting the South Korean government’s May 24 sanctions against North Korea, implemented after the sinking of the Cheonan corvette in 2010, which she had earlier said was “under review with related ministries.” Kang now says that “an interagency review is not taking place.” When Democratic Party leader Lee Hae-chan asked whether the government was willing to revoke the May 24 Measures, which block tourism to Mt. Kumgang and other sites in North Korea, Kang had said, “I’m told that this is under review with related ministries.” Kang’s remarks emerged in the process of answering Lee’s question about whether tourism to North Korea is subject to the UN’s sanctions on the North. Kang said that “tourism per se is not subject to sanctions, but the funds used for it are.” The May 24 Measures included suspending inter-Korean commerce, banning visits to North Korea except for the Kaesong Industrial Complex and the Mt. Kumgang district, limiting contact with North Korean citizens and blocking new investment in North Korea. Since then, however, these restrictions have been lifted one by one, leaving the measures mostly toothless except for the suspension of inter-Korean commerce and the ban on new investments, which are tied up with UN sanctions on North Korea. In Kang’s response, she appears to have confused this situation and the Moon administration’s continuing commitment to inter-Korean cooperation with the issue of tourism to Mt. Kumgang. After Kang’s remarks led to a debate about lifting the government’s independent sanctions on North Korea, she backpedaled by stating that a substantial portion of the May 24 Measures overlap with UN sanctions on North Korea and that they are a matter that should be reviewed in light of the overall situation, including progress toward denuclearization. “What I was trying to say was that I’ve been told the question of lifting the May 24 Measures is under review not ‘with related ministries’ but ‘by related ministries,’” Kang said, while apologizing for provoking controversy. (Yoo Kang-moon and Kim Ji-eun, “S. Korean Foreign Minister Admits Pompeo Expressed Displeasure with Inter-Korean Military Agreement,” Hankyore, October 11, 2018) “There were deliberations about the inter-Korean military agreement [during a phone call between the South Korean Foreign Minister and the US Secretary of State on September 17]. The [first] phone call, which lasted for 40 minutes, was conducted in a respectful tone,” said an official from South Korea’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to the Foreign Ministry’s explanation, the controversial phone conversation actually consisted of two telephone calls, one in the morning and one in the evening. On both occasions, it was Pompeo who made the phone call. In connection with this, The Foreign Ministry official said that Pompeo, after reviewing the related briefing, “posed a number of questions” to Kang in regard to “areas he hadn’t been adequately briefed about and needed to confirm separately.” At the end of the phone call, after answering these questions, Kang told Pompeo she understood that there had been “adequate communication between the military authorities” and asked him to confirm this matter inside the US government. On the evening of the same day, Pompeo called Kang back and said the information in question had been confirmed inside the U.S. government and that the situation had been dealt with. Pompeo told Kang he hoped the South Koreans would get some good results from the Pyongyang summit, the Foreign Ministry explained. A Foreign Ministry official disputed reports claiming that Pompeo had lost his temper and said that the first phone call had been conducted in a “respectful tone.” When asked whether Pompeo had apologized during the second phone call for calling Kang without a complete understanding of the issue because of internal American communication issues, the official said, “that was certainly the impression that was given.” The Foreign Ministry also said that only the inter-Korean military agreement had been brought up during the phone call and denied reports claiming that mention had also been made about a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the inter-Korean railroad project, slated to be held this year. “The Defense Ministry had been in consultation with [USFK] Commander Brooks, and the [Blue House] National Security Office with [White House National Security Advisor John] Bolton. This was a communication problem inside the US government,” alleged a senior official at the Blue House National Security Office.
This wasn’t the primary responsibility of the Foreign Ministry. This isn’t something that has to be deliberated from scratch by Kang Kyung-wha and Mike Pompeo,” the official added. South Korea’s Defense Ministry emphasized once again that the matter had been adequately discussed by the two sides’ militaries. “My understanding is that there have been adequate deliberations between South Korean and American military officials and that these matters have been adequately communicated and shared by South Korean government ministries,” said Defense Ministry Deputy Spokesperson Lee Jin-woo, a colonel in the army, during the briefing on Thursday. On October 9, Vincent Brooks, commander of US Forces Korea as well as the UN Command, visited Arrowhead Hill inside the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), where work is underway to remove mines. “This effort to clear a route to the historic Arrowhead [Hwasalmeori] Hill has my full support,” Brooks said. (Kim Ji-eun, Kim Bo-uyeop and Gil Yun-hyung, “MOFA Addresses Rumors about Pompeo Being ‘Infuriated’ with Inter-Korean Military Agreement,” Hankyore, October 12, 2018)

The government is closely discussing with the U.S. about including South Korean experts in the inspection of the Punggye-ri nuclear testing site in the North, Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha said Wednesday. The remarks came during the National Assembly’s audit of the ministry. This was a response to Rep. Choo Mi-ae of the ruling Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) who stated South Korean experts should be included on the team of international inspectors who will examine the Punggye-ri site. Defense Minister Jeong Kyeong-doo also said in a separate audit that Korea has "delivered its intentions so that it can take part when North Korea and the U.S. discuss nuclear inspection." (Kim Bo-eun, “Seoul Seeks Inclusion in Nuke Inspection,” Korea Times, October 10, 2018)

KCNA: “A joint press release was made public at the three-party negotiations of vice foreign ministers of the DPRK, Russia and China held in Moscow on Oct. 9, 2018. The joint press release is as follows: Choe Son Hui, vice foreign minister of the DPRK, Igor Morgulov, vice foreign minister of the Russian Federation, and Kong Xuanyou, vice foreign minister of the People's Republic of China, had three-party negotiations on the Korean peninsula issue in Moscow on Oct. 9, 2018. The three parties reached a consensus of view that all the issues regarding the Korean peninsula should be settled in a peaceful, political and diplomatic way. They highly appreciated the efforts of the countries concerned for political solution to the Korean peninsula issue and expressed support for the negotiations between the DPRK and the U.S.A. and between the north and the south of Korea for allaying fears and mending fences with each other. The three parties reaffirmed the will for denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and establishment of a peace regime there. The three parties shared the understanding that such processes should be ensured to progress in a stage-by-stage and simultaneous way while giving precedence to confidence-building and that they should be accompanied by corresponding measures by the countries concerned. Taking notice of the significant, practical steps for denuclearization taken by the DPRK, the three parties reached a consensus on the need for the UNSC to activate the process of adjusting sanctions upon the DPRK in time. The three parties re-clarified their common stand against independent sanctions. Also, at the negotiations they discussed in detail the necessity for consolidating bilateral or multilateral cooperation between the relevant countries in order to establish a lasting peace regime on the Korean peninsula. The three parties agreed to continue dialogue.” (KCNA, “Joint Press Release of DPRK-Russia-China Negotiations Made Public,” October 11, 2018)

U.S. officials are preventing American aid workers from making humanitarian trips to North Korea, according to people familiar with the matter, inhibiting the flow of food and medical assistance to the isolated country ahead of a new round of diplomacy over Pyongyang’s nuclear program. The decision was made by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, two of these people said, part of an attempt to tighten the screws on North Korea in response to perceived foot-dragging on dismantling its nuclear program. The State Department last year banned U.S. citizens from traveling to North Korea, citing the risk of arrest and long-term detention, but allowed for humanitarian exemptions. The department had granted such requests since then from American
citizens based in the U.S., South Korea and China. In recent weeks, though, the department has rejected requests for specially validated passports from members of at least five aid groups operated by American citizens, according to two of these people, with no possibility of appeal. A State Department official said that while special exemptions could be made “in the U.S. national interest,” the department ultimately had discretion to determine what met those criteria. “That a group’s prior application was approved does not guarantee that a new application will be approved,” the official said. The official raised the possibility of “the diversion and misuse of humanitarian assistance by the DPRK regime for its weapons programs.” Aid workers account for a large proportion of the few U.S. citizens who have traveled to North Korea in recent years. Most are members of Christian nonprofits such as Samaritan’s Purse, the Mennonite Central Committee and the Quaker-founded American Friends Service Committee. Christian Friends of Korea, a Black Mountain, N.C.-based nonprofit aid group founded in the wake of a famine that devastated North Korea in the 1990s, makes four trips a year to the country to dispense medical aid. The nonprofit sought State Department approval in June for a September trip to North Korea for 11 U.S. citizens and had two of its applications rejected, said Heidi Linton, the group’s executive director. A subsequent application lodged in August for a November trip was denied entirely by the department last month, she said. “We were planning to see new patients this time,” said Ms. Linton. “In some cases, if they don’t start treatment very soon, it may mean the difference between life and death.” The United Nations World Food Program said October 9 that it is facing a 73% shortfall in funding for its North Korea operations this year, and called for more international contributions. It estimates that roughly 40% of North Korea’s 25 million people are undernourished. Kee Park, a Harvard Medical School scholar and director of the North Korea program at the Korean American Medical Association who has traveled to North Korea to perform humanitarian surgery work, said today that his application was denied in August. Park called the State Department’s decision “arbitrary” and “inconsistent with the intent of exempting critical humanitarian assistance within the broader maximum pressure policy against DPRK.” Keith Luse, executive director of the National Committee on North Korea, a Washington nonprofit organization that serves as an advocate for the various aid groups doing work in North Korea, lashed out at the denial of the visas. “It has become clear that the Trump administration regards the provision of humanitarian assistance to the North Korean people as a legitimate target for its maximum pressure campaign,” Luse said. Tightening the flow of aid to North Korea may be a way of increasing U.S. leverage in a fresh round of bilateral talks aimed at breaking an impasse over Pyongyang’s nuclear program, said Joseph Yun, who until earlier this year was the U.S. special envoy on North Korea issues. “They’re accumulating chips to give to them,” said Yun, who added that the waivers might be granted again as part of an agreed set of mutual concessions in the nuclear talks. (Jonathan Cheng, “U.S. Blocks Aid Workers from North Korea,” Wall Street Journal, October 11, 2018)

South Korean President Moon Jae-in said he believed it was only a “matter of time” before related countries declare an end to the 1950-53 Korean War in an interview with the BBC at the Blue House. “Issuing an end-of-war declaration is something that I had ample discussions with the U.S. side, including President Trump,” said Moon, according to a transcript of the interview released by the Blue House this afternoon. He went on to say there was a “shared understanding between South Korea and the United States” that it would be better for the declaration to be announced “at the earliest time” as a “political statement.” Moon said that declaring an end to the war would be one of the corresponding measures taken by the United States in response to the North’s denuclearization steps and that it would lead to negotiations for a peace treaty as a next step. “An end-of-war declaration is a political statement signaling that the United States and North Korea have ended a long-running hostile relationship. If that happens, it will lead to the beginning of negotiations for a peace treaty, and in the end, the peace treaty will be signed with the complete denuclearization [of the North],” Moon said. The president also reaffirmed North Korean leader Kim Jong-un’s commitment to denuclearization, emphasizing that the North promised to give up nuclear weapons “for the sake of economic growth.” He also said that North Korean leader Kim told him there would be “no reason whatsoever” for him to maintain a nuclear arsenal under the international sanctions choking the North’s economy if his “regime’s security was guaranteed” by the United States. Moon also said what Kim had meant by “complete denuclearization” would
begin with a suspension of nuclear tests and missile launch tests, followed by “termination of nuclear facilities that produce nuclear weapons and develop missiles and of all existing nuclear arsenal and material.” He said that a “specific process” for complete denuclearization was up for the United States and North Korea to discuss, since Pyongyang was demanding Washington take “corresponding steps” that meet the North’s denuclearization steps. Moon said there was a “clear understanding” between himself and North Korean leader Kim that complete denuclearization should include the steps described above. Moon said that the key to improving human rights in North Korea would be bringing the North into contact with the outside world through cooperation with the international community and South Korea, rather than international pressure on the North to change its behavior. Moon said that the key to improving human rights in North Korea would be bringing the North into contact with the outside world through cooperation with the international community and South Korea, rather than international pressure on the North to change its behavior. Moon said that the key to improving human rights in North Korea would be bringing the North into contact with the outside world through cooperation with the international community and South Korea, rather than international pressure on the North to change its behavior. Moon’s BBC interview was conducted a day before his nine-day trip to Europe, which kicks off in Paris and will be followed by Rome, the Vatican, Brussels and Copenhagen. Moon embarks on the trip tomorrow and returns home on October 21. (Kang Jinkyu, “Moon Says Ending the War Is ‘Only a Matter of Time,’” JoongAng Ilbo, October 13, 2018)

In hailing the deal he reached with Kim Jong-un this summer in Singapore, President Trump said it “largely solved” the North Korean nuclear crisis. He has since doubled down on that statement, most recently on October 9. “People don’t realize the importance of the first meeting,” he said. “I mean, we said, ‘Point No. 1: denuclearization.’ They’ve agreed to denuclearization.” It was actually the third bullet point in the four-point Singapore agreement, and for the North Koreans, the order of those bullet points is everything. It will only agree to denuclearize once Washington commits to the first and second points: Trump’s promise to build “new” relations and a “peace regime” in Korea — and makes North Korea feel secure enough to disarm. The standoff shows how North Korea has turned the deal Trump signed with its leader, Kim, into one of its most effective cudgels in talks with Washington over denuclearization, ceaselessly flaunting it to force American concessions. For all the warm talk between Trump and Kim, the differing interpretations of the Singapore deal show the two sides remain locked in the same years long stalemate, with Washington focused on denuclearizing North Korea and the North using its nuclear weapons as leverage to win diplomatic recognition from the United States and seek a peace treaty to formally end the Korean War. And those differing readings of the deal raise questions about whether Trump will ever succeed in getting North Korea to denuclearize. Even President Moon Jae-in of South Korea, who has positioned himself as a mediator between Trump and Kim, has said that to denuclearize the North, Washington must build Kim’s confidence that his country can survive without nuclear weapons. And many analysts agree. “A country like North Korea — a small and weak country diplomatically isolated and economically devastated and a country surrounded by big powers — may feel very insecure, even though its neighboring countries have no intention to attack them,” said Yoon Young-kwan, a former South Korean foreign minister and professor emeritus at Seoul National University. Skeptics warn that in its talks with the United States, North Korea is giving up just enough to create the illusion of progress while enabling Trump to claim victory. This year, North Korea imposed a voluntary moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests and shut down its underground nuclear test site. Last month, it agreed to dismantle some missile-test facilities and — if Washington took “corresponding” steps — to dismantle its Yongbyon nuclear complex, a center for producing nuclear bomb fuel. But it has not clarified what it will do with its nuclear warheads and missiles, as well as the facilities that produce them. South Korean conservatives fear that Kim’s real intention is not to denuclearize but to use negotiations for a peace treaty to drive out 28,500 American troops based in the South. And H.R. McMaster, who served as Trump’s national security adviser until April, warned that Kim may hold onto his nuclear arsenal to force the reunification of the two Koreas under his regime. “We must remain alert to the possibility that his regime meant what it said when its officials stated on numerous occasions: that his nuclear arsenal would constitute a ‘treasured sword’ designed to pry apart the alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea, by making America think twice about ever coming to South Korea’s aid in time of war,” McMaster said at the annual World Knowledge Forum in Seoul, the South’s capital, yesterday. Until recently, it had appeared all but impossible to imagine North Korea giving up its nuclear weapons, or Washington providing the incentives the North wanted, like a peace treaty. But Trump, Kim and Moon are shaking up conventional notions and giving hope to some that personal chemistry can bring progress where past talks stalled. Trump has said he is “in love”
with Kim, whom he once called a “Rocket Man” on a “suicide mission.” Kim has said he cherishes the “friendly relationship and trust” forged with Trump, whom he once called a “dotard.” Moon, who has met Kim three times since April, helped fashion the North Korean dictator’s image makeover, encouraging him to appear with him on live television and repeatedly describing him as a “young” and “candid” leader prepared to give up his nuclear weapons in exchange for economic development and better ties with Washington. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s meeting October 7 with Kim suggested that Washington may have realized it must address Kim’s concerns about security to make progress in talks over denuclearization. “The secretary and Chairman Kim discussed the four pillars of the Singapore summit,” Heather Nauert, a State Department spokeswoman, said October 9. “That was something that was important for them to do.” North Korea has traditionally viewed denuclearization as taking place in sequenced “phases” for which it demands “simultaneous” incentives from Washington for each step. The decades-old negotiating style, known as a “salami-slicing tactic,” is embedded in the Singapore statement, which commits North Korea to work “toward” denuclearization while obligating Washington to improve ties and remove hostilities on the divided Korean Peninsula. That obligation comes partly from the country’s fear that its nuclear weapons are its only strong bargaining chip in negotiations with Washington, one it cannot afford to waste. Some analysts already see a replay of past stalemates. In May, North Korea unilaterally dynamited its Punggye-ri nuclear test site to help entice Trump to meet with Kim in June, but did not invite outside inspectors to determine how thoroughly the site was dismantled or to collect vital data on its weapons program. Now, as he seeks a second meeting with Trump, Kim is again using Punggye-ri as an incentive, saying North Korea will invite outside experts to the site. But there is already quibbling over whether a full inspection will be allowed. Kim “has mastered the art of milking a single cosmetic concession for months,” Vipin Narang, an expert on North Korea at M.I.T., said on Twitter this week. “Brilliantly selling the same horse twice.” (Choe Sang-hun, “North Korea Weaponizes Its Deal with Trump,” New York Times, October 13, 2018, p. A-7)

The two Koreas have agreed to break ground for the modernization of cross-border railways and roads in late November or early December, said a statement released by South Korea’s Unification Ministry. The statement came as a result of high-level talks today to discuss the implementation of the agreement reached at last month’s inter-Korean summit in Pyongyang. South Korean Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon met with Ri Son-gwon, chairman of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country, in a meeting that kicked off at around 10 a.m. at the truce village of Panmunjom. Regarding the railway project, both sides agreed to conduct a joint survey for the Gyeongui Line, which runs along the west coast of the Korean Peninsula, from late October, and the Donghae Line, along the east coast, from early October. Regarding the connection of cross-border roads, the two countries decided to exchange documents to decide on further details, including the itinerary. According to the statement, they plan to hold a Red Cross meeting in November on the North’s eastern slopes of Kumgangsan to discuss details on video meetings and exchanges of messages between families separated by the 1950-53 Korean War. The North’s scenic mountain has often served as a venue for the reunions of separated families, including the latest event held in August. Details on plans to field a united team at the 2020 Olympics and file a bid to jointly host the 2032 Olympics will be discussed at a sports meeting to be held at the recently launched joint liaison office in the border town of Kaesong. The South and North also shared the view that general-level military talks should be held as soon as possible to push for the establishment of a joint military committee. A time frame for the military talks was not given in the statement, but Cho explained in a press briefing after the meeting that specifics would be discussed following the wrap-up of an ongoing landmine removal operation later this month. Asked how the Seoul government will deal with the issue with the UNC, Cho emphasized that it is closely discussing the matter with the UNC. Concerns over possible sanctions violations surround the project, with its perceived role of laying the groundwork for other inter-Korean economic projects. “(We) should work hard to produce results that people would be happy with by agreeing quickly on detailed and practical methods to swiftly implement the September Pyongyang Declaration,” Cho said at the start of the meeting. Wrapping-up today’s talks, Ri called Monday’s talks “productive” and noted that though it is crucial to reach agreements at such inter-Korean meetings, the implementation of the agreements will determine the speed of improvement.
of inter-Korean relations. Cho agreed with Ri, acknowledging the importance of implementation. 

Cho led a five-member delegation including Vice Unification Minister Chun Hae-sung, Vice Land and Transport Minister Kim Jeong-ryeol, Vice Sports Minister Roh Tae-gang and Director-General Ahn Moon-hyun from the Prime Minister’s Office, the ministry said. The North Korean delegation also initially consisted of five members -- with Ri as head of the group -- but two more officials joined at the last minute. Jon Jong-su, vice chairman of the North’s Committee for Peaceful Reunification, and Hwang Chung-song, a senior official at the committee. The original members of the North’s delegation were Vice Railroad Minister Kim Yun-hyok, Vice Minister for Land and Environment Protection Pak Ho-yong and Vice Sports Minister Won Ki-u. (Jung Min-kyung & Joint Press Corps, “Koreas Agree to Start Railway, Road Work by Dec.,” Korea Herald, October 15, 2018) During high-level talks held at the House of Peace in Panmunjom, South and North Korea adopted a joint statement containing seven points about the scheduling of cooperation projects and follow-up talks in various areas necessary for implementing the Pyongyang Joint Declaration, which resulted from the inter-Korean summit held in September. The follow-up meetings arranged for the implementation of the Pyongyang Declaration are military general-level talks (location undecided, to be held “soon”), a meeting of the forestry cooperation subcommittee (Kaesong Joint Liaison Office, Oct. 22), a meeting of the health and medical care subcommittee (Kaesong Joint Liaison Office, late October), sports talks (Kaesong Joint Liaison Office, end of October) and Red Cross talks (Mt. Kumgang, November). The cooperation projects that were scheduled include working-level deliberations to be held “soon” for a North Korean concert in South Korea in October, the on-site joint survey of the North Korean section of the Gyeongui (Seoul-Sinuiju) railroad in late October, an on-site joint survey of the North Korean section of the East Sea railroad in early November; and a groundbreaking ceremony in late November or early December for a project to connect and modernize the roads and railways along the East and West Seas. One important feature of this agreement is that the Inter-Korean Joint Liaison Office in Kaesong, which opened on Sept. 14 to implement one of the main points agreed to in the Apr. 27 Panmunjom Declaration, has emerged as the primary scene for inter-Korean governmental talks, beginning with these high-level talks. This represents a major leap forward in the systematization of inter-Korean relations. Representatives from the two sides were able to wrap up the talks in five hours and 16 minutes. This is incredibly fast, given the vast scope and difficulty of the agenda of “devising measures for implementing the Pyongyang Declaration.” The most striking agreement reached was creating a timetable for the road and railway cooperation project. While the Pyongyang Declaration only said that the groundbreaking for the connection and modernization of roads and railways on the East and West Sea lines would take place “within the year,” inter-Korean negotiators accelerated the timeframe and narrowed it down to “late November or early December.” This is thought to express Kim Jong-un’s intention of holding the groundbreaking prior to his “return visit to Seoul within the year.” Leading up to the groundbreaking, the two sides agreed to initiate joint surveys of the northern stretch of the Gyeongui line “in late October” and of the East Sea line “in early November.” The schedule for the joint surveys of the roads along the West and East Seas is supposed to be confirmed via correspondence. Crossing the demilitarized zone (DMZ) will require prior consultation with the UN Command and effectively with the American government. Also remarkable was the agreement to convene the health and medical care subcommittee at the Kaesong liaison office at the end of October “to prevent the influx and spread of infectious diseases.” The Unification Ministry announced it would use this meeting to create a “health community on the Korean Peninsula.” Cooperation in health and medical care drawing a lot of attention not only because of the urgency of humanitarian measures, but also because it would create momentum on the Mother and Child Health and Nutrition project, organized by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Program (WFP). On September 21, 2017, the South Korean government promised to give the project US$8 million from the Inter-Korean Cooperation Fund, but the funds have yet to be disbursed. Providing US$8 million to this project would have major political consequences since it would point the way to securing and expanding humanitarian aid, which represents an exception to the tough sanctions imposed on North Korea. The question of creating and operating a joint military commission to coordinate the implementation of the “Agreement on the Implementation of the Historic Panmunjom Declaration in the Military Domain,” which is regarded as the greatest achievement in inter-Korean relations to result from the Pyongyang summit this past September, will be discussed during talks between
generals that are supposed to be held “soon.” South Korean government officials believe that these talks will be held between October 20, when the mine removal work at the Panmunjom area comes to an end, and November 1, when measures are implemented to end hostile behavior in the air around the military demarcation line. The Red Cross talks for the divided family reunions, which have a major impact on public opinion in South Korea, were pushed back to November, presumably because North Korea’s “confiscation” of the divided family reunion building needs to be addressed before the talks can be held. The North announced it had confiscated the building on April 27, 2010, when inter-Korean conflict was intensifying after the sinking of the Cheonan corvette. South and North Korea agreed to hold sports talks around the end of the month to “deliberate the question of jointly participating in international competitions, including the 2020 Summer Olympics [in Tokyo], and of jointly hosting the 2032 Summer Olympics.” (Lee Je-hun, “South and North Korea Adopt Joint Statement Following High-Level Talks,” Hankyore, October 16, 2018)

Trump: “Lesley Stahl: ... What about North Korea? Talking about accom-- Trump: Well, I consider it a, so far, great achievement. Look, we-- Lesley Stahl: You say "so far"? Trump: It's always so far, til everything's done. I-- I-- you know, deals are deals, okay? Whether it's a real estate deal or a retail deal, it doesn't matter. But I will say this. The day before I came in, we were goin' to war with North Korea. I sat with President Obama-- Lesley Stahl: We were goin' to war? Trump: --and-- we were gonna--I think it was going to end up in war. And my impression is-- and even in my first few months, I mean, that rhetoric was as tough as it could possibly get. Doesn't get any tougher than that. Nobody's ever heard rhetoric that tough. We were going to war with North Korea. Now, you don't hear that. You don't hear any talk of it. And he doesn't wanna go to war, and we don't wanna go to war, and he understands denuclearization and he's agreed to it. And you see that, he's agreed to it. No missiles. Lesley Stahl: Do you trust him? Trump: I do trust him, yeah, I trust him. That doesn't mean I can't be proven wrong -- Lesley Stahl: Why would-- Trump: about it? Lesley Stahl: you trust him? Trump: Well, first of all, if I didn't trust him, I wouldn't say that to you. Wouldn't I be foolish to tell you right here, on 60 Minutes-- Lesley Stahl: Well, remember what Reagan said. "Trust, but verify." Trump: Sure. I know. It's-- it's very true. But the fact is, I do trust him. But we'll see what happens. Lesley Stahl: But is it true that they haven't gotten rid of a single weapon, and they may actually be building more missiles- Trump: They want to-- Lesley Stahl: With nuclear-- Trump: And I will tell you that they're closing up sites. Lesley Stahl: But-- Trump: Setting it up. Lesley Stahl: Is what I said true, that they haven't? Gotten-- Trump: Well, nobody really knows. I mean, people are saying that. I've actually said that. Lesley Stahl: What? That they're still building missiles, more missiles? Trump: We don't really know, Lesley. We really don't know. But I assume-- Lesley Stahl: Suspect that? Trump: Let's say the answer is yes, okay? In the meantime, they haven't tested a missile. They haven't tested a rocket. They definitely haven't done a nuclear test because you know about them real fast. It sort of moves the earth. And we have a relationship now. Lesley Stahl: One of the things that Kim has asked for is for you to ease the sanctions. Trump: We haven't done that. Lesley Stahl: Are you prepared to do that? What-- what does he have to do-- Trump: No, No. 1-- Lesley Stahl: Before you're-- Trump: No I'm not doing it. This isn't the Obama administration. I haven't eased the sanctions. I haven't done anything. I haven't done anything. We're meeting. I believe he likes me. I like him. We have a good relationship. It's very important. President Trump at rally: "And then we fell in love, okay. No really. He wrote me beautiful letters. And they're great letters. We fell in love." Lesley Stahl: I wanna read you his resume, okay? He presides over a cruel kingdom of repression, gulags, starvation-- reports that he had his half-brother assassinated, slave labor, public executions. This is a guy you love? Trump: Sure. I know all these things. I mean-- I'm not a baby. I know these things. Lesley Stahl: I know, but why do you love that guy? Trump: Look, look, I-- I-- I like-- I get along with him, okay? Lesley Stahl: But you love him. Trump: Okay. That's just a figure of speech. Lesley Stahl: No, it's like an embrace. Trump: It well, let it be an embrace. Let it be whatever it is to get the job done. Lesley Stahl: He's a bad guy. Trump: Look. Let it be whatever it is. I get along with him really well. I have a good energy with him. I have a good chemistry with him. Look at the horrible threats that were made. No more threats. No more threats. Lesley Stahl: China Trump: I get along with him. It's very important. China, let's go. Lesley Stahl: I'm skipping across the world here. You've slapped a lot of tariffs-- Trump: $250
Lesley Stahl: Gonna do more? Trump: Might. Might. Lesley Stahl: Round three? Trump: They wanna negotiate, Lesley. They wanna negotiate. Lesley Stahl: Are you ready Trump: Look. Lesley Stahl: Are you ready to-- Trump: I have a great chemistry also with President Xi of China. I don't know that that's necessarily going to continue. I told President Xi we cannot continue to have China take $500 billion a year out of the United States in the form of trade and others things. Lesley Stahl: And how-- how-- Trump: And I said we can't do that, and we're not gonna do that anymore. Lesley Stahl: How much squeezing of them are you prepared to do when American products are gonna be more expensive for American consumers in the end of all this? Trump: Okay. Okay. So, so far, that hasn't turned out to be the case. Lesley Stahl: Some-- Trump: --if you think about it, so far, I put 25% tariffs on steel dumping, and aluminum dumping 10%. Lesley Stahl: But they've-- Trump: --again. Lesley Stahl: --retaliated. That's what I'm asking. Trump: They can retaliate, but they can't-- they don't have enough ammunition to retaliate. We do $100 billion with them. They do $531 billion with us. Lesley Stahl: Are you trying to sort of push them into a depression? Trump: No no, although they're down 32 percent in four months, which is 1929. Lesley Stahl: Well that's what I'm asking Trump: I don't want that. No, I don't want that. I want them to negotiate a fair deal with us. I want them to open their markets like our-- our markets are open. Lesley Stahl: But you're in-- Trump: And it will be a fair deal-- Lesley Stahl: --trade war right now. Trade war. Trump: You call it war, I don't call-- Lesley Stahl: You-- you-- Trump: --it-- Lesley Stahl: --you did today. Trump: I called it a skirmish. Lesley Stahl: I heard you, you called it a war. Trump: I called it, actually I called it a battle. But, actually, I'm gonna lower that. I consider it a skirmish. And we're gonna win. ...Lesley Stahl: You have also slapped some tariffs on our allies. Trump: I mean, what's an ally? We have wonderful relationships with a lot of people. But nobody treats us much worse than the European Union. The European Union was formed in order to take advantage of us on trade, and that's what they've done. Lesley Stahl: But this is hostile. Trump: And yet, they-- it's not hostile. Lesley Stahl: It sounds hostile. Trump: You know what that is hostile? The way they treat us. We're not hostile. Lesley Stahl: No, but can't you deal with-- Trump: We've been-- we've been-- Lesley Stahl: --them without-- Trump: --the stupid country for so many years. Lesley Stahl: Are you willing to get rid of that Western alliance? Trump: Now, I like NATO, NATO's fine. But you know what? We shouldn't be paying almost the entire cost of NATO to protect Europe. And then on top of that, they take advantage of us on trade. They're not going to do it anymore. They understand that. Lesley Stahl: Okay, but are, it does seem this, are you willing to disrupt the Western Alliance? It's been going for 70 years. It's kept the peace for 70 years. Trump: You don't know that. You don't know that. Lesley Stahl: I don't know what? Trump: You don't know that. Lesley Stahl: Is it true General Mattis said to you, "The reason for NATO and the reason for all these alliances is to prevent World War III?" Trump: No, it's not true. Lesley Stahl: What's not true? Trump: Frankly, I like General Mattis. I think I know more about it than he does. And I know more about it from the standpoint of fairness, that I can tell you. Lesley Stahl: I'm gonna try one more time. Okay. Trump: I know-- and, Lesley, you don't have to try again. I know exactly what you're saying-- Lesley Stahl: Well, answer my question. Trump: The answer is this. I will always be there with NATO, but they have to pay their way. I'm fully in favor of NATO, but I don't wanna be taken advantage of. ...Lesley Stahl: --do you believe that the Russians interfered in the 2016 campaign election? Our election- Trump: They-- they meddled. But I think China meddled too. Lesley Stahl: But why do you-- Trump: And I think other countries-- Lesley Stahl: --say China meddled too? Trump: And you wanna know something? Lesley Stahl: Why do you say Chi-- why don't you just say-- Trump: Well, let me ask you-- Lesley Stahl: --the Russians meddled? Trump: Because I think China meddled also. And I think, frankly, China-- Lesley Stahl: This is amazing. Trump: --is a bigger problem. Lesley Stahl: You are diverting the whole Russia thing. Trump: I'm not doing anything. Lesley Stahl: You are, you are. Trump: I'm saying Russia, but I'm also saying China. ... Lesley Stahl: You have said that this administration is like a smooth-running machine. And yet, we keep hearing that the White House is in chaos. Trump: It's-- wrong, it's so false. It's fake news. I'm changing things around. And I'm entitled to. I have people now on standby that will be phenomenal. They'll come into the administration, they'll be phenomenal. Lesley Stahl: More people gonna go? Trump: Yeah, other people will go, sure. Lesley Stahl: 'Cause so many people, you have kind of a record of --on turnover. Trump: I think I have a great Cabinet. There're some people that I'm not happy with. Lesley Stahl: Who are you not happy with? Trump: No, I don't
wanna say that but-- Lesley Stahl: Come on. Trump: Not I don't want to say that. But I have some people that I'm not thrilled with. And I have other people that I'm beyond thrilled with. Lesley Stahl: What about General Mattis? Is he going to leave? Trump: Well, I don't know. He hasn't told me that. I have-- Lesley Stahl: Do you want him to-- Trump: --a very good relationship with him. It could be that he is. I think he's sort of a Democrat, if you wanna know the truth. But General Mattis is a good guy. We get along very well. He may leave. I mean, at some point, everybody leaves. Everybody. People leave. That's Washington. ... (CBS, “Lesley Stahl Speaks with President Trump about a Wide Range of Topics in His First 60 Minutes Interview since His Election,” October 15, 2018)

KCNA: “The following is the full text of an article made public by Kim Chol Myong on Tuesday whose title is "What do ill-boding remarks from the U.S. signify": After the Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the DPRK met U.S. State Secretary Pompeo on a visit to Pyongyang, the DPRK-U.S. relations that had been on a stalemate began to roll again. Speaking before reporters after his Pyongyang visit, Pompeo said that his visit was quite good and that the DPRK and the U.S. had productive dialogue, noting with satisfaction that an important advance was made this time, too, and crucial progress would continue to be made. Even heard from the White House are comments that Pompeo had very good meeting in the DPRK and it was advance beyond excellence and the current tempo of the DPRK-U.S. negotiations is remarkably fast. Even rung out from south Korea and the international community are such voices that one cannot but be skeptical about the truthfulness of images of Chairman Kim Jong Un and Pompeo with bright smiles on their faces and that it is supposed that candid discussion of the DPRK's measure and the U.S. corresponding measures was made, which led to an optimistic prospect that this will have very positive impact on the situation of the Korean peninsula. But ill-boding remarks are heard from the U.S. now as if to jeer such positive observation of the public, shocking the world. Openly heard from off-year election campaigning rally places and press conferences are such call that sanctions must be continued until denuclearization is realized and that something must be taken more out of the DPRK in order to lift sanctions. The U.S. State Department just repeats the stereotype words that "defusing sanctions on the DPRK is possible only after denuclearization", disallowing even the application for visit to the DPRK for humanitarian projects which had been exceptionally approved in the past and putting pressure on all sides on the south Korean authorities not to advance the south-north relations ahead of the denuclearization. 

Even the White House made such threatening words that the north and the south cannot go ahead with the implementation of the historic joint declaration "without an approval by the U.S.", enraging not only south Koreans but all other Koreans. Every sound made in the world is bound to leave echo. So offending us are the coarse words heard from the U.S. even before the sound of cheers made in Pyongyang with smiles died out. They could have been made to flatter the hard-liners in their policy toward the DPRK in order to create favorable political environment before the off-year election in November. But one should be able to think that what they say are heard by those in the DPRK even though they are said in the U.S. and be able to think and speak from the position of the dialogue partner. The U.S., which is quite well aware that there was very excellent conversation in which mutual stands were fully understood and views were exchanged during Pompeo's visit to Pyongyang, is responding to good faith with evil. This is enough to stun the world. In front it thrust its hand asking for friendship but behind the scene it is making irrelevant remarks. It is something quite far away from common sense, to say nothing of diplomatic practices. In fact, the U.S. intent to keep on sanctions means that it would not stop hostile policy. This, in other words, means that it would stop improving relations. A U.S. high-ranking official looking after the DPRK-U.S. negotiations, shortly ago, was so natural to spit it out that the DPRK should not consider the U.S. keeping sanctions and maintaining watching attitude as an expression of hostility toward it. Is the barbarous strangling aimed at stamping out the right to existence and the right to living of the Korean people an expression of good faith and friendship, if not that of hostility. Mankind defined encroachment upon the sovereignty and economic independence of other countries, economic pressure measures threatening the base of the economic lifeline of a country and economic blockade against other countries as an act of aggression in the "treaty on definition of aggression" which was adopted and took effect in the 1930s. Hostile policy and reciprocity cannot go together. If the U.S. intends to be stubborn in its
sanctions, which means to continue to pursue hostile policy, is the Singapore Joint Statement which promised to end the extreme hostile relations between the DPRK and the U.S. and to open up new future of any worth and what did the U.S. president mean by "big progress" which he bragged. Does it mean to dare apply American diplomatic formula meant to "hold a big stick to talk to a dialogue partner" to the DPRK. It would be awkward for the U.S. with the two faces of Janus to look at the DPRK in its just eyes and, therefore, it would be comfortable for it to approach the DPRK-U.S. negotiations with cooled-down attitude. What should be emphasized again is that it is quite a contradiction and a faulty expression for the U.S. to continue to call for maintaining sanctions and pressure on the DPRK in response to its proactive and preemptive measures for denuclearization. Quite long period has passed since the DPRK stopped nuclear tests and inter-continental ballistic rocket launches and it is, therefore, natural for "sanctions measures" taken on that pretexts to disappear accordingly. What matters is that the U.S. president himself, whenever opportunities presented themselves, bragged that the DPRK does not conduct nuclear tests and ballistic missile launch tests and that he saved millions of lives but it is just all of the reactions to the measures taken by the DPRK in good faith. No wonder, big powers like China and Russia contend that the processes for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and the establishment of peace-keeping mechanism should be progressed in a phased and simultaneous way and be accompanied by corresponding actions by countries concerned. It is a common practice to offer for what is given but the U.S. which does not know offering after being given is natural to be jeered by the world as "America which does not even belch after swallowing a whole chicken." What becomes clearer with passing time is the true intention sought by the U.S. through sanctions. It is an undeniable reality that denuclearization and sanctions are misused as tools for meeting party interests and strategies of the political forces within the U.S., not to solve bottleneck problems between the DPRK and the U.S. to even a certain extent. The reason is clear. If it is sincere in its stand of respecting the spirit of the Singapore DPRK-U.S. Joint Statement and of hoping for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, it cannot be so unreasonable and inefficient in handling the DPRK-U.S. relations as now. The hard-liners fail to approach the issue of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula from the stand for peace of humankind but use it as a material for attacking the diplomatic policy of the government whereas the Trump administration has not gotten rid of the policy of one-sided pressure on the DPRK while reading the faces of the hard-liners. No wonder, the fundamental interests of the DPRK-U.S. relations are deeply mired in its evil cycle to suffer losses. It is also a well-known fact that sanctions are being misused as a "rope" for keeping many countries around the world tied within the sphere of its influence while being used as a tool for domestic policy by the U.S. at the same time. When viewed in this context, it is clear why the U.S. insists with its ears closed that it would keep sanctions until a clear signal is heard from someone while saying with its eyes closed that no movement for denuclearization can be seen from the DPRK. The U.S. politicians must clearly understand that the DPRK-U.S. relations and furthermore the world peace are mocked and insulted as the sanctions which hold no more pretext and value are being misused by the political forces of the U.S. for meeting their interests. All our people say that the U.S. is a country which only knows receiving, not giving. and it is so narrow-minded for a superpower. It is hard to guess till when and up to where the big U.S. is going to dangle on the unilateral good faith and magnanimity of the DPRK. The U.S. must lend an ear to the advice of the international community which strongly urges the U.S. to stop the sanctions on the DPRK, saying that no problem can be solved only by means of sanctions and pressure. Unless U.S. takes flexible and realistic measures, being away from the stiffened way of thinking dating back to the past, the "sanctions" would only become a chain shackling the U.S. from advancing toward the world and future before pressuring the one it aims. Counting on the U.S. above all, the DPRK made a promise with it to end the hostile relations of over 70 years and make common efforts for peace in the Korean peninsula and the world, and has taken a series of measures in good faith. If the U.S. does not take any trustful measures for clearing up the concerns of the DPRK which it is quite well aware of, it is clear that the DPRK-U.S. relations would become such far apart and the settlement of the nuclear issue of the Korean peninsula would be such distant. Such U.S. acts of playing a double game and only forcing the unilateral demand on the DPRK as now would be little short of destroying the tower which the top leaders of the two countries built by taking the advantage of the miraculous opportunity and with painstaking efforts. It is difficult to
advance the DPRK-U.S. negotiations even an inch with an obstacle called sanctions kept on the rail, however loudly the whistle is blown. A new page of the DPRK-U.S. relations can be written only with a soft brush, not with a rough stick.” (KCNA, “What Do Ill-boding Remarks from U.S. Signify,” October 16, 2018)

The two Koreas and the United Nations Command (UNC) discussed disarmament of the Joint Security Area (JSA) amid expectations for unarmed soldiers to "guard" the inter-Korean border area in a near future. "The three-way consultation body had negotiation on measures on having a weapons-free JSA, including the withdrawal of firearms and guard posts," according to the Ministry of National Defense. Army Colonel Cho Yong-geun headed the South’s three-member delegation, with the North led by Colonel Om Chang-nam, according to the ministry. United States Army Colonel Burke Hamilton also represented the UNC for the hours-long discussions. The trilateral meeting is aimed at finalizing details to realize complete disarmament at the JSA.

The two Koreas reached a consensus over the plan by signing a joint military agreement during an inter-Korean summit in Pyongyang last month. The three parties are expected to have narrowed their differences on specific timelines to implement disarmament measures in the area, but they did not reveal any details. (Lee Min-hyung, “UNC, North Korean Military Discuss JSA Disarmament,” Korea Times, October 16, 2018)

The focus of the “corresponding measures” that North Korea is publicly demanding from the U.S. in exchange for its denuclearization is rapidly shifting since Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s fourth visit to North Korea on October 7 from a formal declaration of the end of the Korean War to the issue of sanctions. Some analysts think this is because the two sides came to an understanding about the end-of-war declaration during Pompeo’s meeting in Pyongyang with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. This focus is thought to represent North Korea’s intense desire for easing sanctions to be one of the major items on the negotiating table along with the end-of-war declaration in the run-up to the meeting between North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui and State Department Special Representative for North Korean Policy Stephen Biegun, which will function as “working-level talks” prior to the second North Korea-U.S. summit. U.S. plans to maintain and even strengthen sanctions came under fire in a column signed by a private individual titled “What can we learn from the nasty things being said in the U.S.?”. A new page of the DPRK-U.S. relations can be written only with a soft brush, not with a rough stick.” (KCNA, “What Do Ill-boding Remarks from U.S. Signify,” October 16, 2018)

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had converted these TELs yet again to a peculiar variant carrying a canister, resembling what

Kim now needed to pursue the quantitative growth of his nuclear force. If North Korea is serious about remaining a nuclear power and using its weapons for what Kim described as “a powerful and reliable war deterrent” in that same speech, he will need more missiles and more launchers. …As this year’s Foundation Day parade on September 9 demonstrated, North Korea is no longer touting its nuclear-capable systems—at least for as long as the current round of its diplomatic charm offensive persists. But, behind the scenes, we have reports that Kim’s diktat is being followed to the letter. Even U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, testifying to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee just weeks after the Singapore Summit between Kim and Trump, could not deny that North Korea was still enriching fissile material for use in additional nuclear warheads. Later in the summer, the Washington Post, citing U.S. intelligence assessments, noted that North Korea was manufacturing additional Hwasong-15 ICBMs at the well-known Sanum Dong Research Center. In this context, even as diplomacy proceeds between the United States and North Korea, with a second Trump-Kim summit appearing highly likely, we should attempt to understand what kind of nuclear force structure North Korea envisages. While it’ll be out of the scope of this analysis to comprehensively answer that much larger question, there is an important constraint on North Korea’s force structure development: its reliance, to date, on externally sourced heavy launch vehicles for transporting, erecting, and launching ICBMs. During the April 15, 2012, military parade to commemorate the centennial of Kim Il Sung’s birth, North Korea first showed off an ICBM system, known as the Hwasong-13/KN08. While independent experts quickly came to the assessment that the systems shown that day were mocked up airframes and that North Korea remained some time away from an ICBM capability ready to see flight-testing, the launch vehicles drew immediate attention. The ICBMs were seen on eight-axle heavy trucks, which were quickly pinpointed as the Wanshan WS51200 heavy logging truck, manufactured by Chinese firm Wuhan Sanjiang Import and Export Co. LTD. The external provenance of these trucks is no longer in question. In 2013, the United Nations Panel of Experts (PoE) on North Korea established pursuant of Security Council resolution 1874, delivered its assessment that North Korea had imported the trucks with falsified end-user certification. This was to say that Wuhan Sanjiang delivered the trucks to North Korea expecting that they would be used for forestry applications, apparently missing the easily perceptible dual-use nature for a country that had long coveted a heavy launch platform for large road-mobile missiles. With regard to North Korea’s nuclear force structure, the precise number of these WS51200 heavy trucks imported from China has long been a topic of interest. Based on all available evidence, it would appear that North Korea never received more than six of these trucks from China. Only six have ever been seen together in a military parade setting, including during their public unveiling in 2012. The PoE report in 2013 located the original “Democratic People’s Republic of Korea Forestry Ministry Rim Mok General Trading Company, Limited” certification to the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation (the parent company of the parent company to Wuhan Sanjiang) that “six units of the off-road trucks (WS512000)” had been transferred to North Korea. In 2017, when Wuhan Sanjiang was sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department under Executive Order 13382, the public notice observed that in 2011 “Wuhan Sanjiang transferred six off-road lumber transporter vehicles to North Korea, which North Korea subsequently converted into Transporter-Erector-Launchers (TELs) for use in its ballistic missile program.” By all accounts then, six—and only six—of these vehicles have been in North Korea since 2011. Since 2011, the original WS51200s imported from China have undergone extensive modification—likely at the facility known to the U.S. intelligence community as the Mupyong-ni Arms Factory, identified first by open-source researchers as having a role in TEL modification in 2014. There are three major known ICBM-linked modifications to these TELs. In 2012, we saw the KN08-accommodating WS51200. In 2015, North Korea unveiled the KN14, or Hwasong-13 mod 2—another ICBM design that was seen on the WS51200-derived TEL. In April 2017, during the Day of the Sun parade, North Korea had converted these TELs yet again to a peculiar variant carrying a canister, resembling what one
observer cleverly described as the lovechild of a WS51200 launcher and a Russian-style Topol road-mobile ICBM launcher. The extended canister mounted on the WS51200 during that parade required a particularly dramatic modification to the cab, digging into the center. Four TELs modified to this configuration were seen during the parade, with a fifth on standby as a replacement. Later in 2017, we saw a new configuration of the WS51200 TEL when North Korea conducted two flight tests of its Hwasong-14/KN20 ICBM, once from North Pyongan province and again from Chagang province—both in July. In released photography of these tests, we see identical camo patterns and an unmodified cab, suggesting that apart from the five TELs that were converted for the canister-toting modification seen at the April 2017 parade, North Korea had set aside one WS51200 for the design bureau involved with the Hwasong-14 ICBM project. U.S. intelligence had additionally detected movement of a KN20 TEL into Kusong after the July 4 ICBM test, suggesting that North Korea moved this TEL for the second test, which incidentally occurred right outside the Mupyong-ni Arms Factory. In November 2017, when North Korea first tested the Hwasong-15 ICBM—its largest missile ever—KCNA celebrated the introduction of a new “9-axis self-propelled launching vehicle manufactured by workers of the munitions industry.” To accommodate the considerable length of the Hwasong-15, the regular WS51200 wouldn’t do. North Korea had to modify the WS51200 with the most substantial structural modification since its procurement of the vehicles in 2011 by adding another axle. Its ability to do so wasn’t completely a surprise, and the location of the Hwasong-15 test in Pyongsong, near the so-called March 16 Factory, underlined a growing indigenous capability to modify—and perhaps build—large TELs. Kim Jong Un had visited and toured the March 16 Factory in Pyongsong that same month, with KCNA underlining the facility’s involvement in the manufacture of “large-scale truck[s]” and “Korean-style heavy-duty vehicles while solving the knotty problems by dint of science and technology under the uplifted banner of self-reliance.” Apart from the added axle, the vehicle included an all-new three-window cab, suggesting that North Korea had reused and modified one of the vehicles that had been dramatically modified for the April 2017 parade. By February 2018, we have evidence that at least five of the six WS51200s had been modified to the nine-axle variant used in the Hwasong-15. On February 8—one day before the start of the PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games kicked off the ongoing bout of inter-Korean diplomacy—North Korea paraded four Hwasong-15s through Kim Il Sung square, with another vehicle on standby. All five vehicles included the three-window cab too, suggesting that North Korea had reused the modified April 2017 vehicles. The Hwasong-14 was included at the parade, too, but not on an integrated TEL. Instead, four Hwasong-14 airframes were towed—and not in a mobile-erector-launch configuration either. This suggested that as of February 8, 2018, North Korea had at least five WS51200 TELs modified for use with the Hwasong-15 and perhaps one more—the same one used to test the Hwasong-14 twice in July 2017—configured for the Hwasong-14. The Washington Post report this summer that North Korea was manufacturing additional Hwasong-15s would suggest that the sixth WS51200 may also be modified now to accommodate this missile. A decision to do so would not be surprising. The Hwasong-15 outperforms the Hwasong-14 in every regard, including range and payload capability. North Korea’s ICBMs play a particular role in its nuclear strategy—holding U.S. homeland targets at risk—that would give the Hwasong-15 every bit the edge over the Hwasong-14. For Kim Jong Un’s nuclear force today, the best possible deterrent posture would be to include six launchers for Hwasong-15—possibly with plans to reload in a crisis. The question of why North Korea has yet to demonstrate an indigenous capability of build heavy launch vehicles for its ICBMs has often come up in discussions of its burgeoning force structure. After all, how can a country that has seemingly mastered the indigenous production of ICBMs fail to build the vehicles that are designed to carry them? The answer—perhaps counter intuitively—is that these kinds of launch vehicles are difficult to manufacture and especially so with the kinds of high reliability and endurance features necessary for their use in a nuclear force. (A forestry truck breaking down may mean lost revenue; road-mobile ballistic missiles breaking down in a crisis can mean the difference between a grudging shot at survival and certain defeat for the North Korean regime.) The emphasis given to the March 16 Factory and the launch of the Hwasong-15 out of Pyongsong, right next door to the factory, suggest that North Korea may be inching close to an indigenous ICBM launch vehicle. Indeed, if Kim is serious about a nuclear force structure capable of deterring the United States by threatening to hold U.S. cities at risk, he will want additional ICBM launchers. Both North Korea and the
United States plan to go first in any conflict on the Korean peninsula and U.S. preemption scenarios, in particular, plan to swiftly destroy Kim Jong Un’s ICBM force. While reloading existing launchers in a crisis is the next best thing, Kim will want to have as many launchers as possible. Six will be insufficient. Other modes of basing may be appealing to Kim as well. Rail-mobility, in particular, may have a future in North Korea, given existing railroad networks and tunnels. Silo-basing is likely a nonstarter given that, once detected, North Korean silos would be sitting ducks to a U.S. conventional strike. Kim Jong Un’s newly favored low-profile approach to his nuclear forces means that we may never quite see a parade through Kim Il Sung showcasing an indigenous ICBM TEL—the juche successor to the WS51200. But rest assured that North Korea is working toward this.” (Ankit Panda, “Toward Mass Production: The Future of North Korea’s TELs,” NKNews, October 17, 2018)

The United States opposes a plan by South and North Korea to set up a no-fly zone over their heavily fortified border, the latest sign of a rift between Seoul and its top ally, two sources familiar with the matter told Reuters. Washington and Seoul both publicly insist they are on the same page about dealing with Pyongyang. But behind the scenes, there are growing signs of disagreement as South and North Korea forge ahead with plans to defuse military tensions and rebuild economic ties. The military accord, sealed during last month’s summit in Pyongyang, is one of the most concrete agreements between the neighbors this year. But U.S. officials have raised concerns that it could undermine defense readiness and comes without substantial progress on denuclearization. The pact includes a halt in “all hostile acts,” a no-fly zone around the border and a gradual removal of landmines and guard posts within the Demilitarized Zone. The United States was not likely to openly protest against an inter-Korean initiative, Seoul officials said, but its deep involvement in sanctions enforcement and military operations give it leverage to delay or change the policy. The no-fly zone is a key sticking point for the U.S. because it would effectively prevent close air support drills, the sources said, adding that Pompeo raised the issue during the call with Kang. Both sources spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter. The zone, effective November 1, will extend 40 kilometers north and south from the Military Demarcation Line in the East and 20 kilometers in the West for fixed-wing aircraft. The agreement also bars live-fire drills involving fixed-wing aircraft and air-to-ground guided weapons in the no-fly area. South Korea and the United States had held such drills regularly until halting joint exercises in June. There are different restrictions on helicopters, drones and balloons, with exemptions for commercial and non-military operations such as medical, disaster and agricultural uses. In close air support, airplanes provide firepower for troops who may be operating near enemy forces. Most fighter jets that U.S. forces operate in South Korea, such as the F-16, can play that role, one of the sources said. (Hyunhee Shin, “U.S. Opposed to Koreas’ Plan for No-Fly Zone over DMZ: Sources,” Reuters, October 18, 2018) Controversy continues to grow over South Korea’s plan to establish a no-fly zone along the border with North Korea, prompting debate over the question of building trust with Pyongyang without compromising the military’s reconnaissance capabilities. The Moon Jae-in administration maintains that the measure is crucial to addressing the lack of military trust between the two countries, suggesting that preventing accidental clashes between forward-deployed units is key to reducing the risk of minor skirmishes escalating into an all-out war. “No-fly zone is essentially a confidence-building measure. … Flying so close to the border area can be a source of major accidental military clashes,” President Moon’s special adviser Moon Chung-in told The Korea Herald at a security forum in Seoul last week. Effective November 1, the two Koreas will be banned from flying fighter jets, choppers, drones and even balloons inside the no-fly zone. The zone extends 40 kilometers north and south of the Military Demarcation Line in the east and 20 kilometers in the west for fixed-wing aircraft. The Defense Ministry said while the measure limits the capability to monitor North Korea’s massive front-line units, the gap can easily be bridged by more advanced reconnaissance assets employed by superior commands and US Forces Korea. There might be a “slight impact” when the Army conducts tactical reconnaissance with drones and the Air Force collects imagery intelligence, but South Korea’s multilayered surveillance capabilities can minimize the gap, the Army and Air Force chiefs said. “Employing Unmanned Aerial Vehicles held by corps-level units can be partly limited,” Army Chief of Staff Gen. Kim Yong-woo told the lawmakers October 18. “But superior command’s units are sufficiently capable of dealing with (North Korea’s) tactical units.” Air Force
Chief of Staff Gen. Lee Wang-geun agreed. In a meeting with lawmakers Friday, Lee said the restriction could diminish the scope of the surveillance area by aircraft, but the loss was trivial and could be compensated for by the USFK’s advanced assets. However, concern persists among security experts that establishing a no-fly zone is a reckless step to pursue with North Korea, whose nuclear weapons and massive conventional forces pose a significant threat to South Korea. Given that airpower is one of the rare areas where South Korea enjoys an advantage over North Korea thanks to advanced assets from the US Air Force, imposing restrictions on the allies’ air forces is too much of a concession, security experts said. “I’m afraid the South Korean military has become blinded, unable to see what North Korea is doing,” said retired Lt. Gen. Shin won-sik, who served as Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff before leaving the Army in 2016. “North Korea’s advantage in asymmetric capabilities can only be offset by South Korea’s advanced surveillance, reconnaissance and precision-strike capabilities. Establishing a no-fly zone has killed such capabilities.” In particular, Shin warned that the measure might undermine the military’s ability to detect surprise attacks from North Korea, especially those from massive artillery units positioned along the DMZ. North Korea has stationed massive artillery units capable of hitting Seoul with tens of thousands of rounds within the first hour of a conflict. While the inter-Korean detente has raised the hope that the artillery units might be withdrawn, no such agreement was made between the two Koreas. Shin In-gyung, president of the Korea Defense Network, believes that establishing a no-fly zone is a strategic mistake. Given that North Korea’s surveillance and airpower lag far behind that of South Korea, he said, the military agreement favors Pyongyang. “Now there is a significant gap between the two Koreas in terms of airpower and reconnaissance capabilities. … Speaking about the capabilities that North Korea doesn’t possess, it seems that we struck a deal that only ends up neutralizing our capabilities,” said Shin. (Yeo Jun-suk, “No-Fly Zone: Prudent Trust-Building Step or Reckless Concession,” Korea Herald, October 21, 2018)

The U.S. has asked South Korea for a list of potential cross-border projects and timetables and asked it to guarantee that they do not violate UN sanctions against North Korea, an American official said. Alarmed by the announcement that the two Koreas want to kick off reconnecting cross-border railways and roads before the end of the year, the U.S. warned that it could withdraw support for all cross-border projects if even one violation of sanctions is discovered. A senior official in the Trump administration told Chosun Ilbo today that the U.S. does not oppose cross-border projects under the joint declaration signed at the inter-Korean summit in April. But the official added that the U.S. asked South Korea to submit a list of the projects it wants to pursue as well as a timetable and check which areas could potentially violate sanctions. The official said there is a lot of potential for violating sanctions in the projects and it will not be possible to pursue all of them. The official said the aim is to achieve “transparency” in talks about the projects, adding that Washington has warned it could withdraw support even for projects that already got the green light should any violations be revealed. The U.S. asked South Korea to submit the list by October 15, when the two Koreas held their latest round of talks, but Seoul missed the deadline. In the meeting, North and South Korea agreed to hold a ground-breaking ceremony on the reconnection projects in late November or early December, though Seoul says actual work will have to wait until sanctions are eased. (Cho Yi-jun, “U.S. Demanded List of Cross-Border Projects,” Chosun Ilbo, October 19, 2018)

President Donald Trump has nominated Air Force veteran David Stilwell as assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, the White House said. Stilwell, who speaks Korean, Chinese and limited Japanese, currently serves as director of the China Strategic Focus Group at the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Headquarters in Hawaii after retiring from the military in 2015 with more than 35 years of experience as a pilot, commander and Korean linguist. The brigadier general has also served at the Defense Department and as a defense attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing. From 2008 to 2010, he served as commander of the 35th Fighter Wing at Misawa Air Base in northeastern Japan. (Kyodo, “Trump Picks Air Force Vet David Stillwell as Top U.S. Diplomat for E. Asia,” October 18, 2018)
Pope Francis said he “could go” to North Korea and that he would “definitely” respond to an invitation should Pyongyang send one, during his meeting with South Korean President Moon Jae-in at the Vatican. The pope’s message, delivered during a 38-minute meeting with the president in a private audience only attended by the two and one interpreter, raised expectations that the leader of the Catholic Church could make an unprecedented historic visit to a state that brutally suppresses religious freedom and encourages the adoration of its ruling Kim dynasty. “Should [the North] send an official invitation, I will answer definitely and I could go [there],” the pope was quoted as saying by Yoon Young-chan, spokesman for the Blue House. The pope also reportedly said he would like to receive the official invitation from the North. Moon also thanked Pope Francis, who has continuously expressed his support for peace on the Korean Peninsula. “I have taken to heart your message that dialogue is the only way to solve all kinds of conflicts. As a result, North Korean leader Kim, President Trump and I were able to lay down the foundation to set in place a permanent peace regime and denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula,” Moon was quoted as saying to Pope Francis. The pope told Moon he gave his “strong support” to Moon’s “pursuit of peace process on the Korean Peninsula.” “Go forward and do not stall. Do not fear,” the pontiff was quoted as saying. In an interview with the BBC on October 12 in Seoul, Moon said that bringing the North into contact with the outside world is a better way to get it to change its behavior than mere pressure. On October 19, Moon attended the 12th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) summit in Brussels, the third leg of his nine-day overseas visit to Europe. The biennial event hosted heads of 51 countries, 21 from Asian and 30 from Europe, with the theme of “Global Partners for Global Challenges.” Moon also had a series of summit meetings with Britain, Germany and Thailand starting from 10:30 a.m. local time on the sidelines of the ASEM meeting.

(Kang Jin-kyu, “Pope Wants Invitation from Kim,” JoongAng Ilbo, October 20, 2018)
inspectors as a sign of leader Kim Jong Un’s sincerity in denuclearizing. However, like May, Macron insisted the sanctions pressure must be maintained until the North takes more concrete steps to scrap its nuclear and missile program. France and Britain both hold seats on the UN Security Council. “Mr. Moon’s main goal during his trip to Europe was to lift EU sanctions,” said Ramon Pacheco Pardo, the KF-VUB Korea Chair at the Institute for European Studies in Brussels. Pacheco Pardo said he believes the EU will be more open to North Korea engagement following Moon’s trip, but added that the bloc wouldn’t likely budge from its insistence on the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of North Korea’s nuclear program, as laid out by the U.N. Moon’s sanctions push risks angering Washington, which fears that relieving the North’s isolation could undermine leverage in denuclearization talks. (Dasl Yoon and Laurence Norman, “Moon’s Push to Ease Sanctions Falls Flat,” Wall Street Journal, October 19, 2018)

10/19/18

The United States and South Korea have suspended upcoming joint air defense drills to give diplomatic efforts with North Korea "every opportunity to continue," the U.S. military said. The Pentagon said the decision to suspend Exercise Vigilant Ace, which had been scheduled for December, was taken by U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and South Korean Defense Minister Jeong Kyeong-doo, who met in Singapore today. Pentagon spokeswoman Dana White said in a statement that the decision had been taken to "give the diplomatic process every opportunity to continue." White said, "Both ministers are committed to modifying training exercises to ensure the readiness of our forces. They pledged to maintain close coordination and evaluate future exercises." She added that Mattis had spoken with his Japanese counterpart as well on the issue. Vigilant Ace is one of several exercises that have been suspended since the summit to encourage dialogue aimed at getting North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons. Last year, Vigilant Ace had more than 230 aircraft, including six F-22 Raptor stealth fighters, and around 12,000 U.S. service members. (CNBC, “U.S. and South Korea Suspend More Drill to Bolster North Korea Diplomacy,” October 19, 2018) Trump has regularly made statements in recent weeks suggesting that all U.S. military exercises with South Korea had been suspended. But lower-level training operations between the two allies have continued apace. Only three high-profile exercises had been suspended as a result of the Singapore summit: Ulchi Freedom Guardian and two Korean Marine Exchange Program training operations. Friday’s decision to suspend Vigilant Ace marked the fourth canceled exercise. Vigilant Ace is primarily an annual air-combat exercise in which fighter jets from both countries come together and fly in various scenarios. The Pentagon described it as a way to enhance the ability of the armed forces from the two countries to operate with one another. Mattis has not been a fan of the decision to suspend the military exercises, according to former U.S. officials, who said that he had urged against putting them on the table during negotiations. (Paul Sonne, “U.S. and South Korea Cancel Exercise to Give Diplomacy ‘Every Opportunity,’” Washington Post, October 20, 2018, p. A-6)

South Korea plans to create a “blue-water” naval fleet, capable of conducting global operations, to try to safeguard its interests at a time of shifting power dynamics and growing uncertainty about U.S. commitment to the region. The fleet, set to consist of three squadrons and feature South Korea’s Aegis destroyers, will contribute to a broader arms build-up in the region, triggered by China’s military modernization and its assertive stance on territorial claims. “The task fleet will contribute to securing maritime traffic routes and ensure free maritime operations and safety of our citizens through the expanse of our operational areas into far seas,” the South Korean navy said. It said it would furnish the new fleet with an aviation command that would “run maritime patrol aircraft and choppers [to] ensure the completeness of various maritime aviation operations.” (Bryan Harris, “Seoul to Expand Navy in Face of Chinese Military Build-Up,” Financial Times, October 20, 2018)

10/20/18

Jong Hyon commentary: "Does the U.S. feel ashamed of itself for approaching us with two faces": “What is recently heard from the U.S. over the Korean issue makes the world people confused. On one hand it is advertised that U.S. Secretary of State Pompeo's Pyongyang visit made a "great achievement" desired by the U.S. and, on the other hand, the "sustained sanction" unpleasant to the ear is heard so much. Heard from campaign venues of the U.S. are such voices that it has a
very good relationship with north Korea and there is no threat at present, though the former was 
going to war with the latter in the past. Whereas it is heard from news conference and other places 
that sanctions should be sustained until north Korea does something and there is no idea of lifting 
the sanctions on it. The U.S. Department of State stated that the visit to Pyongyang was very 
productive and successful and what was discussed with the DPRK was a "great progress," 
showing a desire to have technical talks at an early date. On the other hand, it contended that the 
U.S. constant stand is "denuclearization first and lifting of sanctions next," forcing the south 
Korean authorities not to accelerate the north-south cooperation and urging Southeast Asian and 
European countries to intensify the cooperation in putting pressure upon the DPRK. The U.S. 
consented to the outstanding issues and the concerns of the DPRK in Pyongyang, but denied 
the consensus later. It "voiced full support" for the improvement of inter-Korean relations 
at the Singapore summit, but now checks the inter-Korean cooperation, claiming that "it is 
impossible without the consent from the U.S." Lack of logic in the words and deeds of the U.S. 
only causes a doubt. Which of the two faces of the U.S. is true, smiling or abrupt? Does the U.S. 
really want to improve its relationship with the DPRK or does it have some other intention? We 
wonder whether the U.S. administration suffers from psychological confusion under the weight of 
some political pressure and irritation at home. Even The New York Times, commenting on such 
words and deeds changing at any time and place and inconsistent attitude, said that the 
government sends confusing messages and pursues the policy of sanctions on the DPRK only to 
cause empty threat and confusion. Of course, we are aware of the "embarrassing situation" and 
"awkward position" of the White House with the November off-year election of U.S. Congress 
just ahead. We are well aware that the political situation of the U.S. is very complicated and this 
makes it difficult for the administration to make a decision and push ahead with it. Due to those 
who insist on "hard line" against their will and set themselves against Trump's policy, the U.S. 
political climate is on the verge of disaster. Some of them claim that they should not be deceived 
and they cannot trust sincerity of north Korea toward denuclearization, whereas some people say 
that maximum pressure should be maintained aside from dialogue and lowering the level of the 
pressure will lead to a great mistake. Some people try to cause a nuclear-phobia, saying that what 
will be beyond imagination is allowing north Korea to develop nukes. This is the present 
American political situation in which the truth and falsity are confused by such assertions. 
Commenting on such stunning situation, even ex-President Obama deplored that the U.S. politics 
is becoming mean, illiberal and dishonorable and rampant in the political camp are bluffing, 
offensive, insult, false assertion and bogus anger. It is clear to everyone that the opposition forces' 
noisy talk about denuclearization and escalation of sanctions are to annoy the Trump 
administration and become occupants of the Oval Office and Congress, not out of a good will for 
peace. It is just a paradox of the mean politicians who are utterly ignorant of the DPRK and have 
ever thought of the most realistic way of denuclearization. This being a hard fact, is it good for 
the U.S. administration to keep reading the face of the opposition forces? The U.S. administration 
can never pave its own way for the truth, if it keeps turning its ear to such rumors. What matters is 
that the U.S. administration, being much afraid of the grumblings by the hard-liners at home, is 
insensitive to the fact that its dialogue partner feels nervous about its unfaithful deed and double-
headed attitude. Americans obsessed with hypocrisy, deception, arrogance and self-complacency 
may regard such unilateral and double-faced behavior as something normal and natural. But they 
should know that it is just an unpardonable insult to Koreans who like to do everything in a pure 
and explicit manner and set much store by faith and promise. If what Americans said in 
Pyongyang is utterly different from what they said in Washington and if their remarks are entirely 
different from what they think of, the tower of mutual confidence built with much effort will 
become futile like building the tower with eggs. It seems that the U.S. regards the negotiations 
with the DPRK not as the ones for putting an end to the history of hostility and distrust lingering 
century after century and for establishing the new relations of trust but as a black-hearted kiss. 
The whole world hailed the meeting of the top leaders of the two countries in Singapore as an "epochal 
meeting" and a "meeting changing history". It was because the world thought that the U.S. finally 
dropped the strong-arm policy and opted for dialogue and negotiations. Americans gave applause 
to the measures of goodwill taken by the DPRK but now cry out for constantly brandishing the 
club of pressure. It is hard to discern what is true and what is false in their language. Even at a 
time when the DPRK-U.S. talks were proceeding in an amicable atmosphere in Pyongyang,
Americans at home openly cried out for not dropping the club of "pressure", asserting "pressure" is the main card for tackling the issue. It seems that they failed to sense the on-going situation. That's why the international community comments that the U.S. is not interested in the give-and-take-style negotiations but only hopes that the DPRK would be pressurized into surrender, and that the U.S. is just short-sighted to see the far-reaching development as it too deeply sticks to denuclearization. A bird flies with its two wings, but the U.S., with its wings furled, only urges the DPRK to fly. The U.S. may be just called a dishonest man who likes receiving, not giving anything, and the DPRK doing it favors in return for nothing can be called a great man. The international community is sneering at the U.S. like this. In the UN arena Russia strongly opposes the on-going pressure on the DPRK, holding that sanctions can never be a substitute for diplomacy, and China also contends that doing everything by force will bring about disastrous results. But the U.S., due to its half-done double-dealing way of thinking and behavior, fails to discern what is big and what is small, and even lost the senses of proportion and balance in the quagmire of confusion in the goal and means. It seems that Americans have just come to be ignorant of what goals they seek -- global peace and stability or sanctions and pressure --, being at the end of their tether due to their fierce internal dispute. Consistency of thinking and deeds can be ensured and the DPRK-U.S. negotiations can progress toward their original goals on the fixed track only when the U.S. doesn't lose its way although it is plagued with difficulties caused by the dispute in its internal politics. We do not want good will and generosity of the U.S. but urge it to act in the elementary give-and-take principle. The DPRK holds that the DPRK-U.S. relations can be improved only when they are based on mutual confidence, but the U.S. insists that the bilateral relations can be improved through tightened sanctions and pressure. There is no need to question whose assertion is right. Koreans dislike and hate duplicity and two-faced behavior. The U.S. should deal with the DPRK with sincerity, instead of depending on double-dealing tactics. And it had better look on the successful future with soft face, not looking back upon the failed past with black face.” (Jong Hyon, “Does the U.S. Feel Ashamed of Itself for Approaching Us with Two Faces,” KCNA, October 20, 2018)

Carlin: “Pyongyang appears to have made a potentially far-reaching, and possibly internally contentious, decision to put the question of sanctions squarely on the table at exactly the point US-DPRK negotiations are rapidly losing momentum. At first glance, this seems an effort to force Washington to realize that its current approach of what the North considers the U.S. “all-take-but-no-give” attitude is driving the situation into a dangerous tailspin. On October 16, North Korea publicly heralded its decision when KCNA carried the “full text of an article made public by Kim Chol Myong” focusing on sanctions as the major obstacle to progress in US-DPRK negotiations. KCNA rarely carries the full text of articles or official statements, and when it does, this signifies they are to be read with special care. The article came the closest any DPRK commentary has since early this year to criticizing President Trump directly. The norm for the past many months had been to lay the blame for problems on “conservative” forces or “those who are called experts” in the US. Though stopping short of criticizing the president by name, the Kim Chol Myong article went right up to that line and leaned across it, complaining: “If the U.S. intends to be stubborn in its sanctions, which means to continue to pursue hostile policy, is the Singapore Joint Statement which promised to end the extreme hostile relations between the DPRK and the U.S. and to open up new future of any worth, and what did the U.S. president mean by “big progress” which he bragged.” Playing on that same theme, the article continued: “What matters is that the U.S. president himself, whenever opportunities presented themselves, bragged that the DPRK does not conduct nuclear tests and ballistic missile launch tests and that he saved millions of lives but it is just all of the reactions to the measures taken by the DPRK in good faith.” Making sure the main point was clear, the article ended by putting sanctions front and center: “If the U.S. does not take any trustful measures for clearing up the concerns of the DPRK which it is quite well aware of, it is clear that the DPRK-U.S. relations would become such far apart and the settlement of the nuclear issue of the Korean peninsula would be such distant. Such U.S. acts of playing a double game and only forcing the unilateral demand on the DPRK as now would be little short of destroying the tower which the top leaders of the two countries built by taking the advantage of the miraculous opportunity and with painstaking efforts. It is difficult to advance the DPRK-U.S. negotiations even an inch with an obstacle called sanctions kept on the rail, however loudly the
“whistle is blown.” Use of the word “difficult” appears intended to hold the door open, if only a crack, to the possibility of a diplomatic path through the sanctions thicket. A tougher bottom line would have been to declare that it was “impossible” to move ahead while sanctions remained in place. Only four days after the Kim Chol Myong warning, KCNA ran the text of a different article, this one under the name of yet another rarely seen commentator—Jong Hyon. Like Kim Chol Myong, Jong Hyon was critical of the US, but used noticeably less pointed language, avoiding any criticism of “the President,” and casting the problem almost entirely in terms of “confusing” signals from “the administration.” The article implied the root of the problem was not sanctions so much as “double dealing tactics” brought on by election pressures, and this could conceivably resolve itself after the mid-term US elections. Adopting an approach typically meant to soften the tone, rather than issue blunt assessments, Jong Hyon diluted judgments by attributing critical positions to “international opinion” or casting criticisms as questions. For example, it said, “We wonder whether the US administration suffers from psychological confusion under the weight of some political pressure and irritation at home.” While noting the “awkward position” of the White House facing the November mid-terms—a stance several Rodong Sinmun articles had adopted over the past couple of months—nevertheless, Jong Hyon warned the administration that it should understand that positions adopted for US domestic political purposes have an effect elsewhere, and that Washington seems “insensitive to the fact that its dialogue partner feels nervous about its unfaithful deed and double-faced attitude.” The use of the term “nervous” rather than something tougher or more definitive appears calculated to signal that although the situation is not good, it has not yet entered a truly dangerous moment. Indeed, Jong Hyon bent over backwards to give the administration the benefit of the doubt, noting, “We are well aware that the political situation of the U.S. is very complicated and this makes it difficult for the administration to make a decision and push ahead with it.” While the earlier Kim Chol Myong article had similarly noted that the White House could “have been made to flatter the hard-liners in their policy toward the DPRK in order to create a favorable political environment” before the November elections, and had issued a similar warning that “one should be able to think that what they say are heard by those in the DPRK even though they are said in the U.S. and be able to think and speak from the position of the dialogue partner,” it had not softened the criticism but bluntly asserted that the “coarse words” were “offending” the North. It was inevitable that the North would begin to sharpen the focus on sanctions relief as a critical element of its negotiating position. Recent US blandishments to the ROK against easing sanctions, numerous reports that the US was seeking to constrain the South from moving ahead with its commitments under recent inter-Korean agreements, and finally reports that Washington has stopped US NGOs from proceeding with humanitarian work in the North may have helped Pyongyang decide that it was time to lay down a marker. In contrast to the Kim Chol Myong piece, the language in the Jong Hyon article suggests an effort to register concern but to soften the criticism in a manner that leaves the way open to picking up progress later this year. Whether this reflects a difference of opinion in the leadership, or simply a quick recalculation that the first piece was too harsh awaits further evidence. The first public signal that the North might be changing its position and moving toward playing the sanctions card was a KCNA commentary on October 2 declaring that Pyongyang had dropped its call for an end of-war declaration. The commentary declared that “if the United States does not want the end of war, we will not bother to cling to it.” At the same time, it pointedly reiterated the offer, advanced in the September 18 North-South summit in Pyongyang, that the North would “dismantle” Yongbyon in return for “corresponding measures” by the US. Coming less than a week before Secretary of State Pompeo’s visit to Pyongyang, the KCNA commentary essentially told Washington that there were now bigger fish to fry, and that the “corresponding measures” would not include the end-of-war declaration, if that is what the Americans had in mind. Then, two days before the US Secretary of State was to arrive, the North reported that Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui had left for Beijing and Moscow, meaning she would be away from Pyongyang when Pompeo was there on October 8. The day after Pompeo’s visit, a highly unusual trilateral DPRK-PRC-Russian meeting of vice foreign ministers issued a joint press release which stated: The three parties had a common understanding that [denuclearization and establishing a peace regime] must proceed in a step-by-step and simultaneous way while putting priority on building trust, and that they must be accompanied by corresponding measures by the countries involved. While noting the fact that the DPRK has taken significant, practical denuclearization measures, the three parties had
Japan’s Prime Minister Abe Shinzo stood before African leaders in Nairobi two years ago and outlined his vision for a vast stretch of the globe — from the Pacific to the Indian Oceans — united by trade and a common political worldview. It was also a statement on the broader ambitions of Japan, which has watched China dethrone it as Asia’s top economic powerhouse. Japan’s initiative, called the Free and Open Indo-Pacific, is based on the principles of free trade and freedom of navigation, the rule of law and the market economy — and is partly a riposte to China’s Belt and Road plan that envisions investment and infrastructure flowing west from Beijing toward Africa and Europe. Japan is now thinking bigger and with more confidence — challenging the rise of China and trying to adapt to greater isolationism by the Trump administration. Earlier this month, Japan’s Indo-Pacific plan was backed by leaders from across Southeast Asia’s Mekong River region. The pact was bolstered by a promise of investment in “quality infrastructure” that is financially and environmentally sustainable — and backed by greater visibility for Japan’s warships in the sea lanes and ports of Asia. In an acknowledgment of Washington’s worries about China’s clout, the Japanese plan has also become a key regional policy objective — and slogan — for the United States too. Much of Japan’s bolder approach can be traced back to Abe himself. Japan’s people, he told the U.N. General Assembly last month, understand that their miraculous postwar prosperity is based on free trade, and have “eagerly awaited” their leaders to act as flag-bearers in this century for Asia’s vast new middle class. “Japan's responsibility is tremendous indeed,” he said at the United Nations. “That is also Japan's mission, rooted in its own history.” One pillar is the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, also known as the TPP-11. It is the successor to the regional trade deal that the Obama administration designed and then was abruptly abandoned during Trump’s first week in office. Following the U.S. withdrawal, Abe personally led a massive effort to save the TPP, convincing 11 nations from New Zealand to Canada to sign a new agreement in Santiago in March. It is expected to come into force next year. There is a military side, too. Japan’s pacifist constitution precludes it developing armed forces with “war potential.” In practice, however, Japan’s Self Defense Forces are well-equipped and becoming more visible in Asia. Earlier this October, Japan’s new amphibious troop brigade took part in joint exercises with U.S. Marines aimed at retaking an “enemy-held” island. Earlier this month, Japanese armored vehicles were used on foreign soil for the first time since World War II, in another exercise in the Philippines. Last month, a Japanese submarine, helicopter-carrier destroyer and two destroyers conducted live fire exercises in the South China Sea in what was seen as a message to China, which claims full ...
The U.S. Treasury Department is “deeply concerned” about planned financial cooperation between North and South Korea and has told South Korean banks that “U.N. and U.S. sanctions on North Korea remain valid”, a South Korean regulatory document has shown. The document, drafted by South Korea’s Financial Services Commission (FSC) and released today after a parliamentary audit, reveals the U.S. Treasury Department’s unusual direct calls to South Korean banks, and highlights another sign of discord between Washington and Seoul over North Korea. Just after Kim and South Korea’s President Moon signed an agreement in Pyongyang on September 19 during their third summit this year, an unidentified deputy assistant secretary at the U.S. Treasury Department’s Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence called executives in
A press release and step Forestry Administration, as chief delegate.

KCNA: “Inter-Korean talks for cooperation in forestry took place at the north-south joint liaison office [today] under the agreement at inter-Korean high-level talks for implementing the historic “September Pyongyang Joint Declaration.” Present there were the north side’s delegation led by Kim Song Jun, vice director-general of the General Bureau of Forest under the Ministry of Land and Environment Protection, and the south side’s delegation with Pak Jong Ho, vice-director of the Forestry Administration, as chief delegate. At the talks both sides discussed the practical issues and step-by-step measures for promoting inter-Korean cooperation in forestry and adopted a joint press release. (KCNA, “Inter-Korean Talks for Cooperation in Forestry Held,” October 23, 2018)
After an agreement was reached during a meeting of the inter-Korean forestry cooperation subcommittee today to work toward modernizing 10 tree nurseries in North Korea within the year and exterminating the pinewood nematode in North Korea by March of next year, the next question concerns the current state of forests in North Korea. There’s widespread awareness of the severe deforestation in North Korea, a country in which mountains cover 80 percent of the land, but there aren’t any officially recognized figures on this issue. A report about prospects for environmental climate change in North Korea that was published in 2012 by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) based on data received from North Korea’s Ministry of Land and Environmental Protection stated that there were 8,927,300 ha (hectares) of forest land in North Korea as of 2005. The North says that 1,284,100 ha of this, or 14 percent, is deforested. This is sharply contradicted by figures released in 2008 by South Korea’s National Institute of Forest Science, under the Korea Forest Service. The institute’s latest figures (2008), which are released every 10 years after analyzing satellite imagery, estimated that were 2.84 million ha of deforested land in North Korea. This represented a 74 percent increase from the 1.63 ha reported in the previous survey (1999). The implication is that 32 percent of North Korea’s total forested area, or 47 times the area of Seoul, is deforested. But both of these are estimates, which is the reason that experts say that joint surveys and research are critical for inter-Korean forestry cooperation. North Korea’s deforestation is believed to have been exacerbated by the combination of famine, energy crisis and economic recession that hit the country in the 1990s amid natural disasters and the splintering of the socialist bloc. The deforestation was the consequence of chopping down too many trees, both to collect firewood for fuel and to clear land for farming. North Korea has made an effort to restore its forests – passing forestry legislation in 1992, establishing the Ministry of Land and Environmental Protection in 1996 and establishing a 10-year plan (2001-2010) for creating forestry resources in 2000, and current leader Kim Jong-un has taken an even greater interest in this area. It’s thought that Kim Song-jun, deputy director of the General Forestry Bureau at North Korea’s Ministry of Land and Environmental Protection, may have expressed some dissatisfaction on this point during the meeting of the inter-Korean forestry cooperation subcommittee on October 22. In the words of Park Jong-ho, deputy director of the Korea Forest Service, the agreements reached during the meeting (modernizing 10 nurseries in North Korea within the year, providing pesticides for the pine wood nematode in November, working together to exterminate the pest by March 2019 and carrying out pest extermination efforts on a seasonal and yearly basis) “failed to meet the expectations” of North Korea, which is “waging a war to restore its forests.” “My understanding is that North Korea has a substantial amount of technological capability. They probably have a strong demand for the resources and materials that they lack,” said Woo Jong-su, director of Green One Korea. The specific areas of support that South and North Korea announced after their meeting had to do with cooperation in the production of forestry equipment and materials, including transparent panels for greenhouses and containers for nurseries. Considering that nursery modernization requires greenhouses, growth environment control systems (automatic temperature control apparatus), irrigation and shading facilities, low-temperature sapling storage facilities, and seed planting equipment, only the most basic of these materials appear to have been brought up during the meeting. “The issue of the budget probably kept the two sides from discussing large-scale facility support in the short term,” said an expert who spoke on condition of anonymity. Separately from this, the budget proposal for inter-Korean forestry cooperation that the Korea Forest Service submitted to the office of Democratic Party lawmaker Rep. Kim Hyeon-gwon shows that the agency is planning to invest 7.5 billion won (US$6.6 million) to build a tree nursery on state-owned land in Paju, Gyeonggi Province, with the aim of helping North Korea. (Kim Ji-eun, “South and North Korea Agree to Modernize Tree Nurseries and Exterminate Pinewood Pests in the North,” Hankyore, October 25, 2018)
agreement, the Panmunjom Declaration reached at April's first summit between Moon and Kim, is going through a parliamentary ratification process. The ministry's point was that last month's Pyongyang Declaration is designed to carry out April's Panmunjom Declaration, and parliamentary ratification of the broader agreement would cover all subsidiary agreements. "Improvement in inter-Korean relations and reduction in military tensions will make it easier and facilitate complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," Moon said during a Cabinet meeting where the summit agreement and a separate inter-Korean military agreement were approved for ratification. "It is not only a way to protect the lives of our people and promote their safety, but it will also be helpful to our economy by removing crisis factors," he said. "More than anything else, it will be beneficial to people living near the border, and it is also a way to substantially improve the human rights of North Korean people." April's Panmunjom Declaration contains a series of broad agreements to halt "all hostile acts" against each other, explore ways to enhance cross-border exchanges and pursue the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The Pyongyang Joint Declaration fleshed out the April deal and calls for a series of wide-ranging economic and humanitarian cooperation projects and exchanges between the two sides. It also contains the North's commitment to take specific steps toward denuclearization. The military agreement calls for ceasing all hostile acts against each other so as to reduce military tensions and prevent accidental clashes, such as suspending all military exercises near the land and sea borders between the two sides. The main opposition Liberty Korea Party protested the government failed to win parliamentary consent. "The (Moon Jae-in) government claims that the Panmunjom Declaration needs parliamentary ratification, but there is no need to ratify the Pyongyang summit and military agreements, key elements (of the April deal). This perception shows how the president is dogmatic," Kim Sung-tae, the floor leader of the LKP, said. "The government is calling on opposition parties to cooperate, but in reality, it ignores people and the National Assembly," he added. The minor opposition Bareunmirae Party raised the issue of procedural legitimacy. "It is problematic that the Cabinet approved the Pyongyang deal first just because the president could not sign the April summit agreement pending on the parliament," Kim Kwan-young, the floor leader of the BP, said. "It should have watched the National Assembly's discussion on the April deal further." But the ruling Democratic Party defended the ratification. "It is not an issue of whether the Pyongyang summit deal should be approved prior to or after the ratification of the Panmunjom Declaration," the ruling party said. "The approval also indicates the need for the National Assembly to ratify the April summit deal. We hope that the political circle will cooperate with the ratification to help improve inter-Korean ties." (Yonhap, “Moon Ratifies Summit Meeting amid Opposition Parties’ Protest,” October 23, 2018)

Pyongyang is not coming up with a time and location for the next U.S.-North high-level talks, a senior South Korean government official said, lending to a “frustrating” situation. The high-level official familiar with the negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington told reporters that an early end-of-war declaration “depends on when the [North-U.S.] working-level talks start and how in-depth their agreement is.” He noted that the United States considers a declaration to end the war as “part of a bigger picture” in the denuclearization negotiations, and that details “will become more concrete during the working-level negotiation process.” The official added that “if working-level talks take place, it is not impossible for it to happen within the year.” He indicated that Washington considered the declaration to end the war as just one of its negotiating cards in the ongoing denuclearization dialogue. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo hinted one week ago in an interview with Voice of America (VOA) that a “senior leader meetings” could take place “in the next week and a half or so,” which would be a “real opportunity to make another big step forward on denuclearization.” But working-level talks between Stephen Biegun, the U.S. special representative for North Korea, and Pyongyang’s Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui have not moved forward since. This high-level official further said, “What is frustrating is that the United States is prepared to meet them at any time, but North Korea is not giving a definite date and location.” However, the official added North Korea “will get in touch for the working-level talks because, so long as Kim Jong-un instructed Vice Foreign Minister Choe, it is an order that cannot be ignored.” Likewise, Washington has not yet been able to confirm which high-level official North Korea would dispatch as Pompeo’s counterpart, though figures such as the leader’s younger sister Kim Yo-jong have been considered possible. Kim, first vice director of the Central
Committee of the Workers’ Party of North Korea, played a role as a de facto chief of staff for her brother during the June 12 Singapore talks with Trump, and could play an influential role should she be Pompeo’s dialogue counterpart. During Pompeo’s Pyongyang visit earlier this month, she sat at the negotiating table with her brother, even when Kim Yong-chol, the vice chairman of the Workers’ Party, was in the same building. However, the official pointed out “it is unclear if she can immediately leave the country at the moment.” There is also the possibility that Pyongyang is waiting to see the results of the U.S. midterm elections on November 6 before scheduling a summit. “For North Korea, they are playing a game putting on line the dismantlement of all its nuclear weapons and facilities,” the official added, “hence they are preparing thoroughly, which is why it is taking so much time.” Pyongyang has also been demanding sanctions relief rather than an end-of-war declaration as a corresponding measure from Washington. A U.S. State Department official told the VOA today, “Sanctions will remain in full effect should North Korea fail to denuclearize,” adding that the “full implementation of UN Security Council resolutions by the international community brought us to this moment, and are necessary for a successful outcome of this process.” Trump, said this official, has been clear that “sanctions relief will follow denuclearization, and the sooner we get to that point, the sooner we can lift sanctions.” Lee Do-hoon, the South Korean Foreign Ministry’s special representative for Korean Peninsula peace and security affairs, made a three-day visit to Washington since October 21 and had talks with his U.S. counterpart, Biegun, yesterday, discussing the U.S.-North denuclearization negotiations, a second Kim-Trump summit and rallying China and Russia’s support. Lee visited Beijing last week, meeting with his Chinese counterpart Kong Xuanyou, who recently had a trilateral meeting in Moscow with North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Choe and Russia’s top nuclear envoy, Igor Morgulov, where they called for some sanctions relief. (Sarah Kim and Jung Hyo-sik, “North Korea Stalls on Next Talks with U.S.”, JoongAng Ilbo, October 25, 2018)

President Trump says he is withdrawing from a landmark Cold War-era arms treaty with Russia because Moscow has been violating the agreement for years. But scrapping the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty also serves another key Trump goal: intensifying military pressure on China. Because Beijing is not a signatory to the agreement, it has been able to build an extensive arsenal of medium-range ballistic missiles armed with conventional warheads. It’s a stockpile that now threatens U.S. air bases and aircraft carriers central to the Pentagon strategy for defending allies in Asia. If Trump follows through on his vow to withdraw from the treaty, the Pentagon would be free to deploy medium-range missiles in Asia capable of hitting targets in China, current and former officials say. Unless Russia and China agree to a new agreement, Trump has said, “we are going to develop the weapons.” Abrogating the treaty could come at a high price, however. It would risk intensifying a growing U.S. military rivalry with Beijing and Moscow, both of which are likely to deploy new weapons to counter any U.S. buildup, critics say. “Withdrawing from the treaty will open the door to a new and unconstrained competition,” said Lisbeth Gronlund, co-director of the Global Security Program at the Union of Concerned Scientists, an arms-control group based in Washington. Exiting the treaty has long been a goal of Trump’s national security advisor, John Bolton, a longtime critic of arms-control agreements who traveled to Moscow this week to explain the U.S. decision to Russian officials. At a news conference Tuesday in Moscow, Bolton brushed off mounting concerns from China and European allies — as well as Russia — that U.S. withdrawal from the treaty would undermine global security. Bolton quipped that he would say the same thing if he were living in Beijing. “In the case of China, one-half to one-third of their ballistic missile capability would violate the treaty if they were party to it,” Bolton said. In 2011, Bolton argued in a Wall Street Journal opinion piece that the U.S. should either expand the treaty to cover China or “abrogate it entirely so that we can rebuild our own deterrent capabilities.” A Pentagon report on China’s military capabilities released in August said Beijing had conventionally armed short- and medium-range ballistic missiles as well as ground- and air-launched land-attack cruise missiles. The U.S. is especially concerned about China’s DF-26, an intermediate-range ballistic missile fielded in 2016 that has a maximum range of 2,500 miles, enabling it to strike U.S. bases as far away as Guam. “We are at a disadvantage with regard to China today in the sense that China has ground-based ballistic missiles that threaten our basing in the western Pacific and our ships,” Adm. Harry Harris, former head of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, who is now ambassador to South Korea, told the Senate
Technical preparations are underway for a joint study by South Korea and Russia aimed at reviewing the economic feasibility of a plan to lay a natural gas pipeline that would run through North Korea, connecting Russia and South Korea. If this huge project is actually carried out, it would create an “energy artery” linking South and North Korea. Since the trilateral cooperation on natural gas resources potentially represents the triple boon of economic benefits, peace on the Korean Peninsula and co-prosperity of South and North Korea, eyes are fixed on when South Korea and Russia will initiate their joint study. On October 24, the Korea Gas Corporation (KOGAS) announced that it had undertaken the technical preparations that are one of the preliminary phases for a joint study between South Korea and Russia on piped natural gas (PNG) for a trilateral natural gas project in which natural gas extracted from gas wells in Siberia and the Russian Far East would be supplied through overland pipes in North Korea to South Korea. “The PNG joint research is unconnected to sanctions on North Korea, and we are carrying out technical preparations for creating future conditions without violating the sanctions,” KOGAS said. During a summit between South Korean President Moon Jae-in and the leader of Russia in June, the two leaders agreed to move forward with a joint gas study aimed at trilateral cooperation with North Korea. They also agreed that KOGAS and Russian state-owned gas company Gazprom would conduct joint research into the economic feasibility and technical aspects of laying a pipeline. Recently, the two gas companies have held a number of working-level deliberations aimed at launching the joint study. The plan to run a pipeline through North Korea to pipe Siberian natural gas into South Korea has been periodically discussed both in the private sector and in the government since the 1990s, but it was effectively scuttled by a number of volatile factors, such as North Korea’s nuclear program. A report reviewing a 2010 joint study by South Korea and Russia stated that an annual 7.5 million tons of natural gas produced by Siberian gas wells would be
supplied to South Korea through an overland pipeline. In regard to the length of the pipeline, Samjong KPMG estimated in 2015 at the request of KOGAS that the shortest route (running from the North Korea-Russian border through Wonsan, Cheolwon, Paju and Incheon to Pyeongtaek) would be 1,202km long. If the pipeline ran through Pyongyang and Kaesong, in consideration of North Korea's potential demand for natural gas, the length would extend to 1,505km. Though North Korea uses hardly any natural gas at present, it's highly likely to add natural gas to its energy supply moving forward. Naturally, there are limitations to what can be achieved through joint research by South Korea and Russia alone, and they'll have to enter negotiations with North Korea. It will also be necessary to carry out a geological survey for the route of the pipeline in North Korea, as well as to review its price competitiveness if the gas had to be liquefied and shipped in the event of an unexpected incident. "Before a South Korean and Russian joint research project can take the form of a 'due diligence' in which researchers enter North Korea directly and investigate the conditions for an overland pipeline, they would have to deliberate with North Korea as well as gain approval from the US [for the due diligence]. If there is no due diligence in North Korean territory, the research could also consist of South Korea and Russia preparing and sharing the latest data about long-term demand for natural gas [in South Korea] and supply capability [in Russia]," said Lee Seong-gyu, head of the northern energy cooperation team at the Korea Energy Economics Institute. KOGAS is also estimating the transshipment fees. Considering the gas transit tariff contracts that Gazprom has made with Ukraine and Slovakia, it's estimated that South Korea would pay North Korea US$2 for every 100km that 1,000m$ of natural gas is transported (assuming a usage-based fee), in which case the annual gas transit tariff would amount to about 180.4 billion won (US$158.7 million). "There are no international agreements or universal standards pertaining to overland pipelines, and transshipment fee agreements are typically negotiated and confidential," KOGAS noted. North Korea could also be compensated for the gas transit in kind instead of cash and use the natural gas it receives domestically. For South Korea, the government's policy of converting to environmentally friendly energy is one of the reasons for moving forward with this joint research project. KOGAS expects that this project would not only secure a stable supply of natural gas but also help lower the price of LNG. The price of LNG in Japan, China and South Korea, which are the world's three biggest importers of natural gas, is nearly twice that of prices in the US (US$4.49) and European markets because of contracts that are linked to international crude oil prices and because of unfavorable conditions that are called the "Asian premium." In 2017, the average price of LNG in South Korea was US$8.08 per 1MBtu. Currently, KOGAS is importing natural gas that is produced in wells in countries such as Qatar and Australia and then liquefied for transport by ship, but with a pipeline, the natural gas could be transported in its original gaseous state. This is also expected to greatly reduce the current price set in negotiations with LNG suppliers. (Cho Kye-wan, "South Korea and Russia to Conduct Joint Study for Natural Gas Pipeline Running through N. Korea," Hankyore, October 26, 2018)
it by thoroughly implementing the June 12 North Korea-U.S. declaration,” he added. "The peace part was also specified in the September joint declaration." (Yonhap, “N.K. Remains Committed to Summit Agreements with U.S., South Korea: Official,” October 25, 2018)

South Korea currently has no plans to reopen a joint industrial complex in North Korea's border town of Kaesong, officials from the presidential office Cheong Wa Dae said. The resumption of the Kaesong complex would be impossible unless international sanctions against the North are first removed, they added. The remarks came in response to reports that Pyongyang has decided to retract its decision to freeze or confiscate South Korean assets in the Kaesong Industrial Complex and the South Korean-developed resort and facilities on Mount Kumgang. "It is not true,” a Cheong Wa Dae official said while speaking on condition of anonymity. He also dismissed reports that Seoul plans to reopen the Kaesong complex in the near future. (Yonhap, “‘Restart of Kaesong complex impossible under int'l sanctions’: Cheong Wa Dae,” Korea Times, October 25, 2018)

The Trump administration is cutting back on who on Capitol Hill gets to see intelligence reports on North Korea's nuclear weapons program, according to multiple congressional sources. Under the new rules, each party's House and Senate leaders, along with the chair and ranking member of the foreign relations committee, and the entire armed service and intelligence committees, get direct access to the reports. It is a change from previous distribution of North Korea related intelligence reports which, for the most part, gave access to the entire committees and the staffers on those committees. The fear on Capitol Hill is that the limited distribution, which has been implemented over the past few weeks, will leave Congress largely in the dark when it comes to what U.S. intelligence has collected about North Korea's motivations and nuclear developments. Some on the Hill, citing President Trump's outreach to North Korea, worry that the White House is limiting the flow of information because the reports might indicate Pyongyang is accelerating its nuclear program. "It is not a good look. It is very telling that they are doing this. We can't prove it, but it is an indication that there could be a significant problem," explained one senior Senate staffer. "The reports could give alarming details that they don't want out there in the public theater." The White House insisted that the change is not being aimed solely at Capitol Hill, but still admitted that there was a change in distribution. "The administration has limited access to certain compartments of [North Korea] intelligence because of numerous leaks that could jeopardize national security. The number of people has been reduced for both the [White House], executive branch and for congress. So this wasn't targeting Congress," said a senior White House official. "We worked with leadership and listened to the concerns to modify the first list to strike the balance of making sure members who need the intelligence get it but to also protect the most sensitive of intelligence." There are North Korea briefings made available to members of Congress in small groups, particularly Republican members who have a close relationship with the White House. Yet Republicans and Democrats alike are frustrated by the move, which they say will inhibit Congress' role in the high-stakes diplomacy being orchestrated by the White House and the State Department. "It will be problematic because even if you sit on a committee like [Intelligence], only the chair and ranking get that intelligence, not their staff. That is just kind of nuts," explained another senior Senate staffer. Certain highly sensitive intelligence reports on other topics do have restrictions on them. But the rules governing the North Korea reports makes this an even more stringent, and specific, lockdown on information. "Usually there has been higher clearance level required for this administration than in the past, but at very minimum intelligence staffers can see it or the Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff," explained another source. "But this is bigger and more restrictive because not even staff are allowed to see it." With the change happening so recently and Congress being out on recess, its direct impact has yet to be felt. Staffers are trying to figure out the best way to push back, and what questions to ask the administration about their decision. In the meantime, the move is expected to come to the fore when Trump has his second summit with Kim Jong Un. An administration official said that the new rules on North Korean intelligence were part of a crackdown on intelligence leaks. The administration, this official said, is worried about leaks complicating U.S. diplomatic efforts or jeopardizing intelligence collection efforts by exposing how the intelligence was obtained. When Trump came back from his first meeting with Kim Jong Un in June, he tweeted that North Korea was "no longer a Nuclear Threat." The statement quickly set off alarm bells among North Korea
analysts who disagreed with the president's assessment. Later in the summer, some news outlets reported that classified U.S. intelligence showed that North Korea was continuing to develop new missiles. Those reports, unconfirmed by CBS News, challenged the notion that Trump's meeting with Kim had put an end to the North Korean nuclear threat. Given what a congressional staffer called the administration's "problem with leaks," the administration then started looking for ways to limit the dissemination of intelligence regarding North Korea. What remains unclear is if lower level analysts at the State Department, Department of Defense and Department of Energy are also being denied access to intelligence reports. The State Department said they do not comment on intelligence matters and the office of the director of national intelligence declined to comment at all. Pompeo confirmed that Kim is still running a dangerous nuclear program when he told members of congress that North Korea is continuing to produce fissile material. Members of Congress and congressional staffers, however, feel they need to know more than that to do their jobs effectively. (Kylie Atwood, “Trump Administration Limits Sharing of North Korea Intelligence with Congress,” CBS News, October 25, 2018)

The Office of Foreign Assets Control of the Treasury Department imposed Thursday (local time) sanctions on Singapore’s trading company, Wee Tiong (S) Pte. Ltd., and vessel operator WT Marine Pte. Ltd., and Tan Wee Beng who took charge of them. It is the 9th unilateral sanction imposed by Washington this year. The previous one was executed just 21 days ago when the U.S. sanctioned Turkish businesses and North Korean diplomats for engaging in illegal trade of arms and luxury goods. The number is higher than that of last year when North Korea aggressively carried out missile launches and nuclear testing. Six out of the nine rounds of sanctions have been put in place since the historic U.S.-North Korea summit on June 12. Assets relevant to the sanctioned are to be frozen while American nationals are banned from doing business with them. (Gi-Jae Han, “U.S. Sanctions Singapore Companies over North Korea Deals, Dong-A Ilbo, October 26, 2018) The Department of Justice is accusing a Singaporean trader of helping North Korea circumvent sanctions, saying Tan Wee Beng laundered millions of dollars through the U.S. and Singapore. "Tan Wee Beng and his co-conspirators made deliberate efforts to launder money through the U.S. financial system on behalf of North Korea," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in a statement on Thursday from the agency announcing the DOJ’s charges. The Treasury Department also announced "North Korea-related designations" on two of Tan Wee Beng's associated businesses, Wee Tiong (S) Pte Ltd and WT Marine Pte Ltd. A representative at Wee Tiong (S) Pte Ltd, where Tan is director and a major shareholder, told NPR Tan was not available to comment on the charges. However, in comments to the BBC, the 41-year-old Tan denied the charges, telling the network, "Nobody has contacted me. The FBI has not called me, the Singapore police have not called me." "We are an international trading company, and not a front [for laundering]," he reportedly said, saying he found out about the charges through news reports. The Treasury Department alleged that since at least 2011, Tan and at least one other person at the company completed contracts for commodities worth millions of dollars for North Korea. "To do so, Tan Wee Beng made a concerted effort to obfuscate payment origins and structure transactions to avoid regulatory scrutiny," the agency said — adding that in one instance, Tan and the company "orchestrated payment in bulk cash, hand-delivered to a North Korean." Wee Tiong (S) Pte Ltd says it trades in marine fuels, rice and sugar and is "one of the largest privately owned commodities trading house[s] in Asia.” U.S. authorities issued a federal arrest warrant for Tan in August, after officials leveled charges against him including conspiracy to violate the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, bank fraud and money laundering. On October 22, Song Il-hyok, deputy director general of the North Korean foreign ministry’s Institute for Disarmament and Peace, told a gathering of security officials in Beijing that Trump and Kim "recognized that the mutual confidence-building can promote the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.” But according to The South China Morning Post, Song said the U.S. should "immediately lift the sanctions and the hindrance to confidence-building,” saying sanctions are "confidence-destroying measures." (James Doubek, “U.S. Charges Singaporean Trader with Laundering Money for North Korea,” NPR, October 26, 2018)
The two Koreas agreed late today to completely demolish 22 front-line guard posts (GPs) by the end of November within the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating Seoul and Pyongyang, following a broad-reaching military agreement at President Moon Jae-in's summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un last month to reduce tensions. Military generals of both sides held talks at Tongilgak in the North's side of the truce village of Panmunjom inside the DMZ. After, they released a joint statement saying they agreed to create a joint military committee to explore further measures to disarm and cut back military threats against each other. The two Koreas, however, failed to produce a detailed timetable for when the committee will be launched.

Starting November 1, all hostilities and accidental clashes will be banned on both sides, according to the statement. North Korea would close the gates for its concrete bunkers and military tunnels. “At the talks, the two sides decided to create a 10-member joint survey team early next month as a measure to guarantee the safe sailing of civilian and non-military vessels passing through the Imjin River estuary along the 70-kilometer-long waterway separating both countries,” the statement said, adding that the when and how will be fixed through additional working-level talks. Major General Kim Do-gyun represented South Korea's delegation at the talks, while Lieutenant General An Ik-san represented the North. As a rare gesture, North Korea allowed a vehicle carrying the South's delegation to cross the Military Demarcation Line (MDL), considered the Armistice Line and land border between the two Koreas, for the delegation to reach the meeting place about 150 meters from Southern territory. Previously delegates from both sides made border crossings on foot. (Kim Yoo-chula and Joint Press Corps, “Koreas Agree to Demolish 22 Guard Posts,” Korea Times, October 26, 2018) The two Koreas and the U.S.-led U.N Command (UNC) wrapped up the process of disarming the Joint Security Area in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), Seoul's defense ministry said. As of 1 p.m., they completed the work of withdrawing military posts, armed troops and firearms from the JSA in the buffer zone separating the two Koreas, in line with last month's inter-Korean agreement aimed at reducing tensions, preventing accidental clashes and building mutual trust. Tomorrow and the next day, the three sides will carry out joint verification work to ensure that the JSA is completely disarmed. "The military authorities of the two Koreas and the UNC will make joint efforts to ensure that the JSA disarmament, stated in the September 19 military agreement, will be implemented normally," the ministry said in a statement. Once the disarmament is complete, Korean people and foreign tourists will be allowed to cross the military demarcation line from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The South and North will each station a patrol of 35 unarmed soldiers, including five officers, there. (Yonhap, “Two Koreas, UNC Wrap up Disarmament of JSA,” October 25, 2018) South and North Korea agreed to withdraw 11 guard posts from each side of the demilitarized zone by the end of November as a follow-up to an inter-Korean military agreement signed last month. In removing the guard posts, the militaries of the two Koreas consented to completely demolish guard posts and withdraw all personnel from there. During a meeting of generals held on the northern side of Panmunjom, the two sides agreed to check the progress of the withdrawal of the guard posts in December as a final step. After withdrawing the 11 guard posts, which will be done on a test-run basis, the two sides said they will continue discussion on removing the rest along the border. Today’s talks were attended by a five-member delegation from each side. The South Korean delegation was led by Major Gen. Kim Do-gyun while his North Korean counterpart was Lt. Gen. An Ik-san. “Through our meeting today, we reached an agreement on the timetable for withdrawals of 11 guard posts, which was agreed previously that it should be done by the year’s end,” said Gen. Kim in his closing remarks. Echoing Kim’s positive note, Gen. An of North Korea expressed his satisfaction with the outcome, saying that the meeting Friday “involved deep discussion and led to the consent from each side on military issues. “We have once again affirmed that the militaries of the two sides could reach agreements that meet the expectations of the Korean people if we respect the wishes of the top leadership,” he continued, referring to South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. “The North and South reaffirmed a [previous] agreement in which the two will halt confrontational activities on land, sea and air effective November 1 and apply new operational rules,” read a press release. They also agreed to form a joint committee comprised of 10 military, civilian and government officials from each side to conduct research on the Han River estuary in early November to ensure the safe navigation of civilian vessels in the area. The two sides also agreed to continue preparations by each side in land mine removal and road renovations in the DMZ so that they could launch a joint excavation operation for remains of soldiers killed in
China and Japan capped a rejuvenation of ties with agreements on everything from currency swaps to ocean rescue today, in a thaw that comes as President Donald Trump presses for better trade terms with both nations. “I would like (our countries) to cooperate with each other to contribute to the peace and security of the region and the world,” said Prime Minister Abe Shinzo during a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing. “I want to start a new era for Japan and China with Mr. Xi,” he added. Abe became the first Japanese prime minister to make an official visit to China in seven years, as Asia’s two largest economies sought to play down disagreements that have hindered relations for decades. China-Japan relations have undergone turbulence but are now “back to a normal track,” Xi told Abe. “Under the new situation, our interdependence with each other has deepened. Also, we are sharing more common interests and concerns in multilateral and wider areas.” During the meeting, Xi said he will “consider seriously” Abe’s invitation to visit Japan next year, a Japanese official who briefed reporters said. Abe and Xi also agreed to reinforce communication to avoid conflicts, the official said, apparently referring to the disputed Senkaku islands. Prior to the Abe-Xi meeting and after a separate meeting with Chinese Premier Li Ke-qiang, Abe told a news conference that they had agreed to create a “new framework” to jointly move ahead with infrastructure projects in third nations and strengthen a wide range of cooperation ranging from finance to innovation. “Switching from competition to collaboration, I want to lift Japan-China relations to a new era,” Abe told Li at the outset of their meeting. “Japan and China are neighbors and partners. We will not become a threat to each other.” Japan has already announced it will discontinue its 40-year-old official development assistance program to China. By bolstering investment in other countries, the governments of Asia’s two biggest economies will aim to form a new model of economic cooperation between them. In Beijing, Abe and Li also reached agreements to start talks about cooperation in state-of-the-art technology and protection of intellectual property rights as well as to resume their currency swap deal of up to ¥3.4 trillion for times of financial emergency. A forum was also held today to discuss Chinese and Japanese infrastructure investment in other countries. Li told Abe, “Now that relations between the two countries have returned to a normal track, we would like to achieve win-win outcomes by stably developing our ties in the long term.” Li added, “Especially regarding our economic and trade cooperation, we earnestly want to lift it into a new phase.” Abe and Li agreed that Japan and China will proceed with free trade, in an apparent warning against Trump’s trade protectionism. Aiming to deepen trust in the security field, Tokyo and Beijing also signed an agreement to facilitate cooperation over search and rescue operations in the event of accidents in waters off the two nations. Abe said Japan and China had agreed to work together to open a hotline as soon as possible to avert accidental clashes at sea and in the air, adding that they should make efforts to ensure the East China Sea is a “sea of peace, cooperation and friendship.” They also agreed to aim for an early resumption of talks on a joint development of gas fields in the East China Sea. Both countries, meanwhile, confirmed the importance of cooperation between them to achieve the denuclearization of North Korea, with Abe saying Tokyo and Beijing will “fulfill (their) responsibilities” for peace and stability in East Asia. Abe also said China has promised to consider, based on scientific grounds, relaxing its ban on Japanese food imports that was imposed following the 2011 Fukushima nuclear crisis, which was triggered by devastating earthquake and tsunami disasters. As a symbol of friendship, Japan and China also agreed to speed up talks for another giant panda to be leased to a zoo here. Abe is accompanied on the trip to Beijing by Foreign Minister Kono Taro, Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Seko Hiroshi and a large delegation of business leaders. (Kyodo, Bloomberg, Associated Press, “Abe and Xi Agree to Promote New Economic Cooperation amid U.S. Trade Fears,” Japan Times, Oct 26, 2018)
South Korea and the United States will launch a joint working group next month to coordinate their strategy on North Korea, a government official in Seoul said Wednesday, hours after the State Department's announcement. The allies agreed to establish the working group for "regular, systemic and formal" communication, mainly on denuclearization and peace regime efforts, the foreign ministry official told reporters. "(We) plan to launch it next month," he said on condition of anonymity. The deal was reached during U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun's trip to Seoul, although the idea was floated "months earlier." The State Department broke the news of the working group first, briefing the press on the outcome of Biegun's fourth visit to South Korea as Washington's point man on Pyongyang. "As part of that, the two governments agreed on establishing a new working group that would further strengthen our close coordination on our diplomacy, on our denuclearization efforts, on sanctions implementation and inter-Korean cooperation that comply with United Nations sanctions," its deputy spokesperson, Robert Palladino, said at a press briefing. Officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Biegun and Seoul's top nuclear envoy, Lee Do-hoon, talked about the matter on October 27 night. It was just a matter of timing for each side to make public the agreement without a joint press release, the official said. Lee and Biegun will lead the new communication channel, he added. Regarding media-driven speculation about a possible rift between the allies on North Korea, he questioned the need for a "routine speed adjustment." "It's structurally difficult to make progress on one track and do so on the other without even one inch of gap," the official pointed out. "I think we need to fill the gap with mutual trust and communication." He cited three rounds of inter-Korean summit talks this year alone and brisk follow-up negotiations, adding that the North and the U.S. appear to be in close back-channel consultations as well. He expected the two sides to hold working-level talks as agreed during Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's trip to Pyongyang in September. (Yonhap, “S. Korea, U.S. to Launch Working Group on North Korea in November,” October 31, 2018)

A top North Korean diplomat has essentially acknowledged that North Korea and Japan made contact in July in Vietnam, but said no substantial progress was made toward summit talks between the two country’s leaders. The disclosure was made today to Kyodo News by Kanemaru Shingo, the second son of the late Kanemaru Shin, who was a prominent politician and former Liberal Democratic Party vice president who had worked to establish diplomatic relations between the two countries in the 1990s. Kanemaru, 73, held talks with Song Il Ho, North Korea’s ambassador for negotiations to normalize ties with Japan, during a five-day trip to Pyongyang that ended today. On the contentious issue of abductions of Japanese nationals, Song reiterated the official line that the issue has been resolved, saying that there are no Japanese abductees still alive in North Korea, according to Kanemaru. Japan officially lists 17 Japanese citizens as having been abducted by North Korean agents in the 1970s and 1980s but alleges Pyongyang’s involvement in many more disappearances. Five of the 17 were repatriated in 2002. According to Song, Tokyo must first make a “sincere apology” for Japan’s 1910-1945 colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula before any summit between Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un can be held. Kanemaru, who visited North Korea with officials from Yamanashi Prefecture, his home turf, said he exchanged opinions with Song at a meeting that lasted several hours. It was previously reported that Kitamura Shigeru, head of Japan’s Cabinet Intelligence and Research Office, and a senior official from the North’s ruling party had held a secret meeting in July in Vietnam. Song downplayed the importance of the interaction to “seasonal greetings,” saying the Japanese side had merely stated its basic stance on the abduction issue, according to Kanemaru. Moreover, there was “absolutely no concrete proposal” from the Japanese government regarding summit talks between Abe and Kim, Kanemaru quoted him as saying. At the same time, Song also voiced a readiness to meet with Japanese government officials himself, saying that if a nonpartisan delegation of lawmakers were to visit North Korea, he would “unreservedly welcome” them. In September 1990, Shin Kanemaru co-headed a joint delegation of LDP and Japan Socialist Party members that visited North Korea. The parties signed a joint declaration with the North’s ruling Workers’ Party of Korea calling for the need to normalize diplomatic ties. The elder Kanemaru, who died in 1996 at age 81, also held talks with the North Korea’s late founder, Kim Il Sung, during the visit. Kanemaru Shingo served as his father’s secretary and was deeply involved in the negotiations at the time. Since then he has frequently visited North Korea. (Kyodo, “Progress on
The director of the hospital in North Korea that treated an American student who died last year after detention in the country has rejected fresh charges that he died as a result of torture. KCNA quoted the director of the Pyongyang Friendship Hospital as saying on Saturday that recent reports about the fate of 22-year-old Otto Warmbier, who died days after he was returned to the United States in a coma, were a “total distortion of the truth.” “The American doctors who came ... to help Warmbier’s repatriation acknowledged that his health indicators were all normal and submitted a letter of assurance to our hospital that they shared the diagnostic result of the doctors of our hospital,” KCNA quoted the unnamed director as saying. “Now the question is: what is the ulterior motive of those American doctors trying to make a different story at this point in time with regard to the cause of Warmbier’s death,” the report said, adding that medical assessments “should not be influenced by any selfish purpose or political interest.” It added that Warmbier’s “health indicators were all normal” at the time of his release and there should instead be an investigation into the cause of his sudden death after his arrival in the United States. The KCNA report came hours after the Korean service of the Voice of America radio station carried a report on a lawsuit filed by Warmbier’s parents alleging that their son was tortured in detention. VOA quoted declarations filed in support of the suit by Otto Warmbier’s former dentists as saying that there was evidence of trauma to his teeth. It quoted another declaration from Daniel Kanter, a neurologist who was the lead physician for Warmbier on his return to his home town of Cincinnati as saying that Otto suffered brain damage after a cessation of blood flow to the brain for five to 20 minutes. “Because the injury was so extensive, it was unlikely that Warmbier was with medical personnel who were willing and able to intervene to resuscitate him when the injury occurred,” Kanter declaration was quoted as saying. North Korea has blamed botulism and ingestion of a sleeping pill for Warmbier’s condition. The coroner who examined Warmbier said he found no sign of botulism, adding there was no evidence of trauma to Warmbier’s teeth or of broken bones. President Donald Trump charged last year that Warmbier was tortured, but also held an unprecedented summit with the North Korean leader this year and is planning another aimed at persuading him to abandon a nuclear weapons program that threatens the United States. (David Brunnstrom, “North Korea Hospital Director Says Warmbier Torture Charges ’Total Distortion,’” Reuters, October 27, 2018)
today. In a Singapore meeting with Defense Minister Jeong Kyeong-doo earlier this year, U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis proposed indefinitely postponing the massive Vigilant ACE drill that was slated for December. It was aimed at helping move forward denuclearization talks with North Korea and reducing the defense budget. "(I) sympathize actively" with the U.S. offer, Jeong told lawmakers during a parliamentary audit session in Seoul. The minister, however, pointed out public concerns about a potential impact on national security. "Even if (the training) is postponed, I will put forward opinions on complementary measures in the Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) to be held in the U.S.," he added without elaborating. Asked about the future of the military's ambitious project to beef up its combat capabilities, he said it will go on as planned despite the current dialogue mood. It has pushed for the so-called three-axis program -- the Kill Chain pre-emptive strike system, the Korean Air and Missile Defense (KAMD) and the Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation (KMPR) power. "For now, there's no change or adjustment plan for the three-axis system," he said. Touching on the controversy over the North's position on the Northern Limit Line (NLL), the de-facto sea border with the South, Jeong said that working-level North Korean officials have yet to accept the NLL as the maritime border, despite leader Kim Jong-un's apparent recognition of it. In April, the leaders of the two sides agreed to turn the tense area into a "maritime peace zone." They used the term "NLL" in their joint statement. President Moon Jae-in said it indicates that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has virtually recognized the NLL. The North's navy, however, had continued to claim its own security line until recently, sending repeated warning messages to South Korean ships crossing it. That appears to be because North Korea's front-line troops have not received any new related instructions from Kim, Jeong said. He added that the North's working-level officials have not yet agreed to accept the NLL. Gen. Park Han-ki, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the South urged the North not to take issue with the NLL during the bilateral general-grade talks last week. "(We) clearly told (the North) to stop sending such inappropriate radio messages," he said. (Yonhap, "Minister Says Allies Need Alternative to Joint Air Exercise," October 29, 2018)

As South Korean President Moon Jae-in pursues a conciliatory approach toward the North, those who share his vision are playing a bigger role in his inner circle, sowing the seeds of discord with Washington. Meanwhile, senior officials who place importance on South Korea's alliance with the U.S. have taken a back seat. Communication between the U.S. and South Korea "has stagnated to a severe level," a diplomatic source in Seoul said. But Moon seems undeterred. Moon Chung-in, a top foreign policy adviser to President Moon, says Seoul does not need Washington's consent. "South Korea and the U.S. maintain the strongest cooperative relationship," said a source close to the presidential Blue House. "The inter-Korean rail connection will proceed soundly on schedule." South Korea's national security and foreign policy team is dominated by the likes of Moon Chung-in -- those who hold reconciliation between the two Koreas a higher value than the American alliance. Many of those figures hail from the administration of late President Roh Moo-hyun, who pursued a "sunshine policy" with the North after taking office in 2003. Chung Eui-yong, South Korea's national security adviser and the counterpart to Trump's John Bolton, is sympathetic to the alliance with the U.S. But his deputies and the top brass in the National Intelligence Service all trace their roots to the National Security Council and similar posts during the Roh era. Moon himself once served as Roh's chief secretary. Although Roh's government extended olive branches to Pyongyang, it worked closely with the U.S. as well. During that period, Seoul sent troops to Iraq and signed a bilateral free trade agreement with Washington. A turf war ensued between the elements in the Blue House wishing to break free from U.S. influence, and Foreign Ministry figures seeking to maintain the alliance. Setting Moon's presidency apart is the overwhelming dominance of the Blue House in foreign policy matters. The Foreign Ministry lost clout as a result of the impeachment and removal of Moon's immediate predecessor, President Park Geun-hye. "The National Security Office controls foreign policy and the national security agenda, and the agencies purportedly in charge of those areas are being alienated," said a legislator belonging to the opposition Liberty Korea Party. The few remaining officials who lean toward the U.S. are being squeezed out. First Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Lim Sung-nam, a holdover from the Park administration, was replaced in late September by Cho Hyun, the second vice minister. Cho served in the Roh Blue House, but he was involved in trade policy, not in resolving the North
President Moon Jae-in of South Korea takes every opportunity to describe Kim Jong-un, North Korea’s leader, as a “young and candid” strategist, one who is ready to bargain away his nuclear arsenal to secure economic growth for his impoverished nation. In doing so, Moon is attempting something that his predecessors who favored dialogue with the North also tried to do, but failed: changing North Korea’s global image as a regime that simply cannot be trusted. For decades, it has been an article of faith among Washington’s foreign policy establishment, as well Moon’s conservative critics at home, that North Korea will renge on any agreement made. For that reason, they say, there can be no substantial concessions to the North in the talks over its nuclear weapons until it takes real steps toward disarming. That view has contributed to a standoff in the talks between the North and the United States. As Moon has pushed to deepen ties with Pyongyang, the backlash from his critics has been swift. A major South Korean newspaper this month called him the “chief spokesman for Kim Jong-un,” and an American commentator, quoting Creedence Clearwater Revival, recently referred to him as a “bad Moon on the rise.” If Kim wanted to change his image from nuclear madman to mature negotiator, it’s unlikely he could have found a better agent than Moon. Moon, who has met with Kim three times this year, has repeatedly endorsed him as a leader of good faith. After their first meeting in April, Moon’s office quoted Kim as saying, “I know that the Americans are viscerally repulsed by us North Koreans, but if they talk with us, they will find out that I am not the type of person who would shoot a nuclear missile to the South or toward the Pacific or at the United States.” A central message in Moon’s diplomatic efforts is that Kim truly wants to be a great economic reformer for his country, as Deng Xiaoping was for China decades ago, and that the world must not miss the opportunity. Kim, he says, intends to negotiate away his nuclear weapons if Washington lifts sanctions and provides security guarantees, like a peace treaty ending the Korean War, so he can focus on economic development. “Chairman Kim told me that besides the moratorium on testing nuclear weapons and missiles, he would dismantle the facilities that produce them, as well as all the nuclear weapons and fissile materials his country owns, if the United States takes corresponding measures,” Moon said this month. Even leaving aside the question of his true intentions, Kim is a difficult figure to vouch for. He has indeed taken steps to reform his country’s economy, allowing markets and private businesses to open, giving farmers more freedom to sell their crops and factory managers more autonomy to decide what to produce. Despite international sanctions, he engineered a building boom in Pyongyang, the capital, which Moon called “remarkable progress” when he addressed a cheering crowd of 150,000 there in September. But Kim also had his uncle executed and his half-brother assassinated in a foreign airport. And his country’s record on human rights is among the world’s worst. Last year, Kim was accelerating nuclear and missile tests and threatened the United States, as well as the region, with nuclear war. But this year, he announced a “new strategic line” under which “all efforts” would be channeled toward “the socialist economic construction.” In less than a year, Kim has made more concessions on his nuclear weapons program than Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush ever extracted from his father — though critics say that in truth, he has given up little of substance. He imposed a voluntary moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests and shut down the North’s underground nuclear test site. He also agreed to dismantle some missile-test facilities and — if Washington took “corresponding” steps — to dismantle the Yongbyon nuclear complex, a center for producing nuclear bomb fuel. But he has yet to state in his own words whether, and when, he will scrap his nuclear arsenal. Moon’s critics say he is playing into the North Korean leader’s hands. Kim’s ultimate goal, they say, is to get the world accustomed to the reality of a nuclear-armed North, while using negotiations to stall for time and create a false sense of progress. “We had tried this in past negotiations: offering North Korea a comprehensive package of incentives in the hopes that it would denuclearize,” said Yun Duk-min, a former chancellor of the Korea National Diplomatic Academy who now teaches at the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Seoul. “It didn’t work. I don’t think it will this time, either.” But another South Korean analyst, Lee Seong-hyon, shared Moon’s vision, saying “a great transformation” was unfolding on the Korean Peninsula. “It’s easy to make the same old argument about why North Korea can’t be trusted,” said Lee, of the Sejong Institute near Seoul. “But rather than being fixated on the old way of looking at North Korea, we
The U.S. special envoy for North Korea proposed Seoul and Washington jointly inspect Pyongyang's Punggye-ri and Yongbyon nuclear sites, MBS-TV reported. Stephen Biegun, who met this week with South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-hwa and top officials in President Moon Jae-in's Cabinet, could be laying the foundation for negotiations between the United States and North Korea. South Korean officials who spoke to MBC said the government would "positively" review the U.S. proposal. The United States and North Korea are expected to hold high-level talks in New York on November 9. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is to meet again with senior North Korean official Kim Yong Chol, and the talks will include working-level discussions involving North Korean diplomat Choe Son Hui. Seoul's spy agency confirmed on October 31 the Kim Jong Un regime spends more than $525 million annually on luxury goods, Asia Economy Daily reported. Spy agency chief Suh Hoon was speaking at a parliamentary audit and was responding to a question from Lee Eun-jae of the opposition Liberty Korea Party. (Elizabeth Shim, “Report: U.S. Envoy Proposed Joint Inspection of North Korea Nuclear Sites,” UPI, October 31, 2018) According to the account of a diplomatic source in Washington today, the two sides have effectively finished coordination toward holding the high-level talks - previously mentioned by Pompeo on Oct. 19 - sometime around late next week soon after the U.S. midterm elections on November 6. The most likely venue is to be New York City, where North Korea's UN mission is located, although Washington, DC, has also been mentioned. A South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs senior official said Seoul and Washington shared a schedule and agenda for the high-level talks during an October 30 visit by US State Department Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Biegun. After arriving in South Korea on October 28, Biegun met on October 29 with Blue House Chief of Staff Im Jong-seok, Minister of Foreign Affairs Kang Kyung-hwa, and Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs Lee Do-hoon. In remarks on October 19, Pompeo said, “I’m very hopeful we’ll have senior leader meetings here in the next week and a half or so [in late October] between myself and my counterpart.” The two sides reportedly planned to hold high-level talks around late October, but ended up delaying them due to the situation on the US side. Kim is seen as likely to be North Korea’s counterpart in the meeting with Pompeo. The likelihood of his meeting President Donald Trump appears slim, as Trump is scheduled to attend a centennial ceremony in Paris on November 11 to commemorate the end of the First World War. The date and venue for the second North Korea-US summit appear likely to be key issues at the high-level talks. The high-level talks are also expected to include discussions on North Korea’s denuclearization measures and corresponding measures from the US. North Korea has invited inspectors to its Punggye Village nuclear test site and announced its intent to dismantle its engine testing site and missile launch pad at Tongchang Village; it has also announced its willingness to dismantle its nuclear facilities at Yongbyon, contingent on corresponding measures from Washington. While Pyongyang has been vocal in demanding the loosening of sanctions and a declaration ending the Korean War from the US, Washington has countered that sanctions will not relaxed without denuclearization. Discussions on the issues of denuclearization and corresponding measures appear likely to continue after the high-level talks at a follow-up meeting next month between Biegun and North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui. This afternoon, Biegun met with South Korean National Security Office director Chung Eui-yong to discuss the Korean Peninsula political situation in general and plans for close coordination and cooperation between the two sides in the
General An and I have been exchanging letters by way of the North Korean [and American]

North Korea regardless of whether there is progress toward denuclearization of North Korea.” “There are many initiatives that we can cooperate on, and we are looking forward to working closely between the ministry and the U.S.,” he continued. Biegun also told Cho he was meeting his Ministry of Foreign Affairs counterpart Lee Do-hoon that evening for the 14th time since assuming his position on Aug. 23, adding that the importance of close partnership between the US and South Korea was being emphasized in all cases. Cho replied that the current moment is “a very important time.” “I am glad that your visit means discussions on plans for close cooperation between our two sides in connection with advancing inter-Korean and US-North Korea relations,” he told Biegun. (Hwang Joon-bum, Noh Ji-won, and Lee Je-hun, “Kim Yong Chol to Meet with Pompeo in U.S. Next Week,” Hankyore, October 31, 2018)

Washington appears to have asked Seoul to backtrack “a bit” on President Moon Jae-in's headlong approach emphasizing dialogue and engagement with North Korea, a government official said today. U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun met with Presidential Chief of Staff Im Jong-seok, late yesterday, at the presidential office and the two had "intensive talks" on various issues including steps to achieve the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the North, Cheong Wa Dae said. But what made the meeting "something special" is that the U.S. envoy requested the in-person session with Im, which many political analysts in Seoul interpreted as "very rare" because National Security Office chief (NSO) Chung Eui-yong has been playing a central role in the denuclearization talks since the very beginning. "A meeting between Biegun and chief negotiator for nuclear disarmament Chung had been scheduled at Cheong Wa Dae, late [today], but Biegun wanted Im to join. As Im had plans [tomorrow] that couldn't be rearranged at the last minute, the U.S. envoy changed the meeting schedule with Chung. The NSO chief was notified of the decision," a Cheong Wa Dae official said without elaborating further. The reason the U.S. envoy pushed for the meeting was to deliver its message directly to the operatives behind the President's "sanctions-easing" pitch, a government official told The Korea Times by telephone. "Biegun filed Washington's worries about Seoul's engagement-focused North Korean policies in a closed-door meeting with the presidential chief of staff as this strategy is carrying risk at a time of growing friction between Seoul and its top allies, which continue to maintain pressure on the North," according to the official asking not to be named. "Washington thinks presidential chief of staff Im is a hidden force and wants to ensure applying a phased policy toward North Korea is not pursued unless a new agenda is fixed in the upcoming Kim-Trump summit," said Shin Bum-cheol, a senior fellow at the Seoul-based Asan Institute for Policy Studies. (Kim Yoo Chul, “U.S. Calls on Seoul to Slow North Korea Policy,” Korea Times, October 30, 2018)

Kelly McKeague, director of the US Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), has been directly corresponding with North Korean Lieutenant General An Ik-san to discuss the recovery of the remains of US soldiers killed in North Korean territory during the Korean War. “During the letters I’ve exchanged with North Korean Lieutenant General An Ik-san, we’ve discussed concrete details such as the timeframe of the recovery, I sent my most recent letter to An three weeks ago,” McKeague said. He made these remarks during an interview that took place when a South Korean delegation from the South Korea-US Security Forum visited DPAA, which is located at the US Indo-Pacific Command in Hawaii, on October 23. “My most recent letter deals with related areas of progress, including the fact that the proposal we’re going to give North Korea hasn’t been finalized but probably will be within two weeks,” McKeague said, without getting into the details of the proposal that the US government is working on. “DPAA is directly responsible for the recovery of remains,” McKeague said, adding that he’d “received permission from Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to directly contact An Ik-san for deliberations” without specifying the timing. McKeague emphasized that DPAA has been authorized by Pompeo to “contact and deliberate with the North Koreans regardless of whether there is progress toward denuclearization.” “Lieutenant General An and I have been exchanging letters by way of the North Korean [and American]
South Korea’s top court stirred decades-old resentments that threaten to inflame relations with Japan, ordering a leading Japanese steel maker to compensate Korean men forced to work as slave laborers during World War II. It upheld a lower-court ruling in 2013 that Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal must pay 100 million won, or about $88,700, to each of four South Korean men who said they had been subjected to forced labor between 1941 and 1943. Korea was a Japanese colony from 1910 until Japan’s surrender in 1945. The ruling could apply to pending cases involving other companies accused of using forced labor. The court said there was nothing in postwar agreements or international law that prevented individual victims from seeking redress. The ruling, which the Japanese government quickly denounced, laid bare the resilient bitterness over Imperial Japan’s occupation of Asian neighbors even 73 years after the surrender to allied powers. Despite postwar agreements that — in Japan’s view at least — settled claims for damages sought by the country’s former colonial conquests, debate over compensation and reparations has not subsided. “We have a court saying a corporation is responsible for forced labor and that restitution must be paid, no matter what governments have agreed,” said Christopher Gerteis, a Japan expert and associate professor of history at SOAS University of London. For descendants of the millions in Asia who were killed or brutalized in a war started by Imperial Japan, Gerteis said, the ruling is a stark reminder. “This was their holocaust,” he said. The Nippon Steel case has added resonance because the lawsuit was filed more than 20 years ago, and nearly all former forced laborers there who could have received compensation have since died. “I am the only one still alive to see this day come,” Lee Chun-shik, 94, the surviving plaintiff, told reporters outside the courthouse. The verdict could open the floodgates for other victims and their relatives to file lawsuits against an estimated 300 Japanese companies accused of using forced labor during the colonial era. Hundreds of thousands of Koreans were forced to work for Japan’s war efforts in Japan, China and elsewhere, according to South Korean historians. While only a few thousand are still believed alive, their families can sue. Japan insists that all matters concerning allegations of forced labor were settled under agreements that established diplomatic ties with South Korea in 1965. Prime Minister Abe Shinzo called the ruling “an impossible judgment in light of international laws.” Japan’s foreign minister, Kono Taro, said the court’s ruling “overturns the legal basis of the friendly cooperative relationship between Japan and South Korea.” Any impediment to close collaboration between the United States, Japan and South Korea is worrisome to American officials, who have sought to present a united front on the issue of North Korea’s nuclear weapons and on the growing reach of China’s power in Asia. “The unfortunate thing is, who needs this kind of tension between Japan and South Korea at a moment when we’re in the middle of really difficult transitions and difficult diplomacy on the Korean Peninsula and more...
broadly with China?” said Daniel C. Sneider, a lecturer in East Asian studies at Stanford University. Kono suggested that Japan might seek to appeal the ruling — presumably referring to the International Court of Justice, the court established by the United Nations in 1945. But South Korea indicated that it wanted to avoid major diplomatic fallout, suggesting it will seek a compromise solution. Prime Minister Lee Nak-yon said the government “respects” the ruling, promising efforts to “heal the pain of the victims as quickly and as much as possible.” At the same time, he said South Korea preferred a “future-oriented” relationship with Japan. Some scholars have suggested that the two governments and the Japanese companies create a joint fund for the victims as a way to avoid more lawsuits and heightened diplomatic tensions. The case started in 1997, when two former workers sued Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal in Japan. But courts there sided with the company and the Japanese government, saying the 1965 treaty had settled the issue. In 2005, the plaintiffs joined two other former workers to take their case to South Korean courts. At first, judges supported the Japanese court decisions. But in 2012, the Supreme Court sent the case back to a lower court, saying the Japanese rulings contravened the South Korean Constitution and international legal norms. In 2013, a lower court in South Korea ordered the Japanese steel maker to pay compensation to the plaintiffs, three of whom have now died. That same year, another court ordered Mitsubishi Heavy Industries to pay similar compensation to five former workers. In 2014, a third Japanese company, Nachi-Fujikoshi, was ordered to compensate 13 former workers who were still alive and the families of 18 others who had died. All three Japanese companies appealed. While the Supreme Court ruling on Tuesday applied only to the Nippon Steel case, legal experts expected the court to rule similarly in the other two. South Korean prosecutors are investigating allegations that the Supreme Court sought budgetary and other political favors from former President Park Geun-hye in return for delaying a ruling on the cases to save Park a diplomatic problem. President Moon Jae-in, who replaced Ms. Park last year following her impeachment, has argued that the 1965 agreement should not prevent the victims from seeking redress. Moon has also criticized, but did not nullify, Ms. Park’s unpopular 2015 agreement with Japan to resolve a decades-old dispute over “comfort women,” Korean women forced into sexual slavery by Japanese occupiers. (Choe Sang-hun and Rick Gladstone, “South Korean Ruling in Suit on Forced Labor Rekindles Old Tensions,” New York Times, October 31, 2018, p. A10)

After the Pentagon scuttled a longstanding pledge to destroy its existing cluster-munitions stockpile, the Army is moving ahead with renewed vigor to acquire at least three new foreign-made versions of the weapons for its artillery. Late last year, the Trump administration canceled a Defense Department policy that limited the military’s ability to use cluster munitions, which, at a conference on Friday in Arlington, Va., Deputy Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan attributed specifically to the threat posed by North Korea. The now-abandoned policy, drafted in 2008 under Robert Gates, the defense secretary at the time, required any submunitions used after 2018 to have a dud rate, or the percentage of submunitions that don’t detonate when they are supposed to, of 1 percent or less — a standard the Pentagon appeared unable to meet, even a decade after the policy was put in place. The 2017 policy change stated that newly produced cluster munitions must have a dud rate of 1 percent or less, but left open the use of older cluster munitions with higher dud rates, which allowed the United States to maintain its large cluster-munitions stockpile. The Army has since ramped up its efforts to seek newer cluster-munition models. According to military officials, the new generation of weapons the Pentagon is looking to buy is designed to selectively destroy armored vehicles and either self-destruct or deactivate itself if it does not find an appropriate target — making it theoretically less likely than older versions of the weapon to harm civilians. But bomb technicians, who are trained to always treat an unexploded submunition as armed and capable of exploding, say such safety features are inherently unreliable, because mechanical and electronic systems built into the submunitions can and will fail. In late October, a spokeswoman at Picatinny Arsenal, home to the Army’s weapons and ammunition development, confirmed that the service plans to buy 3,100 Swedish-made Bonus 155-millimeter artillery projectiles from BAE Systems. It is also reviewing a similar projectile called SMArt 155, a German munition marketed by General Dynamics, according to a representative of the company and an announcement on the Army’s website. The two weapons are similar in form and function. They are fired from a howitzer toward concentrations of military vehicles and eject into the air two submunitions that use sensors to locate vehicles below. If the sensors select a target, the
submunitions then explode, sending a slug of metal, known as an explosively formed penetrator, or E.F.P., down onto a targeted vehicle. Army budgeting documents indicate that the service plans to test a new antipersonnel cluster weapon called the M999, which is offered by IMI Systems, an Israeli company. At a recent arms-trade exposition, an official at the company told The New York Times that the shell contains nine submunitions, each roughly the shape and size of a soda can and each with a fuse that sends out radio waves to measure how far it is above the ground and to tell the fuse when to detonate. The IMI Systems representative also said the submunitions contain self-destruct features. Those features are potentially important to the Pentagon, which has faced criticism for the high dud rates of many of its submunitions and for its refusal to join an international treaty that more than 100 other nations have signed to ban the manufacture, stockpiling and use of weapons that cannot detect and destroy a single target, contain more than nine submunitions and do not have a self-destruct feature. The Army declined to release data on the dud rates of the weapons it is pursuing and also declined to say how much it plans to spend on the Bonus rounds. It did say that the Bonus munitions are compliant with the Defense Department’s policy, but it will not perform any additional tests to verify that. Recent arms-development history provides a basis for skepticism on both dud rates and costs. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Army developed the Search and Destroy Armor Munition, or SADARM, which ejected two E.F.P. bomblets that searched for targets. In 2001, after spending $266 million and building only 348 serviceable rounds of the 47,000 that it had budgeted for, the Army canceled the program because of the weapon’s poor reliability. The Pentagon had also made bold claims about the reliability of its airdropped CBU-97 Sensor Fuzed Weapon, each of which contains 40 submunitions; in 2006, it claimed that 99 percent of its submunitions would either find their targets and explode or would self-destruct. But photos emerged on social media from Yemen in 2015 of dud submunitions that had been provided by the United States and dropped by Saudi warplanes, suggesting that the Air Force’s claim did not hold up in combat use. The manufacturer, Textron Systems, announced in 2016 that it would no longer make the weapons. SADARM and CBU-97 each had “sensor fused” submunitions that are very similar to those used in the Bonus 155-millimeter artillery projectiles recently bought by the Army and in the SMArt 155 weapons that the Army is evaluating. One arms-trade analyst and proponent of the cluster-munition ban, Jeff Abramson of the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, said the Pentagon should not field any new submunitions at all. “Military planners can envision nearly any scenario, no matter how unlikely, to find a rationale for using or developing a weapon,” he said. “The global community has agreed that indiscriminate weapons such as land mines and cluster munitions should never be used.” (John Ismay, “With North Korean Threats Looming, Army Pursues Controversial Weapons,” New York Times Magazine, October 30, 2018)

The United States and South Korea will review their joint military exercises and decide whether to suspend next year’s drills by the beginning of December, South Korean Defense Minister Jeong Kyeong-doo said. In a visit to the Pentagon, Jeong said the results of the review will be due by Nov. 15 with a final decision on 2019’s joint military exercises due by December 1. Speaking alongside Jeong, Defense Secretary James Mattis defended the decision to cancel those exercises that have already been scrapped, saying that “we are not right now concerned with a loss of combat capability.” “Clearly the threat from North Korea at least as expressed by Chairman Kim [Jong Un] has been significantly reduced,” Mattis added. “However the capability still exists and that is why the minister and I talked on every detail about our collaboration.” Most recently, the Pentagon announced earlier this month that it was canceling Vigilant Ace, one of the U.S. military’s largest annual aviation exercises. That followed the cancellation of the annual Ulchi Freedom Guardian summer exercises, as well as two Korean Marine Exchange Program exercises. In his September confirmation hearing to become the new commander of U.S. Forces Korea, Gen. Robert Abrams said canceling exercises has resulted in a “slight degradation” in readiness. He also said planning was proceeding on the spring exercises but that whether they actually happen is a decision for Trump and South Korea’s president. Today, Mattis said the military would likely have to “make adaptations” in the future to ensure combat capability is not lost. “But right now, again, this is not a total suspension of all collaboration and military exercises,” he continued. “Certain large ones were put on hold, suspended temporarily in order to give the diplomats the best possible effort because we were making a good faith effort on the military side. We would
give them the opportunity to get the good faith effort on that on the negotiation side.” (Rebecca Kheel, “U.S., South Korea to Decide on Canceling 2019 Military Exercises by December,” The Hill, October 31, 2018) South Korean Defense Minister Jeong Kyeong-doo said that “the foundation for the OPCON transfer has been laid” in regard to his signing an important document related to the transfer of wartime operational control of South Korean troops, known as OPCON. After making these comments in the opening remarks to a joint press conference with US Secretary of Defense James Mattis, Jeong said that “the specific timeframe of the handover will be decided by South Korea and the US.” During the Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) on Wednesday, Jeong and Mattis signed and announced guiding principles for alliance defense that stipulate that US Forces Korea and the UN Command will be maintained even after OPCON has been transferred from the US military to the South Korean military. According to the Alliance Guiding Principles announced by South Korea and the US, “As a symbol of the commitment pursuant to the Mutual Defense Treaty, US Forces Korea (USFK) is to continue to be stationed on the Korean Peninsula and firmly fulfill the security commitment to the ROK.” This is aimed at reassuring concerns expressed in some quarters of South Korea and the US that American troops could be withdrawn during the process of moving toward North Korea’s denuclearization. The guiding principles also said that “The ROK-US post-OPCON transition Combined Forces Command and its subordinate combined component commands are to be established to deter external aggression and, if deterrence fails, to defend the ROK.” This was also the first document to stipulate the new command structure of Combined Forces Command: “The national authorities of the ROK are to appoint a General or an Admiral to serve as the Commander of the post-OPCON transition Combined Forces Command, and the national authorities of the United States are to appoint a General or an Admiral to serve as the deputy commander of the post-OPCON transition Combined Forces Command.” When Mattis was asked whether he believed the North Korean threat had decreased enough to suspend Vigilant Ace and other South Korea-US joint military exercises, he said the threat from North Korea had been reduced significantly, just as North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has said. But North Korea still has the capability to be a threat, Mattis said, explaining that that’s why he and Jeong were discussing cooperation and related matters. Importantly, Mattis expressed his official support for the Comprehensive Military Agreement (CMA) signed by South and North Korea to implement the Panmunjom Declaration, which sets up a no-fly zone, among other things. When a reporter noted reports in the press about a disagreement between South Korea and the US and asked Mattis if he fully supported the CMA, Mattis said, “Yes.” (Hwang Joon-bum and Yoo Kang-moon, “Defense Minister Says ‘Foundation’ for OPCON Transfer Has Been Laid,” Hankyore, November 1, 2018)

North Korean officials commit sexual violence against women with apparent impunity as part of systemic oppression and other abuses tolerated within Kim Jong-un’s regime, according to a Human Rights Watch report released today. The 86-page report offers the latest glimpse into a range of suspected human rights violations carried out by authorities in the North Korean state, including public executions and arbitrary detentions of suspected activists and dissidents. Kenneth Roth, Human Rights Watch’s executive director, said that “North Korean women should not have to risk being raped by government officials or workers when they leave their homes to earn money to feed their families.” “Kim Jong Un and his government should acknowledge the problem and take urgent steps to protect women and ensure justice for survivors of sexual violence,” Roth added. The regime in Pyongyang said that North Korea is a “heaven for women” in response to a call for action from the United Nations in 2014 on human rights abuses. But testimonies by more than 50 female defectors from North Korea in the report describe a lack of judicial avenues to report sexual violence and a culture that places a social stigma on rape victims who come forward. The report does not directly link the abuses to the highest ranks of Kim’s regime, but it suggests there are few controls on officials such as police officers and prison-camp guards to prevent assaults against women. “When an official in a position of power ‘picks’ a woman she has no choice but to comply with any demands he makes, whether for sex, money, or other favors,” the report said. (Min Joo Kim, “North Korea Women Face Widespread Violence by ‘Government Officials,’ Rights Group Says,” Washington Post, October 31, 2018)
North Korea has threatened to restart the development of its nuclear weapons program unless the United States lifts sanctions, underscoring one of the major potential stumbling blocks in Washington’s diplomatic outreach with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. The statement is the latest indication that negotiations over its nuclear program have hit an impasse. The North Korean Foreign Ministry warned that unless sanctions were lifted and Washington stopped behaving “arrogantly,” North Korea could reinstate “byongjin” — its policy of simultaneously developing its nuclear weapons program alongside seeking economic development. In April, Kim declared that the country’s nuclear weapons program was sufficiently advanced, and that the policy of “byongjin” would be replaced by a single focus on improving the economy. Backtracking could reignite tensions with the United States. Still, neither side has turned its back on negotiations. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told journalists that he will meet his North Korean “counterpart” for further talks next week, although he did not specify exactly when, where or with whom those talks would take place. Pompeo met Kim in Pyongyang last month, and says he secured a promise to allow American inspectors into two nuclear and missile testing sites to check on their dismantlement. Speaking on “The Laura Ingraham Show” last week, Pompeo said a summit between Kim and President Trump could happen early next year and enable “a substantial breakthrough in taking down the nuclear threat from North Korea.” “We’re still happy that they haven’t conducted a nuclear test in an awfully long time and they haven’t launched a missile in an awfully long time,” Pompeo said, adding that Kim had made clear to him he intends to denuclearize but that much more work needed to be done. In an interview with Sean Hannity on Fox News on Friday, Pompeo reiterated that “a lot of work” remains to be done, but added: “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.” North Korea argues that Trump promised Kim in June that a new era in relations was beginning. “The improvement of relations and sanctions are incompatible,” the Foreign Ministry commentary said. “Friendship is incompatible with ‘pressure.’” The Foreign Ministry asked Washington to abandon its “foolish daydream” that sanctions and pressure will lead to denuclearization. “We cannot help laughing at such a foolish idea,” it said. The United States, it added, was making a big mistake if it believed that North Korea would agree to unilateral disarmament as long as sanctions remain in place, and argued that negotiations should be “simultaneous and phased” and based on “reciprocity and equality.” “If the U.S. keeps behaving arrogantly without showing any change in its stand, while failing to properly understand our repeated demand, the DPRK may add one thing to the state policy for directing all efforts to the economic construction adopted in April and as a result, the word ‘byongjin’ may appear again,” the statement said. “The U.S. will be able to dodge piteous future that may do harm to itself and the world only when it gives up highflying desire and one-sided viewpoint,” it wrote. (Simon Denver, “North Korea Threatens to Restart Nuclear Program Unless U.S. Lifts Sanctions,” Washington Post, November 3, 2018) Responding to Washington’s ongoing public aversion to North Korea sanctions relief, a director of the foreign ministry-linked Institute for American Studies warned that Pyongyang may reconsider Kim Jong Un’s April 2018 directive to focus solely on economic development. “If the U.S. keeps behaving arrogant without showing any change in its stand…the word “byongjin” (simultaneously conducting economic construction and building up nuclear forces) may appear again and the change of the line could be seriously reconsidered,” director Kwon Jong Gun said in the KCNA-distributed statement. “It is worth recalling that such view has already begun to appear in the DPRK,” the director added, a possible reference to growing sentiment there about the nature of ongoing diplomacy with the U.S. In particular, Washington’s ongoing sanctions designations on “objects supposed to have relations with the DPRK” and “pressure” on Seoul to slow down inter-Korean cooperation was “incompatible” with Singapore summit pledges to improve U.S.-DPRK trust and ties, the director argued. Unless the U.S. offers a “corresponding reply” to recent “proactive and good-will measures” gestures — a likely reference to North Korea’s continued long-range missile and nuclear test moratorium and partial steps to disable the Sohae missile engine test stand — “the DPRK will not move even 1 mm (further).” And taking issue with American claims that “key to the improvement of DPRK-U.S. relations lies in denuclearization,” Kwon said that “rare spectacles” should have been witnessed (between the two countries) before the DPRK began nuclear development.” (Chad O’Carroll, “North Korean Official Moots Idea of Resuming Overt Nuclear Development,” NKNews, November 3, 2018)
KCNA: “Kwon Jong Gun, director of the Institute for American Studies of the Foreign Ministry of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Friday issued a commentary titled "When does the United States wake up from the foolish greed and daydream." The commentary reads in full: The U.S. is still suffering from obsessive-compulsive neurosis. Much water flew under the bridge but the U.S. still sticks to the pressure upon the DPRK, repeatedly clamoring about "denuclearization first, lifting of sanctions next." Every day the high-ranking officials of the White House and the U.S. administration claim that "sanctions should be kept up until north Korea is denuclearized" at a time when the DPRK-U.S. negotiations are under way in Pyongyang for the improved bilateral relations and the international community is excited to see the "September Pyongyang Joint Declaration" The U.S. feels uneasy about the failure of the international sanctions against the DPRK, frequently issuing the "caution notice" related with the sanctions and imposing sanctions upon objects supposed to have relations with the DPRK irrespective of nationality. It puts pressure upon south Korea to adjust the improvement of inter-Korean relations according to the speed of the DPRK-U.S. nuclear negotiations, inform the U.S. of the concrete programs and timetables of the undertakings for inter-Korean cooperation in advance before pushing ahead with them and confirm the possible violation of sanctions. Is this a way of removing the hostile relations between the DPRK and the U.S. and making a new history of improving their relations? We cannot but ask the U.S. whether the project of the century for peace on the Korean Peninsula and rest of the world should be conducted in such way. What top leaders of the DPRK and the U.S. promised at historic Singapore meeting in June shaking hands is to put an end to the hostile relations of centuries between the DPRK and the U.S. and make a new history of improving the relations. That's why it was hailed and supported by the whole world. The U.S. is derailed from the main subject, the basic orbit of the improvement of the DPRK-U.S. relations and peace, losing the destination confirmed in Singapore and dashes for "denuclearization based on maximum pressure." There is no justification for sanctions, and a summit of the century took place in Singapore in the wake of the active and preemptive measure of the DPRK. The U.S. still resorts to sanctions and pressure, though. The U.S. should not forget what it promised. The improvement of relations and sanctions are incompatible. "Friendship" is inconsistent with "pressure." Undoubtedly the U.S. is convinced that the sanctions and pressure increase the bargaining power in negotiations. It is the height of absurdity. It can be said that the U.S. mode of thinking that the brutal way of hurting the other partner in the era of civilization helps increase its bargaining power in negotiation still remains in the medieval ages. The U.S. thinks that its oft-repeated "sanctions and pressure" lead to "denuclearization". We cannot help laughing at such a foolish idea. Now is the time for the U.S. to abandon a foolish idea that the DPRK came out to the negotiating table, yielding to the sanctions. The U.S. claims that north Korea's response to dialogue is to get rid of the tough sanctions and the sanctions will not lift until the denuclearization is completed. Even middle school students in Korea ridicule the U.S. assertion. The U.S. should admit that it came out to the negotiating table after it understood that "strategic patience", nuclear blackmail, military threat and intensive offensive to isolate and stifle the DPRK can never work on the DPRK and that the nuclear threat to the U.S. mainland is a matter of time. On the contrary, the U.S. thinks that the DPRK came to the negotiations giving in to sanctions. The foolish judgment is the factor of all tragicomedies of the U.S. striking the world people dumb. The U.S. cannot get rid of a pitiful lot unless it discards its foolish idea and frankly lays bare its inner feelings. The U.S. would be well advised to look at the records of the DPRK-U.S. dialogue before making nonsense, if it cannot believe our warning. Then it will clearly see the records of history that the DPRK came to the negotiations with the U.S. when the national power of the DPRK was fully displayed and its military muscle reached a higher stage, not when the DPRK could hardly stand under someone's pressure. The U.S. should stop misleading the public into thinking that a key to the improvement of DPRK-U.S. relations lies in denuclearization. By randomly calling for a mixture of things for denuclearization like declaration and verification, allegedly for the mending of the DPRK-U.S. relations, the U.S. is trying to get world people confused, by making them into believing that denuclearization of the DPRK would solve everything. Our question is if the nuclear issue of the DPRK is really a sore spot that caused all the complicated problems including the tension on the Korean peninsula and the bedeviled DPRK-U.S. relations. In this context, a subjunctive mood may help probe the truth. Let's imagine the U.S. is right when it claimed the DPRK's nuclear issue is a "root cause." If so, "rare spectacles" should have been witnessed before the DPRK began
nuclear development. In other words, the DPRK-U.S. relations should have been improved to be matchless and the Korean peninsula should have turned into a peaceful land without the threat of a war tens of years ago. Then it should be put it that the DPRK's access to nukes led to the disappearance of "all these good things" and appearance of "all the evils." Can this be explained by the U.S.? However brazen-faced one is, one must go abash and would remain tongue-tied. History sharply tells the world that without the U.S. presence in south Korea that led to the division of the land of Korea and the start of war to be followed by unceasing military provocations and nuclear blackmail, the nuclear issue of the Korean peninsula wouldn't have been raised from the outset. As shown, the U.S. is totally to blame for all the problems on the Korean peninsula including the nuclear issue and therefore, the very one that caused all those must untie the knot it made. The UN also said that sanctions were not unchangeable. Nevertheless, the U.S. is crying out for putting the "maximum pressure" upon the DPRK, claiming that "there is nothing to give the DPRK before its denuclearization". It is just like a guilty party filing the suit first. The U.S. should come to its senses as early as possible and behave reasonably and rationally, properly understanding who its rival is. It had better stop the self-destructive act of putting pressure on the DPRK, aware of distress of predecessors who said that the U.S. drove its head into the wall of north Korea for more than seven decades but there is no change in north Korea and the U.S. head terribly ached. Days ago, heard at the UN were laments and warning that "the world is sick with bad disease dubbed 'lack of confidence', confidence among states and confidence in international order have reached the deadline, and we should advance on the basis of facts, not fear, and reason, not illusion". The U.S. deserves to lend an ear to the laments and warning. The U.S. should accept the advice of the international community that it is a big mistake to expect that the DPRK with strong sense of independence will meet the unilateral demand for denuclearization as long as tough sanctions against the DPRK go on and that the DPRK-U.S. negotiations should be simultaneous and phased course based on reciprocity and equality." Now that we gave all things possible to the U.S., things it hardly deserves, by taking proactive and good-will measures, what remains to be done is the U.S. corresponding reply. Unless there is any reply, the DPRK will not move even 1 mm, how costly it may be. If the U.S. keeps behaving arrogant without showing any change in its stand, while failing to properly understand our repeated demand, the DPRK may add one thing to the state line for directing all efforts to the economic construction adopted in April and as a result, the word "byongjin" (simultaneously conducting economic construction and building up nuclear forces) may appear again and the change of the line could be seriously reconsidered. It is worth recalling that such view has already begun to appear in the DPRK. The DPRK has waited for a long time with patience. However, nothing has changed in its surroundings but itself. The U.S. will be able to dodge piteous future that may do harm to itself and the world only when it gives up its high-flying desire and one-sided viewpoint." (KCNA, “Institute for American Studies of DPRK Foreign Ministry Urges U.S. to Abandon Foolish Daydream,” November 2, 2018)

The United States and South Korea will begin small-scale military drills tomorrow just days ahead of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s meeting with a North Korea official to discuss denuclearization and plans for a second summit between the two countries. The Korean Marine Exchange Program was among the training drills that were indefinitely suspended in June after President Donald Trump met North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore and promised to end joint U.S.-South Korea military exercises often criticized by the North. A spokesman for South Korea’s Ministry of Defense confirmed a round of training would begin near the southern city of Pohang, with no media access expected. About 500 American and South Korean marines will participate in the maneuvers, Yonhap reported. Meanwhile, Pompeo, interviewed yesterday on CBS’s “Face the Nation,” said he would be in New York City at the end of this week to meet with his North Korean counterpart, Kim Yong-chol. “I expect we’ll make some real progress, including an effort to make sure that the summit between our two leaders can take place, where we can make substantial steps towards denuclearization,” Pompeo said. The biggest combat-readiness war game ever staged in and around Japan has gone ahead, however, with nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan joining Japanese destroyers and a Canadian warship in the ocean off Japan — another key player in the effort to pressure North Korea. Pompeo, interviewed on “Fox News Sunday,” said the Trump administration wants a full, verifiable denuclearization of the Korean
Peninsula. He added that Trump insists on “no economic relief until we have achieved our ultimate objective.” (Josh Smith and Joyce Lee, “U.S., South Korea Resume Low-Key Military Drills ahead of Talks with North Korea,” Reuters, November 4, 2018)

11/5/18

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will be traveling to New York on November 7 to meet with his North Korean counterpart, Kim Yong Chol. The State Department says the top U.S. envoy for North Korea, Stephen Biegun, will join Pompeo and Kim to discuss efforts toward what it calls “achieving the final, fully verified denuclearization” of North Korea. The State Department says Pompeo and Kim will discuss “all four pillars of the Singapore Summit joint statement,” including denuclearization. (Associated Press, “Pompeo to Meet North Korean Counterpart Thursday in New York,” Yomiuri Shimbun, November 6, 2018)

The outgoing commander of American troops in South Korea voiced support today for controversial measures to reduce military activity along the border with North Korea. Writing in a South Korean military publication, General Vincent Brooks said recent steps by South and North Korea to disarm areas along the so-called demilitarized zone between the two nations have "the support and agreement of the United States." Last week a no-fly zone went into effect along the border, despite private concerns by U.S. officials that the move could restrict training and the ability to monitor the border. Other steps included disarming some areas of the border and removing some landmines and guard posts. "Together, these activities demonstrate a shared commitment to positive action and work to develop the trust essential to the next steps along the road to a lasting and stable peace," Brooks wrote. Pompeo previously expressed "discontent" with the deal that created the no-fly zone, which South Korean sources said became a key sticking point for the United States because it would effectively prevent close air support drills. Brooks' comments came as U.S. and South Korean marines conducted military drills near the southern city of Pohang under the Korean Marine Exchange Program for the first time in months, according to the South Korean ministry of defense. Over the weekend, Kim hosted President Miguel Diaz-Canel of Cuba - another country under U.S. sanctions - during a lavish visit in Pyongyang, where the two leaders vowed to boost their cooperation. During a banquet on Sunday, Kim said the "two countries are in the same trench in the struggle for defending sovereignty and dignity of their countries and safeguarding international justice," according to a state media report. Diaz-Canel, meanwhile, "voiced his will to meet all challenges by the hostile forces" alongside North Korea, according to the report. South Korea hopes the North and the United States will make “big progress” during the talks set for this week, presidential spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom said today. (Josh Smith and Joyce Lee, “U.S. Backs Disarmament Steps along Demilitarized Zone – General,” Reuters, November 5, 2018)

The top U.S. military officer said that the United States would have to start making changes to its military posture on the Korean peninsula over time if talks with North Korea advance. "The more successful we are in the diplomatic track, the more uncomfortable we will be in the military space," Marine General Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told a forum at Duke University. "Because over time, this negotiation will take a form where we're going to have to start making some changes to the military posture on the peninsula. And we're prepared to do that in support of Secretary Pompeo," Dunford said. He did not elaborate on what changes might be expected. In Seoul, presidential spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom declined to comment on Dunford's remarks and referred to previous statements on the issue by the leaders of North and South Korea. "I'd like you to remember that Chairman Kim Jong Un said there is no correlation between declaring the end of the (Korean) war and a pullout of U.S. troops from South Korea, or a weakening of the South Korea-U.S. alliance, and that President Moon Jae-in also said to that effect several times," Kim said at a press briefing on November 6. (Idrees Ali and Phil Stewart, “U.S.-North Korea Talks Could Affect Military Posture in Korea – Dunford,” Reuters, November 6, 2018)

11/6/18

South Korea is still trying to work out a deal to officially declare an end to the Korean War by the end of this year, expecting North Korean leader Kim Jong-un to visit Seoul "soon," presidential
National Security Office (NSO) chief Chung Eui-yong said today. "Seoul is discussing with key stakeholders in denuclearization talks to make a declaration ending the Korean War by the end of this year," Chung said during a National Assembly audit of Cheong Wa Dae and the presidential national security team. "Regarding the format (of the war-ending declaration), lots of options remain wide open. It seems like there is much possibility and there are many variables." Chung, who is also Seoul's top envoy in denuclearization talks, said South Korea is expecting to see "substantial progress" in the North's denuclearization from Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s meeting with his North Korean counterpart Kim Yong-chol in New York. "Following the Pompeo-Kim meeting, Seoul expects working-level talks to follow," Chung said. Separately, an official at Cheong Wa Dae said efforts for a peace declaration that would eventually lead to a peace treaty are in line with President Moon Jae-in's greater engagement policy with the North through dialogue and compromise. He said Washington may grant Pyongyang a peace declaration as a "confidence-building measure" after the North discloses the full inventory of its nuclear warheads and agrees to allow nuclear watchdogs to inspect its facilities. Meanwhile, Chung declined to comment on what conditions are required to finalize the end-of-war declaration. He said Seoul would deliver humanitarian aid to North Korea if the high-level meeting between the United States and North Korea produces acceptable results. During the audit, the ruling Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) engaged in a war of words with the main opposition Liberty Korea Party (LKP) over presidential chief of staff Im Jong-seok's recent visit to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) while President Moon was traveling to European capitals. The LKP said Lim's visit to inspect mine removal with the unification minister and national security chief was "very inappropriate," claiming the role of the presidential chief of staff is limited and intended to support the President behind the scenes. The DPRK said because Lim is also chief of the presidential committee on inter-Korean affairs, the trip was necessary to check progress on the easing of border tensions. (Kim Yoo-chul, “Talks Underway to End Korean War: NSO Chief,” Korea Times, November 6, 2018)

The Koreas and the U.S.-led U.N. Command (UNC) agreed to draft the rules of interaction that will be applied to guard duty in the JSA and decided to make a decision on them at an early date through exchanges of documents,” the ROK Defense Ministry said in a press release. The agreement came at the third round of their trilateral talks at the Freedom House, a South Korea-controlled building in the border truce village of Panmunjom. The three sides discussed a set of follow-up issues related to disarmament in the Joint Security Area (JSA) in the Demilitarized Zone, including the verification work that occurred on October 26 and 27 after the Koreas removed guard posts, armed troops and other weapons in the JSA following the demining operations there. At the talks, they also discussed how their surveillance equipment is run and ways to readjust its operations. Once the disarmament and related procedures are complete this year, Koreans and foreign tourists will be allowed to cross the Military Demarcation Line from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The South and North will each station a patrol of 35 unarmed soldiers there. The South and the North were represented by Army Col. Cho Yong-geun and Army Col. Om Chang-nam, respectively, at the talks. The UNC's delegation was headed by Army Col. Burke Hamilton. (Yonhap, “Koreas, UN Command Agree to Draft ‘Rules of Interaction’ for JSA Guard Duty,” November 6, 2018)
Washington’s sudden announcement, Seoul officials were not too worried about what it meant to future North-U.S. denuclearization negotiations. A senior South Korean Foreign Ministry official familiar with the talks said today, “Our government had been looking forward to the North-U.S. high-level talks to bring about actual measures for the denuclearization and establishment of permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula, hence we think it is regrettable that they are not taking place.” He added that Seoul “looks forward to the talks being rescheduled at an early date.” “There is no need to imbue excessive meaning to the postponement of the talks,” the official added. “We have to see it as a process toward the achieving of denuclearization and establishment of a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, and there are situations where planned meetings are postponed.” The State Department statement, the official noted, “has a calm tone,” adding that the South Korean government “will continue to try to play a role in enabling momentum in dialogue.” Washington briefed Seoul about the postponement ahead of the announcement, this official added. Kim Eui-kyeom, the Blue House spokesman, said in a briefing Wednesday, “I don’t believe that the postponement [of the high-level talks] means that the North-U.S. negotiations have become null or lost momentum or direction.” Diplomatic sources indicated that the North Korean side asked to postpone the talks. (Sarah Kim, “Pompeo’s Meeting with Kim Jong Chol Canceled Abruptly,” JoongAng Ilbo, November 7, 2018) The goal of a diplomatic meeting set for tomorrow seemed simple: Nail down a plan for a second summit between President Trump and the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un. But finalizing the meeting itself — between Mike Pompeo, the secretary of state, and one of Kim’s top compatriots — proved harder than expected. The State Department announced early Wednesday that it had been canceled. “Ongoing conversations continue to take place,” the statement said tersely. The cancellation leaves little doubt that the diplomatic process between the United States and North Korea is now mired in quicksand after peaking in Singapore with the initial summit between the two leaders. There are mismatched demands and expectations on both sides, and the pitfalls have only gotten more obvious in recent weeks. At the White House later today, Trump said the meeting would be rescheduled and insisted that “we’re very happy with how it’s going with North Korea.” “We’re in no rush,” he said, adding that he expected to again sit down with Kim early next year. “The sanctions are on. The missiles have stopped, the rockets have stopped. The hostages are home.” Last Friday, North Korea veered toward hostility as its foreign ministry warned the country would return to a policy of strengthening its nuclear force if the Trump administration did not lift economic sanctions. That announcement did not bode well for prospects of a successful meeting between Pompeo and the North Korean party official, Kim Yong-chol, a hardline general and former intelligence chief. “I think Pompeo again is in a bit of pickle,” said Jung H. Pak, an expert on North Korea at the Brookings Institution and a former C.I.A. analyst. “North Korea has been clear about what they’re not willing to do.” In a statement on November 5, Heather Nauert, State Department spokeswoman, said Pompeo and Stephen Biegun, special representative for North Korea, planned to discuss steps toward progress in tomorrow’s meeting with Kim Yong-chol, the envoy from Pyongyang. Among the four main points agreed to in Singapore, Nauert said, was “the final, fully verified denuclearization of the DPRK.” But that is a notable change in wording from the agreement reached in June. The third of the four points in that agreement said North Korea “commits to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” according to the White House statement from the summit. North Korea has interpreted this as meaning all sides agreeing to give up arms. North Korean officials also have stressed the two points ahead of denuclearization to argue that forging a formal declaration to the end of the Korean War happen first. Those points called on the United States and North Korea to establish a new relationship with the aim of “peace and prosperity” and try to build “a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.” Last month, Pompeo met with the North Korean leader in Pyongyang. The chief American diplomat described it as a “good trip” and announced a modest agreement by Kim to allow outside inspectors to enter Punggye-ri, a network of underground tunnels where North Korea has conducted all its nuclear tests. Pak said North Korea’s offers so far have been minor compared to what it is asking of the United States in return — the formal end-of-war declaration and an easing of harsh economic sanctions. “Because the North Korea nuclear program is so advanced, this is like North Korea offering to sell us Windows 97 at a price higher than it warrants,” Pak said. She said Trump had already given away important leverage by agreeing to stop joint military exercises with South Korea. After Pompeo’s trip in October, Biegun was
Supposed to meet with Choe Son-hui, North Korea’s vice foreign minister. But that never happened, marking another sign of lackluster diplomacy. Talks between North Korea and the administration of President Moon Jae-in of South Korea have been going much more smoothly. Moon is trying to arrange a meeting by year’s end with Kim Jong-un in Seoul, following on the South Korean president’s landmark visit to North Korea in September. That would be their fourth meeting this year. On November 3, a commentary in Rodong Sinmun encouraged the two Koreans to move forward with an end-of-war declaration. It described a “vital demand of the Korean nation” that the two governments “ease the military tension on the Korean Peninsula and remove the danger of war.” “On the inter-Korean process, it’s been continued progress on all fronts,” said John Delury, a professor at Yonsei University in Seoul. “The Americans should catch up to the South Koreans.” In two days, the subject of North Korea will no doubt come up again when Pompeo meets in Washington with Yang Jiechi, a senior Chinese foreign policy official. Jim Mattis, the defense secretary, is expected to meet the same day with General Wei Fenghe, China’s defense minister. (Edward Wong, “Trump Shrugs off Wobbly Diplomacy with North Korea,” New York Times, November 8, 2018, p. A-11)

Nauert: “Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo’s meeting with officials from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, scheduled for this week in New York, will now take place at a later date. We will reconvene when our respective schedules permit. Ongoing conversations continue to take place. The United States remains focused on fulfilling the commitments agreed to by President Trump and Chairman Kim at the Singapore Summit in June.” (DoS Spokesperson Heather Nauert, Press Statement, Meeting with DPRK Officials,” November 7, 2018)

Trump: “Q How about North Korea? How about North Korea? Q Thank you, Mr. President. Two international questions. The first one: Secretary Pompeo’s talks with North Korea have been postponed. What is happening there? THE PRESIDENT: Yeah, nothing — Q And will your meeting still happen with — THE PRESIDENT: No, we’re going to change it because of trips that are being made. We’re going to make it at another date. But we’re very happy how it’s going with North Korea. We think it’s going fine. We’re in no rush. We’re in no hurry. The sanctions are on. Q You still expect to meet Kim Jong Un? THE PRESIDENT: No, no. Listen. Excuse me. Wait. Q Sorry, sir. THE PRESIDENT: The sanctions are on. The missiles have stopped. The rockets have stopped. The hostages are home. The great heroes have been coming home. Mike Pence was in Hawaii, where the — one of the most beautiful ceremonies that anyone has ever seen for the fallen. These are great heroes. Very important. When I was running, a lot of people — as many years ago as it was — in many cases, grandchildren — but they were asking about that. They’re coming home and they’re being provided to us as we speak. But I’m in no rush. I’m in no rush. The sanctions are on. I read a couple of times, and I’ve seen a few times where they said, “He’s done so much.” What have I done? I met. Now, I’d love to take the sanctions off. But they have to be responsive, too. It’s a two-way street. But we’re not in any rush at all. There’s no rush whatsoever. You know, before I got here, they were dealing with this for over 70 years. And I guess, on a nuclear front, for 25 years. That’s a long time. I’ve been there; I probably left Singapore four or five months ago. And we made more progress in that four or five months than they’ve made in 70 years. And nobody else could have done what I’ve done. But I’ll say this — I’ll say this very simply: We’re in no rush. The sanctions are on. And whenever it is — but that meeting is going to be rescheduled. Q That meeting — but about your meeting with Kim Jong Un, sir, will it happen in the next months? THE PRESIDENT: Sometime next year, I would say. Q Sometime next year? THE PRESIDENT: Sometime — sometime early next year. Yeah.” (White House Press Office, Remarks by President Trump in Press Conference after Midterm Elections, November 7, 2018)

Senator Edward J. Markey, Democrat of Massachusetts and a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, has urged President Trump to allow American humanitarian aid workers into North Korea, despite a recent ban on travel to what officials consider a hostile nuclear state but also one of the world’s poorest nations. In a letter today he said that he was “deeply troubled” by reports that the Trump administration was barring aid workers “from shipping supplies or traveling to
North Korea as they seek to provide the most basic humanitarian assistance.” Markey praised Trump’s decision to engage in diplomacy with Kim Jong-un, the North Korean leader, but said the aid workers needed to be allowed to do their jobs. Aid groups provide a range of services, including agricultural training and surgery, but are finding it impossible to enter North Korea because of new State Department restrictions. “The humanitarian situation in North Korea is far too dire for these draconian policies,” Markey wrote in the letter that was also sent to Mike Pompeo, the secretary of state, and Steven Mnuchin, the Treasury secretary. In September 2017, the Trump administration enacted a general travel ban to North Korea after the death of Otto F. Warmbier, a University of Virginia student. During the first year of the ban, American humanitarian aid workers were given a “special validation” to travel to North Korea with a one-visit-only passport issued by the State Department. (Journalists traveling there get the same passport.) But in September, aid workers found that State Department officials had begun rejecting their applications for the passport. The letters of rejection said the workers had no recourse for appeal. A dozen American nonprofits work regularly in North Korea. “The potential life-threatening consequences of this policy are far reaching,” said Keith Luse, executive director of the National Committee on North Korea, which represents the groups. The State Department has said each application is determined case by case and must be in line with American interests.


North Korea called for the postponement of high-level talks with the United States in New York, Seoul’s top diplomat said. Speaking at a National Assembly session, Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha cited consultations with Washington on the issue. Asked about the matter by a lawmaker, Kang said, "The U.S. explained to us that it received a notification from the North Korean side to put off (the talks)." The minister added she has yet to have phone talks with Pompeo to discuss the matter. Before the abrupt U.S. announcement, however, Stephen Biegun, Washington’s special representative for North Korea, talked with his South Korean counterpart Lee Do-hoon by phone. Speculation is rampant about why this week’s Pompeo-Kim meeting was cancelled. Pyongyang may be unprepared to accept Washington’s demand for additional steps toward denuclearization, which include presenting the list of its nuclear weapons and relevant facilities. A State Department official dismissed speculation about a possible rift with Pyongyang.

“Timing, timing. This has to do with timing as a matter,” its deputy spokesperson Robert Palladino said at a press briefing. "Schedules change. Schedules change all of the time in fact ... This is the case we’re dealing with, purely a scheduling issue, and it’s as simple as that.” Denuclearization talks between the North and the U.S. are related with inter-Korean cooperation to some extent, but there’s no fixed sequencing, a ministry official told reporters on the condition of anonymity.

Meanwhile, the foreign ministry said there will be no big impact to the Korean Peninsula issue from the outcome of the U.S. midterm elections, in which the Democrats regained control of the House, while the Republicans kept their grip on the Senate. "There has been bipartisan support (on Capitol Hill) for the South Korea-U.S. alliance and a peaceful resolution to the North Korean nuclear issue,” she said. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Delayed New York Talks with U.S.: S. Korean Minister,” November 8, 2018) South Korea and the US appeared to play down speculation that the meeting was postponed due to stark differences between Washington and Pyongyang on how the denuclearization process should proceed. “The US explained to us that North Korea had asked the US to delay the meeting because their schedules were very hectic,” Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha said at a parliamentary session on Thursday. “Through various communication channels between South Korea and the US, we were aware of this in advance.” (Ock Hyun-ju, “N. Korea Postponed High-Level Meeting with U.S.: Foreign Minister,” Korea Herald, November 8, 2018)

President Moon Jae-in asked the new U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) commander to oversee the transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON) of Korean forces to the host country smoothly, at a change-of-command ceremony held today. Army Gen. Robert Abrams replaced Gen. Vincent Brooks as commander of the USFK, the ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command (CFC) and the United Nations Command (UNC), at the ceremony held on Camp Humphreys, a U.S. military base in Pyeongtaek, Gyeonggi Province. "I believe a more stable South Korea-U.S. joint defense
The United States is delaying approval of several requests for sanctions exemptions to deliver tractors, spare parts and other goods needed for humanitarian relief in North Korea, according to documents seen by AFP today. Russia asked the Security Council to discuss the delays during a meeting held behind closed doors today. UN resolutions specify that these should not affect humanitarian aid. The exemptions would allow deliveries of plumbing parts needed to repair North Korean health facilities, farm equipment such as tractors and other goods needed for humanitarian projects, according to documents seen by AFP. Ambassador Nikki Haley said the United States "is going to take our time" to review the requests to ensure that they are not diverted to Pyongyang instead of reaching those in need. Haley accused Russia of seeking to score "brownie points" with North Korea by raising the sanctions issue at the Security Council. The United States has rebuffed calls from China and Russia to ease sanctions to reward leader Kim Jong Un for halting missile tests and opening up a dialogue with the United States. President Donald Trump's administration maintains that maximum pressure from sanctions must be maintained to compel Kim to follow through on his pledge to denuclearize the Korean peninsula.

"We have given a lot of carrots up until now. We are not going to get rid of the stick, because they haven't done anything to warrant getting rid of the sanctions yet," Haley said. A planned meeting between US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and top North Korean official Kim Yong Chol to push for progress on denuclearization was cancelled at Pyongyang's request, she said. "They postponed it because they weren't ready," said Haley, adding that she expected the meeting, which will also discuss plans for a second Trump-Kim summit, to be rescheduled. "We continue to stand ready to talk." Around 10.3 million people, or 41 per cent of North Korea's population, are undernourished, according to the UN office for humanitarian affairs. A request presented by Ireland in August to allow its largest humanitarian agency, Concern Worldwide, to carry out four relief projects in North Korea has yet to be approved after the United States requested more time, documents showed. Italy's Agrotec Spa company is seeking authorization to export tractors, spare parts and tractor trailers to North Korea under a European Union program to improve food security. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) submitted in June a request for a water sanitation project that is still under review, according to a Red Cross official. "The health care system in DPRK in rural areas is very fragile, 40 percent of people lack access to safe water," said a Red Cross official. "Water programs are about saving lives and halting the spread of disease such as TB. Any tightening of a definition of humanitarian action that does not include improving access to safe water affects very vulnerable people in DPRK," he said. (Carole Landry, “U.S. Delays UN Approval of Aid for North Korea,” AFP, November 8, 2018)
US-PRC: “SECRETARY POMPEO: ...Even as our countries confront important differences in the bilateral relationship between the nations, our cooperation remains essential on many, many central issues. For example, I expressed in our meeting today the importance of remaining united in the pursuit of the final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea as agreed to be Chairman Kim in Singapore. This means maintaining pressure through the continued strict enforcement of all UN Security Council resolutions. China’s cooperation in enforcing those UN Security Council resolutions will help achieve meaningful breakthroughs on this important denuclearization issue. I also expressed our desire to see further cooperation from China in addressing Iran’s nuclear missile programs and other malign activities. We hope to work with the Chinese Government and Chinese energy companies in this regard. Bringing Iran’s oil export revenues to zero is a critical component of this campaign, and we discussed this today. ...POLITBURO MEMBER YANG: (Via interpreter) ... The Chinese side is committed to peace and development in the Asia Pacific. We respect the United States interest in the Asia Pacific. At the same time, we expect the United States to respect China’s security interests in the Asia Pacific, China’s sovereignty and development interests. China has undertaken some constructions on its islands and reefs. Most of them are civilian facilities. The purpose is to serve the interest of the Chinese people and also to provide public goods to others. At the same time, it is necessary for China to build certain security facilities in response to possible threats from outside. We believe that no country should use any excuse to engage in militarization in the region. Actually, to pursue militarization in the region will not only undermine interest of regional countries, but will hurt the countries who take these actions themselves. There’s no such a problem of the freedom of navigation and overflight being obstructed, so to use the freedom of navigation and overflight as an excuse to pursue military actions is unjustifiable. ...The two sides discussed in an in-depth manner the Korean Peninsula issue. China reaffirmed its position and commitment to denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula, and a solution through consultation and negotiation. China will continue to enforce strictly relevant UN Security Council resolutions. China supports direct dialogue between the United States and the DPRK and hopes that the two sides will meet each other halfway, accommodate each other’s legitimate concerns, build trust, and advance denuclearization process and the establishment of a peace mechanism in tandem. ...SECRETARY MATTIS: ...As the Secretary of State touched on, we also discussed the importance for all military, law enforcement, and civilian vessels and aircraft, including those in the PLA Navy, the Chinese Coast Guard, and the PRC Maritime Militia, to operate in a safe and professional manner, in accordance with international law, as we seek peaceful resolution of all disputes in the South China Sea. Through candid discussions, we sought ways to lessen tension, maintain open lines of communication between our militaries, and reduce the risk of miscalculation. And we made clear that the United States will continue to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows. The U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, one that is underpinned by the rules-based international order and regional stability, is unwavering. ...POLITBURO MEMBER YANG: In my opening remarks, I said that in our discussion we talked about the issue of the South China Sea. China reaffirmed its principled position on this issue and pointed out that China has indisputable sovereignty over islands in Nansha and its adjacent waters. On its own territory, China is undertaking some constructions to build civilian facilities and necessary defense facilities. That is the right of preservations and self-defense that international law has provided for sovereign state that has nothing to do with militarization. They are legitimate. China is committed to addressing disputes through dialogue and negotiation with parties directly concerned. China is working with ASEAN countries to fully implement, fully and comprehensively, the DOC, and the consultation now COC is making good progress. Well, right now the situation in the South China Sea is trending toward greater stability. In our discussion just now, the Chinese side made it clear to the United States that it should stop sending its vessels and military aircraft close to Chinese islands and reefs and stop actions that undermine China’s sovereignty and security interest. And we urge the United States to play constructive role for peace and stability in the South China Sea. That will certainly help reduce security risks. ...” (DoS, Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo, Press Availability with Secretary of Defense James Mattis, Chinese Politburo Member Yang Jiechi, and Chinese State Councilor and Defense Minister General Wei Fenghe, Ben Franklin Room, Washington, November 9, 2018)
A pro-North Korean newspaper in Japan said that North Korea's talks with the United States will not be necessary if Washington does not intend to implement its June summit agreement but only seeks to stick to the status quo. "If the U.S. does not implement the (June 12) joint statement but prefers to stick to the status quo by making a case for adjusting speed with such an expression as 'in no hurry,' there is no reason to bother to have talks," Choson Sinbo said in an article. The newspaper apparently expressed discomfort over what President Donald Trump said recently after the sudden cancellation of high-level talks between North Korean and the United States scheduled for this week. Trump attributed the cancellation to "trips that are being made," adding, "We're in no hurry. We're in no hurry. The sanctions are still on." Choson Sinbo called attention to a recent commentary contributed by a research center chief of the North Korean foreign ministry in which he warned the North could seriously reconsider its "byungjin policy" of economic growth and nuclear weapons development if Pyongyang's request for corresponding steps from Washington is not met. "It is not a phrase that can be written by a research center chief's own decision," it said, hinting that the warning must have reflected an intention of higher-ups. The newspaper said that North Korea understands that Trump has many "enemies" inside, who have different ideas, but warned that its patience is getting thin in the face of many things that have happened in the process of implementing the June 12 summit agreement between the two countries. It noted that if the U.S. takes trustworthy steps aimed at addressing North Korea's concerns, it would lead to progress in their bilateral relations and eventually make their high-level talks take place at an earlier date. (Yonhap, “Pro-N. Korea Newspaper Says No Talks Necessary If U.S. Sticks to Status Quo,” November 10, 2018)

Carlin: “Apparently concerned that Washington is not taking its warnings seriously, Pyongyang has conveyed through an article in Choson Sinbo, the pro-North Korean newspaper in Japan, what it hopes will be read as a sober exegesis of its recent public criticism of the US. With a Pyongyang byline, the piece was authored by Kim Chi Yong, a reliable interpreter of DPRK policy pronouncements whose articles are often used by the North to put in plain language signals that it sometimes veils in confounding obscurity. Citing the US State Department, the Choson Sinbo piece acknowledged that a trip to New York for “high-level talks” by DPRK chief negotiator Kim Yong Chol, scheduled for November 8, had been “postponed.” It obscured the fact that the North had asked for the postponement, asserting, “There are different interpretations of what is in the background.” It carefully did not rule out high-level talks in the future proceeding “without interruption in line with expectations and demands of both sides,” but waved a warning flag that this progress would need to be based on an understanding that the “premise established for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is the implementation of the most rational and most fair phased simultaneous action principle.” The article also gingerly raised that possibility of the North hanging back on a second Trump-Kim summit, implicitly arguing that if the US does not take “credible measures” to address North Korean “concerns” in high-level talks, the summit could be delayed. The Choson Sinbo article embellished on criticism that had appeared in a pair of KCNA commentaries last month complaining that after Secretary of State Pompeo came out of what the North has portrayed as an unmistakably positive October 9 meeting with Kim Jong Un, elements in the Trump administration had moved almost directly into negative comments. The article drew special attention to the warning in a November 2 commentary by the head of the Foreign Ministry’s Institute for American Studies (IFAS) that the North’s current strategic line of “everything for the economy” could change back to the “byungjin” line—i.e., equal emphasis on the nuclear weapons and economic sectors. In a dramatic rendition of internal events leading up to that warning, the piece said that “alarm bells were sounded through a public institution handling US affairs as a departure from [the relatively more positive] editorial tone of news media.” In case anyone missed the point, the Choson Sinbo piece underlined that the IFAS commentary would not have included reference to such a potentially seismic policy shift without the approval of higher authority. While still abiding by what is clearly high-level Pyongyang guidance to avoid criticism of President Trump by name, the article took a couple of sideways swipes at the president, slamming two of his public positions—his claim that he was in “no rush” for progress in talks with the North, and that the South could do nothing without US approval, something the article labeled as a “speed control theory.” The piece also took him to task for “touting” the absence of North Korean nuclear and missile tests as if that were his doing rather than Pyongyang’s initiatives. At
North Korea is moving ahead with its ballistic missile program at 16 hidden bases that have been identified in new commercial satellite images, a network long known to American intelligence agencies but left undiscussed as President Trump claims to have neutralized the North’s nuclear threat. The satellite images suggest that the North has been engaged in a great deception: It has offered to dismantle a major launching site — a step it began, then halted — while continuing to make improvements at more than a dozen others that would bolster launches of conventional and nuclear warheads. [??] The existence of the ballistic missile bases, which North Korea has never acknowledged, contradicts Trump’s assertion that his landmark diplomacy is leading to the elimination of a nuclear and missile program that the North had warned could devastate the United States. “We are in no rush,” Trump said of talks with the North at a news conference on November 7, after Republicans lost control of the House. “The sanctions are on. The missiles have stopped. The rockets have stopped. The hostages are home.” His statement was true in just one sense. Trump appeared to be referring to the halt of missile flight tests, which have not occurred in nearly a year. But American intelligence officials say that the North’s production of nuclear material, of new nuclear weapons and of missiles that can be placed on mobile launchers and hidden in mountains at the secret bases has continued. And the sanctions are collapsing, in part because North Korea has leveraged its new, softer-sounding relationship with Washington, and its stated commitment to eventual denuclearization, to resume trade with Russia and China. Moreover, an American program to track those mobile missiles with a new generation of small, inexpensive satellites, disclosed by the New York Times more than a year ago, is stalled. The Pentagon once hoped to have the first satellites over North Korea by now, giving it early warning if the mobile missiles are rolled out of mountain tunnels and prepared for launch. But because of a series of budget and bureaucratic disputes, the early warning system, begun by the Obama administration and handed off to the Trump administration, has yet to go into operation. Current and former officials, who said they could not publicly discuss the program because it is heavily classified, said there was still hope of launching the satellites, but they offered no timeline. The secret ballistic missile bases were identified in a detailed study published today by the Beyond Parallel program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a major think tank in Washington. The program, which focuses on the prospects of North-South integration, is led by Victor Cha, a prominent North Korea expert whom the Trump administration considered appointing as the ambassador to South Korea last year. His name was pulled back when he objected to the White House strategy for dealing with Kim Jong-un, the North Korean leader. A State Department spokesman responded to the findings with a written statement suggesting that the government believed the sites must be dismantled: “President Trump has made clear that should Chairman Kim follow through on his commitments, including complete denuclearization and the elimination of ballistic missile programs, a much brighter future lies ahead for North Korea and its people.” A spokesman for the C.I.A. declined to comment. The revelation of the bases comes as Trump’s signature piece of diplomacy, based on his meeting exactly five months ago with Kim, appears in peril. American officials have responded that they already have a detailed target list — one that goes back decades — but want to use the North’s accounting to determine whether it is revealing all the known facilities and moving honestly toward denuclearization. The new satellite imagery suggests the opposite. “It’s not like these bases have been frozen,” Cha, the leader of the team that studied the images, said in an interview. “Work is continuing. What everybody is worried about is that Trump is going to accept a bad deal — they give us a single test site and dismantle a few other things, and in return they get a peace agreement” that formally ends the Korean War. Trump, he said, “would then declare victory, say he got more than any other American president ever got, and the threat would still be there.” The North Korea experts who have examined the images believe that the North’s motivations are fairly easy to interpret. “It looks like they’re trying to maximize their capabilities,” Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., a co-author of the report and a veteran
analyst of satellite images of North Korea, said in an interview. “Any missile at these bases can take a nuclear warhead.” “The level of effort that North Korea has invested in building these bases and dispersing them is impressive,” he added. “It’s very logical from a survival point of view.” Weapons experts, as well as Pompeo, say that North Korea, despite engaging in denuclearization talks, continues to produce the fissile material that fuels nuclear arms. The North is believed to have about 40 to 60 nuclear warheads. The new report profiles a missile base known as Sakkanmol, a little more than 50 miles north of the Demilitarized Zone. It is one of the closest to South Korea. Seoul, the capital, is about 80 miles away, as are American troops. The report contains a dozen or so satellite images of Sakkanmol — each heavily annotated to show the base checkpoint, headquarters buildings, barracks, security areas, maintenance depots and the entrances to the warrens of underground tunnels that hide mobile missiles and their transporter trucks. The base runs through a narrow mountain valley over an area of three square miles. Each tunnel entrance, the report says, is protected by a neighboring berm of rock and dirt about 60 feet high and two outward-opening doors about 20 feet wide. They are meant to protect the tunnel entrances from artillery fire and aerial attack. The report says the Sakkanmol base conceals seven lengthy tunnels that can accommodate up to 18 transporters that move the missiles. Each is typically fitted with one warhead. If tensions rose, the report says, the missiles would be transported from the base to pre-arranged launching sites — often no more than a wide spot in a road. The mobile launchers can move quickly — they can be ready to fire in under an hour — which is why the United States has been trying to get the small satellites into the sky for early warning. The satellites have a special kind of sensor using “synthetic aperture radar” that cuts through clouds. The current, multibillion-dollar constellation of large satellites that keep an eye on North Korea is often out of position, and officials say the country’s ballistic missile sites are under surveillance less than 30 percent of the time. (The exact figure is classified.) A map of North Korea in the report shows three belts of missile bases that run from short-range tactical emplacements, to sites with midrange missiles that could strike most of South Korea, Japan and American bases in the Pacific, to strategic ones for missiles that threaten to reach American shores. The strategic bases appear to be home to the intercontinental ballistic missiles that North Korea test-fired in 2017, alarming the world. The North’s tests, while demonstrating significant progress, did not prove that it had solved all the technical problems inherent in launching a nuclear warhead that could reach the continental United States. That is why Trump and Pompeo have argued that the halt to missile testing is a major accomplishment: It prevents Kim from demonstrating that he can take those last steps. The report, which was also written with Lisa Collins, a research fellow at the center, supplemented the satellite imagery with interviews of North Korean defectors and government officials around the world. The North’s missile bases, with few exceptions, are “in mountainous terrain, often spread out within narrow dead-end valleys,” Bermudez said. He added, “These bases simply do not look like missile operating bases as seen in the United States, Russia, China or Europe.” Major nuclear powers tend to house their land-based missiles in underground silos, which can be vulnerable to pre-emptive attack. The North’s heavy reliance on missiles that can be repositioned with the changing circumstances of war is part of an effort to avoid that mistake, while giving the country a stronger hand in the game of nuclear diplomacy and brinkmanship. “The bases are clearly active,” Cha said. “It’s not like these things have been frozen and are decaying.” (David E. Sander and William J. Broad, “Hidden Bases in North Korea Suggest Deceit,” New York Times, November 12, 2018, p. A-1) A new report from a Washington think tank identified more than a dozen hidden bases in North Korea that could be used to disperse mobile launchers for ballistic missiles in the event of a conflict. Are these bases evidence that North Korea is cheating on the agreement it reached in June, when President Trump met North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore? Analysts say the answer is no — although there are plenty of caveats. “Kim hasn’t broken any promises,” said Jeffrey Lewis, a nonproliferation expert at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey. "Instead, he’s making good on one of them — to mass produce nuclear weapons.” The report is the latest evidence that while North Korea has indeed stopped its missile testing, it is far from dismantling its weapons facilities. Indeed, it appears to be adding to its stockpile: U.S. intelligence reports from the summer found that North Korea had begun producing new missiles at a factory, and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo acknowledged during Senate testimony that Pyongyang “continues to produce fissile material.” Duyeon Kim, an adjunct senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security, said
while these developments violate U.N. Security Council resolutions, they do not breach Kim’s agreement with Trump. “North Korea didn’t break any promises with Trump because there’s no nuclear deal in place yet with Washington,” she said. “I realize I am a broken record, but North Korea has never offered to abandon its nuclear weapons,” said Lewis, the nonproliferation expert. “What North Korea has offered is the beginning of a process that might — might — someday lead to an outcome like that.” The State Department did not say whether they viewed the base as a violation of any agreements with the United States. “President Trump has made clear that should Chairman Kim follow through on his commitments — including complete denuclearization and the elimination of ballistic missile programs — a much brighter future lies ahead for North Korea and its people,” a spokesman said in a statement. (Adam Taylor, “Newly Revealed N. Korean Missile Bases Raises Doubts,” Washington Post, November 12, 2018, p. A-10) The Blue House said November 13 the existence of the missile sites was “nothing new” and rejected the use of the word "deception" by the Times and similar framing of the story by other news outlets, including CNN, citing a risk of undermining sensitive talks. “Talk of ‘secrets’ or ‘undeclared’ or ‘deception' can possibly bring misunderstanding at this moment when there is a need for US North Korea dialogue, because it can block the talks and undermine the opening of negotiation," the Blue House official said. The official said North Korea had not previously pledged to close the Sakkannmol Missile Base, the focus of the CSIS report, saying “There had been no treaty or negotiation that mandated closing the missile base.” It's true that the North Korean missile program was never included in the Singapore statement signed by both leaders, and would not appear to breach any other agreements signed by Pyongyang. (Will Ripley, “When It Comes to North Korea, Who’s Really Being Deceptive?” CNN, November 13, 2018)

Bermudez, Cha, Collins: “Located within the Tactical Belt in North Hwanghae province, 85 km north of the DMZ and 135 km northwest of Seoul, the capital of South Korea, is the Sakkannmol missile operating base (38.584698° 126.107945°). Although occasionally and incorrectly referred to as an “underground missile storage” facility, it is a forward Hwasong-5/-6 missile operating base subordinate to the Strategic Force of the Korean People’s Army (KPA), which is responsible for all ballistic missile units. The base is located near the point where the three counties of Pongsan, Sohung, and Yontan in North Hwanghae province meet. Disambiguation of references to reported missile bases in these counties indicates that they are actually referring to the Sakkannmol missile operating base. This is likely true for references to a missile base at Togol, 9.5 km to the northeast, and may also be true for a reported ballistic missile unit in the Sariwon area, 31 km to the west. First phase construction of the Sakkannmol base began sometime between 1991 and 1993 using specialized engineering troops from KPA Unit No. 583 (the cover designator of the Military Construction Bureau). This initial phase of construction included the excavation of seven underground facilities and a drive-through missile support facility and the construction of a small number of barracks and support structures. The first phase was likely partially completed by September 1999 when it was reported that “27 (Scud missiles) were deployed to the Togol area (Sakkannmol) of North Hwanghae to form a missile regiment.” Reports from the following month suggest that Hwasong-6 missiles were planned for deployment at Sakkannmol and other Tactical Belt ballistic missile operating bases. Other reports from 1999 state that “North Korea is building underground launch pads and tunnels” at Sakkannmol; however, there is no evidence of this in any commercial satellite imagery and it is likely a mistaken description of the underground facilities at the base. In early 2001, the base was reportedly 90 percent completed and its final completion was anticipated by the end of the year. Beginning about 2004, the construction of an unidentified military facility with administration, barrack, housing, and support facilities began along the valley leading to the Sakkannmol base. The close proximity to the base—in fact one has to pass through this area to reach Sakkannmol—strongly suggests a relationship to the base and perhaps to the larger Tactical Belt. This relationship, if there is one, remains to be confirmed. Sometime in 2010 to 2011, a second phase of construction activity began at Sakkannmol that included the addition of barracks, vehicle maintenance and storage facilities, greenhouses, and a number of small structures throughout the base. After Kim Jong-un ascended to power in December 2011, he instituted widespread changes throughout the KPA emphasizing realistic training and increased operational readiness. These changes soon resulted in the reorganization of the Strategic Rocket Command into the Strategic Force in 2013 as well as significant
Infrastructure developments at a number of missile bases. At Sakkanmol, while these developments undoubtedly resulted in training and operational readiness improvements, only minor infrastructure changes were observed. Satellite imagery since that time continues to show minor infrastructure changes to the base that are consistent with what is often seen at remote KPA bases of all types. As of November 2018, the base is active and being reasonably well-maintained by North Korean standards. Encompassing approximately 7.8 km, the Sakkanmol missile operating base extends 3.4 km up a small forked valley running first east along the Yongdanggake stream and then south past the tiny agricultural village of Sango-dong to the equally small village of Sakkanmol (from which it derives its name). Most of the area encompassed by the base consists of unoccupied mountains and small agricultural activities that support the base. It is unknown whether the military facilities and housing areas in the valley leading to the base are associated with it; if they are, it would increase the size of the base to approximately 12.5 km. The base can be functionally divided into four activities—agricultural support (including numerous greenhouses dispersed throughout the facility), main base (including headquarters, barracks, missile support, vehicle maintenance, storage, and a variety of small support elements), and underground and missile support facilities. Located at the intersection of the eastern and southern branches of the valley is the main base. Immediately to the west of the intersection are barracks, support and agricultural facilities, while to the east are the headquarters, a cultural hall, barracks, support and agricultural support structures, and a large parade ground. Spread out along the upper reaches of the base’s southern valley are entrances to seven underground facilities (UGFs), a barracks, and several small support facilities. The UGFs (38.572350° 126.116094°) are located on the east side of the valley in three groupings spaced approximately 400-500 meters apart. Each entrance is 6 to 7 meters wide and secured by two outward opening doors. Approximately 13-20 meters in front of each entrance is a large rock and dirt berm built from the debris removed when excavating the UGFs. These berms are approximately 18-20 meters high, 55-65 meters long, and intended to protect the entrance from artillery fire and aerial attack. It is uncertain whether adjacent UGF tunnels in each grouping are internally connected so that vehicles (i.e., transporter-erector-launchers (TELs) or mobile-erector-launchers (MELs)) can drive through them. At a minimum, and following typical KPA practices, some are likely linked by small internally connected tunnels. The size of the entrances—as well as known KPA practices and the volume of soil removed—indicates that these tunnels could easily house all of the units TEL/MELs, reload vehicles, other technical vehicles, and supplies. There are two large revetments immediately outside UGF entrances #3 and #4. The purposes of these are unknown; however, they are large enough to support a missile launch in an emergency. Due to the UGF entrances’ location in a narrow tree-lined valley, they are frequently hidden from sight in satellite imagery during spring and summer, just visible during fall, and visible in winter after a snowfall—typically when viewed looking east. The base’s missile support facility—used for arming, fueling, and maintenance operations—is located at the upper end of the valley immediately south of UGF entrance #5. It consists of a drive-through facility measuring approximately 95 meters by 10 to 15 meters with two approximately 25-meter-long earth-covered shelters separated by an open bay. It is unclear if there are additional entrances to the UGFs under these shelters, but this would not be unusual. Reports since late 1999 indicate that the missile unit based at Sakkanmol is a regiment or brigade-sized unit consisting of three battalions with a total of 9-18 TELs/MELs, a headquarters, and organic support units. An October 1999 report states that the KPA deployed “three (battalions of missiles) at Togol (Sakkanmol) near the western border with South Korea” and that the “North is building bases in North Hwanghae, Chagang and Kangwon Provinces, with the one in Pyongsan County, North Hwanghae Province, comprised of three battalions with some 40 Scud-Cs.” A June 2006 statement by a South Korea official reaffirms that “there are five launching bases, including Togol (Sakkanmol) Scud Brigade in Singye, North Hwanghae Province.” Several observations from available satellite imagery support these reports, including: The size, number, and layout of the base’s buildings is similar to that of other known missile operating bases of approximately brigade size. The presence of seven entrances to UGFs that appear to be large enough to support a missile brigade’s equipment. The presence of a specialized drive-through ballistic missile support facility. What appears to be one or two MAZ-543 TELS under camouflaged tarps have occasionally been identified in satellite imagery in front of several of the UGF entrances. This report is based upon an ongoing
South Korea and the U.S. in connection with lifting limits on the use of solid fuel for space missiles with a range of up to 800 kilometers. "Currently, consultations are under way between South Korea and the U.S. in connection with lifting limits on the use of solid fuel for space

study of the Korean People’s Army ballistic missile infrastructure begun by one of the authors (Joseph Bermudez) in 1985, which itself is based upon numerous interviews with North Korean defectors and government, defense, and intelligence officials around the world. While some of the information used in the preparation of this study may eventually prove to be incomplete or incorrect, it is hoped that it provides a new and unique open-source look into the subject that others may build on. The information presented here supersedes or updates previous works by J. Bermudez on these subjects. (Joseph S. Bermudez, Jr., Victor Cha, and Lisa Collins, “Undeclared Nuclear Korea: The Sakkanmol Missile Operating Base,” Center for Strategic and International Studies CSIS, Beyond Parallel program, November 12, 2018)

Sigal: “‘North Korea is moving ahead with its ballistic missile program at 16 hidden bases that have been identified in new commercial satellite images…The satellite images suggest that the North has been engaged in a great deception: It has offered to dismantle a major launching site—a step it began, then halted—while continuing to make improvements at more than a dozen others that would bolster launches of conventional and nuclear warheads.’ That is the ominous lede of a story by David Sanger and William Broad in The New York Times on Monday, November 12. Substituting tendentious hyperbole for sound reporting may convince editors to feature a story on page one, but it is a disservice to readers. The United States and North Korea have yet to conclude an agreement that inhibits deployment of missiles by Pyongyang, never mind requiring their dismantlement. Nor has Washington yet offered the necessary reciprocal steps that might make such a deal possible. A negotiated suspension of missile deployment and production should follow a halt to fissile material production and take precedence in talks over a complete declaration of North Korea’s inventory of nuclear and missile assets. In contrast, Adam Taylor’s story in Tuesday’s Washington Post posed the right question and reported the right answer: ‘Are these bases evidence that North Korea is cheating on the agreement it reached in June, when President Trump met North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore? Analysts say the answer is no—although there are plenty of caveats.’ The New York Times story is based on a careful report by Joseph S. Bermudez, Victor Cha and Lisa Collins that makes no such claim. In fact, as the report acknowledges, the Sakkanmol Missile Operating Base and 15 others have long been observed by US intelligence, 13 of them by Bermudez himself. Far from “moving ahead with its ballistic missile program,” Bermudez notes that “only minor infrastructure changes were observed” at this particular site since Kim Jong Un came to power in December 2011. As for the New York Times’ claim that North Korea is “continuing to make improvements at more than a dozen others that would bolster launches of conventional and nuclear warheads,” while that is quite possible, the report by Bermudez, et al., does not support that contention. It says that Sakkanmol has Hwasong-5 and -6 (also designated Scud B and C) missiles based there since the early 1990s. It is conceivable that some of these short-range missiles may have nuclear warheads, but it seems more likely that the missiles are conventionally-armed and part of the DPRK’s effort to counter US-ROK conventional superiority. It is also possible that intermediate-range missiles capable of reaching Japan could be co-located at some such bases but Bermudez, et al. have not detected any at Sakkanmol. Negotiating a halt to the deployment and production of IRBMs and ICBMs is much more urgent than addressing short-range missiles, which might remain in place as long as they are not nuclear-armed but are part of the North’s conventional deterrent. There is more than enough to do in negotiating constraints on and the elimination of North Korea’s nuclear and missile threats without exaggerating them and prematurely accusing Pyongyang of bad faith or calling into question President Trump’s wisdom for trying nuclear diplomacy in earnest.” (Leon V. Sigal, “The New York Times’ Misleading Story on North Korean Missiles,” 38North, November 13, 2018)

South Korea is in talks with the United States over its pursuit of developing solid-fuel space vehicles for non-military purposes, Seoul’s foreign ministry said. Last year, the allies agreed to eliminate restrictions on the payload weight of South Korea’s ballistic missiles in response to a series of North Korean provocations at that time. South Korea is allowed to develop ballistic missiles with a range of up to 800 kilometers. “Currently, consultations are under way between South Korea and the U.S. in connection with lifting limits on the use of solid fuel for space

11/14/18 A U.S. congressional commission said that China appears to have relaxed enforcement of sanctions on North Korea and called on the Treasury Department to provide a report on Chinese compliance within 180 days. In its annual report, the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission said the Treasury report should include a classified list of Chinese financial institutions, businesses, and officials involved in trading with North Korea that could be subject to future sanctions. The bipartisan commission said China had appeared to enforce sanctions on North Korea more thoroughly than in the past in 2017 and in early 2018. But this effort appeared to have relaxed since a thaw in relations between China and North Korea as the longtime ally of Beijing began to engage with the United States this year. “China appears to have eased off sanctions enforcement, despite its promises to keep sanctions intact until North Korea gets rid of its nuclear weapons,” the report said. “North Korean workers have returned to jobs in northeast China, economic activity and tourism have picked up in border towns, flights in both directions have resumed, and the two countries have conducted high-profile official exchanges to discuss economic development,” it said. It said China always left “key lifelines” in place for North Korea and there were “holes” in enforcement that included “ship to ship” transfers of goods. The report said the Treasury Department, in recommending Chinese sanctions targets, should also “explain the potential broader impacts of sanctioning those entities.” (Reuters, “China Appears to Relaxed U.N. Sanctions, U.S. Congressional Commission Says,” Japan Times, November 15, 2018)

11/15/18 The U.S. will not require North Korea to provide a complete list of its nuclear weapons and missile sites before President Donald Trump and the North’s leader Kim Jong Un meet for a second time, Vice President Mike Pence told NBC News exclusively. Since an initial agreement for denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula was reached between Trump and Kim in June, the United States has pressed the North Koreans to provide information on the entirety of its nuclear operations. The Kim regime has refused to provide the details of the country’s operations and postponed scheduled meetings with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in New York City last week. The second Trump-Kim meeting, slated for after the New Year, will be where a "verifiable plan" to disclose the sites and weapons must be reached, he said, adding: "Now we need to see results.

“I think it will be absolutely imperative in this next summit that we come away with a plan for identifying all of the weapons in question, identifying all the development sites, allowing for inspections of the sites and the plan for dismantling nuclear weapons,” Pence said. (Vaughn Hillymp, “Second Trump-Kim Summit to Go ahead without List of North Korean Nuclear Weapons, NBC, November 15, 2018)

11/16/18 North Korea has tested a new tactical weapon, the North’s official news media said, reporting that Kim Jong-un witnessed the event in his first publicized visit to a weapons test site since the country test-launched its intercontinental ballistic missile last November. State media did not identify the weapon, and the test did not appear to violate the voluntary moratorium North Korea imposed on nuclear and long-range ballistic missile tests this year. Still, Kim’s renewed activities at weapons test sites could complicate the already stalled talks between North Korea and the United States over how to remove the North’s nuclear weapons. North Korea tends to use the prospects of rising tensions on the Korean Peninsula as leverage when negotiations with Washington do not go in its favor. In recent weeks, it has issued vague threats that it might resume testing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles should the United States continue to refuse to make concessions like easing sanctions. KCNA said Kim visited the testing ground of the Academy of Defense Science, the center of weapons development in North Korea, and “supervised a newly developed ultramodern tactical weapon test.” Chosun Ilbo quoted anonymous government sources as saying that North Korea had tested multiple-rocket launchers this month. Besides the North’s nuclear weapons, such rockets are considered one of the greatest military threats against South Korea because the North deploys them near the inter-Korean border to target the South’s capital, Seoul, a city of 10 million people. Recent satellite images have also revealed that North Korea has
new, short

the newly tested weapon was a new model of multiple
tactical weapon" highlighted its desire to upgrade its conventional arms and reassure

Ilbo

financially engaging with the regime only after the "North Korean nuclear issue is handled."

business with North

are lifted. Cho said it was "impossible" for South Korean companies and financial institutes to do

cooperation" between South and North Korea will only be possible after international sanctions

important of close coordination on North Korea

denuclearizes. Moon was also quoted as telling Pence that he would help both countries make

Pence it was imperative to "specifically show" the North the bright future that awaits it if it
denuclearizes. Moon was also quoted as telling Pence that he would help both countries make

in efforts to
denuclearize the North. A series of United Nations Security Council resolutions ban North Korea
from developing and testing ballistic missiles. (Choe Sang-hun, “North Korea Says It Tested an
reported that its leader, Kim Jong-un, supervised “a newly developed ultramodern tactical weapon
test” at a defense institute, the first time in a year that Kim was officially described as overseeing a
weapons experiment. The last time North Korean media reported Kim’s attendance of a weapons
test was on November 29 last year, when the leader watched the launch of a Hwasong-15
intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). Pyongyang, at the time, announced it finally mastered its
nuclear development program. Ever since, it has refrained from carrying out any nuclear or missile
tests as it entered into negotiations with Seoul and Washington.

Local analysts said the regime appeared to have been careful in the KCNA article not to provoke
Washington, especially U.S. President Donald Trump, who’s been bragging about his great
relationship with Kim and the cessation of weapons tests since negotiations began. For one, the
KCNA report said Kim supervised a tactical weapon, not a strategic weapon. The report also
stressed the defensive nature of the weapon and refrained from hurling any threats at the United
States or South Korea in contrast to past weapons tests. Rodong Sinmun ran a similar report on
half of its second page Friday. In the past, Kim’s so-called supervisions of weapons tests usually
made front-page headlines and continued to the second or third pages with a myriad of photos.
Friday’s front page of the Rodong Sinmun was about Kim’s visit to Sinuiju, the capital of North
Pyongan Province, to check the city’s urban planning and development. In a separate KCNA
report, the North reported on South Korean President Moon Jae-in’s recent gift of tangerines,
saying a “large quantity of mandarins produced on Jeju Island” was sent by Moon to Kim. Kim
was said to have expressed his gratitude to Moon and instructed the fruit be distributed to school
children and Pyongyang citizens. Moon reaffirmed policy of engagement with North Korea during
a bilateral meeting with U.S. Vice President Mike Pence in Singapore Thursday on the sidelines of
the East Asia Summit. Blue House spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom told reporters that Moon told
Pence it was imperative to “specifically show” the North the bright future that awaits it if it
denuclearizes. Moon was also quoted as telling Pence that he would help both countries make
progress in denuclearization and improving bilateral relations. In a markedly different tone, the
White House said in a statement about the same Moon-Pence meeting that the two men discussed
the “ongoing efforts to accomplish our two countries’ mutual goals of achieving the final, fully
verified denuclearization of North Korea, as agreed to by Chairman Kim [Jong-un],” and
establishing a permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula. Both were said to have noted the
importance of close coordination on North Korea-related matters, including on implementing
sanctions and inter-Korean cooperation. South Korea’s Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon,
who kicked off a five-day visit to the United States on Tuesday to meet with American officials,
said Thursday at a forum at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington that “real financial
cooperation” between South and North Korea will only be possible after international sanctions
are lifted. Cho said it was “impossible” for South Korean companies and financial institutes to do
business with North Korea under current circumstances, and that Seoul was adamant about
financially engaging with the regime only after the “North Korean nuclear issue is handled.” (Lee
Sung-eun and Chun Su-jin, “Kim Attends His First Weapons Test in Almost a Year,” JoongAng Ilbo,
November 16, 2018) North Korea’s claim last week that it had tested an unidentified
“ultramodern tactical weapon” highlighted its desire to upgrade its conventional arms and reassure
its military even as talks are under way to end its nuclear program, analysts said. Yonhap reported
the newly tested weapon was a new model of multiple-launch artillery rocket system (MLRS),
citing an unnamed military source familiar with intelligence. Other experts suggested it might be a
new, short-range missile. Experts say the test was part of Kim’s initiative to shift the mainstay of
the conventional military power from a nearly 1.3 million-strong army to high-tech weapons. “This is sort of like the North Korean version of military reform,” said Choi Kang, vice president of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul. “If we have to find an underlying message to the outside world, it’s ‘Don’t underestimate us, we are modernizing too.’” New advanced weapons might be even more crucial if the country were to abandon at least some of its nuclear arsenal. Kim has been pushing to modernize production lines at munitions factories and replace aging weapons and technology since he took power in late 2011. “The defense industry should develop and manufacture powerful strategic weapons and military hardware of our style, perfect its Juche-oriented production structure and modernize its production lines on the basis of cutting-edge science and technology,” he said in his 2018 New Year speech, referring to the long-held principle of self-reliance. Kim Dong-yub, a military expert at Kyungnam University’s Institute of Far Eastern Studies in Seoul, said by touting a modernized weapon, Kim could seek to reassure hardline military generals and the public in North Korea who may be worried about a nuclear-free future. “With Kim having publicly declared the economy a new priority and saying the North would denuclearize, many in the military who saw a decline in interest and support could be doubtful and anxious because he has not secured significant concessions like an end-of-war declaration,” Kim, the professor said. “It could have been necessary for him to consolidate the nation even though such a field guidance would give a negative signal to the outside.”


KCNA: “Kim Jong Un, chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea, chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and supreme commander of the Korean People's Army, visited the test ground of the Academy of Defense Science and supervised a newly developed ultramodern tactical weapon test. After seeing the power of the tactical weapon, Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un was so excited to say that another great work was done by the defense scientists and munitions industrial workers to increase the defense capability of the country and the weapon system whose development Chairman Kim Jong Il had chosen personally and directed step by step with his special attention paid to it was born at last. He added that the weapon is just like a posthumous weapon and he missed Kim Jong Il very much while seeing the great success of its test. Kim Jong Un highly praised the officials, scientists, technicians and munitions industrial workers for successfully conducting the test of an ultramodern tactical weapon, to which the Party has attached importance in ardent expectation. He expressed great satisfaction, saying the great success serves as another striking demonstration of the validity of the Party policy of prioritizing defense science and technology and the rapidly developing defense capability of the country and as a decisive turn in bolstering the fighting capacity of the Korean People's Army. He was accompanied by Choe Ryong Hae, Ri Pyong Chol, Ri Jong Sik, Jo Yong Won, Kim Yong Su, Kim Chang Son and Pak Jong Chon.” (KCNA, “Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un Supervises Newly Developed Tactical Weapons Test,” November 16, 2018)

North Korea has decided to expel a U.S. citizen who illegally entered the country last month, KCNA. The man, identified as Lawrence Bruce Byron, had been in custody after crossing into North Korea from China on October 16, it said. "While being questioned, he said he had illegally entered the country under the command of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency," KCNA said. "Relevant authorities have decided to expel him from the country," it added. A man with the same name was arrested in South Korea while trying to sneak over the inter-Korean border in November last year. Byron, who is in his late 50s and from Louisiana, was later deported back to the US. Media reports said he told South Korean officials he sought to facilitate talks between North Korea and the United States, although he is a private citizen. It is rare for North Korea to release an American detainee so swiftly and it comes amid stalled negotiations over Pyongyang's nuclear program. "This gesture means the North wants to keep up momentum for dialogue with the US," professor Yang Moo-Jin at the University of North Korean Studies told AFP. (AFP, “N. Korea to Expel U.S. Citizen Who ‘Illegally Entered’ Country,” November 16, 2018)
KCNA: “Bruce Byron Lowrance, an American citizen, was detained by a relevant organ on Oct. 16 as he entered the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea illegally via the border between the DPRK and China. During the investigation, Lowrance stated that he illegally entered the DPRK under the manipulation of the CIA. The relevant organ decided to deport American citizen Lowrance from the DPRK.” (KCNA, “DPRK Deports American Citizen,” November 16, 2018)

Pubian, Liu and Makowsky: “Recent commercial satellite imagery of North Korea’s Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center indicates that although a minor flow of water could be detected from the pre-existing cooling water outfall pipe of the 5 MWe reactor, such a low flow is more likely indicative of residual waste heat removal from past reactor operations than any new reactor operations. Dredging continues near the reactor’s secondary cooling system, and by November, that dredged material had blocked nearly all of the river channel serving the pump house. Minimal movements of vehicles and equipment have taken place around both the 5 MWe reactor and the Experimental Light Water Reactor (ELWR). Notably, between September 27 and November 2, new excavation had started along the road east of the 5 MWe reactor, the purpose of which is unclear. There are no signs that the ELWR is operating. The river reservoir level had dropped considerably by November 2, leaving the channel serving the pump house of the ELWR filled with silt and sand, with no evidence of water flow to or from the ELWR’s pump house. At the ELWR’s support yard, construction and movement of equipment continues. Moreover, excavation in a nearby lot first observed in October appears to have been filled with some type of small rectangular tank by November.  (Frank V. Pabian, Jack Liu and Peter Makowsky, “North Korea’s Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center: 5 MWe Reactor Unlikely Operating,” 38North, November 16, 2018)

It’s a question that nags at North Korea economy watchers: How has the country been able to maintain stable exchange rates — and avert hyper-inflation — despite intense sanctions, political tensions and a swelling trade imbalance? In a nutshell, North Korea buys a whole lot more than it sells to China and, because of the sanctions, is doing hardly any business with anyone else. Since no one in their right mind would accept the internationally worthless North Korean currency for any significant trade deal, North Korea must be burning up its foreign reserves. And when a country does that, prices generally start to rise — often dangerously so. All of which should be reflected in its exchange rates. So what gives? Understanding what’s going on with the North Korean economy is essential for negotiators trying to gauge how seriously leader Kim Jong Un is about giving up his nuclear weapons and whether sanctions are actually what got him to the negotiation table, as many in the U.S. government have suggested. Exchange rate stability would normally suggest otherwise. But does it? “The fact that the rate is stable means that the overall economy of the country is stable and it is growing,” Ri Ki Song, an economist with the Economic Institute of the North’s Academy of Social Sciences, said in a recent interview in Pyongyang with the Associated Press. "Our economy is not an economy that relies on exports. … Due to the sanctions, we are not making a lot of trade or financial dealings with other countries, so there will be not so many changes in the exchange rates." The North Korean currency, called the won, has two exchange rates. One is set by the government at an artificially high level and is used mainly in shops or hotels that deal only in foreign currency. The other, more closely watched, is tied to market forces and is a better reflection of actual economic conditions. It has stayed mostly within a narrow band of around 8,000 to the U.S. dollar since about 2012-2013. As Ri suggested, there are signs the North Korean economy has been doing well under Kim. But there is clearly a lot more going on. First off, North Korea’s economy has never been self-reliant. It has depended heavily on exporting goods such as coal, textiles and seafood. "There's a reason these goods are sanctioned," said Benjamin Katzeff Silberstein, co-editor of North Korean Economy Watch. He added that Kim has been trying to boost domestic production to reduce the country’s reliance on imports and lift consumption of domestically made goods, which wouldn't be necessary if North Korea was economically self-reliant. Silberstein and fellow economy watcher Peter Ward, in a paper published Thursday by the respected 38 North website, argued the North has several tools to promote stability, such as limiting traders to a specific exchange rate bandwidth or reducing loans in the local currency to keep its circulation low. They also suggested there simply might not be
Any rapprochement between North and South Korea must move forward “in tandem” with efforts to denuclearize the peninsula, and cannot come sooner, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said today. The State Department’s point man on North Korea, Stephen Biegun, met in Washington with South Korea’s special representative for peace and security on the peninsula, Lee Do-hoon, to “further strengthen our close coordination,” Pompeo told reporters. Washington and Seoul have launched a working group to “make sure that we don't talk past each other,” the secretary of state noted. Seoul and Pyongyang appear to be moving ahead with their rapprochement more quickly than the Americans and North Koreans are making headway on disarming Kim Jong Un’s regime. “We have made clear to the Republic of Korea that we want to make sure that peace on the peninsula and the denuclearization of North Korea aren't lagging behind the increase in the amount of inner relationship between the two Koreas,” Pompeo said. “We view them as tandem, as moving forward together. We view them as important parallel processes, and that working

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Trump: “MIKE WALLACE: Toughest decision you've had to make as president? TRUMP: Well, I think North Korea's been very tough because, you know, we were very close. When I took that over, President Obama, right in those two chairs, we sat and talked and he said that's by far the biggest problem that this country has. And I think we had real decision as to which way to go on North Korea. And certainly at least so far I'm very happy with the way we went. I have a very good relationship with Kim. WALLACE: Even though there's talk that they're putting up new sites? TRUMP: Yes. Maybe they are. Maybe they're not. I don't believe that. I don't. And, you know, could. And which is - if it -- if that's the way it goes, that's the way it goes. You know, I go with the way we have to go. But so far it’s been good. We have a very good relationship. We made, I think, some great decisions for the -- for the people of this country. And I do, you know, I put America first and other countries should put themselves first. It's not like we're -- we should put- and everybody else should be second to us. No, other countries are proud of their countries and their leaders should put their countries first. But we were putting out country in many cases last. We were more worried about the world than we were worried about the United States. That's not going to happen with me.” (Fox News Sunday, “President Rump on Divided Congress, Mueller Probe, Foreign Challenges,” November 18, 2018)

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Bill Brown, a former CIA officer and adjunct professor at Georgetown School of Foreign Service, said Ri’s claims about overall economic stability aren't without merit. "But the right question, then, is at what cost," he said in an email to the AP. Brown, now an independent consultant, believes the North is doing what China has been doing for the past 40 years — selling off its assets. Because the state owns all capital, he said, in the short term it can fund itself and protect the exchange rate by selling or privatizing a good part of its property. It could also be raising money by allowing officials to charge for ordinary activities or skimming on salaries while looking the other way as they accept bribes to make up the difference. The problem, of course, is none of that is sustainable. "Stable money is essential to building a new market economy, enhancing private sector-led productivity and growth and allowing citizens to save and invest their own money," Brown said. "I suspect Kim knows good, or at least not bad, relations with (President Donald) Trump and America are essential for confidence in the won and is behaving accordingly. So, for now, no ICBM or nuclear weapon tests, and lots of happy talk." North Korean leaders are well aware of the dangers of a volatile currency. Widespread panic ensued in 2009 when the government decided to exchange the old currency for a new one — at a rate of 100 to 1, erasing personal savings in one fell swoop. Kim Jong Un’s father, Kim Jong Il, reportedly had the finance minister executed for the fiasco. Because of such concerns, even ordinary people have good reason to want to keep their savings in dollars or Chinese yuan. And while confidence in the local currency has recovered in recent years, it still can't be converted into other currencies outside of North Korea and remains ill-suited for big transactions. As Silberstein and Ward point out, its biggest denomination is the 5,000 bill — worth about 60 cents. (Eric Talmadge, “North Korea’s Stable Exchange Rate Confounds Economists,” Associated Press, November 16, 2018)
U.S. officials offered “strong support” for a previously-delayed joint survey on inter-Korean rail cooperation, South Korean chief nuclear envoy Lee Do-hoon said. The comments followed the launch of a U.S.-ROK working group on DPRK issues in Washington DC, led by Lee and U.S. Special Representative on North Korea Stephen Biegun. “The U.S. side expressed full and strong support for the joint survey of inter-Korean railway lines,” Lee said at a press conference following the meeting in a statement carried by Yonhap. The South Korean government previously admitted to differences with the U.S. over the joint on-site survey, which the two Koreas are set to conduct ahead of connecting railways on the west and east coast of peninsula.

The two Koreas at high-level talks held in October agreed to hold a groundbreaking ceremony for rail and road connection and modernization on the peninsula between late November and early December. To this end, they were originally scheduled to conduct a joint on-site survey of the Gyeongui and Donghae railway lines in late October and early November. Lee, who serves as Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs at the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), said that both sides “had balanced and sufficient discussion on their agenda.” “During the meeting of working-group, we discussed all issues concerning inter-Korean and North Korean nuclear program, including denuclearization, the peace regime, and South-North relations,” he added. The establishment of the ROK-U.S. working group also aims to “regularize bilateral consultation,” he added. Lee was also briefed by Biegun on ongoing DPRK-U.S. nuclear negotiations, with Washington reportedly working to get previously-canceled talks between U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and senior North Korean official Kim Yong Chol back on track. The U.S. side also conveyed their plans to hold a second DPRK-U.S. summit “early next year.” (Dagyum Ji, “U.S. Gives ‘Strong Support’ to Inter-Korean Rail Connection: ROK MFA,” NKNews, November 21, 2018)

As the deadlock between North Korea and the US drags on, the US has set “final, fully verified denuclearization” as its long-term goal and freezing North Korean nuclear weapon development and halting the production of nuclear materials as a short-term goal. Considering that the US had been insisting that North Korea must dismantle its nuclear program before negotiations can begin, analysts believe that the US has adopted a much more practical strategy for negotiating with the North. In a strategy report for the East Asia and Pacific region that was jointly released today by the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs at the US State Department and by the Asia Bureau at the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the US explicitly divided the stages of North Korea’s denuclearization into short-term and long-term goals. The US’ long-term goal, the report said, is “final, fully verified denuclearization,” but in the short term, it needs to focus on North Korea freezing its nuclear development, halting nuclear and ballistic missile tests and the production of nuclear materials, and taking the initial steps toward denuclearization. A diplomatic source described the report as “an implementation plan.” It is striking for an official document produced by the Trump administration to divide North Korean denuclearization policy into short-term and long-term goals. “The US’ strategy for the denuclearization negotiations appears to have shifted to destroying some nuclear weapons between April and August, submitting a list of nuclear facilities and weapons between August and November, and then freezing nuclear development after that,” said Cho Sung-ryul, senior research fellow for the Institute for National Security Strategy. “Until the summit in Singapore on June 12, the Trump administration focused on making denuclearization happen quickly. Since then, it has prepared for this issue becoming prolonged [by setting short-term goals]. It’s significant that a practical negotiation strategy has appeared in an official American document,” said Shin Beom-cheol, director of the Security Unification Center at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies. Some even think that the US was offering a glimpse at its negotiating strategy. “The fact that the US listed halting the production of nuclear material as a short-term goal in the report implies that it’s trying to move toward step-by-step negotiations,” said Koo Kab-woo, professor at the University of North Korean Studies. (Kim Ji-eun, “U.S. Divides N. Korea Objective into Short-Term and Long-Term Goals,” Hankyore, December 31, 2018)
On the militarized front line dividing the Korean Peninsula, South Korea has been busy bulldozing and blowing up some of its guard posts. It is a symbol of what Seoul hopes will be a new era of relations with Pyongyang. But it also one of the few steps South Korea can take to build confidence with the North without violating U.N. sanctions or going against its U.S. allies and protectors. In South Korea, frustration is building that its efforts to improve relations with North Korea have not been matched with a corresponding improvement in ties between Pyongyang and Washington. Pyongyang is frustrated that — in its eyes — Trump has not come through on a promise to build a “new era” of relations, while the U.S. administration remains adamant that strict sanctions will remain in place until North Korea surrenders its nuclear weapons. “These acts by the U.S. apparently came from a medieval-era way of thinking that only threatening, coercive and barbarian tactics could enhance its negotiating leverage,” DPRK Today, a state-sponsored website, said yesterday, also complaining about recent military exercises with Japan involving nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and bombers. Those “illogical” tactics won’t work, it said. In Seoul, the government is wary of criticizing the United States directly. But behind the scenes there is a real sense that Washington needs to move the needle forward by building trust with the North. “As long as this lack of confidence persists, the United States and North Korea will just be going around in a vicious circle,” said Lee Soo-hyuck, a ruling-party lawmaker who led South Korea’s negotiations with the North a decade and a half ago. “I really hope the United States has some novel idea.” There is a fundamental disagreement between Washington and Seoul about how we arrived at this point. The Trump administration credits its “maximum pressure” campaign for forcing Pyongyang to the negotiating table. South Korea’s government believes it was President Moon Jae-in and Trump’s joint efforts to extend the hand of friendship to Kim. From that disagreement comes discord about how to move the process forward. Vice President Pence told NBC News last week that it is “absolutely imperative” that when Kim next meets Trump, he hand over a “verifiable” plan to disclose his nuclear and weapons sites, open them for inspection and dismantle them. “Now we need to see results,” Pence said. It is an approach the South Koreans believe to be premature. “North Korea is aware that reporting a list of its nuclear weapons is a very important step toward denuclearization,” South Korean national security adviser Chung Eui-yong said during a parliamentary hearing this month. “But such steps must come after concrete measures are taken to build up trust by both sides.” Chung also quoted Kim as saying that handing over such a list before the two sides trust each other “is the same as telling us to submit a list of targets for attacks.” There is understandable wariness in Washington about trusting a regime that has never demonstrated its trustworthiness in the past, and has not renounced a January pledge to move from testing to mass production of warheads and missiles. But some experts say the United States also is at risk of missing an opportunity to reduce tensions on the Korean Peninsula and explore just how far Kim is prepared to go in cutting his nuclear arsenal in return for better relations and economic development. Robert Carlin, a visiting scholar at Stanford University who was involved in U.S.-North Korea talks from 1992 to 2000, said it’s unrealistic to expect North Korea to allow thousands of U.S. investigators to roam its country at will. Washington also needs to be more aware of how its rhetoric plays in the North, he said. “Why is it so hard for people to grasp that North Korea is not a conquered country?” he asked. “America also needs to stop rubbing their noses in the fact that we’re going to keep sanctions on until hell freezes over.” Joseph Yun, former U.S. special representative for North Korea, said Washington was guilty of “a tremendous amount of mixed messaging” between Trump and other members of the administration — and those under Trump were guilty of being “way too uncompromising.” As a result, he said, Pyongyang was not even giving Pompeo and new Special Representative Stephen Biegun the chance to meet face to face with North Korean officials. “Without getting those meetings, you can’t rely on summits to do all that work.” Recent articles in North Korea state media suggest doubts may be surfacing in Pyongyang about whether Kim’s more conciliatory approach to Washington is bearing fruit, experts say. “Ultimately the only road to a real agreement is to build trust between the United States and North Korea,” said Lee, the South Korean lawmaker. Lee headed South Korea’s delegation at six-party talks when North Korea submitted a list of its nuclear facilities in 2003. “Only if this happens will North Korea feel safe to actually tell the truth.” Meanwhile, the Trump administration has missed small but significant opportunities to signal its interest in a new relationship with Pyongyang, extending at the end of August a travel
ban on U.S. citizens and blocking American aid workers from making humanitarian trips to the country. Yun, the former special representative, said the United States should consider opening liaison offices with North Korea but ultimately should talk to Pyongyang about sanctions relief. “You can see bits of the sand castle crumbling,” said John Delury, an associate professor of international studies at Yonsei University in Seoul. “And there’s a big wave out there.” (Simon Denyer, “S. Korea Seeks Leap of Faith from U.S.,” Washington Post, November 23, 2018, p. A-6)

Pompeo: “Good afternoon, everyone. Happy Thanksgiving. I want to touch on five topics today. ...Fourth, our Special Representative for North Korea Steve Biegun is meeting today with his Republic of Korea counterpart to further strengthen our close coordination on efforts to achieve our shared goal of the final, fully verified denuclearization, as agreed to by Chairman Kim. These are important discussions today with the Republic of Korea. They are discussing ongoing diplomatic efforts, our sustained implementation of UN sanctions, and the inter-Korean cooperation. ...MS NAUERT: Ben from NHK. QUESTION: Yeah, you mentioned Steve Biegun’s meeting with his South Korean counterpart. I just wanted to ask: What’s the message he’s going to be sending as far as what the U.S. Government would like to see the South Korean Government do as far as coordinating their inter-Korean efforts and the denuclearization efforts?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I think there’s complete agreement between the South Koreans and us with respect to how this should proceed. We now have a working group that formalizes those processes so that we can be sure that we don’t talk past each other, that we don’t take an action or the South Koreans don’t take an action that the other is unaware of or hasn’t had a chance to comment on or provide their thoughts. And that’s the purpose of the working group that’s being led on our side by Stephen Biegun. We have made clear to the Republic of Korea that we do want to make sure that peace on the peninsula and the denuclearization of North Korea aren’t lagging behind in the amount of inter-relationship between the two Koreas. We view them as tandem, as moving forward together. We view them as important parallel processes, and that working group is designed to make sure they continue to remain that way.” (Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Remarks to the Press, Press Briefing Room, November 20, 2018)

North Korea blew up some of its front-line guard posts as part of an agreement to ease tensions along its heavily fortified border with South Korea, Seoul’s Defense Ministry said. (Hyung-Jin Kim, “Seoul: North Korea Destroys 10 Guard Posts to Lower Tensions,” Associated Press, November 20, 2018)

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The United States and South Korea have scaled down an annual joint military exercise scheduled for the spring of 2019 to facilitate nuclear talks with North Korea, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said. “Foal Eagle is being reorganized a bit to keep it at a level that will not be harmful to diplomacy,” Mattis said, adding that it would be “reduced in scope.” Foal Eagle is the biggest of the regular joint exercises held by the allies, and has always infuriated Pyongyang, which condemned it as preparations for invasion. But the drill -- one of the world's largest field exercises involving 200,000 South Korean and some 30,000 US soldiers -- was delayed and scaled down last year as diplomatic detente took hold on the peninsula. And following a historic summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore in June, the two allies have suspended most of their major joint exercises including the Ulchi Freedom Guardian in August and Vigilant Ace, slated for next month. Seoul's defense ministry said Mattis' comments were in line with their shared view on the need to back diplomacy -- but a spokeswoman added that the question of whether the exercises will take place at all was "still under discussion." Kim Hyun-wook, a professor at the Korea National Diplomatic Academy, said reducing the exercise was largely expected. "The Trump administration claims Pyongyang's suspension of nuclear and missile tests as the key achievement of its North Korea policy and the joint drills have been postponed as a kind of corresponding measure," Kim told AFP. "As long as talks continue, postponing or reducing major US-South Korea joint exercises has become a fait accompli," he said. (Sylvia Lanteaume, “U.S., South Korea Scale back Military Exercise,” AFP, November 21, 2018)
Seoul announced it would shut down a Japanese-funded foundation meant to support women forced to work as sex slaves in Japan’s military brothels during World War II, the latest step to effectively void a 2015 bilateral agreement that was supposed to solve the enduring comfort women issue. South Korea’s Ministry of Gender Equality and Family said in a press release that it would undergo legal procedures to scrap the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation, which was launched in July 2016 to manage a multimillion dollar fund from the Japanese government. The fund was based on an agreement signed by both countries on December 28, 2015, between Japan’s current prime minister Shinzo Abe’s administration and South Korea’s former right-leaning Park Geun-hye administration. Aimed at resolving the issue of Japan’s recruitment of Korean sex slaves in the early 20th century, which has poisoned bilateral relations for decades, the deal included an apology from Tokyo and a 1 billion yen fund for the victims, which amounted to about $8.8 million at the time. (Lee Sung-eun, “Korea Shutting down ‘Comfort Women’ Fund,” JoongAng Ilbo, November 21, 2018) South Korea said that it would shut down a Japanese-funded foundation created to help Korean women who were forced to work in brothels for Japan’s military during World War II, essentially voiding a 2015 agreement between the countries that was supposed to put the painful issue to rest. South Korea has not formally abandoned the agreement, which both governments at the time called a “final and irreversible” settlement of the decades-old dispute surrounding the former sex slaves, known euphemistically as comfort women. But the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation was in charge of implementing the deal, and by dismantling that organization, South Korea has effectively shelved the agreement. The 2015 deal, pushed through by a president who has since been ousted, was immediately unpopular in South Korea. Tokyo has repeatedly accused Seoul of trying to sabotage it, and Prime Minister Abe Shinzo reacted angrily to the news today. “The agreement made three years ago was the final and irreversible resolution,” Abe said. “Japan, as a member of the international community, has honestly executed this pledge. If one country cannot keep an international pledge, a bilateral relationship cannot be built.” Historians say at least tens of thousands of women, many of them Korean, were lured or coerced into sexual slavery for the Japanese Army during World War II. Under the 2015 agreement, Japan apologized to the women and expressed responsibility for their suffering, and it provided $8.8 million to establish the foundation in South Korea, meant to provide care for the surviving women in their old age. In return, South Korea promised not to criticize Japan over the issue again. The agreement, negotiated by the government of the president at the time, Park Geun-hye, was hailed by the United States, which has urged Seoul and Tokyo to leave their historical disputes behind in hopes of forming a united front to deter North Korea and counter China’s expanding influence in the region. But the deal has been deeply unpopular among South Koreans, including some of the surviving victims, who say it fell short of official reparations and a declaration of legal responsibility on Japan’s part. Of the 239 South Korean women who have come forward since the 1990s to say that they were forced to work in the brothels, only 27 are still alive. One of the survivors, Kim Bok-dong, 92, welcomed the government’s decision. “Abe must apologize and pay reparations,” she said, referring to the Japanese leader, in a recording that supporters made from her hospital bed, which they played during a rally in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. Some of the survivors and their advocates have held a rally there every Wednesday since 1992, demanding Japanese apologies and reparations. Moon, reluctant to damage relations with Tokyo, stopped short of formally nullifying the agreement or demanding that it be renegotiated. But the foundation, created in July of 2016, has been given little to do since Park was impeached, and many of its commissioners have resigned. The foundation has made $3.8 million in cash payments to 34 of the surviving former sex slaves and to relatives of victims who have died. But Moon’s government has reimbursed the foundation for those payments, leaving intact Japan’s contribution, which some South Koreans say should be sent back. The foundation’s role was further undermined when South Korean civic groups and activists, angry about the deal with Japan, created a rival fund called the Justice Remembrance Foundation that provides similar support to the victims. Moon said in September, when he met with Abe in New York, that it had become “inevitable for the foundation to wither” because of the public opposition. The announcement of its dissolution today was made by Jin Sun-mee, South Korea’s minister of gender equality and family, who oversees the foundation. (Choe Sang-hun, “Dispute on Sex Slaves in War Is Back in Seoul,” New York Times, November 23, 2018, p. A-10)
The United Nations Security Council has approved a plan by North and South Korea to conduct a joint field study on connecting their railways, exempting the project from the extensive sanctions it has imposed on the North over its nuclear weapons program, officials said. During his three summit meetings this year with the North’s leader, Kim Jong-un, President Moon Jae-in of South Korea has offered to help renovate North Korea’s decrepit railway system and link it with the South’s, dangling the project as one of the biggest economic benefits the North could expect should it denuclearize. To whet the North’s appetite, South Korea offered to send a train and engineers across the border to conduct a joint field study on the conditions of the North Korean rail system. North Korea quickly accepted. But plans to conduct the study were thwarted in August, and again last month, because of American concerns that it might violate United Nations sanctions, which include severe limits on shipments of fuel and other goods to the North. South Korea would have to bring fuel and equipment into the North to conduct the study. More broadly, the Trump administration did not want its South Korean ally to push ahead with inter-Korean projects too quickly without concrete progress on denuclearizing North Korea. The apparent discord raised fears of a rift in the seven-decade United States-South Korean alliance. This week, the allies moved to dispel such concerns by launching a joint working group to coordinate their interactions with North Korea. Lee Do-hoon, a South Korean official who attended the group’s first meeting this week, later indicated that any misunderstanding about the North’s role in the joint field study had been removed, saying Washington had expressed strong support for it. “As we pursue key projects between South and North Korea, we have maintained that we will do so within the framework of sanctions against the North and cooperate closely with the international community,” the South’s Foreign Ministry said today after the Security Council exempted the railway field study from United Nations sanctions. The Council’s decision only covers the field study, however, and does not mean that South Korea is allowed to start the major investments that would be needed to renovate the North Korean railways. Washington insists, and Moon agrees, that such large investments can begin only after international sanctions are lifted. South Korea has long dreamed of building a trans-Korea railroad that could connect its trains to China and to the Trans-Siberian Railway. The North lies between the South and China, and such a rail connection would give the South a faster way to send exports that are now shipped by sea to China and Europe. It would also provide a shortcut for bringing in Russian oil and other natural resources. But analysts say creating such a rail link would be an enormous task, requiring extensive confidence-building talks between the North and South and billions of dollars to renovate the North’s decrepit rail system, not to mention the lifting of international sanctions. The two Koreas briefly connected short stretches of railway across their border in 2007, but further efforts to reconnect the systems were suspended as the countries’ relations soured over the North’s nuclear pursuits. (Choe Sang-hun, “North and South Korea Get U.N.’s Go-Ahead to Study Joint Rail Project,” New York Times, November 24, 2018)

Pompeo: “Q: Can you talk about the working group that has been set up by the U.S. and South Korea on dealings with North Korea? POMPEO: Yes. That – it’s important as we work to denuclearize North Korea, as we work to fulfill the promises that were made between President Trump and Chairman Kim, there are lots of elements to them. One of them is the relationship between South Korea and North Korea, and the working group is designed to make sure that that effort, that effort to restore peace on the peninsula, moves in parallel with the denuclearization discussions. We are in lock step with our Republic of Korea partners and we want to make sure we stay that way. Q: So it’s really two issues that are being discussed here, the working group with South Korea, making sure you’re working together, relations between the North and South, and then also the denuclearization. POMPEO: That’s right. Yes, sir, that’s exactly correct. Q: Of course, some strong statements recently from North Korea, talk about new tactical weapons they have. What are the next steps on that front? POMPEO: So we think we know what it is they’re referring to there; we’re pretty sure. I can’t say much. Know this: We’ve known this was going to be a lengthy process. This administration came in with a very difficult risk from North Korea. The President made the decision to have a summit with Chairman Kim, and I’ve been tasked with negotiating its resolution. It will take time. We are prepared to be patient, but all the while – all the while that we’re working to make sure that North Korea has continued to stop its missile tests, continued to stop its nuclear tests, the economic sanctions which
North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is willing to allow inspectors into the reclusive country’s main nuclear complex in Yongbyon, South Korea’s Yonhap reported, citing a senior diplomatic source. “I understand that Chairman Kim told (South Korean) President Moon (Jae-in) during their summit in September that if the U.S. took corresponding steps he would not only be willing to shut down the Yongbyon nuclear facilities but also allow verification,” Yonhap quoted the source as saying. The source said Moon passed the message on to President Donald Trump when the two met during the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September. Kim had earlier expressed openness to shutting down the site if Washington took “corresponding” measures, but no offer to allow inspectors in to verify had been reported. Asked about reports today on North Korean willingness to allow inspectors in and whether there had been new developments, State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said she was “not aware of any of that,” but Kim had agreed to inspections in a meeting with Pompeo recently. “That’s something the secretary and Chairman Kim had agreed to and spoken about when the secretary was in Pyongyang about a month ago or so,” Nauert told reporters. “So that’s something they agreed to and we look forward to Chairman Kim fulfilling his commitments.” It was not clear from her remarks whether Kim had specifically said inspectors could visit the Yongbyon facilities. (Doina Chiacu, David Brunnstrom and David Alexander, “North Korea’s Kim Open to Site Inspection: Report,” Reuters, November 27, 2018)

The head of the Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) Korea Mission Center Andrew Kim is set to retire, head of the CIA Gina Haspel confirmed. CNN National Security correspondent Zachary Cohen posted a statement from Haspel on social media, confirming Kim’s departure from the agency. “After 28 years of service and one attempted retirement, we wish Andy the very best as he prepares to conclude his remarkable, indeed storied, career of high achievement at CIA,” that statement read. As alluded to in Haspel’s statement, Kim first retired from the agency following that role, only to return and fill the Korean Mission Center position. (Hamish Macdonald, “Head of CIA Korea Mission Center Retiring, Haspel Tells CNN,” NKNews, November 27, 2018)

Controversy erupted today over a U.S. general’s remarks that South Korea had asked the U.S. Air Force to stop sending bombers to the Korean Peninsula in an effort to support ongoing diplomatic talks with North Korea. According to Agence France-Presse, U.S. Pacific Air Forces Commander Gen. Charles Brown told Pentagon reporters yesterday that U.S. bombers are no longer conducting flights over South Korea, as Seoul has asked for such missions to be halted. While the Ministry of National Defense declined to confirm whether bomber missions over the Korean Peninsula have been halted, the ministry stressed that there were prior consultations between Seoul and Washington. “Such issues are not subject to one side’s unilateral decision, they require consultations between South Korea and the U.S.,” said Defense Ministry spokesperson Choi Hyun-soo during a regular press briefing today. Sending bombers and other US strategic assets has been a sticking point between Seoul and Washington, with the Moon Jae-in administration worrying that such maneuvers would dampen the mood for an inter-Korean detente. South Korea has reportedly expressed concerns over a joint training exercise involving U.S. B-52 bombers and South Korean fighter jets. What was intended to be a trilateral air drill was eventually scrapped in May. “South Koreans asked not to participate in what was intended to be a three-nation air drill involving the US, South Korea and Japan,” the Wall Street Journal reported, citing anonymous U.S. officials. In light of changed security dynamics on the Korean Peninsula, Brown’s remarks about halting bomber missions appear to signal a change in the way the US will conduct joint exercises with South Korea. Despite the halt in flights over the Korean Peninsula, Gen. Brown said the overall number of bomber flights has not changed. Instead, the Air Force has focused on bomber training missions with Japan and Australia, Brown added. U.S. Army Pacific Commander Gen. Robert Brown also said that joint exercises with South Korea are being conducted in a way different from before. “Battalion and below exercises on the peninsula are fine. And that’s working very well at that small unit level. And then above that, we’re doing the
higher-level exercises off the peninsula,” Brown said in an interview with Defense News. Last week, Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis said next year’s Foal Eagle exercise would be scaled back to avoid hurting diplomatic efforts with North Korea. Mattis said the exercise was being “reorganized a bit” to keep it from “being harmful to diplomacy.” The Defense Ministry said South Korea and the US have yet to decide on the extent to which the exercise will be adjusted. Earlier this month, Defense Minister Jeong Kyung-doo said the plan for the upcoming exercise will be laid out no later than Dec. 1. “Consultations are still underway between South Korea and the U.S.,” spokesperson Choi said, denying a media report that working-level consultations for the upcoming exercises had been completed. “There are many types of processes involved in developing exercise plans.” (Yeo Jun-suk, “Controversy Erupts over U.S. Suspension of Bomber Missions over Korea,” Korea Herald, November 27, 2018) “A security catastrophe.” “De facto disarmament.” “A surrender document.” “The military equivalent of South Korea’s IMF crisis.” “National suicide.” Critics have resorted to coarse characterizations in their attacks on the inter-Korean military agreement reached on September 19. They are denouncing the agreement as not only utterly undermining the South Korean military’s security capabilities, but also causing a military disaster that exposes Seoul to a surprise North Korean attack. Many are voicing the even more extreme position that South Korea faces the “threat of communism,” having been taken in by Pyongyang’s false peace offensive. Among the people making these claims, quite a few are individuals who have served in the past as Minister of National Defense or a high-ranking officer in the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). It is certainly worrying when these kinds of arguments are being made by the people who once commanded South Korea’s military. But a closer examination of their claims shows a number of exaggerations and distortion. A few of them are closer to outright deceptions – cloaked in the mantle of “military expertise.” Former JCS deputy chairman Shin Won-sik has claimed that if the Han (Imjin) River estuary is opened for joint use, North Korean special forces could “cross the Han at any time and invade Seoul.” The message is that the Gimpo Peninsula could become the equivalent of the Ardennes, which German troops used for a surprise attack on France during World War II – and that the South Korean military is repeating the error of the French, who let their guard down in the belief that the German armored units could never cross the region. But many military experts see a surprise attack by North Korean special forces as effectively impossible. “The Germans’ surprise attack through the Ardennes was a case of achieving a partial success by taking advantage of deteriorating weather conditions and the darkness of night,” said Korea Institute for Defense Analyses (KIDA) research fellow Kim Seong-won. “The radar on the South Korean military’s reconnaissance aircraft can be used to detect North Korean troop movements under all weather conditions,” Kim added. Additionally, the South Korean marines also have a strong line established on the Gimpo Peninsula. Militarily, a crossing of the Han River estuary would be a tall order. During the Korean War, North Korea’s elite 6th Division was held up for over three days attempting to cross through the region. The crossing was obstructed by natural obstacles including currents running 1.0–1.5m per second and the broad tidal flats exposed during low tides. Overcoming those barriers would require large-scale equipment of the kind that would inevitably show up on the South Korean military’s detection network. Another claim is that the elimination of guard posts (GPs) would allow the North Korean military to sneak military forces as far as the Demilitarized Zone for a purpose attack and to resume its secret digging of underground tunnels. This has led in turn to arguments that the GPs’ removal has resulted in a breach on the South Korean military’s front lines. Military experts called this position a “stretch,” explaining that it showed a lack of understanding of how the GPs’ function. “These claims make the GPs out like bastions to prevent a North Korean surprise attack, but there’s a great deal more of the DMZ that can’t be detected from the GPs,” a JCS officer said. “If a surprise attack were something we could spot from a GP, there’s a very strong chance preemptive artillery fire from the North would have already begun,” the officer added. The officer also said it was “outright impossible to detect underground tunnel excavation from a GP on top of a mountain.” If anything, the withdrawal of guard posts has the effect of pushing the North Korean forces’ boundary line outside the DMZ, military experts said. If the North Korean military withdraws its GPs without abandoning its personnel-centered approach to security operations, this would inevitably move the boundary line back, they argued. “The South Korean military has long been operating a scientific security system,” said KIDA Center for Military Analysis and Planning director Ahn Gwang-su. “The role of GPs has been selected for intermediate- to long-term
Behind the scenes, Japanese officials are still talking to North Korea on ways to resolve the issue of Japanese nationals abducted decades ago. It emerges that secret talks on the issue have recently been held in Mongolia and elsewhere. Although Pyongyang keeps railing against Tokyo through its official news outlets, it is keeping the channels of communication open. As yet though, there has been no breakthrough for a Japan-North Korea summit. Ishikawa Shoichiro, head of the Secretariat of the Headquarters for the Abduction Issue that was set up at the Cabinet Secretariat, met with Song Il Ho, North Korea’s ambassador for normalizing relations with Japan, in Ulan Bator, the Mongolian capital, in late October, according to a source familiar with the negotiations. It remains unclear what they discussed. But it appears that the Japanese side repeated its longstanding call for the repatriation of all Japanese citizens abducted by North Korean agents, while Song reiterated Pyongyang’s position that Tokyo should give priority to shelling out compensation for its 1910-1945 colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula. Japan settled the issue when it normalized diplomatic relations with South Korea in 1965, but grievances held by North Korea have never been addressed as the two countries do not have diplomatic ties. Turning to the secret meetings, the source noted that Kitamura Shigeru, director of the Japanese government’s Cabinet Intelligence and Research Office, met with Kim Song Hye, head of the United Front Department’s tactical office at the ruling Workers’ Party of Korea, in July and thereafter. (Makino Yoshihiro, “Japan Holding Secret Talks with North Korea on Abduction Issue,” Asahi Shimbun, December 1, 2018)

South Korea successfully tested its locally developed rocket engine, officials said, taking a step closer to the full-fledged development of the country’s first space launch vehicle. The test of the 75-ton thrust engine was conducted using a single-stage rocket that was launched from the Naro Space Center in Goheung, South Jeolla Province, at 4:00 p.m. The rocket engine, designed and developed by the Korea Aerospace Research Institute (KARI), will be used on the three-stage Korea Space Launch Vehicle-2 (KSLV-2) currently under development. The 75-ton thrust engine is considered a core technology behind the KSLV-2, which would make South Korea the seventh country in the world to build a space launch vehicle with homegrown technology. The Ministry of Science and ICT and KARI said the critical rocket motor combustion time was maintained for 151 seconds, surpassing an initial goal of 140 seconds. KARI said evaluating the performance of a
liquid propellant rocket engine is determined by the length of the total combustion time. The rocket flew for about 10 minutes after reaching a maximum suborbital altitude of 209 kilometers and hit the ocean 429 kilometers southeast of the country’s southern resort island of Jeju. "We have confirmed the flight of the 75-ton engine after analyzing all available information," Lee Jin-kyu, the vice science minister, said. "The development of the space engine is considered a core technology and the most difficult test for the development of a South Korean launch vehicle." So far, the country has relied on foreign launch vehicles for suborbital satellites. The successful launch of the KSLV-2 would open a new opportunity to enter the commercial space launch market. Currently, only six countries -- the United States, Russia, France (the EU), Japan, China and India -- possess the technology for the development of such space vehicles, the ministry said. Meanwhile, ten countries -- the six aforementioned nations along with the Ukraine, Israel, North Korea, and Iran -- currently have the technology for such rocket engines. The performance of the new engine, including its flight controls and thrust units, was closely monitored during the flight, with no abnormalities detected, official said. The test launch was earlier suspended for 10 months when abnormal readings were detected in the rocket propellant pressurization system. KARI said it has changed the construction of its engine over 20 times and conducted ground-based combustion tests more than 100 times to confirm the viability of the engine. KARI said four of the indigenous thrust engines will be grouped together on the first stage and one on the second stage of the KSLV-2, the ministry said. The whole rocket is scheduled to blast off in 2021. The KSLV-2 rocket is to be South Korea’s first space vehicle wholly designed and built in the country. It will be used to place unmanned satellites into the Earth's orbit and for other commercial applications. The launch is the first time in nearly five years that South Korea has showcased its active space program, following the launch of the KSLV-1 from the Naro in 2013. The government said it is pushing forward a plan to build a space rocket center near the center by 2025 by injecting 36 billion won (US$32 million). (Yonhap, “S. Korea Successfully Tests Space Rocket Engine,” November 28, 2018)

Hecker: “My reply to the frequently asked question if Kim Jong Un will ever give up North Korea’s nuclear weapons is, “I don’t know, and most likely he doesn’t know either. But it is time to find out.” However, insisting that Kim Jong Un give a full declaration of his nuclear program up front will not work. It will breed more suspicion instead of building the trust necessary for the North to denuclearize, a process that will extend beyond the 2020 US presidential election. However, the time it will take to get to the endpoint should not obscure the progress that has already been made. Since this spring, Kim Jong Un has taken significant steps to reduce the nuclear threat North Korea poses. He has declared an end to nuclear testing and closed the nuclear test tunnels by setting off explosive charges inside the test tunnel complex. He also declared an end to testing intermediate- and long-range missiles including intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). I consider these as two of the most important steps toward reducing the threat North Korea poses and as significant steps on the path to denuclearization. Whereas the North still poses a nuclear threat to Japan and South Korea as well as US military forces and citizens in the region, the threat to the United States has been markedly reduced. In my opinion, North Korea needs more nuclear and ICBM tests to be able to reach the United States with a nuclear-tipped missile. Freezing the sophistication of the program is a necessary precursor to rolling it back in a step-by-step process. At the September 2018 inter-Korean summit in Pyongyang, Kim also told President Moon that he would commit to dismantling the Yongbyon nuclear complex if the US takes commensurate measures—unspecified, at least in public. The Yongbyon complex is the heart of North Korea’s nuclear program. Shutting it down and dismantling it would be a very big deal because it would stop plutonium and tritium production (for hydrogen bombs) and significantly disrupt highly enriched uranium production. Yet, Kim’s actions have been widely dismissed as insignificant or insincere by both the left and the right of the American political spectrum. In many of these quarters, the sincerity of Kim’s denuclearization promise is judged by whether or not he is willing to provide a full and complete declaration and to agree on adequate verification measures. But Kim’s willingness to provide a full declaration at this early stage tells us little about his willingness to denuclearize. Moreover, I maintain that insisting on this approach is a dead end, certainly as long as Washington continues to apply “maximum pressure” instead of moving to implement the steps on normalizing relations that President Trump agreed to in the June Singapore
some steps for fuel fabrication, reactor production of plutonium, spent fuel cooling, reprocessing, with delivery of to Yongbyon and discussions with the North’s technical staff, I believe that the steps beginning by on (from the uranium mining and milling sites), plus all streams that must be monitored and assessed for their plutonium content. After plutonium is separated, it must be purified, alloyed, cast and machined into final bomb components. Each of these steps would also be used, but then complemented by turning the uranium into a compound that serves as the precursor gas (uranium hexafluoride) for centrifuge enrichment to produce low enriched uranium for light water reactors or highly enriched uranium for bombs. A complete and accurate accounting of fuel produced would also likely show a discrepancy that indicates that more fuel was produced at Yongbyon than was consumed. The difference could be accounted for by the fuel that North Korea produced for the gas-graphite reactor it built in Syria, a project that was terminated by Israel’s air raid on the Al Kibar site in September 2007. North Korea is unlikely to acknowledge the illicit construction of the Syrian reactor as part of its own plutonium declaration. Once produced in the reactor, plutonium has to be extracted from the used or spent fuel after a sufficient period of time that allows the spent fuel to cool thermally and radioactively. The extraction or separations process is accomplished in a reprocessing facility using mechanical and chemical methods. The North’s reprocessing facility became operational in 2000 reactor at the Yongbyon complex. A complete declaration must provide for the entire operations history (along with its design and operational characteristics) going back to its initial operation in 1986 to correctly estimate how much plutonium was produced. In addition, North Korea has operated the Soviet-supplied IRT-2000 research reactor at the Yongbyon site since 1967. Although little plutonium has likely been produced there, this would have to be verified by providing the complete operating history along with performance characteristics since its initial operation. North Korea has also constructed an experimental light water reactor (ELWR) that is likely not yet operational. Its status would have to be checked to see if it was configured to favor weapon-grade plutonium production. Finally, North Korea began to build but never completed 50 MWe and 200 MWe gas-graphite reactors, whose construction operations were stopped by the Agreed Framework in 1994. Their status would have to be verified. The 5 MWe reactor fuel consists of natural uranium metal alloy fuel elements. Tracking the entire history of fuel fabrication would be an important verification step for plutonium production. It starts with uranium ore mining, milling and conversion to uranium oxide. This is followed by a few additional steps to produce the uranium metal that is formed into fuel elements for the reactor to produce plutonium. Some of these same steps would also be used, but then complemented by turning the uranium into a compound that serves as the precursor gas (uranium hexafluoride) for centrifuge enrichment to produce low enriched uranium for light water reactors or highly enriched uranium for bombs. A complete and accurate accounting of fuel produced would also likely show a discrepancy that indicates that more fuel was produced at Yongbyon than was consumed. The difference could be accounted for by the fuel that North Korea produced for the gas-graphite reactor it built in Syria, a project that was terminated by Israel’s air raid on the Al Kibar site in September 2007. 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Each of these steps generates residue and waste streams that must be monitored and assessed for their plutonium content. Based on my visits to Yongbyon and discussions with the North’s technical staff, I believe that the steps beginning with delivery of yellowcake to Yongbyon (from the uranium mining and milling sites), plus all steps for fuel fabrication, reactor production of plutonium, spent fuel cooling, reprocessing,
plutonium purification and alloying into metal ingots are conducted at Yongbyon. During my
visits to Yongbyon, I was told that the plutonium ingots are then taken off site (of an
undeclared location) in which the plutonium is cast into bomb components—which would
then be followed by machining and assembling into pits, the plutonium cores of the weapons.
In 2010, I was also told that all plutonium residues and wastes from reprocessing and
plutonium metal preparation were still stored at Yongbyon (under questionable safety
conditions). Very little had been done to prepare the spent fuel waste for final disposition. This
is likely still the case and, hence, most of the reprocessing facility must remain operational
after the rest of Yongbyon is shut down in order to prepare the hazardous waste for safe,
long-term disposition. This will also complicate the plutonium inventory verification. A
complete declaration must also include how much plutonium was used during underground
testing. In addition to the six known tests at Punggye-ri, North Korea also claims to have
conducted “subcritical” experiments (stopping just short of a nuclear detonation), which I consider
to be unlikely. If it did, however, North Korea would have to declare the amount of plutonium
used and its current state, particularly since such experiments could leave plutonium in a usable
form unlike the case for nuclear detonations. To verify the nuclear test history of plutonium, as
well as for highly enriched uranium, it would be necessary to provide information or allow drill-
back inspections into the test tunnels at Punggye-ri to ascertain the type and amount of
nuclear material used in the test. To complicate matters even further, if one or more of the
North’s test devices failed to produce a nuclear explosion, then plutonium (or HEU) could still be
resident in the tunnels. Both the United States and Russia experienced such test failures. This is
also possibly the case for North Korea because there is still some uncertainty as to whether or not
a nuclear test was conducted in May 2010 when a faint seismic signal was observed from the test
area. For the most part, the jury is still out on that event, but the North would now have to allow
inspections and verification. It should be apparent that the declaration plus commensurate
verification of the amount of plutonium North Korea possesses, which I believe is only between
20 and 40 kilograms, will be an enormous job. I cannot see it being accomplished in the current
adversarial environment and certainly not within the timeframe that has been specified by the US
government. A similar sequence of declarations, inspections, and verification measures would
have to be developed for the other bomb fuels, namely HEU and the hydrogen isotopes, deuterium
and tritium. Verification of HEU inventories and means of production will be particularly
costious because very little is known about the centrifuge facility at the Yongbyon site. As far
as we know, my Stanford colleagues and I are the only foreigners to have seen that facility, and
then only in a hurried walk-through in 2010. In addition, there exists at least one other covert
centrifuge site. The situation is even more problematic for the second element of the North’s
nuclear program, that of weaponization, which includes bomb design, production, and testing
because we know nothing about these activities or where they are performed. Although we have
some information regarding the nuclear test site at which six nuclear tests were conducted,
we do not know if there are other tunnel complexes that have been prepared for testing. The
third element includes all of the North’s missiles and its production, storage and launch sites and
complexes. These will also represent a major challenge for complete and correct declarations,
inspections and verification. Once all of the elements have been declared and the dismantling
begins, then the focus will have to change to verifying the dismantlement and assessing the
potential reversibility of these actions—a challenge that is not only difficult, but one that must be
ongoing. Verification was one of the sticking points during the 2007-2008 diplomatic initiative
pursued late in the George W. Bush administration. In 2008, the North turned over copies of
18,000 pages of operating records of the reactor and reprocessing facilities in Yongbyon. The
veracity of that disclosure has never been established because diplomatic efforts fell apart when
the United States insisted on more declarations up front and North Korea accused Washington of
having moved the goal posts. That declaration constituted only a small part of what I outlined
above as being necessary for a full accounting of plutonium, not to mention the other components
of North Korea’s nuclear program. That was 10 years ago, and much has happened since to make
future declarations and verification much more problematic. At this time, the level of trust
between Pyongyang and Washington required for North Korea to agree to a full, verifiable
declaration up front does not exist. Hence, my colleagues Robert Carlin and Elliot Serbin and I
have suggested a different approach. Negotiations should begin with an agreed end state:
North Korea without nuclear weapons or a nuclear weapon program. Civilian nuclear and space programs would remain open for negotiation and possible cooperation. But all facilities and activities that have direct nuclear weapons applicability must eventually be eliminated. Rather than insisting on a full declaration up front, the two sides should first agree to have the North take significant steps that reduce the nuclear threat it poses in return for commensurate movements toward normalization—the details of which would have to be worked out during negotiations. A good next step for the North would be the destruction of the 5 MWe plutonium production reactor, which would be part of the package that Kim proposed to Moon at the Pyongyang Summit. If these actions are matched by US steps toward normalization as pledged in the Singapore statement, they will serve to build the trust required for the North to initiate a phased declaration process that initially covers operations in Yongbyon and eventually includes the entire nuclear program discussed above. Unfortunately, the strategic opening created by the Singapore and North-South summits has not been followed by such tactical steps to get the negotiation process off the ground. The North and the South are ready to create a commonly acceptable path forward, but we have the worst of environments in Washington. The Trump team claims progress is being made but insists on maintaining maximum pressure. The North’s Foreign Ministry has pointed out that the “improvement of relations and sanctions are incompatible.” Also, most US North Korea watchers are either wedded to old think that you can’t negotiate with Pyongyang or they are determined to prove President Trump’s claims on North Korea wrong. With nuclear tensions on the Korean Peninsula dramatically reduced, it is time to find out if Kim’s drive to improve the economy will eventually lead to denuclearization. He may determine that his nuclear arsenal poses a significant hindrance to economic development that outweighs the putative benefits it confers. Washington and Seoul should work together to encourage rather than inhibit this potential shift.” (Siegfried S. Hecker, “Why Insisting on a North Korean Nuclear Declaration Up Front Is a Big Mistake,” 38North, November 28, 2018)

North Korea has lashed out at the United States for continuing to press it to improve its human rights record, even with animosities between the two countries having eased so much that President Trump said he and the North’s leader, Kim Jong-un, were “in love.” North Korean diplomats and the state news media have unleashed blistering attacks on Washington since the United Nations’ human rights committee adopted a resolution this month condemning North Korea’s “longstanding and ongoing systematic, widespread and gross violations of human rights.” The resolution, similar versions of which have been adopted each year since 2005, is certain to be approved by the 193-member United Nations General Assembly next month. As it did following the past resolutions, Washington is calling a United Nations Security Council meeting early next month to discuss human rights in North Korea and inviting the United Nations’ top human rights official, Michelle Bachelet, to address the session. North Korea has invariably denounced such resolutions as attempts to overthrow its political system. But this year, it said the human rights “racket” raised by American diplomats at the United Nations was poisoning the mood for talks on denuclearizing North Korea following the historic summit meeting between Kim and Trump in Singapore in June. “Thanks to the peace-loving efforts of the D.P.R.K., the atmosphere of peace and stability has recently settled down in the Korean Peninsula,” Kim Song, the North Korean ambassador to the United Nations, said in a letter to Security Council members. The letter accused the council of seeking to “stoke confrontation, instead of encouraging and promoting the ongoing positive developments” of talks between the United States and the North. In the letter, first obtained by The Associated Press this week, Kim urged council members to vote against convening a meeting. Rodong Sinmun, carried a similarly strident commentary on the issue on November 26, denying there were any human rights abuses in the North. “The reason that the Americans are so obsessed with this absurdity is that they want to sully the image of our republic in order to justify their racket for sanctions and pressure and to extract our concessions in their negotiations with us,” it said. The United States has vowed to continue raising concerns about human rights in North Korea, but it also says the priority is denuclearizing the country. “Our Human Rights Report is very clear about the concerns that we have not just about North Korea but many countries, frankly, around the world and countries that can do a lot better,” Heather Nauert, a State Department spokeswoman, said last month. “Our priority in North Korea, though, right

Elleman: “North Korea test fired a two-stage, liquid-propellant Hwasong-14 missile on July 4, 2017. The missile flew on a steep trajectory, reaching an altitude of about 2,800 km and impacting in the East Sea roughly 930 km from the launch site. A second flight test was attempted three weeks later, on July 28. It too flew almost vertically, peaking at an altitude of 3,725 km, while traversing a ground distance of approximately 1,000 km. Based on available data from the two tests, analysts rushed to estimate the Hwasong-14’s reach if flown on a flatter trajectory intended to maximize range. The computed estimates for maximum range varied considerably, sparking vigorous debate among analysts about the Hwasong-14’s performance capacity. Media accounts, expert summaries, and reference sources generally favored the high-end estimates of the Hwasong-14, asserting it could reach a distance of at least 10,400 km, if not further. A recent paper by James Acton, Jeffrey Lewis and David Wright, examines video recordings of what appears to be the Hwasong-14’s the upper-stage or re-entry vehicle (RV) plummeting toward earth during the July 28 test. Their analysis helps clarify the debate about the Hwasong-14’s capabilities. Armed with the new findings, one can reasonably conclude that the Hwasong-14 can deliver a North Korean nuclear weapon to Alaska, Hawaii, and perhaps Seattle. It cannot, however, reach Denver, Chicago, or New York, as is often stated. For these more distant targets, North Korea must rely on its larger, more powerful Hwasong-15, which has been flight tested only once. David Wright assessed that if flown on an optimal trajectory, the Hwasong-14 could reach a maximum range of 10,400 km. If the earth’s rotation is considered, the Hwasong-14 is, in principle, capable of reaching New York, though it falls just short of Washington, DC. As explained by Wright, his methodology relies on Kepler’s Laws of Motion, the conservation of energy principle, and calculation adjustments to account for aerodynamic drag and gravity losses during the boost phase. It takes trajectory data from the July 28 test of the Hwasong-14 and calculates using fundamental physics the distance the missile would have traveled if it had been on a path that maximizes range. The maximum range Wright calculates is reasonably “insensitive to assumptions about the missile,” including details about Hwasong-14’s propulsion system, structural and propellant masses, payload size, and other characteristics that are difficult to determine from videos, photographs and available flight data. While providing a convenient model for estimating a missile’s maximum reach based only on the reported flight time, peak altitude and the surface distance traveled, this methodology assumes the tested Hwasong-14 was configured with a mock re-entry vehicle weighing the same as a prospective North Korean nuclear warhead. This is a reasonable assumption because Pyongyang’s engineers would want to test a configuration that closely replicates the real weapon system North Korea plans to deploy. Before Acton, et al., released their analysis, there was no independent method for determining the mass of the mock RV fitted atop the Hwasong-14 missile tested on July 28. An alternative approach for evaluating performance begins by reconstructing the tested missile based on engineering fundamentals and the principle characteristics of missiles built and tested by other missile powers whose construction details are known. The reconstructed missile is then subjected to a mathematical, flight simulation model to compute its range as a function of several notional payload masses. This technique is subject to errors or uncertainties in the estimates used to reconstruct the missile. However, in the case of the Hwasong-14, there is strong evidence that its first-stage is powered by a single-chamber engine derived from the RD-250 family of engines originally developed and used by the Soviet Union. Two pairs of steering engines originally designed for use on the Soviet R-27, submarine-launched ballistic missile, and North Korea’s Musudan (Hwasong-10) intermediate-range missile, operate in parallel with the modified RD-250 main-engine. The performance parameters for these engines are well documented, thereby reducing key uncertainties that would otherwise compromise the fidelity of the range calculations. The reconstruction also relies on the missile’s external dimensions, acceleration at lift-off, propellant density, and other estimates based on engineering insights. Some of the assumptions are necessarily tweaked to establish a reconstructed missile that matches the known flight data. The missile’s range can then be calculated for different payload masses. Several analysts used this methodology to calculate the Hwasong-14’s performance. Theodore Postol, Markus Schiller and Robert Schmucker
estimate the North Korean missile has a range of just under 6,000 km when fitted with a 500-600 kg payload. To reach Seattle, about 8,000 km from the Korean Peninsula, the payload must be reduced to below 300 kg. John Schilling independently estimated that the Hwasong-14 could deliver a 500-600 kg payload to a range of 8,000 km. My calculations suggest the Hwasong-14 can reach 7,500 to 8,000 km when carrying a 500 kg payload. A performance estimate that falls between the Postol, et al., and Schilling findings. The minor discrepancies in the calculated range-payload curves generated independently are within the error-bandwidth of the assumptions applied to the missile’s external dimensions, structural and propellant masses, and measured acceleration at lift-off. It is also noteworthy that the Hwasong-14’s second stage employs low-thrust, long action-time engines, resulting in a missile whose maximum reach is quite sensitive to minor changes in payload mass. If, for example, the payload mass is increased from 250 kg to 300 kg, the Hwasong-14’s maximum range is reduced by roughly 1,600 km. Given this sensitivity, it is remarkable that the three independent calculations are reasonably consistent. As mentioned at the outset, Acton, et al., conducted a detailed analysis of what appears to have been the final descent of the Hwasong-14’s RV and/or its second stage. Two video cameras perched on buildings located in Hokkaido, Japan captured the final moments of an object falling into the East Sea at rapid speed on July 28. The analysis concludes that the object seen on the videos fell at a time and location consistent with the reported landing spot of either the Hwasong-14’s RV, or the missile’s empty second stage. It is also possible that the Hwasong-14’s RV failed to separate from the second stage at the end of the boost phase, and that the RV and second stage descended as one until aerodynamic forces destructively separated the two components. Regardless, Acton, et al., conclude that the tested Hwasong-14 was likely carrying an RV weighing 200 kg or less. This finding, if correct, provides a solid foundation for determining the Hwasong-14’s reach when armed with a nuclear weapon. David Wright correctly computes that the Hwasong-14 has a maximum range of about 10,400 km if flown on an optimal trajectory. If the earth’s rotation is considered, the Hwasong-14 could reach New York, which is almost 11,000 km from North Korea. Wright’s estimate assumes that North Korea’s operational, nuclear-armed Hwasong-14 will carry an RV weighing the same as the RV carried during the July 28, 2017 flight test. Findings by Acton, et al., indicate with reasonable confidence that the RV carried by the Hwasong-14 during the test launch weighed 200 kg or less. If one fits an RV weighing between 150 and 200 kg into the models used by Postol, et al., Schilling and myself, the Hwasong-14’s maximum range is the same as those calculated by Wright. Remarkably, when all available data from the July 28 test are combined, the models and findings converge to create a consistent picture of the Hwasong-14’s capabilities. The Hwasong-14 could deliver a North Korean nuclear weapon to Seattle assuming an overall RV mass of about 500 kg, of which the nuclear bomb contributes roughly 300 kg. If North Korea wishes to target Chicago, New York or Washington, DC with a nuclear weapon, it will have to rely on the larger, more powerful Hwasong-15, which has only been flight tested once.” (Michael Elleman, “North Korea’s Hwasong-14: New Data Indicates Shorter Range than Many Thought,” 38North, November 29, 2018)
Yoon told the press briefing. They also stressed the need to maintain pressure on North Korea until the communist state completely denuclearizes. "The two leaders agreed that it is important to maintain existing sanctions until North Korea reaches complete denuclearization," Yoon said. The White House highlighted the importance of keeping sanctions intact. "The two leaders agreed on the importance of maintaining vigorous enforcement of existing sanctions to ensure the DPRK understands that denuclearization is the only path to economic prosperity and lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula," it said in a released statement. DPRK stands for North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Moon praised his U.S. counterpart for playing what he called a "pivotal role" in progress so far in the peace process on the Korean Peninsula. Trump, too, highly evaluated the South Korean leader's role in creating a favorable environment for denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula by easing military tensions. Today's meeting between Moon and Trump marked the sixth of its kind since Moon took office in May 2017. (Yonhap, "Trump Reaffirms Second Summit with Kim, Welcomes Seoul Visit of Kim," JoongAng Ilbo, December 1, 2018)

A South Korean train departed for North Korea for an 18-day joint railway inspection that the Koreas are conducting as part of efforts to modernize, and eventually reconnect, rail lines across their border. The train, made up of six cars and carrying dozens of South Korean officials and experts, left Dorasan Station, just south of the inter-Korean border, around 9:05 a.m. for Panmun Station, near the North's border city of Kaesong. The train will be used to inspect 1,200 kilometers of rail track in the North through December 17. The inspection is part of a summit agreement between the leaders of the Koreas, signed in April, to modernize and eventually reconnect rail systems across their border in a bid to foster reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula. "The inter-Korean railway connection project is intended to overcome division and open a new future of the Korean Peninsula," Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon told a ceremony at Dorasan Station to mark the launch of the inspection. "Through the one connected railway, the South and the North will prosper together and the ground for peace on the Korean Peninsula will be consolidated. The trains running on the track will also carry peace and prosperity with them to Northeast Asia and the world," he added. A North Korean locomotive will take over the six-car train from Panmun Station. The six cars are comprised of quarters for passengers, offices and sleeping, along with other areas reserved for fuel, generator and other equipment. The train will run on the 400-km western Gyeongui Line railway for about six days to the city of Sinuiju near the North's border with China. After the Gyeongui Line inspection is completed, it will move to the eastern town of Wonsan to begin a roughly 10-day inspection of the 800-km Donghae Line railway from Mount Kumgang all the way to Tumen River on the country's northeastern tip, the ministry said. The railway inspection marks the first of its kind since 2007, when the two Koreas inspected a 412-km railway linking Kaesong to Sinuiju. They ran cargo train services between Dorasan Station and Panmun Station for about a year until 2008, when they came to a halt amid frozen inter-Korean relations. It is also the first time for a South Korean train to run from Mount Kumgang to Tumen River since the peninsula was divided following the 1950-53 Korean War. The Seoul government is sticking to its plan to hold a groundbreaking ceremony for inter-Korean railway and road connection projects this year as agreed upon by their leaders in September. (Yonhap-Joint Press Corps, "S. Korean Train Travels to N. Korea for Joint Railway Inspection," November 30, 2018)

Pompeo: "Q: When is the President going to meet again with the North Korean leader? POMPEO: I don’t know. I hope it’ll happen pretty soon. We’re working hard at it. I think it’ll happen shortly after the first of the year but I don’t have any additional information to share with you this morning. Wolf. Q: What’s the problem right now with the North Koreans? POMPEO: The progress – yes. Well, the progress we’ve made has been good. Q: No, what’s the problem? POMPEO: Well, the progress we’ve made has been good. We’re not having missiles launched, there haven’t been any nuclear tests. We continue to have conversations about the right next step – that is the right substantive next step, not the process next step of meetings. We’re working with partners all across the world – South Koreans, the Japanese. Remember, Wolf, these are global sanctions put in place by the United Nations Security Council which deny North Korea the capacity to improve their economy. That’s not going to change, unlike previous administrations
President Donald Trump said he hoped to organize a second summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in early 2019, perhaps as soon as January or February. Trump told reporters traveling home to Washington with him aboard Air Force One from a Group of 20 summit in Argentina that “three sites” were in consideration for the meeting, a follow-up to their historic summit in Singapore in June. When asked about a future meeting, Trump said: “I think we’re going to do one fairly (soon) -- into January, February, I think.” When asked Saturday if he would ever host Kim in the United States, Trump replied: “At some point, yeah.” (AFP, “Trump Says Hopes to Meet N. Korea’s Kim January or February,” December 2, 2018)

President Trump has a “very friendly view” of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and will make his wishes come true if he gives up his nuclear weapons, said South Korean President Moon Jae-in, while cautioning that sanctions will remain in place until then. In remarks released today, Moon also expressed optimism that Kim would visit Seoul soon, marking the first time a North Korean leader has ever done so and sending the world a message of his commitment to denuclearize. After meeting Trump at the Group of 20 summit in Buenos Aires, Moon said the U.S. president had given him a message to bring to Kim. “And the message was that President Trump has a very friendly view of Chairman Kim and that he likes him, and so he wishes Chairman Kim would implement the rest of their agreement and that he would make what Chairman Kim wants come true,” Moon told reporters on his presidential plane over the weekend. But Trump and Moon also agreed on the need to maintain existing sanctions against North Korea until it completely denuclearizes, presidential spokesman Yoon Young-chan said. But Moon said the North is actually asking for “corresponding measures” that did not necessarily have to be reduction or removal of sanctions. He suggested that they might include delaying or reducing U.S.-South Korean military exercises, humanitarian assistance, or sports and cultural exchanges, while a formal declaration of an end to the 1950-53 Korean War “can also be considered.” Van Jackson, a former Pentagon official who now teaches at Victoria University in New Zealand, said he feared Trump might be pressed into declaring sanctions relief that he won’t be able to implement North Korea’s satisfaction, “setting up the U.S. to be the one who failed to live up to its obligations.” “Most sanctions aren’t under Trump's control, and the Democratic House won’t work with Trump to relieve sanctions,” he said. “But that probably won't stop him from making verbal declarations he can't follow through on.” Jackson said it would be unwise to rush towards a summit “without first getting working-level progress towards something resembling denuclearization.” Over the weekend, Trump told reporters that he hoped to hold a second summit with Kim next year, perhaps in January or February, and that three sites are under consideration. “We’re getting along very well. We have a good relationship,” Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One. White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said Moon and Trump “reaffirmed their commitment to achieve the final, fully verified denuclearization” of North Korea, and agreed on the need for “maintaining vigorous enforcement of existing sanctions to ensure North Korea understands that denuclearization is the only path.” Moon said Kim could visit Seoul for a summit before he meets Trump, while South Korea’s Unification Ministry said Monday that it still hopes such a visit can be arranged before the end of the year. “I believe Kim’s Seoul visit itself will be a peaceful message to the world, and also a message of his commitment to denuclearization, commitment to the development of inter-Korean relations,” Moon said. Moon said that if the North Korean leader came to Seoul, “all the people of South Korea will welcome Kim with open arms.” But conservatives are sure to take issue with that statement. In an editorial, DongA Ilbo warned that a rushed visit by Kim to Seoul would only produce “rose-tinted hugs” that don’t lead to substantial progress in denuclearization, while Chosun Ilbo warned of a repeat of the “Singapore fiasco” if Trump and Kim meet for a second time without making progress on nuclear negotiations. (Simon Denver, “S. Korean President Optimistic But Uncertainty Remains after Talk with Trump,” Washington Post, December 4, 2018, p. A-10)
Andrew Kim likely to have met Kim Song-hye or Kim Yong-chol After getting stuck at the threshold of negotiations regarding denuclearization and the normalization of diplomatic relations, North Korea and the US appear to be making progress on their bilateral relations once again. For several days now, US President Donald Trump has been emphasizing his trust in North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and sending positive signals about their second summit, and now it turns out that the North Koreans and Americans held a top secret meeting at Panmunjom on December 3. “North Korea and the US appear to be making headway,” a high-ranking official in the South Korean government said on December 4. A source who is well-informed about the negotiations between North Korea and the US said “it’s true that several options [related to corresponding measures for North Korea’s denuclearization] are being reviewed inside the US administration.” North Korea is likely to have sent Kim Song-hye, head of the Unification Strategy Office at the United Front Department under the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK), or Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui. There are also claims that WPK Vice Chairman and United Front Department Director Kim Yong-chol met Andrew Kim in Panmunjom, but these claims have not been confirmed. The diplomatic community has also raised the possibility that personal letters by Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un may have been exchanged at Panmunjom on Monday. According to another report, Andrew Kim met with North Korean officials in order to introduce his successor prior to his resignation from the CIA later this month. (Kim Ji-eun, “North Korea and U.S. Hold Secret Talks in Panmunjom,” Hankyore, December 5, 2018)

President Trump plans to hold a second summit meeting early next year with Kim Jong-un, even though North Korea has failed to follow through with promises to start dismantling its nuclear weapons program, John R. Bolton, the national security adviser, said. “They have not lived up to the commitments so far,” Bolton said. “That’s why I think the president thinks another summit is likely to be productive.” In June at his first face-to-face meeting with Trump in Singapore, Kim said North Korea would work toward “complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” Trump often notes that there have been no missile or nuclear tests in more than a year to argue that Kim is willing to make good on his promises. But Bolton and others on the president’s staff remain highly skeptical. Senior American officials followed up on the Singapore meeting by asking the North to take a first step by turning over a complete list of its weapons, fuel-production facilities and missile sites. But the North has refused, telling the United States that an inventory of its nuclear assets would give Washington a “target list” if it sought to strike the country. Instead, North Korean officials have insisted that the United States first sign onto a formal declaration to end the Korean War, which they contend Trump agreed to in Singapore, as well as ease harsh economic sanctions. Bolton’s statements were particularly notable because Trump himself has argued that his diplomacy with North Korea has yielded results, and that reports in The New York Times and elsewhere citing continued missile activity were an effort to undermine his efforts. “We fully know about the sites being discussed, nothing new — and nothing happening out of the normal. Just more Fake News,” he wrote on Twitter last month. “I will be the first to let you know if things go bad!” But Bolton made clear that the next summit meeting would have to set a schedule for North Korea’s compliance. Vice President Mike Pence also signaled last month that the United States would no longer require North Korea to submit its inventory of nuclear and missile facilities before the next meeting with Trump. Kim may be under little pressure to act. A second summit meeting would again appease Kim while sacrificing an important point of leverage that the United States has with North Korea, according to some analysts. “This move defies any negotiating logic,” said Evan S. Medeiros, the senior Asia policy director in the National Security Council during the Obama administration. He said that “meeting Kim again only validates Kim’s strategy of using Trump to play for time and sanctions relief, and keep North Korea on the pathway to becoming a de facto nuclear weapon state.” Until this year, the United States had sought to isolate North Korea diplomatically and economically; now it is relying solely on economic isolation through sanctions. Bolton said the second meeting between the two leaders would probably take place in January or February. He made his remarks in an onstage interview at a conference of business executives in Washington organized by the Wall Street Journal. The interviewer, Gerard Baker, an editor at large at the Journal, pressed Bolton on the logic of holding another summit meeting when North Korea was not making any efforts to denuclearize. “They’re
going to discuss this and look at the commitments that were made in Singapore and have a discussion about how they’re going to accomplish those commitments,” Bolton said, “and until that happens there’s not going to be any release of the economic sanctions.” Jean H. Lee, a Korea analyst at the Wilson Center, said the United States would need to prepare carefully before the meeting to have a chance at making progress on those commitments. “The Trump administration must be just as savvy and just as smart as the North Koreans are in the weeks leading up to the next summit if the goal is to come out of that meeting with concrete progress on denuclearization — and not just a propaganda win for Kim,” she said. Meanwhile, American diplomacy has faltered. Bolton added that the United States remained committed to a diplomatic route with North Korea, despite setbacks. “Look, we’re going to pursue this,” he said. “If the North Koreans follow through on the commitments they made in Singapore, President Trump will deserve the Nobel Peace Prize. He opened a door for them. Now they have to walk through it. That’s what we hope to make progress on at the next meeting.” (Edward Wong and David E. Sanger, “Trump Will Meet Again with Kim, Despite North Korea’s Lapses,” New York Times, December 5, 2018, p. A-5)

When Seoul was preparing to open a liaison office in the North Korean city of Kaesong this summer after a decade of virtually no contact with its longtime enemy, South Korean officials had heated debates over whether they should seek approval from Washington. Some top aides to President Moon Jae-in stressed it was an issue for the two Koreas alone and there was no need to involve their U.S. ally, two people with knowledge of the situation told Reuters. But to the surprise of several officials at the meeting, Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon argued Washington must be consulted because Seoul’s plans might run afoul of sanctions imposed on North Korea over its nuclear weapons program. Two dozen countries including the Britain, Germany and Sweden already have embassies in Pyongyang, and other officials saw the proposed liaison office as a far lower-level of contact with the North. And they certainly did not expect Cho to be a leading advocate of strict enforcement of sanctions. Cho was Moon’s personal choice to head the ministry, whose prime mission is to foster reconciliation, cooperation and eventual reunification with the North. Cho, whose 30 year public service history has been inextricably linked to reunification, was even sacked from the ministry in 2008 over his “dovish” stance toward Pyongyang. At the suggestion of Cho and senior diplomats, Seoul ultimately sought U.S. consent before opening the office in September, one of the sources said. All the sources spoke to condition of anonymity due to sensitivity of the matter. Cho declined to comment for this article, but a senior official at the Unification Ministry said it was aware of criticisms of Cho. “Inter-Korean ties are unique in their nature, but it’s been difficult, and there’s North Korea’s duplicity. It’s a dilemma we face, or our fate,” the official said, asking not to be named because of the sensitivity of the issue. The previously unreported debate among Moon’s top officials illustrates a growing divide within South Korea over how to progress relations with the North while keeping Washington on side. Some corners of the administration argue Seoul can’t afford to be seen veering from the U.S.-led sanctions and pressure campaign until Pyongyang gives up its nuclear weapons program, while others feel closer inter-Korean ties can help expedite the stalled diplomatic process, several officials close to the situation say. “If the internal rift leads to moving too quickly with the North without sufficient U.S. consultations, it could pose a setback to not only the nuclear talks but also the alliance and inter-Korean relations,” said Shin Beom-chul, a senior fellow at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul. "Unlike other advisers, Minister Cho has balanced his staunch desire for peace with an understanding of the importance of retaining a strong South Korea-U.S. alignment," said Patrick Cronin of the Centre for a New American Security, an Asia expert in close touch with both U.S. and South Korean officials. “Some alliance discord is inevitable and not worrisome. What would be worrisome would be a clear rupture in South Korea-U.S. approaches for managing North Korea.” The presidential Blue House declined to comment, but Moon told reporters yesterday the view that there was discord between South Korea and the United States was “groundless” because there is no difference in the two countries’ positions on the North’s denuclearization. A third source familiar with the presidential office's thinking said there was mounting frustration with Cho within the Blue House and even inside the Unification Ministry amid concerns he worried too much about U.S. views. “What the president would want from him as the unification minister is to come up with bold ideas to make his pet initiatives
happen," the source said. During three summits this year, Moon and Kim agreed to re-link railways and roads, and when conditions are met, restart the joint factory park in Kaesong and tours to the North's Mount Kumgang resort that have been suspended for years. None of those plans have made much headway, either because sanctions ban them outright, or as in the case of Kaesong, Seoul took time to convince skeptical U.S. officials that cross-border projects wouldn't undermine sanctions. North Korea itself has been an unpredictable partner. Discussions through the Kaesong office have been few and far between, with Pyongyang's negotiators often failing to show up for scheduled weekly meetings without notice, Unification Ministry officials say. Even so, the Kaesong move has caused tensions with Washington. U.S. officials told Seoul that South Korea's explanations on the Kaesong office were not "satisfactory," the South's Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha told a parliamentary hearing in August. Washington was also caught off guard when a group of businessmen who used to operate factories in the now-closed Kaesong industrial park were invited for the opening ceremony of the office, a diplomatic source in Seoul said. The allies launched a working group last month led by their nuclear envoys to coordinate North Korean policy. It was borne out of U.S. desire to "keep inter-Korean relations in check," the source said. Asked about the Kaesong office, a U.S. State Department official said: "We expect all member states to fully implement U.N. sanctions, including sectoral goods banned under UN Security Council resolution, and expect all nations to take their responsibilities seriously to help end (North Korea's) illegal nuclear and missile programs." Another State official said the United States endorsed April's inter-Korean summit agreement during its own summit with North Korea "because progress on inter-Korean relations must happen in lockstep with progress on denuclearization." Last month, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met Cho in Washington, bluntly warning him that inter-Korean cooperation and progress on nuclear negotiations should "remain aligned." Even as he faced pressure from Washington to hold a tough line, Cho was being criticized for dragging his feet on reconciliation. In May, the North called off planned talks with the South led by Cho in protest against U.S.-South Korean air combat exercises. When the meeting eventually took place, Cho's counterpart, Ri Son Gwon, openly blamed Cho for having caused a "grave situation" that resulted in the cancellation of the talks. At the Kaesong office opening, factory owners pressed Cho to reopen the complex and said they were dismayed at the Unification Ministry for repeatedly rejecting requests to visit the border city to check on equipment and facilities idled since the 2016 shutdown. "We've expressed, directly and indirectly, our complaint that the minister may be too lukewarm about our requests, even though allowing the trip has nothing to do with sanctions," said Shin Han-yong, who chairs a group of businessmen with plants in Kaesong. Cho recently told the parliament the delays are due to scheduling issues with the North, adding the ministry "needs more time to explain the overall circumstances" to the international community. Shin, the expert at Asan, warned any move to undermine sanctions may expose South Korean companies to risks of punishment. After Moon and Kim's summit in Pyongyang in September, a senior U.S. Treasury official called compliance officers at seven South Korean banks to warn them that resuming financial cooperation with North Korea "does not align with U.S. policies" and the banks must comply with U.N. and U.S. financial sanctions, according to a South Korean regulatory document. "Realistically we have no option but to consider U.S. positions, as the top priority is the North's denuclearization and the United States has the biggest leverage on that," said Kim Hyung-suk, who served as vice unification minister until last year. "Without progress on the nuclear issues, there would be constraints at some point in sustaining inter-Korean ties. And Minister Cho knows that." (Hyonhee Shin, “Growing Split in Seoul over North Korea Threatens Korea Détente, Nuclear Talks,” Reuters, December 4, 2018) New satellite images obtained exclusively by CNN reveal North Korea has significantly expanded a key long-range missile base located in the mountainous interior of the country, offering yet another reminder that diplomatic talks with the US have done little to prevent Kim Jong Un from pursuing his promise to mass produce and deploy the existing types of nuclear warheads in his arsenal. The satellite imagery offers evidence that the Yeongjeo-dong missile base and a nearby, previously unreported site remain active and have been continuously upgraded, underscoring the reality of just how far apart Washington and Pyongyang are on the issue of denuclearization despite five months of sporadic talks. While the base at Yeongjeo-dong has long been known to US intelligence agencies and analysts, researchers at the Middlebury Institute of International
Studies at Monterey told CNN that the images reveal construction on a new facility just seven miles away from the older site that had not been previously publicly identified. "Satellite images show that the base remains active. Moreover, in the past year North Korea has significantly expanded a nearby facility that appears to be another missile base," the Middlebury Institute report states, noting that it is unclear whether the two bases are separate, or whether one is subordinate to other. The images indicate that North Korea was building an extremely large underground facility in 2017 and that this facility was still under construction as of August 2018. "Construction on the previously unidentified site has continued even after the Singapore Summit" between Kim and President Donald Trump in June, Jeffrey Lewis of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, one of the analysts that identified the site, told CNN. "Whatever Kim says about his desire for denuclearization, North Korea continues to produce and deploy nuclear armed missiles." The site's unique location makes it a strong candidate to receive North Korea's newest long-range missiles, including those that can carry nuclear weapons and can strike the United States, according to Lewis and his colleague David Schmerler. US officials have long said they are not surprised by similar open source findings, but have declined to offer any additional response when other sites have been identified. "We watch North Korea very closely. We continue to support the diplomatic process. We will not discuss matters of intelligence," Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Chris Logan told CNN. The State Department declined to comment, saying it doesn't discuss intelligence matters. South Korea's Defense Ministry, citing the country's Joint Chiefs of Staff, acknowledged Yeongjeo-ri is a missile base and is "one of the important North Korean sites that is being tracked and surveilled in cooperation with the United States." A spokesman for the ministry refused to comment further, saying "it is not appropriate for our military to officially acknowledge the content of a foreign media report." While Kim is not violating any agreement with the U.S. or South Korea by continuing to produce and deploy existing types of missiles, the identification of yet another active North Korean missile base comes at a time when some members of the Trump administration are declaring that Pyongyang has failed to uphold its end of the bargain thus far. "Those missiles are being deployed at bases throughout North Korea, many of which have long been known to outside analysts. Any denuclearization agreement would require North Korea to allow international inspectors to determine that these units are no longer armed with nuclear weapons," according to the report from Lewis and Schmerler. "The Trump Administration has publicly promised to secure access to North Korea military facilities as part of any agreement," the report states. The base itself is strung along a narrow valley. A headquarters area is positioned at the mouth of the valley, the images show. "Up through the valley there are a pair of hardened "drive-through" shelters that were covered with soil and had trees planted on them to disguise them. In front of the pair of drive through, there is a concrete pad that was also covered in dirt," according to the analysis by Lewis and Schmerler. "There are five entrances to underground tunnels that may be used to store missiles," the report states. "Around 2010, North Korea constructed a pair of large drive-through suitable for large ballistic missiles. These shelters are similar to the ones seen at the older portion of the Yeongjeo-dong base." (Zachary Cohen, “New Satellite Images Reveal Activity at Unidentified North Korean Missile Base,” CNN, December 6, 2018)

Lewis and Schmerler: “Why are experts so skeptical of North Korea’s offer to dismantle the test stand it uses to test new rocket engines? One reason is that North Korea is currently producing and deploying nuclear-armed missiles. While closing a test stand would make it harder for North Korea to design new types of missiles, it would not prevent North Korea from continuing to mass-produce and deploy existing types of nuclear-armed missiles, including those that can strike the United States, as Kim Jong Un publicly announced that North Korea would do on 1 January 2018. Missiles are being deployed at bases throughout North Korea, many of which have long been known to outside analysts. One such facility is the missile base near Yeongjeo-dong. The missile base at Yeongjeo-dong has long been a concern to US and South Korean officials because of its location deep in the mountainous interior of the country, up against the Chinese border. Because of that location, the base is a strong candidate to receive North Korea’s newer missiles, including those that can strike the United States. Any denuclearization agreement would require North Korea to allow US or international inspectors to determine that these units are no longer armed with nuclear weapons. The Trump Administration has publicly promised to secure access to North
Korean military facilities as part of any agreement. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo published an article in *Foreign Affairs* in which he even promised a formal agreement with North Korea that would be “superior” to the agreement with Iran, and would include the inspection of military facilities. If that statement means anything, it means inspectors in Yeongjeo-dong. In 2000, the United States sought access to this and other missile bases as part of an agreement to end North Korea’s missile program—and was rebuffed by Kim Jong Il, the father of the current leader. Inspectors can’t take a look around Yeongjeo-dong—at least not yet—but satellites can. We used moderate- and high-resolution images from Planet Labs, as well as high-resolution images from Digital Globe to analyze this site. Satellite images show that the base remains active. That is hardly a surprise. However, we discover that nearby, North Korea constructed, and is currently expanding, a new missile base—one that has not been publicly disclosed before now—near Hoejung-ri. The expansion involves the construction of a massive underground facility (UGF) that North Korea started digging in late 2017. Construction on this UGF has continued throughout 2018, even as the United States and South Korea have sought to portray North Korea as engaging in a process of denuclearization. The original Yeongjeo-dong base is well known—and has long been a source of concern for the United States and South Korea. In November 1998, intelligence sources told the Washington Post that North Korea was constructing a new missile base in North Korea for its long-range Taepodong missiles. “We have identified some construction that we think might be bunkers to store Taepo Dongs in” a senior U.S. official told Dana Priest and Thomas Lippman, “You could roll them out and elevate them into a position to launch.” The location was given as “Yongo dong”—although this is probably an error in transliteration. In 1999, a series of press reports appeared in South Korea based on leaks from South Korean officials that indicated that North Korea was constructing this base, possibly for the Nodong missile—a medium-range ballistic missile well-suited for targeting locations in Japan. The press secretary for the South Korean government clarified that the location was “Yeongjeo-dong” and stated: “Something is being built in that location, and the South Korean and American military are very concerned about it.” These leaks may have been the result of a North Korean scientist who defected to Japan in 1999. He described the construction of the Yeongjeo-dong base and said it was for Nodong missiles. Although, like many defectors, some of his statements are unreliable, he provided a precise geographic description of the base. (A CNS research associate interviewed him in 2002.) In October 2000, when Madeline Albright met with Kim Jong Il, she raised the issue of an agreement to verifiably eliminate North Korea’s long-range missiles. Kim Jong Un rejected access to Yeongjeo-dong. “As for the missiles already deployed, I don’t think we can do much about them,” Albright recalled Kim saying. “You can’t go inside the units and inspect them…” The Clinton Administration’s effort to reach a missile deal collapsed in part over concerns about the lack of access to sites like Yeongjeo-dong. In 2001, the World Food Program identified Kim Hyong Jik County, where the base is located, as one of many locations where it was denied access for security reasons. The geography of the site makes it ideal to house long-range missiles. The base is located in the interior of North Korea, backed up against the Chinese border. It is this location that leads us to believe the general area is a strong candidate for the deployment of future missiles that can strike the United States. The fact that there is a missile base at Yeongjeo-dong is hardly a secret. In 2015, CNS geolocated the Yeongjeo-dong missile base using the description of the site from the North Korean defector. Allison Puccioni independently identified it for IHS Jane’s. A lot of the images you will see in this post are older—there is a reason for that. The North Koreans have taken care to camouflage missile sites, which means that images taken during construction, or immediately afterward, will often show the most details. The base itself is strung along a narrow valley. There is a headquarters area at the mouth of the valley, located at: 41.356067, 127.061008. Up the valley (41.327991, 127.094221), there are a pair of hardened “drive-through” shelters that North Korea covered with soil and then planted trees on top, presumably to disguise them. North Korea also built a concrete pad, which it then covered in dirt. The camouflage is pretty effective. Nearby (41.326328, 127.096255), there are five entrances to tunnels that may be used to store missiles. These are probably the “bunkers” that a senior U.S. official described to Priest and Lippman as where North Korea “could roll them out and elevate them into a position to launch.” There are additional tunnels for storage located at 41.33621, 127.124943. As we said, Yeongjeo-ri has been well-known for twenty years. What caught our eye, however, is that around 2010, North Korea began to construct a new facility about 7 miles...
away that appears to be another missile base. This site has never been publicly disclosed as far as we know. It has been undergoing a continuous process of expansion. The relationship between the two sites is not clear. It is possible that they are simply separate bases that share the advantages of Kim Hyong Jik County’s location, or perhaps one is subordinate to the other. We lean toward the idea that the bases are separate, because each has its own Headquarters area. In many ways, the base near Hoejung-ni strongly resembles the older site at Yeongjeo-dong. Around 2010, North Korea constructed a pair of large drive-through shelters (41.369776, 126.913196) suitable for large ballistic missiles North Korea appears to have begun to expand the base in recent years, starting with the construction of a new headquarters area in 2014. The layout of the new buildings bears a significant resemblance to the older headquarters area at Yeongjeo-dong. And, perhaps most importantly, North Korea is constructing an extremely large underground facility (41.365579, 126.927911) at the base. Construction on this UGF seems to have begun in 2017. It remains under construction, with significant progress made in recent months. Below are images that show the construction. The image from 2015 is a baseline showing no construction. Spoil from the new tunnel first appear in late 2017. (The image is from October 2017). Construction continued throughout 2018, as demonstrated by images from this September and October.”

(Jeffrey Lewis and Dave Schmerler, “North Korea Missile Base at Yeongjeo-dong,” Arms Control Wonk, December 6, 2018)

Satellite images collected and analyzed by a group of researchers at the Monterey, California, based Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS)—reported by CNN—offer insights into two sites in North Korea almost certainly associated with the Korean People’s Army (KPA) Strategic Force. First, the long-known Yeongjeo-dong/Yeongjeo-ri missile base has undergone refurbishment, expansion, and upgrading. Second—and more interestingly—the researchers identify a nearby site “just seven miles away” that appears to have been previously undetected, at least in open sources. According to Jeffrey Lewis and Dave Schmerler of CNS, the Yeongjeo-ri base remains active. Separately, the new facility has notably seen expansion since the June 12 summit in Singapore between U.S. President Donald J. Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. That North Korea would press ahead with improvements to military facilities associated with the KPA Strategic Force after the summit is unsurprising and uncontroversial. The Singapore declaration agreed by Trump and Kim did not constitute an agreement for North Korea’s disarmament—let alone a freeze on ongoing military activities inside North Korea. Yeongjeo-dong, once thought to have been a “suspected [highly enriched uranium] program site” in the early 2000s, has since been reassessed as a missile operating base. It sits in North Korea’s northern Ryanggang province, bordering China and adjacent to Chagang province. Together, Ryanggang and Chagang provinces comprise the two areas that U.S. and South Korea intelligence have identified as operating areas for North Korea’s longer-range missiles. These include Strategic Force units charged with the operation, maintenance, and deployment of medium-range ballistic missiles like the older liquid-fuel Nodong and the newer solid-fuel Pukguksong-2; intermediate-range ballistic missiles like the older Musudan and the newer Hwasong-12; and, finally, the two tested intercontinental-range ballistic missiles, the Hwasong-14 and the Hwasong-15 (Only the latter is likely being slated for large-scale deployment in the near-term. A recent report by researchers at the Center for Strategic and International Studies analyzed in a recent NK Pro analysis suggested why North Korea has chosen to place its longer-range missiles further north. While by no means are these units exclusively based in Chagang and Ryanggang provinces, they are assumed to mostly be based in those two provinces. North Korea’s northern geography benefits from an abundance of difficult to navigate mountains, which lend themselves to the construction of the kinds of underground facilities that the CNS researchers identified at Yeongjeo-dong and the new site in the CNN report. Separately, by basing these missile units further from the Demilitarized Zone, they increase military requirements for the United States and South Korea, who must use more sophisticated means of long-range surveillance (including space-based remote sensing) and rely on more expensive precision missiles to conduct preemptive strikes. South Korea’s new, long-range Hyunmoo IIC short-range ballistic missile, with an earth-penetrating capability, is designed to deal with targets like those identified by the CNS researchers. The newer facility nearby may have any of a range of purposes. First, it could be a sister site to Yeongjeo-dong, with an identical mission. Given the age of Yeongjeo-dong, the site was likely assigned to units operating Nodong or
Musudan missiles. The Musudan has likely been phased out after a dismal 2016 testing record, succeeding in just one trial of either that year. Moreover, its transporter-erector-launcher (TEL) has been seen in parades and testing to have been assigned, with modification, to the Hwasong-12. Second, the site could be designed for a new unit separate from any Strategic Force units that had operating at Yeongjeo-dong. The advent of the Hwasong-12 and the Pukguksong-2 especially would necessitate new sites to accommodate units and support vehicle. This strategy would suggest that instead of substituting older generations of missiles (i.e., Musudan) with newer ones (i.e., Hwasong-12), North Korea was pursuing a wholesale expansion. Without a more complete view of North Korea’s facilities, this hypothesis is difficult to substantiate; other facilities—known and unknown—may have shut down, for instances. A final possibility is that the “extremely large underground facility” described in the CNN report as being linked to the new site might be designed for the storage of warheads. To realize its nuclear strategy, which likely impinges on the first-use of nuclear weapons before units can be preempted by the United States and its allies, North Korea’s missile units would need to be co-located with warhead storage depots. To date, little is known about how North Korea has chosen to design its warhead storage schema. It may use a single site, intending to disperse warheads in a crisis, but this would be risky and prone to failure, especially if the United States is monitoring such a site and interprets the dispersion of warheads as an intent to deploy and use nuclear weapons, increasing the risks of preemption. Without additional data, it is not possible to substantiate this in the case of the facility identified by the CNS researchers, but the existence of similar underground facilities around the country merits closer study and analysis. The missile-related nature of both facilities is not in doubt, however. As the CNN report notes, the imagery exposes several so-called “drive through” shelters—basically, short tunnels, with varying degrees of hardening against attack. These shelters allow missile TELs and TEs to enter and exit without any turn maneuvers, which can be challenging given the large turn radiiuses of many of these vehicles. The size of the shelters indicates that they would have sufficient space to accommodate North Korea’s largest missile TELs—the 9-axle modified WS51200 TEL used with the Hwasong-15—and associated fueling and support equipment. During a crisis, these shelters would allow specific missile units to roll out a short distance to pre-paved concrete launch pads. Evidence of these launch pads is also visible in the imagery collected by the CNS team. (Ankit Panda, “What to Make of Ongoing Activity at North Korea’s Yeongjeo-dong Base,” NKNews, December 6, 2018)

Seoul and Washington will make a decision on whether to conduct its annual Foal Eagle joint military exercise scheduled for next spring taking into consideration a potential second North Korea-U.S. summit, according to multiple military sources. “The United States is paying great attention to advancing North-U.S. relations,” a South Korean government source said. “Our military and government is also responding to the U.S. stance and having discussions taking into consideration the security situation on the Korean Peninsula.” Another government source here said, “What it means to make a decision to hold the drills linking it to the North-U.S. summit is that, in the case that North Korea does not come to the negotiating table, the Foal Eagle may be conducted.” This source elaborated that South Korean and U.S. authorities are also prepared for a possibility that the Foal Eagle exercise could be conducted as usual, and that the budget to send troops and equipment to Korea has already been allocated by Washington. If the Foal Eagle exercise is held, it is expected to be on a smaller scale than last year. Foal Eagle, field exercises involving ground, air, naval and special operations forces, is usually held in early spring during a similar period as the joint Key Resolve drills, which are computer-simulated war games. It is the only such large-scale field exercise between South Korea and the United States deploying troops here. However, the joint Key Resolve exercise is expected to be conducted next March as scheduled. The 2018 Foal Eagle and Key Resolve exercises were postponed by Seoul and Washington at the beginning of this year to reduce tensions with Pyongyang during the PyeongChang Olympics and Paralympics. They were eventually held in April, though Foal Eagle was scaled down in duration and scope compared to the previous year. Regardless of whether the Foal Eagle drills this year are postponed or suspended, or its field training exercises (FTX) are reduced in scale, a command post exercise (CPX) under Key Resolve will still be held. The South Korean Ministry of National Defense is also reviewing a plan for its military to hold solo field exercises without U.S. troops in the case Foal Eagle is suspended. Seoul has to build its capability
for war readiness as it will eventually regain control of wartime operational control, or Opcon, from the United States. Choi Hyun-soo, spokesperson for the Defense Ministry, did not confirm the suspension of the Foal Eagle exercise in a briefing on Thursday and only replied, “South Korea and the United States are conducting working-level discussions. When a decision on this matter is reached, we will make an announcement.” Pyongyang has often protested the Seoul-Washington combined exercises, viewing them as a rehearsal for an invasion. Yesterday KCNA noted that during the historic North-U.S. summit in Singapore on June 12, there was discussion on “the matter of suspending the U.S.-South Korea joint military drills during the goodwill dialogue between the DPRK and the U.S.” KCNA further reported that the two Koreas “are responsible for preserving peace of the peninsula” and “obliged to establish a permanent and durable peace mechanism of the peninsula at any cost by halting the joint military drills with outsiders, the cause of military tensions and conflict.” (Lee Chul-jae and Sarah Kim, “Foal Eagle Drill Decision Tied to Second Summit,” JoongAng Ilbo, December 7, 2018)

Chinese President Xi Jinping told visiting North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho that Washington and Pyongyang should address each other’s concerns and make progress to rid the Korean peninsula of nuclear weapons. Ri’s visit to Beijing came just days after Xi held talks with US President Donald Trump in Argentina, where North Korea was one of the topics on the agenda. Xi told Ri that China hoped North Korea and the U.S. “would to move in the same direction and consider each other’s legitimate concerns, so that the peace talks on the peninsula will continue to make positive progress.” Xinhua reported. “The Chinese side supports the North Korean people under the leadership of its leader Kim Jong-un to explore a [new] development path,” Xi said in apparent support for Kim’s decision to focus on rebuilding his country’s economy, rather than the previous policy of simultaneous development of the economy and nuclear weapons. Xi also underscored the importance of China-North Korea relations and vowed to improve them in the next year. Ri said Pyongyang would continue to work towards denuclearization of the peninsula, and would keep in close contact with Beijing on the peace and stability of the peninsula and the region, according to Xinhua. On the second day of his three-day visit to China, the North Korean foreign minister also met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on today. “China and North Korea should continue to push the situation on the peninsula to develop positively towards denuclearization,” Wang said, according to a foreign ministry statement. “China hopes that North Korea and the United States will maintain dialogue ... and achieve the goals set by the [the two countries’] joint statement.” (Lee Jwong-ho, “China Urges North Korea to Address U.S. Concerns on Nuclear Program,” South China Morning Post, December 7, 2018)

The United States has dropped a bid to hold a UN Security Council meeting on North Korea’s human rights record after failing to garner enough support for the talks, diplomats said today. The decision to scrap the meeting held every year since 2014 also comes as the United States is seeking a second summit between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. North Korea had written to council members last month to urge them to block the US request for the meeting that shines a spotlight on Pyongyang’s dismal record. (AFP, “U.S. Scraps UN Meeting on Human Rights,” December 7, 2018)

President Trump wants South Korea to pay significantly more money for American troops stationed in South Korea, a demand that has snarled negotiations over a defense pact as the Seoul government resists, according to people familiar with the talks. At issue is the so-called Special Measures Agreement, or SMA, a five-year contract between the U.S. and South Korea that expires December 31. The current agreement requires the Republic of Korea to pay about $830 million per year to the U.S. to host the more than 28,500 American troops based in South Korea, or about half of the estimated annual cost. Trump, who has sought to reopen global agreements to get what he considers better deals for the U.S., wants South Korea to pay as much as double the current amount, according to some of the people familiar with the talks, the equivalent of $1.6 billion per year for the next five years. Others familiar with the talks said Trump’s administration is pushing for 150% of the current deal, or about $1.2 billion. The demands aren’t sitting well with Seoul and the two countries are far apart on a new deal, according to the people familiar with the talks. Moon
The Trump administration imposed sanctions on three senior North Korean officials for human rights abuses in the isolated country. U.S. officials said the sanctions are intended to call attention to “brutal” censorship and human rights abuses as well as the death last year of American captive Otto Warmbier. The Treasury Department said the officials have important roles in government agencies previously placed under sanctions. Those designated include Jong Kyong Thae, minister of State Security; Choe Ryong Hae, head of the Organization and Guidance Department; and Pak Kwang Ho, director of the Propaganda and Agitation Department. It was not clear what role any had in the treatment of the 22-year-old student from Ohio who died in June 2017 shortly after he was released from 17 months of captivity in North Korea. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said North Korea was committing “flagrant and egregious abuses of human rights and fundamental freedoms.” The sanctions freeze any U.S. assets the officials may have and make it illegal for any U.S. entity to conduct financial transactions with them. The State Department said in a report published Monday that Pyongyang “continues to censor the media and commit serious human rights violations and abuses. “There is no independent domestic media in the country, and all media are strictly censored,” the report said. “No content that deviates from the official government line is tolerated.” (Associated Press, “U.S. Sanctions 3 N. Korean Officials for Rights Abuses,” December 10, 2018)

Japan took a step today toward expanding its military capabilities by advancing plans for aircraft carriers that can launch fighter jets. The plans, contained in a draft of new defense guidelines approved by the governing parties, would effectively arm Japan with its first aircraft carriers since World War II, with potential striking powers well beyond Japanese territory. The move risks inflaming a politically delicate debate in Japan over whether such expanded military capability is compatible with the country’s pacifist constitution. The plans could be construed as offensive weapons beyond those deemed necessary for self-defense. Under the change, large Japanese naval vessels now equipped with helicopters would be upgraded, enabling them to carry jet fighters capable of short takeoffs and vertical landings, and equipped with stealth technology to avoid detection. With such upgrades, Japan will “enable fighter jets to be operated from existing warships, if necessary to improve the flexibility of their operation,” according to a passage from the guidelines reported by Kyodo News Agency. Kyodo quoted unidentified government sources as saying that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s cabinet intended to endorse the revised guidelines this month. Military analysts in the United States said the upgrades, which Japanese defense officials have been talking about for a while, reflected Japan’s shared concern with the United States about the growing assertiveness of China’s aerial and naval forces in the Pacific. Japan and China have been locked in a longstanding dispute over East China Sea islands that the Japanese call the Senkaku and the Chinese call the Diaoyu. Japanese officials are also increasingly concerned about North Korea’s military capabilities. In September, a Japanese submarine participated in war games in the South China Sea, seen as a direct response to China’s presence. Eric Wertheim, a defense consultant and author of the United States Naval Institute Guide to Combat Fleets of the World, said the planned upgrades in Japan were designed for confrontations in contested waters. In such situations, he said in a telephone interview, “the single most valuable asset is the use of air power, and carrier power when you don’t have air bases nearby.” While supporters of the Japanese upgrades would argue that they are defensive, Wertheim said, such a change “improves Japan’s capability to project power.” Kyodo said that under the planned upgrades, the Japanese government would convert its Izumo flattop destroyers, which can hold 14 helicopters each, so that they can also be used to deploy short-takeoff and vertical-landing aircraft like the F-35B, an American warplane. The agency quoted Japan’s defense minister, Iwaya Takeshi, as telling reporters that since the Izumo had originally been designed as a multipurpose escort ship, “it

has told South Korean officials he isn’t willing to pay more than what his country already has agreed to pay. The leaders of the top five political parties from South Korea have informed Moon in recent weeks that the South Korean national assembly cannot absorb an increase, according to people familiar with those discussions. (Gordon Lubold, Warren P. Strobel, and Andrew Jeong, “Trump Wants South Korea to Pay More for U.S. Troops,” Wall Street Journal, December 7, 2018)
wouldn’t pose any threat to other countries if fighter jets are deployed on it.” Iwaya said last month that the government was considering purchases of the F-35B, a variant of the Lockheed Martin Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter. Iwaya said the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force’s two Izumo-class warships would have to be upgraded to handle F-35B operations. (Rick Gladstone, “Japan Considers Upgrade to Form Aircraft Carriers,” New York Times, December 12, 2018, p. A-10)

KCNA strongly blamed the United States for the impasse in their nuclear talks, saying Pyongyang is waiting for Washington to come to its senses and take corresponding steps for its denuclearization measures, instead of sticking to sanctions. "Prospects of relations between the DPRK and the U.S. depend on when the U.S. will wake up from its foolish thought," KCNA said in a commentary. "The exit will be for the U.S. to build up stairs with measures corresponding to the steps we have taken and walk up the stairs." The North appears to have used KCNA commentary, not an official statement from the foreign ministry, as part of efforts to express complaint against the U.S.’s unwillingness to ease sanctions without breaking off negotiations. "The DPRK-U.S. negotiations are now at a deadlock," it said. "The international community is expressing frustration and disappointment as it is unclear when the stalled train of negotiations will start moving. Who is to blame? The U.S. is to blame. There is no doubt about it." It went on, "How can the train of negotiation move when only the DPRK moves and the U.S. stands still?"

KCNA also said that the North has taken a string of measures, such as suspending nuclear and missile tests and repatriating the remains of U.S. soldiers, saying the U.S. "owes greatly to us." Sanctions won't work against the North as the country has survived decades of sanctions, it said. "Just like it is impossible to start a fire in water, improvement in the DPRK-U.S. relations cannot go in tandem with sanctions and pressure," KCNA said. (Yonhap, “N.K. Urges U.S. to Come to Its Senses, Stop Sticking to Sanctions,” December 13, 2018)

Canadian Michael Spavor has jet skied with Kim Jong Un, felt the ground shake from a North Korean nuclear test, and now it appears, been detained by Chinese authorities. Spavor, a business consultant with deep ties to North Korea, is being investigated on suspicion of endangering state security, Chinese state media reported. The Canadian government says it has been unable to contact him and phone calls, messages and emails to Spavor went unanswered today. The investigation into Spavor follows the detention in Beijing on Monday of former Canadian diplomat Michael Kovrig, who Chinese state media report is being investigated on the same charges. China has reacted angrily to Canada’s arrest on Dec. 1 of Chinese executive Meng Wanzhou, the chief financial officer of China’s Huawei Technologies [HWT.UL], and Spavor's investigation is likely to further escalate the diplomatic row. As one of the few Westerners with personal ties to the North Korea government and Kim himself, Spavor has been trying to drum up international interest in investing in North Korean economic projects, in anticipation of sanctions being eased amid warming ties. Spavor is best known in the region for his relationship with Kim Jong Un, and his role in facilitating a visit to Pyongyang by American basketball star Dennis Rodman in 2013. "That was the most amazing experience I’ve had in my life. .. We hung out for three days," Spavor told Reuters in a 2017 interview. Images from that time show Spavor sharing cocktails with Kim on board one of his private boats, after they had been jet-skiing in the bay next to Wonsan, one of Kim's pet economic development areas. In 2015, Spavor was involved in efforts to attract more than $150 million in foreign funds for Wonsan, including $39 million to fund a new brewery. Now based in the border city of Dandong in China, Spavor has been cultivating ties between potential Chinese investors and North Korean officials. Spavor's experience with North Korea dates to at least 2001. In 2005, he lived in Pyongyang for several months teaching at a school run by a Canadian non-governmental organization, according to the website for his organization, Paektu Cultural Exchange. Since then he's mastered the Korean language - with a distinctly North Korean accent - and maintained regular contact with many people in North Korea, including Kim Jong Un. Spavor's contacts in the isolated and tightly controlled nation have allowed him access when other outsiders were blocked. In February, North Korea barred most foreign media from covering a large military parade in downtown Pyongyang. Spavor was front and center in the parade area, streaming online video of tanks rolling by as North
Koreans celebrated. Gregarious and affable, Spavor is a fixture in the small community of North Korea watchers, with analysts and journalists often seeking his rare insight into the country. Spavor keeps a number of photos of his meetings with Kim on his phone, and describes the North Korean leader as charismatic and smart. But Spavor also is discrete about his contacts with the controversial regime, declining to comment on politics and noting that his work focuses on cultural and business ties. "For me, encouraging these sports engagement events, these nonpolitical friendship interactions, promoting these kind of events can show people that Americans and Koreans can get along very well," he said in the 2017 interview. "I guess if we can continue to increase these exchanges, then we hope that has an effect on politicians too." In September 2017, Spavor was among those in the Chinese border city of Yanji who said they felt the jolt from North Korea’s sixth and most powerful nuclear test. Spavor told Reuters at the time he was eating brunch when he felt the building shake for about five seconds, before the city’s air raid sirens sounded. Ahead of a major publicity push by North Korea around its foundation day events in early September, Spavor told Reuters he was taking dozens of Chinese investors and entrepreneurs into North Korea to "attend matchmaking sessions with various government officials and stakeholders as well as visiting existing and future development zones." When asked about the sanctions in September, Spavor said his clients "are aware of the current sanctions and are waiting for potential investment projects and other business for when the Chinese government gives the green light on business as usual." In his latest posts on social media on December 10, Spavor said he was on his way to the South Korean capital of Seoul for new consulting work and meetings with friends. His friends say he never arrived. (Josh Smith and David Ljunggren, “Detained in China: Canadian Businessman Known for Ties to North Korean Leader,” Reuters, December 13, 2018)

Carlin: “After a lengthy, six-week silence, Pyongyang finally weighed in again with extended criticism of Washington’s stance regarding US-DPRK talks, using what appears to be an authoritative-level article, written under the name of Jong Hyon and carried by the official Korean Central News Agency. The article appeared only three days after the Treasury Department announced sanctions against Choe Ryong Hae—Korean Workers’ Party vice chairman, Politburo Presidium member, and vice chairman of the State Affairs Commission, which DPRK officials say is in charge of negotiations with the US. Though the Jong Hyon article did not mention this latest development, it surely rankled Pyongyang, a fact made clear in a statement by the policy research director of the Institute for American Studies (IFAS) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea a few days later. The Jong Hyon criticism of US administration officials was noticeably harsh, but still careful to toe the line in not attacking anyone by name. The broadside at “a brazen faced guy” who “had amicable negotiations” with the DPRK side, but back home talked about a “rogue state” and “maximum pressure” was unmistakably aimed at Secretary of State Pompeo, who has visited Pyongyang several times. Personal invective against the other side’s officials, especially leading figures on its negotiating team, marks an unpleasant moment but is not an unsurmountable barrier. Pyongyang can reverse itself in its public estimation of individuals when it wants. Comment issued in the name of the Foreign Ministry tends to shy away from personal invective, and the IFAS piece, though singling out the Secretary of State—by position but not by name—left out the harsher characterization of the secretary. More crucially, unlike DPRK criticism over the past five months, the Jong Hyon article did not soften its rhetorical barbs by suggesting that the administration was not so much at fault itself but only wavering under fire from the political opposition, or that US politics was behind Washington’s policy misdirection. The last Jong Hyon article, on October 20, had left the administration partially off the hook by noting that “we are aware of the ‘embarrassing situation’ and ‘awkward position’ of the White House with the November off-year election of U.S. Congress just ahead.” This time the criticism was aimed squarely at the administration. Significantly, the article adhered to what is obviously top-level guidance and stopped well short of any criticism of the president himself, though it did not indicate continued “trust” in him, as some North Korean comments had done a few times before. The IFAS statement took up the task of portraying the president as standing on the right side of the issue, noting that he “avails himself of every possible occasion to state his willingness to improve DPRK-U.S. relations.” The State Department’s stance, it noted pointedly, was “far from the statements of the president.” Overall, despite its
criticism, the Jong Hyon article did not characterize the situation as moving in a dangerous
direction, complaining only that things were, in effect, stuck in the mud. It blamed that state of
affairs on the failure of the US to respond positively to already announced North Korean actions or
decisions on the denuclearization issue. Jong Hyon did credit the US with at least some positive
movement, noting that “a high-ranking US official” (i.e., Vice President Pence) had recently said
the US “would not demand” a North Korean declaration of its nuclear and missile programs as a
precondition for the second US-DPRK summit. It claimed that the US had withdrawn the demand
for a DPRK declaration “after understanding its unreasonable and impudent nature,” but then
added that this could not be considered “a carrot given to the DPRK,” especially since such a
declaration would have been essentially “urging the DPRK itself to specify the coordinates for a
strike.” The “stalemate” description in the Jong Hyon article is important. It is meant as a
signal that the current situation, while stuck, may not yet be sinking into the danger zone,
and implies that the North can hold its nose and live with things as they are a while longer.
Thus, the article did not have to contain any threats. Perhaps the closest it came was in claiming
that it has been a year since “tens of millions of Americans suffered from the horrible nightmare of
a nuclear disaster every night and twisted around in despair after mistaking a meteor from the
nocturnal sky for a ballistic missile from north Korea”—a dark reminder of where the situation
had been and, perhaps unspoken, where it might be again. The December 16 IFAS statement also
recalled the more dangerous situation last year—curiously stating that period had been “marked by
exchanges of fire,” but took the next step and explicitly revived the possibility of a “deterioration
of the situation that might be incurred” by US “hostile actions,” warning that it will “block the
path to denuclearization on the Korean peninsula forever.” Rather than issue such threats, the Jong
Hyon article ended somewhat uncharacteristically on a couple of upbeat notes. It asserted that the
DPRK “hopes” the US will “reach the place where the DPRK has already reached” and that it is
“waiting with patience” to see the US “come to its senses” on this issue of sanctions and pressure
which, it underlined, were incompatible with improving US-DPRK relations. Not surprisingly,
both Jong Hyon and the IFAS statement agreed on the bottom line, that the way forward was for
the US to take “step by step” measures responding to those taken by the DPRK. The IFAS
statement repeated a standard Foreign Ministry line that action should start by resolving what is
“feasible.” Jong Hyon was content to invite Washington to “join the DPRK in efforts for improved
DPRK-US relations.” “Patience” has been a note Pyongyang has struck ever since the US-DPRK
Singapore declaration in June. At some point, the North could revive a tougher theme: that there is
“a limit” to its patience. But to do so now would raise the specter of an evolving crisis, which
apparently Pyongyang does not yet want to do. Although the IFAS article adopted a somewhat
more threatening tone, with no reference to “patience,” it was written in the first person, thus
allowing Pyongyang to claim that these were the views of a relatively low-ranking official. By
contrast, the Jong Hyon article is more authoritative, and its assertion that the North “will wait
with patience,” coming only two weeks before Kim Jong Un’s New Year’s speech, may be
calculated—if nothing else untoward happens in the meantime—to give Kim room to take a
similar approach, critical of Washington but still suggesting the door remains open to
progress between him and the US president.” (Robert Carlin, “Pyongyang: Willing to Wait,” 38
North, December 17, 2018)

A top secret U.S. military assessment found that North Korea is still evading U.N. sanctions by
transferring oil at sea, and that a coalition of U.S.-led forces deployed to disrupt the movements
has failed to dent the overall number of illegal transfers, three U.S. officials familiar with the
intelligence told NBC News. The finding underscores the Trump administration’s struggle to
maintain economic pressure on North Korea amid a diplomatic bid to persuade Pyongyang to
abandon its nuclear and missile arsenal. The smuggled fuel provides a crucial lifeline for the
regime’s economy and armed forces. The U.S. Pacific Command assessment, labeled “Top
Secret,” found that the presence of warships and surveillance aircraft deployed by an eight-nation
coalition since September has forced North Korea to adjust its tactics at sea, including transferring
oil farther away from the Korean Peninsula and often in other countries’ territorial waters. The
White House and the State Department declined requests for comment. After this story was
published, President Trump tweeted, “Many people have asked how we are doing in our
negotiations with North Korea — I always reply by saying we are in no hurry, there is wonderful
The North Koreans are also resorting to smaller vessels to avoid recognition by the coalition's warships and surveillance aircraft, the officials said. The assessment found that while attempts to transfer oil have not decreased, the coalition presence has forced North Korea out of the East China Sea and into more logistically challenging areas to the north and south. That shift could ultimately affect the pace and number of the ship-to-ship transfers, raising the cost of smuggling for North Korea, according to the three U.S. officials. A U.S. defense official said the U.S. began surveillance flights over the East China Sea to disrupt these illicit transfers on Oct. 19, 2017. Since then, the U.S. has conducted more than 300 surveillance flights. Allied nations began flights on April 30, and have flown more than 200 surveillance flights to date. Since October 2017, there have been 30 instances when smugglers halted ship-to-ship transfers when observed by coalition naval forces at sea, according to a U.S. defense official. "We've increased pressure and have been collecting information on these illicit transfers and then feeding them back to our interagency partners for financial, law enforcement and diplomatic action," the official told NBC News. In September, the U.S. and its allies expanded surveillance of North Korea's smuggling, with an eight-nation coalition, including Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand, deploying warships and aircraft to better spot sanctions violations. The move came after a surge in ship-to-ship transfers this year, with North Korea obtaining black market fuel at sea — often with the help of Chinese and Russian counterparts. The smuggling flouts U.N. sanctions that strictly limit oil imports. A U.N. Security Council resolution in September 2017 put a cap on refined imports at 500,000 barrels a year for North Korea. A leaked report by U.N. sanctions experts in August, based on U.S. intelligence, found the number of transfers surging, with vessels turning off the transponders that show a ship's geographic location. Between January and May, North Korean ships made 89 deliveries of refined petroleum to the country's ports, U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley said in July. A senior Defense Department official recently described an escalating cat-and-mouse game with North Korea, as Pyongyang adapts its tactics to avoid being spotted by U.S. and allied aircraft and naval ships. "It's a sustained effort but I would tell you the North Koreans are learning, evolving, getting better so the ship-to-ship transfers are taking place farther away from the Peninsula," Randy Schriver, assistant secretary of defense for Asian and Pacific security affairs, said at a discussion this month at the University of Chicago Institute of Politics. "So they're getting better with their own attempts to evade, and we're evolving as well in terms of our sustained effort to disrupt that." The head of U.S. Pacific Command, Adm. Phil Davidson, told a small group of reporters last month that the U.S. has stepped up its participation in the coalition, recently dedicating two ships to the mission and increasing surveillance flights by 50 percent. Another effect of the North Korean ships moving into waters belonging to other nations is those countries can share their intelligence about the smuggling with the international coalition, the three U.S. officials said. Schriver said coalition vessels and aircraft have not carried out forced boardings of ships but have gleaned information that allows governments to uncover the smuggling networks. "What's equally as powerful as boarding a ship is taking a picture of the hull, getting information about the ship involved in the illegal activity, and that allows you to get to the insurers, the networks, the people financing the operation, and so we've been successful with a camera as much as we would be if we were to proceed to boardings." The crew of a Canadian naval ship taking part in the sanctions monitoring, the HMCS Calgary, reportedly saw several ship-to-ship oil transfers in recent months during its deployment in the East China Sea, with suspected blacklisted vessels taking part in some cases. The mere presence of a Western warship prompted some smugglers to quickly turn and flee the area, Canadian media reported. "We noted in a few instances that the transfers would wrap up quite quickly and they would have to escape. So our presence disrupted several of the transfers," said Cmdr. Blair Saltel. Having survived decades of economic sanctions, North Korea has honed techniques to skirt international prohibitions, using shell companies, illicit financing, stealthy shipping movements, and partners in China and Russia to smuggle in prohibited goods, experts and former officials said. Analysts and firms that track North Korean shipping data say there are numerous signs that the regime continues to use deception to move coal out of North Korean ports for sale and to obtain oil through ship-to-ship transfers at sea. "I think they're certainly trying to keep apace with the sanctions regime," said Lucas Kuo, an analyst at C4ADS, a nonprofit research organization that
uses data to track illicit networks. Two ships identified in a report by a U.N. panel this year for smuggling coal to Russian ports, the Sky Angel and the Sky Lady, continue to operate and recently made port visits to Japan — even obtaining insurance paperwork, according to maritime and shipping sites. The Sky Angel pulled into the Japanese port of Muroran in July, and Sky Lady made a port of call at Tomakomai on December 11. "The fact that they're still able to acquire this insurance at least raises some questions," Kuo said. Time-lapse videos from a San Francisco-based private company, Planet Labs, have shown coal shipments moving out of North Korean export facilities at Nampho and Rason over the past year. The videos indicate coal traffic ramped up during the course of 2018, the website NK Pro reported. Apart from smuggling, legal trade between China and its impoverished neighbor has picked up again since a drop in 2017, when Pyongyang had angered Beijing with a flurry of missile tests. Analysts that try to track the price of fuel in North Korea have detected no major spike in gasoline prices, despite the strict quotas imposed by the U.N. sanctions, with prices below peaks reached last year. "While the price of diesel and petrol in Pyongyang appeared stable between July and October, we did see a slight increase in the cost of both products in mid-October, though not above previous levels observed in 2018," said Hamish Macdonald of NK Pro. Experts and foreign diplomats say Washington's "maximum pressure" campaign has faltered since President Donald Trump met North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore in June, with China relaxing its enforcement of sanctions. Even the U.S. president has said he would prefer to drop the term "maximum pressure" given the positive tone of his discussions with Kim. Despite the tentative detente between Kim and Trump, the Treasury Department has continued to press ahead on sanctions against North Korea in recent months. Treasury has blacklisted more individuals, ships and companies accused of violating U.S. sanctions against North Korea, and issued warnings to businesses and insurance companies to stay away from vessels or organizations suspected of taking part in smuggling operations. Both China and Russia insist they are consistently abiding by U.N. Security Council resolutions on North Korea. As to whether China and Russia were fully enforcing international sanctions on Pyongyang, a State Department official told NBC News that all U.N. member states were obliged to carry out U.N. sanctions. Some lawmakers have long urged the U.S. to go after major Chinese banks or firms suspected of enabling North Korea's evasion of sanctions, arguing that Beijing helps insulate its neighbor from the full effect of international sanctions. But the Trump administration, like its predecessors, so far has chosen not to penalize large Chinese companies in connection with North Korea's sanction-busting. "The United States does not comment on internal deliberations regarding sanction designations, however our actions have made clear we will not hesitate to take unilateral action against entities that conduct prohibited activities or facilitate sanctions evasion," the State Department official said. (Courtney Kube and Dan De Luce, “Top Secret Report: North Korea Keeps Busting Sanctions, Evading U.S.-Led Sea Patrols,” NBC News, December 14, 2018)

Sigal: “The usual story going around Washington is that North Korea has no intention to denuclearize or to provide a complete and accurate declaration of all its nuclear facilities and inventory and allow the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) access to verify that declaration. According to this story, North Korea reneged on promises to take these steps in the past, and instead, temporarily suspended production of plutonium, impeded unfettered access for IAEA inspectors, secretly sought the means to enrich uranium, expelled the inspectors, and resumed plutonium production when its enrichment activity was challenged. This narrative is incomplete and misleading, because it ignores the crucial link between Pyongyang’s willingness to accept US requests for verification and Washington’s willingness to take steps to end enmity with North Korea. There is, in short, another way to interpret the troubled history of US-North Korean negotiations on verification. Invoking international law as decreed by the UN Security Council and imposing UN sanctions to punish North Korean transgressions—the crime-and-punishment approach—has never worked with Pyongyang. North Korea views verification as a path to a fundamentally new relationship with the United States. In return for denuclearization steps, it wants Washington, in the words of the Agreed Framework that the two signed in 1994, to “move toward full normalization of political and economic relations”—or end enmity and reconcile, starting with a peace declaration and some easing of or exemptions from US sanctions. To judge from what North Korean officials have told US officials and ex-officials for years, reconciliation
entails the normalization of political and economic relations, a “peace regime” on the Korean Peninsula, and potentially an alliance like the one the United States has with South Korea that would be backed by a continuing US troop presence on the peninsula rather than withdrawal. Pyongyang has offered to dismantle its Yongbyon nuclear complex in return for “corresponding measures” and hinted that it is willing to let the United States, not the IAEA, monitor that dismantlement. Pyongyang has seen the IAEA as treating it unfairly ever since 1993, when the Agency demanded a special inspection of its nuclear waste sites to determine whether it had reprocessed more plutonium than it had initially declared in 1992. Pyongyang likely views the IAEA as a US accomplice in the crime-and-punishment approach. And since the IAEA cannot satisfy the North’s desire for US reciprocity, never mind get Washington to reconcile, it likely wants US inspectors on the hook for verification—at least for now—to assure compliance.

Washington has moved part way to satisfy Pyongyang. It has put the peace declaration on the negotiating table. And it is no longer insisting on a complete declaration of North Korea’s nuclear assets as the first step in implementing the commitment it made at the Singapore Summit to “work toward complete denuclearization.” Instead, it seems prepared to phase in the declaration, starting with the location of its plutonium reactors, reprocessing and enrichment sites. Before asking for the amount of fissile material and number of weapons, it will seek access to the North’s nuclear test sites, uranium mines and sites where the uranium ore is refined and turned into a gas for enriching. This nuclear archeology will better enable it to assess how much fissile material the North could have produced. Vice President Mike Pence hinted at this nuclear archeology on November 15 when he spoke of “a plan …for identifying all the development sites,” and “allowing for inspection of the sites.” On September 27, 1991, President George H.W. Bush announced the removal of all US nuclear weapons from Korea. Within a month, North Korea halted the reprocessing of spent fuel to extract plutonium. On December 31, it concluded a Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula with South Korea pledging not to “possess facilities for nuclear reprocessing and enrichment.” On January 7, 1992, with President Bush in Seoul, South Korea announced the suspension of the annual Team Spirit joint military exercises. That very day, a DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman announced its intention to sign a safeguards agreement with the IAEA. On January 22, 1992, the first ever high-level meeting between a US and DPRK official took place with Under Secretary of State Arnold Kanter and Kim Yong Sun, the Korean Workers’ Party secretary for international affairs. On March 14, 1992, Pyongyang agreed to set up a Joint Nuclear Control Commission with Seoul to monitor their denuclearization accord. On April 10, the DPRK Supreme Assembly ratified its safeguards agreement with the IAEA. The following month, IAEA Director-General Hans Blix made an official visit to Yongbyon during which he toured the unfinished reprocessing plant and received a 150-page initial declaration inventorying Pyongyang’s nuclear material and equipment. This sequence strongly suggests North Korea’s willingness to accommodate the United States on verification in return for US steps to end enmity. During the Blix visit, DPRK officials asked for the IAEA’s help to acquire light-water reactors and supply them with nuclear fuel in return for abandoning reprocessing, a request that the IAEA had no ability to satisfy. When the North Koreans repeated the request to US diplomats in Beijing on June 1, Washington dismissed the idea out of hand. Things went downhill from there. The most surprising revelation in its declaration was that North Korea had reprocessed spent fuel once, extracting 90 grams of plutonium. In July 1992, an IAEA inspector took smear samples that revealed an “anomaly” in that declaration. They showed that the North had conducted reprocessing on three separate occasions in 1989, 1990 and 1991. The IAEA reached no firm conclusion about the amount of plutonium extracted. Some US intelligence estimates put that amount at 1-2 bombs’ worth. Subsequent analysis by the nuclear labs would call that amount into question; it estimated the range from 90 grams to less than a bomb’s worth. But the original estimate would drive policy for many years to come and would prompt the IAEA to ask for a special inspection of nuclear waste sites at Yongbyon on February 12, 1993, a request that the North rejected. Even worse, on October 8, 1992, Washington and Seoul decided to resume the Team Spirit joint military exercises the following March. At an October 22 meeting to work out nuclear inspections, the North demanded that the South cancel Team Spirit, or it would call off the talks on the Joint Nuclear Control Commission to implement verification. On March 8, 1993, Team Spirit kicked off. On March 12, the DPRK Foreign Minister gave 90 days’ notice of its intent to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), citing the
Troubled Past,” to come.” (Leon V. Sigal, “To North Korea, Verifying Requires Reconciling: The Lesson from a Troubled Past,” 38North, December 14, 2018)

Team Spirit “nuclear war rehearsal” and the IAEA Board of Governors’ “unjust” demand. From that point on, it would allow the IAEA to monitor some Yongbyon sites “for the continuity of safeguards” but, citing its unique status with regard to the NPT, it has never again allowed ad hoc routine inspections. Failure to remain on the road to reconciliation had thrown nuclear inspections into a ditch. The “decision” to “withdraw” from the NPT was not final: the DPRK told the UN Security Council it would last “until the US nuclear threats and the unjust conduct of the IAEA against the DPRK will be recognized to have been removed.” It was an opening to diplomatic give-and-take that Washington seized. On June 11, 1993, the United States agreed with the DPRK in their first ever joint statement to the principles of: “Assurances against threat and use of force, including nuclear weapons; peace and security in a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula, including impartial application of full-scope safeguards, mutual respect for each other’s sovereignty and non-interference in each other’s internal affairs; and support for the reunification of Korea.” The North, in turn, “decided unilaterally to suspend as long as it considers necessary the effectuation of its withdrawal” from the NPT. Months of back and forth between Washington and Pyongyang resulted in some forward movement but diplomacy broke down in March 1993 with the collapse of the “Super Tuesday,” arrangement intended to secure forward movement in the North’s discussions with South Korea and the International Atomic Energy Agency, both important players in dealing with the nuclear issue. The crisis reached a climax in May 1994 when the North began unloading plutonium-laden spent fuel from its reactor but was defused when former President Jimmy Carter met with Kim Il Sung. Four months of further negotiations yielded the 1994 Agreed Framework that October. In return for US willingness to “move toward full normalization of political and economic relations,” including the provision of two light-water reactors and heavy fuel oil in the interim, the DPRK suspended the operation of its reactor and reprocessing plant at Yongbyon pending their eventual dismantlement and put the spent nuclear fuel unloaded from its reactor that May into dry casks under around-the-clock monitoring by the IAEA for “continuity of safeguards.” Upon completion of the supply contract for the reactors, the North pledged to permit ad hoc and routine inspections; it also promised that once a “significant portion” of the LWR project was completed, but before delivery of key nuclear components, it would come into full compliance with its safeguards agreement and take all the steps deemed necessary by the IAEA to verify the accuracy of its questionable 1992 initial declaration of nuclear material. The North thereupon shut down the reactor and reprocessing plant and granted access for the IAEA to monitor it. The accord showed how steps to end enmity might facilitate verification. But again, hopes would soon be dashed. In 1997, after Washington had taken only minimal steps to end enmity, was slow to get the reactor project off the ground, and had seldom delivered the promised heavy fuel oil on schedule, the DPRK began warning that if the United States did not live up to the Agreed Framework, it was not obliged to do so either. It soon began to acquire the means to enrich uranium from Pakistan and elsewhere. Yet it made no attempt to reprocess the spent fuel stored under monitoring at Yongbyon or to restart its reactor. Six years would elapse before it would do so. By then, according to US intelligence estimates, it had foregone generating enough fissile material for 100 nuclear weapons. It had also allowed its nuclear facilities, worth many millions of dollars, to deteriorate to a point where they could not be salvaged. Nevertheless, the Bush administration, seizing on intelligence that the North was stepping up its acquisition of centrifuges and other uranium enrichment equipment, confronted it in October 2002. Spurning a North Korean offer to negotiate on the issue and ignoring opposition from South Korea and Japan, Washington suspended shipments of promised energy aid, thereby tearing up the Agreed Framework. While US forces were tied down preparing to invade Iraq, North Korea retaliated by expelling the IAEA inspectors. It then reprocessed the spent fuel removed from the reactor in 1994 and extracted five or six bombs’ worth of plutonium, which, when weaponized, would allow it to conduct nuclear tests for the first time. It also moved to restart its reactor, ramped up its enrichment effort, and aided Syria in constructing a reactor of its own. Had Washington lived up to its obligations, would Pyongyang have done so? There is no way to know for sure. But IAEA monitoring was the first victim of US failure to reconcile. More tit-for-tat on verification was still to come.” (Leon V. Sigal, “To North Korea, Verifying Requires Reconciling: The Lesson from a Troubled Past,” 38North, December 14, 2018)
Institute for American Studies of the DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs policy research director’s statement: “It is a significant event for ensuring peace and security of the region and beyond that the top leaders of the DPRK and the U.S. committed themselves to improve the DPRK-U.S. relations at the historic DPRK-U.S. summit held in Singapore last June, and the current DPRK-U.S. relations are advancing along the steadfast will of the top leaders to follow through on the Singapore DPRK-U.S. Joint Statement in good faith. However, the continued commission by the United States of vicious anti-DPRK hostile actions, running counter to these developments, prompts my shock and indignation. During the past six months since the Singapore DPRK-U.S. summit, the U.S. high-ranking politicians including the secretary of state have almost every day slandered the DPRK out of sheer malice, and the State Department and the Treasury Department have taken anti-DPRK sanctions measures for as many as eight times against the companies, individuals and ships of not only the DPRK but also Russia, China and other third countries by fabricating pretexts of all hues such as money laundering, illegal transactions through ship-to-ship transfer and cyber-attack. Recently, the U.S. is resorting to anti-DPRK human rights plot in such a way that it carries deliberate provocation by adding high-ranking government officials of the DPRK, a sovereign state, to its unilateral sanctions list, while taking issue with the non-existent "human rights issue." Now, the international society is unanimous in welcoming the proactive denuclearization steps taken by the DPRK and urging the U.S. to respond to these steps in a corresponding manner. And president Trump avails himself of every possible occasion to state his willingness to improve DPRK-U.S. relations. Far from the statements of the president, the State Department is instead bent on bringing the DPRK-U.S. relations back to the status of last year which was marked by exchanges of fire. I cannot help but throw doubt on the ulterior motive of the State Department. If they are a sort of diplomats of "only superpower", they should at least realize from the past record of the DPRK-U.S. relations that sanctions and pressure would not work against the DPRK. The United States will not be unaware of the self-evident fact that its threat, blackmail and pressure against the other side cannot be a solution under the relations of pent-up confrontation, mistrust and hostility between the DPRK and the U.S. and deterioration of the situation that might be incurred by these hostile actions would not be beneficial for peace and security of the Korean peninsula and beyond. Since we know too well that the deep-rooted hostility between the DPRK and the U.S. cannot be redressed overnight, we have been proposing that the DPRK-U.S. relations be improved on a step-by-step approach of resolving what is feasible one by one, by giving priority to confidence building. If the high-ranking politicians within the U.S. administration including the State Department had calculated that they could drive us into giving up nuclear weapons by way of increasing the anti-DPRK sanctions and pressure and human rights racket to an unprecedented level, which has nothing to do with confidence building, it will count as greatest miscalculation, and it will block the path to denuclearization on the Korean peninsula forever - a result desired by no one. The U.S. should realize before it is too late that "maximum pressure" would not work against us and take a sincere approach to implementing the Singapore DPRK-U.S. Joint Statement."


12/18/18

DoS briefing: “PALLADINO: Ben. Let’s go to NHK. ...Q: Yeah. Can I just ask what the current status is with U.S.-DPRK negotiations? I know you put out an announcement that Steve Biegun is going to South Korea, but it seems he’s only meeting with South Korean counterparts. And over the weekend, North Korea put out some pretty strong statements after U.S. sanctions. So I’m just wondering, are you still having daily communications? Is there any sort of positive progress? PALLADINO: Yeah, give me a second here. As you point out, our special representative has gone – is about to depart, I think, and – if I’m going to be clear – and he will be on his way to South Korea. You saw the media note early today. To your first question, your first question was does communication still continue. I would say communication is ongoing, yes. And so as far as the status of what is going on right now, I would say our goal remains the same, and that is to achieve the final, fully verified denuclearization of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea as committed to by Chairman Kim in Singapore. And at that summit in Singapore, President Trump and Chairman Kim, they made the first leader-level United States-Democratic People’s Republic of Korea commitment on denuclearization in history. And the United States remains confident that
the commitments made by President Trump and Chairman Kim at their summit in Singapore will be fulfilled. Q: Still (inaudible)? QUESTION: Robert, follow-up -- MR PALLADINO: It’s Chairman Kim’s commitment to denuclearization upon which the world remains focused. Follow-up? Q: Follow-up. PALLADINO: Please, Janne. Q: Thank you. You said that Singapore – that the Chairman Kim commitment on denuclearizations in Korean Peninsula – he never mentioned about denuclearizations in North Korea. What is different concept? Because Chairman Kim recently – he mentioned that – he never mentioned the denuclearization, their country, Seoul -- PALLADINO: Yeah. I haven’t seen those comments, but our focus remains denuclearization of North Korea, and that’s where we’re pushing. So -- Q: So we’re a little confused at the -- PALLADINO: Don’t be confused. Our policy hasn’t changed. Q: Wait. PALLADINO: We are focused on the denuclearization of North Korea. We remain confident and we look forward to the commitments that Chairman Kim and that President Trump have made, and -- Q: One more follow-on -- QUESTION: That means – the denuclearization in Korean Peninsula meaning is the denuclearization in North Korea; is that right? PALLADINO: I don’t want to split words, and I think our policy has been clear. Let’s go right there, please. Q: All right. So on the special representative’s travel to South Korea, he’s going to Seoul, but will he make any stop to Panmunjom while he’s there? PALLADINO: I have nothing to announce on his trip during this – nothing to announce on future plans. I know – I think in the media note we outlined some of the meetings that he would be engaged in. There will be follow-up discussions to their November 20th meeting that they had here in Washington. He’ll be meeting with the Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs Representative Lee Do-hoon and other Republic of Korea officials. This is very much focused on strengthening United States-Republic of Korea coordination. And this is all about our shared objective for the final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea. And while he’s in Seoul, Special Representative Biegun and Special Representative Lee, they’re both going to also co-chair as – the United States-Republic of Korea working group meeting, and that’s going to be focused on our joint efforts to achieve this goal and to flesh that out further. And that will include inter-Korean cooperation projects as well. Q: A follow-up? PALLADINO: Yeah. North - - Q: Speaking of this – U.S.-ROK coordination, the United States and South Korea have failed so far to reach an agreement on President Trump’s demand that the South Koreans pay more to support U.S. troops stationed in South Korea, despite many meetings on this. Is there concern within the department that the failure to reach such an agreement is undermining the denuclearization talks, because it shows a lack of unity between North and – the U.S. and South Korea right now? PALLADINO: Talks are ongoing, and the United States-Republic of Korea relationship, that really is a linchpin of – for peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and in the region. And we’ll continue working together. Let’s go – please, right there. Right there. Q: North Korea has complained against the U.S. recent sanctions, saying it breaks the progress on the talks. So do you see you’re still making talks with North Korea? And is Secretary Pompeo going to resume his talk with his counterpart? The previous meeting was canceled last month. Are you still going to resume the talk? PALLADINO: Regarding your question on sanctions, I would just say the world remains united in enforcing and implementing United Nations sanctions until the final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea. And President Trump himself has been very clear on this. President Trump has made it clear that sanctions relief will follow denuclearization. And the sooner North Korea denuclearizes, the sooner sanctions can be lifted. ... (Deputy Spokesperson Robert Palladino, Department of State Press Briefing, December 18, 2018)
South Korean officials. International aid groups have complained that Washington’s strict enforcement of sanctions against the North, including the travel ban imposed on American citizens last year, has hampered their operations in the country. North Korea is one of the world’s poorest nations, and many of its citizens suffer from chronic malnutrition and shortages of medical care. The sanctions have been enforced so vigorously that aid groups have said that it has become nearly impossible to transfer cash for their daily operations in the North, or even take any metal objects, like shovels and water pumps, there. Biegun’s comment came three days after North Korea warned that if the United States continued to escalate its sanctions and highlighted human rights issues in the country, it could “forever” shatter any chance of denuclearizing the North. In Seoul, Biegun plans to meet with South Korean officials to coordinate the allies’ policies on North Korea, including the enforcement of sanctions. South Korea has been eager to improve its ties with the North, and initiated an 18-day field study in recent weeks on the condition of North Korea’s rail systems. The two Koreas plan to hold a groundbreaking ceremony next Wednesday for a joint project to modernize and reconnect cross-border roads and railway tracks. The ceremony is to take place at Panmun Station just north of the western land border between the two countries. Whether any significant engineering work can take place will depend on progress in ridding the North of its nuclear arms. International sanctions imposed on the North over its weapons program forbid the kind of significant investment from the South that such infrastructure work would entail. Washington has insisted that South Korea refrain from joint economic projects with the North until the country takes important steps toward denuclearization. The meeting Biegun will attend is expected to focus on ensuring that the inter-Korean project proceeds in a way that does not violate international sanctions. The Trump administration enacted the travel ban on North Korea in September last year, after an American university student, Otto F. Warmbier, died as a result of brain damage suffered in a North Korean prison. The ban affected a dozen American nonprofit groups that work regularly in North Korea, although some aid workers have been able to get “special validation” to travel to the North, in the form of one-time-only passports issued by the State Department. (Choe Sang-hun, “U.S. Plans to Review Ban on Trips to North Korea,” New York Times, December 20, 2018, p. A-11)

Stephen Biegun, the U.S. special representative for North Korea, conveyed multiple times to Seoul that the issue of cost-sharing for the stationing of U.S. Forces in Korea is linked to the Pyongyang nuclear issue during his visit here last week, according to multiple diplomatic sources December 28. Biegun made a four-day visit to Seoul from December 19 to 22, where he held a working group meeting on North Korea’s denuclearization that he co-chaired with his South Korean counterpart Lee Do-hoon, the special representative for Korean Peninsula peace and security affairs. Multiple diplomatic sources said that while defense cost-sharing is not in Biegun’s portfolio, he is “very familiar with details of the negotiations.” One source said, “If the defense cost-sharing issue is not resolved in a manner intended by U.S. President Donald Trump, there is a concern that he will approach it not only as an economic issue but that he would link it to the North Korea nuclear issue.” Washington seems to be saying that Seoul will have to accept the Trump administration’s demands for a sharp increase in contributions in a new defense cost-sharing agreement currently under negotiation if it wants its own position on North-U.S. talks and denuclearization to be accepted. “America shouldn’t be doing the fighting for every nation on earth, not being reimbursed in many cases at all,” Trump said in a speech to troops in Iraq on Wednesday. “If they want us to do the fighting, they also have to pay a price.” He continued. “And sometimes that’s also a monetary price, so we’re not the suckers of the world.” Trump, in keeping with his tough stance on defense burden-sharing with allies, tweeted on December 24: “We don’t want to be subsidizing rich countries at the disadvantage to us.” Since March, Seoul and Washington have been negotiating a renewal of their bilateral Special Measures Agreement (SMA), a multiyear cost-sharing deal under the Status of Forces Agreement for the maintaining of U.S. troops in Korea, which is set to expire at the end of this year. Washington is demanding Seoul pay significantly more, around 150 percent the current amount, according to U.S. media reports. The latest round of talks took place in Seoul from December 11 to 13, but the two sides failed to strike a new deal. Amid a deadlock in the latest round of negotiations for a new bilateral cost-sharing agreement, the 10th round since 1991, Washington was said to have proposed during the most recent meeting to set the expiration date of the new deal to one year, shortened from the
current five years. This could be a tactic by the Trump administration to gain more time as it conducts a comprehensive review of defense burden-sharing deals to increase the contributions of allies including Japan and NATO. Under the current deal, Seoul pays annually around 960 billion won ($860 million), or around half the cost of the stationing of some 28,500 U.S. troops in Korea. Seoul is said to have conveyed that it cannot accept a steep increase in its contributions nor a one-year deal. A government official said, “The government position is that it is difficult to increase the contribution to above 1 trillion from 960 billion won this year.” During his Seoul visit, Biegun conveyed the message that a “roadmap” for North Korea denuclearization has been completed that deals with the easing of sanctions on Pyongyang. (Cha Se-hyeon, Chun Su-jin, and Sarah Kim, “U.S. Increases Pressure on Cost-Sharing,” JoongAng Ilbo, December 29, 2018)

Biegun: “.... It is a pleasure to be back here in Seoul. This will be my 18th meeting with my counterpart Ambassador Lee Do-hoon, and it is wonderful to be here again and to have the opportunity to work with a close ally South Korea. This week Ambassador Lee and I will resume our discussions on how to work together to engage the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in a manner that will help us move forward and move beyond the 70 years of hostility that have divided the Korean Peninsula, the Korean people, and the United States and the DPRK. Toward that end, upon my return to Washington, D.C., next week, I have been directed by Secretary of State Pompeo to review United States policy on humanitarian assistance provided to the DPRK by private and religious American organizations. I understand many humanitarian aid organizations operating in the DPRK are concerned that strict enforcement of international sanctions has occasionally impeded the delivery of legitimate humanitarian assistance to the Korean people. I will be sitting down with American aid groups early in the New Year to discuss how we can better ensure the delivery of appropriate assistance, particularly through the course of the coming winter. We will also review American citizen travel to the DPRK for purposes of facilitating the delivery of aid and ensuring that monitoring in line with international standards can occur. Beginning last year, the United States imposed strict limits on the approval of travel of U.S. citizens to the DPRK. These limits may also have impacted the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Two months ago, an American citizen was detained for illegally entering the DPRK. The government of the DPRK handled the review of the American citizen’s expulsion expeditiously and with great discretion and sensitivity through diplomatic channels. This step gives us greater confidence about the safety and security of Americans traveling to the DPRK and will be one factor that we consider as we review travel requests by American representatives of humanitarian aid groups. I want to be clear. The United States and the United Nations will continue to closely review requests for exemptions and licenses for the delivery of assistance to the DPRK. We will still prioritize the safety and security of Americans as we review the requests for travel. And we will continue to expect that humanitarian aid organizations to meet international standards for access and monitoring of their programs. However, we also believe the conditions are right for us to reevaluate how these policies are implemented, and we plan to do so early next year. I look forward to a productive set of meetings with my counterpart Ambassador Lee Do-hoon this week. We may have more things to say to the press at the end of our meetings.” (DoS, Special Representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun, Remarks, Incheon International Airport Seoul, December 19, 2018)

“Regarding the issue of North Korea’s denuclearization, it would be an accurate assessment to say that the process (of talks between the US and the North) is not fully on track at the moment,” Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon told reporters. “There have been a US-North Korea summit and interactions between ranking officials from both sides, but we remain at a stage where both sides are struggling to be on the same page regarding practical and corresponding measures on denuclearization,” he added. A high-ranking government official later explained that once both sides start discussing detailed corresponding measures, the process will gain traction or enter a new stage. The official also noted that the lack of trust between the US and North Korea was an obstacle to the negotiations. “North Korea said that if the US takes corresponding measures it would accept inspection of the Yongbyon nuclear complex. But it seems the problem stems from
North Korea’s struggles to ‘calculate’ whether it will be able to safely secure sanctions relief when it makes that move,” he said. But the official added that Washington and Pyongyang are starting to “understand each other a little,” suggesting that the government is still optimistic that both sides will continue the momentum of dialogue. The official said Pyongyang could start by declaring a nuclear freeze, then move on to partial or complete dismantlement of its nuclear weapons upon submitting an inventory of the weapons. It could then accept relevant inspections in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency. The US, in return, could take nonpolitical and nonmilitary measures, sign a peace treaty, or establish diplomatic relations with the North, he added. (Jung Min-kyung, “Denuclearization Process Not Yet ‘Fully on Track’: Unification Minister,” Korea Herald, December 19, 2018)

KCNA: “A commentary "It would be better to search for a new way rather than facing a barrier in the old way" was made public by Jong Hyon [Cho'ng Hyo'n] on Thursday [20 December]. The "handshake of epochal significance" between the top leaders of the DPRK and the U.S., which had been at the greatest odds on earth, in Singapore on June 12 and the subsequent publication of the DPRK-U.S. joint statement evoked the world's repercussion as a "strong message of peace" and "blessings on humankind," the commentary said, and went on: Six months have passed since then, but in the course of analyzing in detail the hardly understandable words and acts the U.S. made when approaching the DPRK-U.S. relations and its improper behaviors seen during negotiations, we could see what the knotty problem is. It was the U.S. misguided understanding of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. In other words, the U.S. regards the big concept of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula as the same as the partial concept of the "denuclearization of north Korea." The June 12 DPRK-U.S. joint statement signed by the top leaders of both sides and supported by the whole world does not contain any phrase called "denuclearization of north Korea." It only contains the phrase "denuclearization of the Korean peninsula." However, the State secretary of the U.S. who took part in the epochal event in Singapore himself is asserting that "north Korea committed itself to complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of north Korea there." This is something aghast. By replacing the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula with "the denuclearization of north Korea," the U.S. tries to cause the optical illusion of the people in their view of the DPRK-U.S. relations, and stop them from making a correct judgment. The U.S. must have a clear understanding of the phrase, denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, and study geology, in particular, before it is too late. When we refer to the Korean peninsula, they include both the area of the DPRK and the area of south Korea where aggression troops including the nuclear weapons of the U.S. are deployed. When we refer to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, it, therefore, means removing all elements of nuclear threats from the areas of both the north and the south of Korea and also from surrounding areas from where the Korean peninsula is targeted. This should be clearly understood. Therefore, it is a self-evident truth that the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is a joint work which can never come true unless the DPRK and the U.S. make joint efforts. It was the U.S which forced the DPRK to possess the nuclear weapons as a war deterrent as the former posed steady threats to the latter with nuclear weapons through the deployment of nuclear strategic assets and nuclear war exercises after shipping massive nuclear weapons to the Korean peninsula which was originally non-nuclear zone. In the light of this fact, it would be proper to say that the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula means "completely removing the nuclear threats of the U.S.to the DPRK," before it means the elimination of its nuclear deterrence. However, we have shown the U.S. which has thousands of nuclear weapons enough to destroy the earth several times, the country which has not changed even a single point-mark in its nuclear attack map targeting the DPRK, our will to denuclearization in practice and in a preemptive way, not in words. What we asked the U.S. to take as a corresponding measure was not a thing that is hard to decide and hard to put into practice for the U.S. The end of the hostile policy toward the DPRK and the lift of unwarranted sanctions measures are what the U.S. can do without a knuckle of finger, only if it has a will. If the U.S. sincerely wishes for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, can it go so strange as now? It is persisting in the maintenance of sanctions on the DPRK and pressure over the issue of "human rights." It seems it is thinking of rattling the DPRK, a country of high sense of dignity, and disrupting the negotiations. Or it is trying to find a way of derailing the improvement of relations and the
The denuclearization process by inventing absurd "evidence" called "strange signs" in nuclear and missile bases of the DPRK. Voices of concern are heard from the U.S.to the effect that finding a way for the denuclearization, given the present stalemate of the DPRK-U.S. negotiations, would be like a groping for a way in the middle of desert. But there is a way. **If the U.S. gives up the ambition for denuclearization by dint of high-handed practices and pressure and unilateral "denuclearization of north Korea", the way-out will be shown.** Only when it keenly realizes that the application of American formula that "diplomacy is the continuation of war by dint of other means of violence" and the persistence of "maximum pressure" will invite disastrous results, the road will come to its sight. It would be better to look for a new way, rather than facing a barrier on the old way. (KCNA, “Korea’s Denuclearization Requires Removal of ‘All’ Nuclear Threats,” December 20, 2018)

Carlin: “Just a week after the last high-level commentary carried by KCNA, another one by the same author—Jong Hyon—appeared on December 20. This one has caused a considerable reaction in Western media, though it actually contains little that is new. The focus of attention has been on the commentary’s brief discussion of denuclearization: “When we refer to the Korean peninsula, they include both the area of the DPRK and the area of south Korea where aggression troops including the nuclear weapons of the U.S. are deployed. When we refer to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, it, therefore, means removing all elements of nuclear threats from the areas of both the north and the south of Korea and also from surrounding areas from where the Korean peninsula is targeted.” This is not a new North Korean position, though observers might be excused for mistaking it for a shift, or the uncovering of something that had heretofore been hidden. Since this July, the focus of the North Korean public position on denuclearization has been on sanctions, and the problem is portrayed as flowing from the oft-stated US policy that sanctions would not be lifted until the North had finished dismantling its nuclear program. In some cases, the North complained the US was calling for the North’s “unilateral” denuclearization. The North’s counter has been that denuclearization was embedded in a broader process of US-DPRK normalization and peace. Pyongyang’s stated position that this would probably not proceed quickly, and that the process should proceed step by step, starting with what was “feasible.” The North said it had kick-started the process by taking a number of unilateral steps (e.g. shutting down the nuclear test site) and putting on the table several others (e.g. in September offering to dismantle key facilities in Yongbyon if the US would take “corresponding actions in line with the spirit of the June 12 DPRK-U.S. joint statement.”) In September, Kim Jong Un introduced a new formulation, “to turn this land into a nest of peace where neither nuclear weapons nor nuclear threat exist.” There was no public elaboration of that position, but it stood—albeit in abstract, somewhat poetic terms—as a new DPRK definition of denuclearization. Undoubtedly, it was meant to be consistent with the June 12 US-DPRK Singapore Summit joint statement calling for “complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” No one at the time should have imagined that by this terminology (denuclearization of the “Korean Peninsula”) the North meant anything other than its already established call for US steps to remove its “nuclear threat” against the DPRK. In effect, Kim’s introduction of the new formulation was cueing up the issue of what Pyongyang intended to raise as the US half of the denuclearization issue. This is a point the latest Jong Hyon commentary emphasized with relish: “It was the U.S. misguided understanding of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. In other words, the U.S. regards the big concept of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula as the same as the partial concept of the “denuclearization of north Korea.” The June 12 DPRK-U.S. joint statement signed by the top leaders of both sides and supported by the whole world does not contain any phrase called ‘denuclearization of north Korea.’ It only contains the phrase ‘denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.’” **In the background.** A fuller exposition of the North’s view on the US half of the denuclearization issue exists—and apparently is still relevant—in a July 6, 2016 DPRK Government spokesman’s statement. That statement asserted: “We clearly state that the denuclearization we call for is the denuclearization of the entire Korean Peninsula. This includes the South’s nuclear abolition and the denuclearization of the areas around South Korea.” The statement went on to elaborate by listing five points. “First, all nuclear weapons of the United States, which it has neither confirmed nor denied after bringing them into South Korea, must be publicly disclosed. Second,
abolished, and their abolition verified before the world. Third, a guarantee must be made that the United States will never again introduce the means of nuclear strike to the Korean Peninsula and its surrounding areas, where it has frequently deployed them. (Note: Jong Hyon’s formulation is somewhat more restrictive, “from surrounding areas from where the Korean peninsula is targeted.”) Fourth, a firm commitment must be made to not threaten or blackmail us with nuclear weapons or through acts of war that mobilize nuclear weapons, and to not use nuclear weapons against our Republic under any circumstances. Fifth, the withdrawal of the US forces, which hold the right to use nuclear weapons, from South Korea must be declared.” **Bottom line.** Other than warning that continuation of current US policy will have “disastrous results,” the Jong Hyon commentary contains no threats. Its prescription for “a way out,” is relatively simple, and somewhat Delphic, giving Pyongyang maximum room to maneuver if the process manages to move back into negotiations: “If the U.S. gives up the ambition for denuclearization by dint of high-handed practices and pressure and unilateral “denuclearization of north Korea,” the way-out will be shown.” (Robert Carlin, “DPRK Repeats Stance on Denuclearization,” December 21, 2018)

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis resigned after clashing with President Trump over the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syria and Afghanistan, saying in a parting letter that the president deserves someone atop the Pentagon “better aligned” with his views. The retired Marine general’s surprise resignation came a day after Trump shocked American allies and overruled his advisers, including Mattis, upon announcing a withdrawal from Syria. In the process, Trump declared victory over the Islamic State, even though the Pentagon and State Department for months have been saying the fight against the group in Syria isn’t over. Trump also ordered the Pentagon, against Mattis’s recommendation, to come up with a plan to withdraw approximately half of the American troops deployed to Afghanistan, a move that military officials have warned could plunge the nation into chaos. (Paul Sonne, Josh Dawsey and Missy Ryan, “After Syria Rift, Mattis Resigns,” *Washington Post*, December 21, 2018, p. A-1)

"The United States has no intention of easing our unilateral or United Nations sanctions” on Pyongyang, stressed Stephen Biegun, the US Special Representative for North Korea. “However, within the context of the engagement that we have with the DPRK (North Korea), we are prepared to explore number of other things that could build trust. We do have a number of initiatives we'd like to look at as we begin the process of denuclearization in North Korea.” Biegun’s comments come a day after US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo voiced hope that a second Trump-Kim summit can be scheduled for early 2019. The US envoy declined to detail the initiatives, but he has previously said Washington will be more lenient in enforcing a blanket travel ban in cases where Americans are heading to North Korea for humanitarian assistance. Biegun was in Seoul coordinating policies toward the North with his South Korean counterpart Lee Do-hoon, including on a highly symbolic groundbreaking ceremony due next week for reconnecting and modernizing cross-border roads and railways on the peninsula. Lee said they had agreed that the ceremony should go ahead as scheduled, as Seoul seeks to head off possible controversy over breaching sanctions against Pyongyang. (AFP, “U.S. Prepared to Discuss Trust-Building with N. Korea: Envoy,” December 21, 2018) South Korea and the United States agreed today that a highly symbolic inter-Korean event will be held in North Korea next week as scheduled, Seoul's top nuclear envoy said. After a "working group" meeting with Washington's special representative for North Korea, Stephen Biegun, Lee Do-hoon said the two Koreas will also proceed with their joint war remains recovery program under the Trump administration's agreement. The issue of providing North Korean residents with Tamiflu, an antiviral medication, has been also resolved, Lee told reporters. The two Koreas plan to hold a groundbreaking ceremony in the North’s border town of Kaesong on Wednesday for their work to modernize and re-connect cross-border roads and railways. (Yonhap, “U.S. Okays Groundbreaking Ceremony for Inter-Korean Infrastructure Project: Official,” December 21, 2018)

South Korea has asked the United States to provide wider exemptions to sanctions on North Korea imposed by the U.N. Security Council Sanctions Committee (UNSC), as Seoul is aiming to
expand joint economic and business projects with Pyongyang. A senior Cheong Wa Dae official
told the Korea Times that National Security Office chief Chung Eui-yong asked Stephen Biegun,
the U.S. special envoy for North Korea, for wider exemptions on sanctions on North Korea during
Biegun's recent visit. "At an afternoon tea meeting late Friday at Cheong Wa Dae, Chung told
Biegun that wider exemptions for UNSC sanctions on North Korea are needed in a step to build
trust between the two Koreas and Washington and Pyongyang ahead of the upcoming second
U.S.-North Korea summit," the official said, asking not to be identified. South Korea needs
exemptions from the UNSC to carry out joint economic projects with North Korea. Common
worries are that despite the ongoing efforts by Seoul to move ahead with various types of
ambitious inter-Korean business projects such as connecting rail networks, those projects Seoul
envisions could violate sanctions and weaken the U.S.-South Korea alliance. The Cheong Wa Dae
official said Seoul's unification ministry would soon provide up to $8 million in humanitarian aid
to North Korea. However, the offer, which was initially at the request of U.S. affiliates and the
plan for which was approved by the South Korean government, is still pending. "As President
Moon Jae-in's earlier attempts for a sanctions-easing pitch apparently fell flat because of differing
thinking between key stakeholders in the denuclearization talks, Seoul is applying needs-based
and case-by-case scenarios in assessing North Korean sanctions-related issues," the official said.
"Biegun told Chung he will discuss with U.S. officials exploring ways to help inter-Korean
economic projects see further progress." In 2016, the UNSC imposed sanctions on North Korea in
response to its fourth nuclear weapon test and a long-range missile launch. Beyond railway and
road reconnection projects, Seoul is hoping for early normalization of its symbolic and massive
business projects such as the Mount Kumgang tourism project and the Kaesong Industrial
Complex. But in the absence of waivers and exemptions from the UNSC, which the United States
as a member would have to back up, such moves would violate sanctions. U.N. Resolution 2375,
issued in September 2017, prohibits "forming joint ventures or cooperative entities, new and
existing, with North Korea entities or individuals." The Cheong Wa Dae official did not elaborate
on whether Chung asked the visiting U.S. envoy for more concessions to restart the tourism
project or for resumption of the industrial complex. The Chung-Biegun meeting came a few hours
after U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the U.S. had received a commitment from North
Korean leader Kim Jong-un in the denuclearization process. "There remains a long ways to go, but
we are hard at it even today," Pompeo told NPR. "The North Koreans have not suffered an
economic sanctions regime like the one that the Trump administration has imposed and continues
to impose. We're going to loosen travel restrictions. Also, we are counting on a second summit."
(Kim Yoo-chul, "Seoul Seeks Wider Sanctions Exemptions for North Korea," Korea Times,
December 21, 2018)

The top U.S. point man on North Korea said his government is "eager" to move on to the next
stage of talks with the communist nation in an apparent effort to move their stalled
denuclearization negotiations forward. Stephen Biegun, special representative for North Korea,
also reaffirmed Washington's willingness to ease restrictions on humanitarian assistance for the
impoverished country. "Humanitarian assistance is not blocked by the U.N. sanctions. However,
some of the reviews of licenses and travel approvals do affect the ability of humanitarian
organizations to do very important work in North Korea," he told reporters after meeting with his
South Korean counterpart, Lee Do-hoon. The U.S. official, however, made it clear that the U.S.
will stick to its sanctions until North Korea takes further steps for denuclearization, while leaving
open the door for efforts aimed at building mutual trust with the North. "The U.S. has no intention
of easing our unilateral or U.N. sanctions," he said. "However, within the context of the
engagement we had with the DPRK, we are prepared to explore a number of other things that
could build trust between the U.S. and North Korea." DPRK is the abbreviation for the North's
official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Asked about the Seoul government's
push for the provision of US$8 million worth of humanitarian aid to the North through
international agencies, Biegun said the U.S. will review how to approve related licenses. "We
talked about these issues and we agreed to take some steps moving forward in the next year. We
will have more to say about it at our next meeting," he said. (Yonhap, "Biegun Says U.S. Is Eager
for Follow-up Talks with N. Korea," December 21, 2018) The top US nuclear envoy said Friday
that successful cooperation between South Korea and the US will help bring an end to "war and
hostility” on the Korean Peninsula, while adding that the US was excited to hear the results of the two Koreas’ joint railway survey. “The work we do together is not just for US-South Korea relations, it’s for the future of the Korean Peninsula,” Stephen Biegun said during a meeting with South Korean Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon in Seoul. “And if we are successful, we will close a chapter of 70 years of war and hostility on the Korean Peninsula and create a new, brighter future for all of the Korean people,” he added. (Jung Min-kyung, “Allies Cooperation to End Hostility on Korean Peninsula, Excited to Hear Results of Railway Survey: Top U.S. Nuclear Envoy,” Korea Herald, December 21, 2018)

Vice President Mike Pence was expected to give a speech on North Korea's human rights abuses last week, adding firepower to an announcement of new sanctions and the release of a report on dictator Kim Jong Un's brutal rule. But the speech was scrapped amid tensions in U.S.-North Korean talks over the regime's nuclear weapons program. An official in Pence's office said the cancellation was because of a scheduling conflict. But another source familiar with the plans said it was in part because of concerns about angering or alienating North Korea and further derailing nuclear talks. Human rights groups are concerned that it's another sign the administration is easing some of the pressure on the regime for its human rights abuses. While none of the sanctions have been lifted -- and new ones were added on three top officials last Monday -- the State Department said this week they will review restrictions on humanitarian aid into North Korea and the ban on all U.S. citizens traveling to the country. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo denied that meant “relaxing the economic sanctions campaign. Nothing could be further from the truth,” he told NPR on December 20. A spokesperson for the department declined to comment. But the administration has also signaled nuclear talks are “our priority,” as the State Department said in October. There's growing concern that given the deadlock, the administration is willing to agree to some of those steps in order to move nuclear talks forward -- especially by easing pressure on human rights. In addition to Pence's speech, critics point to the administration's failure to win enough votes for a United Nations Security Council session on the regime's abuses, as the U.S. mission had for the last five years. “Unfortunately, the message this administration is sending is that it sees diplomacy and human rights as opposing forces,” said Francisco Bencosme, Asia Pacific advocacy manager for Amnesty International. "The failure to raise North Korea human rights issues at the U.N. Security Council, the lack of a formal roll-out on the sanctions announcement or an articulation of a North Korea human rights strategy compound this administration's North Korea policy.” A spokesperson for the U.S. mission to the U.N. told ABC News the U.S. is looking to hold the meeting in 2019 and “remains deeply concerned with the human rights situation in North Korea.” In October, the State Department declined to say whether Pompeo had raised human rights with Kim directly and argued that denuclearization was the priority. Spokesperson Heather Nauert said the U.S. “is very clear about the concerns that we have, not just about North Korea but many countries, frankly, around the world and countries that can do a lot better. Our priority in North Korea, though, right now is denuclearization.” In a reminder of the regime's cruelty, the family of Otto Warmbier was in court December 19 for their lawsuit against North Korea for torturing and killing their son. Warmbier died in June 2017 after being arrested and held by North Korea for allegedly stealing a propaganda poster in January 2016. The 22-year-old was released and returned to the U.S. with severe brain damage. He died days later. North Korea has denied torturing him, but the Warmbiers are suing in federal court in Washington for more than $1 billion, according to the Associated Press. (Conor Finnegan, “Pence Canceled North Korea Human Rights Speech, with Trump Administration Concerned about State of Nuclear Talks,” ABC News, December 22, 2018)

The United Nations Security Council has granted a sanctions waiver to enable the Koreas to hold a symbolic groundbreaking ceremony for their project to modernize and reconnect roads and railways across the border this week, a Seoul official said. South and North Korea are preparing to hold the event Wednesday at Panmun Station in the North's border town of Kaesong. The project is part of the summit agreement reached between their leaders in April aimed at fostering balanced development and co-prosperity on the Korean Peninsula. "Consultations over the groundbreaking ceremony with the council's North Korea sanctions committee were wrapped up Monday, New York time," a foreign ministry official said. While the groundbreaking ceremony itself is not
subject to sanctions imposed on the North, the waiver was needed for the train that South Korean officials are planning to take, as well as for other materials necessary for the event, to enter the North. The Seoul government said it sent related materials and some 30 officials to North Korea tomorrow. Another group of South Koreans were dispatched to the North today for the preparatory work. South Korea reportedly sought the sanctions exemption from the U.N. after consulting with the United States during their working group meeting on North Korea held in Seoul last week. Ranking officials from the Koreas -- including South Korea's Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon and Transport Minister Kim Hyun-mee, as well as Ri Son-gwon, the chairman of the North's state agency in charge of inter-Korean ties, and Kim Yon-hyok, the North's railway minister -- are planning to attend the ceremony. Seoul earlier set aside around 700 million won (US$618,000) to hold the event, which will be attended by some 100 people from each Korea. (Yonhap, “U.N. Grants Sanctions Exemption for Inter-Korean Project’s Groundbreaking Ceremony,” December 25, 2018)

A federal judge awarded over $501 million in damages to the parents of Otto Warmbier, the American college student who died last year after suffering a severe brain injury while detained in North Korea, in a lawsuit they had filed against the autocratic regime. Judge Beryl A. Howell of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia concluded that North Korea was “liable in the torture, hostage taking and extrajudicial killing of Otto Warmbier,” who was returned to the United States in June 2017 in a vegetative state and died later that month when he was removed from life support. Judge Howell wrote in her ruling that “a larger award is appropriate to punish and deter North Korea.” It is highly unlikely that Warmbier’s parents, Fred and Cindy Warmbier, will see anything close to the full amount from North Korea, which has no formal diplomatic relations with the United States. The Trump administration could seek money for the Warmbiers as part of negotiations with North Korea over denuclearizing the country. “We are thankful that the United States has a fair and open judicial system so that the world can see that the Kim regime is legally and morally responsible for Otto’s death,” the Warmbiers said, referring to North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-un, in a statement today. “We put ourselves and our family through the ordeal of a lawsuit and public trial because we promised Otto that we will never rest until we have justice for him.” The Warmbiers’ lawsuit, filed in April, alleged that their son had been tortured so badly that he returned home deaf, blind and unable to communicate. When Warmbier’s family met him at an Ohio airport on June 13, 2017, they could hear “loud inhuman sounds” as they ascended the plane’s steps. “Greta ‘ran off the plane screaming’ because Otto looked like a ‘monster,’ and not ‘Otto,’” Judge Howell wrote, referring to Warmbier’s sister. “Otto’s mother, too, ‘almost passed out’ upon seeing Otto.” The total amount awarded included $96,000 for medical expenses, over $300 million in damages to Warmbier’s parents and $150 million in damages to Warmbier’s estate. United States law does not usually allow private citizens to sue foreign countries, but the Warmbiers were able to file their suit after President Trump readded North Korea to the State Department’s list of state sponsors of terrorism in late 2017. The Warmbiers retained Richard Cullen, a politically connected former federal prosecutor who is also the lead lawyer for Vice President Mike Pence in the special counsel’s investigation into Russian interference in the presidential election. Warmbier, a junior at the University of Virginia who was majoring in economics, was detained by the North Korean authorities at the Pyongyang airport in January 2016 after a five-day visit there with a tour group. The authorities accused him of tearing down a propaganda poster from a restricted area of his hotel. In a televised news conference, Warmbier admitted to destroying the poster, a confession that his parents believe was coerced. A short time later, a court convicted Warmbier and sentenced him to 15 years in a hard-labor prison. Judge Howell wrote that it was likely that Warmbier was severely injured while in custody and suffered a devastating brain injury around April 2016. The State Department advised the family not to speak publicly about their son during his captivity out of fear about how North Korea might react, the judge said. “The fact that North Korea continued to detain Otto in this severely compromised condition for over a year, rather than send him home earlier to obtain medical care, compounds the deliberate nature of that totalitarian state’s brutal treatment of Otto,” Judge Howell wrote. (Matthew Haag, “North Korea Is Ordered to Pay Otto Warmbier’s Parent over $501 Million in Damages,” New York Times, December 25, 2018)
12/27/18  Despite the apparent impasse in denuclearization negotiations, North Korea has been reaching out behind the scenes through various channels to U.S. lawmakers and people involved in shaping policy toward Pyongyang, sources confirmed today. It has been attempting to make direct contact with the U.S. Congress and key figures that deal with the North Korea issue. “North Korea, through various methods including emails, has contacted key U.S. figures dealing with the North Korea issue, asking to meet,” a diplomatic source familiar with the situation in Washington told the JoongAng Ilbo. “This is something that the U.S. figures who have been contacted by the North Korean side have directly relayed.” “Pyongyang has made attempts to reach out to lawmakers and members of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, showing how astute and thorough their movement is,” the source continued. As Washington and Pyongyang do not have formal diplomatic relations, North Korea’s permanent mission to the United Nations, or the New York channel, is the most frequent means of communication between the two countries. The North Korean mission is believed to have contacted lawmakers in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate, along with key officials in the U.S. State Department and Treasury Department. A senator who is a member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations has also been contacted by the North. North Korea also reached out to a former senior official in the U.S. State Department’s East Asian and Pacific Affairs Bureau during the Barack Obama administration who might have played a key figure in forming North Korea policy if the Democratic candidate, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, had become president. He still plays a key role in advising the Democrats on foreign affairs and security policy. The diplomatic source said, “The fact that North Korea even contacted this individual signifies that it is familiar with K Street.” K Street refers to a hub of think tanks, lobbyists and advocacy groups in Washington. “North Korea is diligently sounding out the situation with the United States under the table,” the source continued. The former Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs official confirmed to this source that North Korea had sent an email but said he didn’t reply. The source added that North Korea, by contacting such figures, “is trying to figure out the atmosphere in the U.S. government toward the easing of sanctions.” (Cha Se-hyeon, Lee Yu-jeong, and Sarah Kim, “U.S. Increases Pressure on Cost-Sharing,” JoongAng Ilbo, December 29, 2018)

12/30/18  Kim Jong-un sent a letter to South Korean President Moon Jae-in today to call for continued efforts to build peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula next year, Seoul’s presidential office said. Kim also said that the leaders of the two Koreas have taken practical measures this year helping to get over long-running confrontation across their border, Cheong Wa Dae spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom told reporters. “Chairman Kim sent a personal letter to President Moon today,” the official said. “Through the letter, he delivered a warm year-end greeting wrapping up the year 2018 and an intention to move together for the sake of peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula.” He added, “Chairman Kim said that the two leaders have induced practical and aggressive measures that go beyond the long-running confrontation by meeting three times in a year and emphasized that they have liberated their people from military tensions and fear of war.” The official said that Kim also expressed disappointment for not making his promised trip to Seoul by year's end but emphasized a strong willingness to honor the promise while closely watching relevant situations. "Chairman Kim made clear that he wants to meet President Moon frequently in 2019 as well to move forward discussion on peace and prosperity and expressed an intent to resolve the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula together," the spokesman said. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Letter Sends Letter to Moon: Presidential Office,” December 30, 2018)

1/1/19  Kim Jong-un, North Korea’s leader, said today that he was willing to have a second summit meeting with President Trump, but he paired the offer with a threat that if international sanctions against his country were not lifted, the North would “have no choice” but to return to nuclear confrontation. “I am willing to meet the United States president at any time for the betterment of our international community,” Kim said in his New Year’s Day speech, broadcast on North Korea’s state-run television. “However, if the United States does not keep its promise in our international community and misinterprets our patience and intention and continues with the sanctions, then we have no choice for the sake of our national interest and peace of the Korean
Peninsula but to come up with new initiatives and new measures.” Wearing a suit and tie and sitting in an overstuffed leather armchair in a book-lined room, Kim offered a largely motivational speech about the need to strengthen the North Korean economy. But he took the opportunity to reiterate a demand that South Korea cease all military drills with “other foreign sources.” “Those should be completely stopped,” Kim said. “That is our stance.” Kim said the country would not be willing to take further steps toward removing its nuclear weapons unless the United States reciprocated. “The statements and agreements after the summit with the United States were that we are going toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and that is my resolute commitment,” he said. “We will not make nuclear weapons and we will not proliferate nuclear weapons, and I have said this, and I will say this again now. If the United States can show corresponding measures, the relationship between the two countries will, through many processes, accelerate for the better. But if the counterpart continues with its past habits, it won’t be good, but I hope they stop this.” Kim also indicated that the North wanted a peace declaration formally ending the Korean War. In declaring that he would not make nuclear weapons, Kim was going further than anything he said at his summit meeting with Trump in Singapore in June. North Korea made no explicit promise to “freeze” its program, and American intelligence officials have said that they believe North Korea has continued to produce the fuel for nuclear weapons — and likely the weapons themselves. The distinction is a relatively minor one, because once the fuel is produced, fashioning it into weapons is no longer much of a challenge, as the North has proved through a series of nuclear tests that ended 13 months ago. Kim’s demand that the United States begin to lift sanctions before North Korea takes any steps toward dismantling its nuclear infrastructure is essentially a return to the state of affairs when Trump took office early in 2017. Trump entered the White House vowing he would not repeat the mistakes of his predecessors, who lifted some sanctions. Trump and his aides said the North would have to dismantle everything first and trust that sanctions would be lifted later. Since the Singapore meeting, Trump has occasionally seemed to waver on the question of lifting some sanctions before the North dismantles its facilities and gives up its weapons and missiles. Now, with Kim’s demand, he must decide whether to back down — and take steps similar to those of his predecessors. Analysts noted that Kim did not specify what exactly he wanted the Trump administration to do but was suggesting that removing some sanctions and moving toward a formal peace declaration to end the Korean War might prod the North to take certain steps toward denuclearization. “Previous public and private comments from Kim and other North Korean officials suggest they would be willing to decommission the Yongbyon nuclear complex under expert supervision,” said Daryl G. Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, referring to a plutonium reactor, spent fuel reprocessing facility and uranium enrichment plant. Kim’s remarks followed a recent escalation of rhetoric from the North suggesting that he was losing patience with the diplomatic stalemate and the sanctions that have remained in place since his meeting with Trump in Singapore. This month, the North Korean Foreign Ministry warned that the United States’ continued hardline sanctions policy might “block” any chance of denuclearizing the country. A few days later, the North said through its official news agency that it would not dismantle its nuclear weapons program until the United States agreed to shrink its military presence on and near the Korean Peninsula. North Korea is “very good at playing hard to get. They are always saying, ‘We could go back to our old ways,’” said Lee Sung-yoon, a professor of Korean studies at the Fletcher School at Tufts University. Lee, who said Kim had shrewdly tempered his rhetoric, said he did not believe the North Korean leader intended to abandon his nuclear weapons program. “He came across as more peace-prone, reform-minded and denuclearization-prone, which I think is a ruse,” Lee said. “A nation doesn’t spend 50 years in building the bomb and just give it up for the empty privilege of shaking hands with the U.S. president. But it’s in his interest to play this game for the time being.” In his New Year’s speech, Kim praised the progress toward further cooperation that the two Koreas had made over the previous year. “North and South Koreans have to continue resolving our tensions in the skies, waters and land in and surrounding the peninsula, through carrying out practical measures based on already agreed upon inter-Korean agreements,” he said. He also suggested that South Koreans who once worked at the Kaesong industrial complex, which was run jointly by North and South Korea and shut down in 2016, should be allowed to return. The North, he suggested, would accommodate them unconditionally. “We should all be proud that we are moving together, North and South, as Koreans,” he said. “We
should expand our inter-Korean cooperation so that we can actually see changes.” Over the weekend, Kim sent a rare personal letter to the South Korean leader, Moon Jae-in, saying he hoped to visit Seoul in the new year. Analysts expect he may also try to meet China’s president, Xi Jinping, and Russia’s president, Vladimir V. Putin. One of the distinguishing factors of this year’s speech was its more casual delivery. By giving the speech live and in what appeared to be his library, Kim projected a more relaxed demeanor that was largely intended for his domestic audience. Kim’s “presentation to his own people was a leader who’s authoritative and decisive, but also very comfortable and familiar,” said Jean H. Lee, a former Associated Press bureau chief in Pyongyang who is now a global fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington. (Motoko Rich and David E. Sanger, “North Korean Leader Warns U.S. to Drop Sanctions, or Relations ‘Won’t Be Good,’” New York Times, January 1, 2019, p. A-6)

Full text of the New Year Address made by Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un on January 1, 2019: “The year 2018 was a historic year, in which remarkable changes took place in the internal and external situations and our socialist construction entered a new stage thanks to our Party’s line of independence and strategic decision. The Third Plenary Meeting of the Seventh Party Central Committee held in April last year constituted an occasion of pivotal significance in developing our revolution onto a new stage and continuing to speed up the advance of socialism on the basis of the great victory of the line of promoting the two fronts simultaneously. ....Thanks to our proactive and positive efforts, a peace-oriented current was created on the Korean peninsula and the international prestige of our Republic continued to be raised, and in the midst of this we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the founding of the glorious DPRK in splendor with great dignity and self-confidence. ...The munitions industry, in hearty response to our Party’s militant call for concentrating all efforts on economic construction, produced a variety of farm machinery, construction equipment, cooperative products and consumer goods, thereby giving an impetus to economic development and the improvement of the people's living standards. ...True to the decision of the April Plenary Meeting of the Party Central Committee on bringing about a revolutionary turn in science and education, the sector of science and technology presented valuable research findings conducive to accelerating the growth of hi-tech industries and revitalizing the national economy; the efforts to make education modern and scientific gained momentum, the teaching conditions and environment being updated at many universities, colleges, middle and primary schools across the country. ...Every sector in the national economy should give impetus to hitting the targets of the five-year strategy for national economic development. We should direct primary efforts to relieving the shortage of electricity to make a breakthrough in revitalizing the national economy. One of the most important and pressing tasks in socialist economic construction for this year is to radically increase the production of electricity. By focusing state investment on the electric-power industry to maintain and reinforce its existing foundation and making maximum and effective use of it to renovate and modernize one by one badly needed sectors and projects, we can, for the present, raise power generation to the peak year level. We should take the problem of easing the strain on electricity as an undertaking of the whole state, step up the construction of hydroelectric power stations including Orangchon and Tanchon power stations and create a capacity for generating tidal, wind and atomic power under a far-reaching plan. Provinces, cities and counties should develop and utilize in an effective way various energy sources available in their local areas. ...Improving the people’s standard of living radically is a matter of greatest importance for our Party and state. ... Last year was a stirring year which witnessed a dramatic change unprecedented in the history of national division spanning over 70 years. With a determination to usher in an era of national reconciliation, peace and prosperity by putting an end to the abnormal state on the Korean peninsula which had suffered a constant war crisis, we took proactive and bold measures to effect a great turn in north-south relations from the outset of last year. It is unprecedented that three rounds of inter-Korean summit meetings and talks were held in a year amid great expectations and interest of peoples at home and abroad, and this clearly showed that north-south relations entered a completely new stage. The Panmunjom Declaration, the September Pyongyang Joint Declaration and the north-south agreement in the military field, which were adopted by reflecting the firm resolve and will to usher in an era of peace in which war exists no longer on the Korean peninsula, are of great significance as a virtual nonaggression
declaration in which north and south have committed themselves to terminating fratricidal war based on force of arms. While sportspersons of north and south displayed the wisdom and strength of the nation by jointly entering international competitions, artistes came and went to Pyongyang and Seoul to fire the enthusiasm for national reconciliation and reunification. We took the significant first step towards common prosperity of the nation by promoting cooperation projects in various fields including railways, road, forestry and public health while resolutely overcoming manifold obstacles and difficulties. The surprising changes which took place in inter-Korean relations last year convinced all the fellow countrymen that when they join minds and efforts, they can turn the Korean peninsula into the true home of the nation, which is the most peaceful and will prosper forever. Though it was the initial step, north and south pooled intentions and wisdom to surely reverse inter-Korean relations in the utmost extremes of distrust and confrontation to those of trust and reconciliation and make in a short time eye-opening achievements which were unimaginable in the past. I am very satisfied with that. In the New Year 2019 we should make greater strides in our efforts to boost inter-Korean relations, achieve peace and prosperity and reunify the country on the basis of the priceless achievements we made last year which was wonderfully adorned with unprecedented events. All the nationals should hold high the slogan "Let us usher in a heyday of peace, prosperity and reunification of the Korean peninsula by thoroughly implementing the historic north-south declarations!" It is our steadfast will to eradicate military hostility between north and south and make the Korean peninsula a durable and lasting peace zone. North and south, as they agreed, should take practical measures proactively to remove military hostility on the whole of the Korean peninsula, including the ground, airspace and sea, as a follow-up to its ending in the areas of confrontation. Given that north and south committed themselves to advancing along the road of peace and prosperity, we maintain that the joint military exercises with foreign forces, which constitute the source of aggravating the situation on the Korean peninsula, should no longer be permitted and the introduction of war equipment including strategic assets from outside should completely be suspended. It is also needed to actively promote multi-party negotiations for replacing the current ceasefire on the Korean peninsula with a peace mechanism in close contact with the signatories to the armistice agreement so as to lay a lasting and substantial peace-keeping foundation. All the fellow countrymen should unite as one, being conscious that the master of peace on the peninsula is our nation, in order to wage a powerful struggle to check and frustrate all the moves that wreck peace and incite military tension on this land. Inter-Korean cooperation and exchanges should be expanded and developed in an all-round way so that national reconciliation and unity can be consolidated and all the fellow countrymen can practically benefit from improved north-south relations. For the present, we are willing to resume the Kaesong Industrial Park and Mt Kumgang tourism without any precondition and in return for nothing, in consideration of the hard conditions of businesspersons of the south side who had advanced into the Kaesong Industrial Park and the desire of southern compatriots who are eager to visit the nation's celebrated mountain. When north and south join hands firmly and rely on the united strength of the fellow countrymen, no external sanctions and pressure, challenges and trials will be able to hinder us in our efforts to open a broad avenue to national prosperity. We will never tolerate the interference and intervention of outside forces who stand in the way of national reconciliation, unity and reunification with the design to subordinate inter-Korean relations to their tastes and interests. North and south should not pass up the favorable atmosphere of today when all the nationals' interest in and aspiration for reunification are growing unprecedentedly, but actively try to find a peaceful reunification plan based on nationwide agreement and direct sincere efforts to this end. All the fellow countrymen in north, south and abroad should further accelerate in high spirits the nationwide advance for implementing the north-south declarations, and thus glorify this year as a historic one when another radical change is brought about in the development of inter-Korean relations and implementation of the cause of national reunification. Comrades, Last year, our Party and the government of our Republic exerted responsible efforts to safeguard the peace and security of the world and expand and strengthen friendship with different countries. The three rounds of our visit to the People's Republic of China and the Cuban delegation's visit to our country were remarkable events in boosting strategic communication and traditional ties of friendship and cooperation among the socialist countries. Last year, frequent visits and exchanges were made on Party, state and government levels between the DPRK and
many countries of the world, with the result that they deepened mutual understanding and confirmed the stand and will to promote sound development of the international community. The historic, first-ever DPRK-US summit meeting and talks brought about a dramatic turn in the bilateral relationship which was the most hostile on the earth and made a great contribution to ensuring peace and security of the Korean peninsula and the region. It is the invariable stand of our Party and the government of our Republic and my firm will to establish a new bilateral relationship that meets the demand of the new era as clarified in the June 12 DPRK-US Joint Statement, build a lasting and durable peace regime and advance towards complete denuclearization. Accordingly, we declared at home and abroad that we would neither make and test nuclear weapons any longer nor use and proliferate them, and we have taken various practical measures. If the US responds to our proactive, prior efforts with trustworthy measures and corresponding practical actions, bilateral relations will develop wonderfully at a fast pace through the process of taking more definite and epochal measures. We have no intention to be obsessed with and keep up the unsavory past relationship between the two countries, but are ready to fix it as early as possible and work to forge a new relationship in line with the aspirations of the two peoples and the requirements of the developing times. As evidenced by the reality of north-south relations that made rapid progress last year, nothing is impossible to a willing heart, and dialogue partners will reach the destinations that are beneficial to each other without fail if they put forward fair proposals on the principle of recognizing and respecting each other by abandoning their dogged insistence broadmindedly and conduct negotiations with a proper stand and the will to settle issues. I want to believe that our relations with the United States will bear good fruit this year, as inter-Korean relations have greeted a great turn, by the efforts of the two sides. I am of the opinion that, while meeting and holding talks beneficial to both sides with the US president in June last year, we exchanged constructive views and reached a consensus of understanding for a shortcut to removing each other's apprehensions and resolving the entangled problems. I am ready to meet the US president again anytime, and will make efforts to obtain without fail results which can be welcomed by the international community. But if the United States does not keep the promise it made in the eyes of the world, and out of miscalculation of our people's patience, it attempts to unilaterally enforce something upon us and persists in imposing sanctions and pressure against our Republic, we may be compelled to find a new way for defending the sovereignty of the country and the supreme interests of the state and for achieving peace and stability of the Korean peninsula. The stabilized situation on the Korean peninsula and in the region is never something that has been created with ease, and the countries that are truly desirous of peace have the common responsibility for setting great store by the current situation. The neighboring countries and international community have to support our sincere stand and efforts for promoting the positive development of the situation on the Korean peninsula and fight against all practices and challenges that wreck peace and run counter to justice. Our Party and the government of our Republic will continue to bolster up unity and cooperation with the socialist countries and develop relations with all countries that are friendly to us under the ideals of independence, peace and friendship. ...This year, too, we will face constant obstacles and challenges in our progress, but no one can change our determination and will and stop our vigorous advance and our people will successfully achieve their beautiful ideals and goals without fail. Let us all work energetically and with one mind and will for the prosperity and development of the genuine people's country, the socialist motherland.” (KCNA, “New Year Address of Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un,’ January 1, 2019)

Future denuclearization talks should pay attention to North Korean leader Kim Jong-un’s comments on the possible development of nuclear energy to tackle the country’s electricity shortage, according to Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon. In a television show tonight, Cho said the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes was guaranteed in exchange for the development of a resolution of the nuclear weapon issue in the agreement of the six-party talks, in which South Korea, the United States, China, Russia and Japan participated in 2005. “Our basic stance is that North Korea’s nuclear power development for peaceful use should be discussed after the North’s denuclearization,” he said. His remarks came after the North Korean leader hinted at using nuclear power as part of the country’s plans to increase electricity supply during his New Year’s speech. “We should take the problem of easing the strain on electricity as an undertaking of
the whole state, step up the construction of hydroelectric power stations, including Orangchon and Tanchon power stations, and create a capacity for generating tidal, wind and atomic power under a far-reaching plan," he said. His comment has prompted speculations that the North could refuse to demolish uranium-enrichment facilities in order to supply fuel for a light-water reactor at Yongbyon in negotiation with the US President Donald Trump. In the speech, Kim reiterated his determination to achieve complete denuclearization while calling on his country to seek economic development and modernize its defense industry. “The potential nuclear power capability could be discussed with progress on denuclearization in the future through talks such as negotiations between the North and the US,” a Unification Ministry spokesperson said today. “For the time being, we should focus on making efforts for the joint goal of the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” (Park Han-na, “Unification Minister: N.K.’s Nuclear Energy Development Could Be Discussed in Denuclearization Process,” Korea Herald, January 2, 2019)