

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم  
بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد  
از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

MARCH 14, 2018

by CHARLES PIERSON  
15.03.2018

## *A Nuclear Travelogue: From North Korea to Saudi Arabia*



Photo by Francisco Anzola | [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)

As one nuclear crisis winds down in Asia (maybe) is President Donald Trump laying the foundations for a new nuclear crisis in the Middle East?

On Thursday, March 8, came the surprise news that President Donald Trump had accepted an invitation to meet with Kim Jong-un of North Korea. South Korean National Security Advisor [Chung Eui-Yong](#) made the announcement at the White House following a meeting with President Trump. Kim had delivered the invitation to a visiting group of South Korean officials, including Chung. Chung passed Kim's invitation along to

President Trump during their meeting on Thursday. The South Koreans had been in Pyongyang to arrange a summit between the two Koreas which is now set to be held in April.

In his statement Thursday, Chung said that Trump would meet with Kim “by May.” The time and location of the meeting have yet to be set. If the meeting takes place—and one can never tell with the mercurial Trump—it will be the first time a US president has met a North Korean leader.

Kim Jong-un, Chung said, has promised not to conduct missile or nuclear tests during talks. (This does not include nuclear research and manufacture of missiles and bombs.) Suspending tests would extend North Korea’s side of an informal “freeze” which the US and DPRK had observed during the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea. The freeze will now be one-sided, however. Kim said that he does not ask the US and South Korea to continue to suspend their annual joint war games as they had done during the Olympics. In addition, US economic sanctions on North Korea will continue. Trump tweeted on March 8 that there was “Great progress being made but sanctions will remain until an agreement is reached.”

And the cherry on the sundae? Kim says he wants to denuclearize.

\* \* \*

Meanwhile, in a separate reality in which nukes are nothing to worry about, the Trump Administration is considering the sale of nuclear reactors to [Saudi Arabia](#). What’s more, the Administration is considering allowing the sale without necessary safeguards.

According to [Bloomberg](#): “Lawmakers and nonproliferation experts warn that without strict prohibitions, a deal to supply Saudi Arabia with nuclear power plants could allow spent fuel to be reprocessed into weapons-grade plutonium.”

The Saudi reactor deal is being pushed by what Bloomberg calls a trio of “blue-chip lobbyists” law firms. The firms are King & Spalding, which is headquartered in Atlanta and which has an affiliate in Riyadh; Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLC of San Francisco; and the law offices of David Kultgen. Bloomberg describes Kultgen as “a lawyer and retired Saudi Arabian Oil Company executive.”

[Christopher Wray](#), selected by President Trump to replace James Comey who Trump had fired as FBI Director, is a former King & Spalding partner. Several other former King & Spalding attorneys now hold positions in the [Trump Administration](#). The firm “reportedly has advised President Trump’s real-estate-empire,” according to the Young Turks’ [Ken Klipperstein](#).

All three firms have registered with the Department of Justice as lobbyists for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as required under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. (For more information on the Foreign Agents Registration Act, consult President Trump's former national security adviser, General [Mike Flynn](#).)

Unsurprisingly, Iran and Israel are strongly opposed to the sale. Israel likes being the only nuclear-armed state in the Middle East. In order to remain so, Israeli air strikes took out Saddam Hussein's Osiraq nuclear reactor in 1981 and what Israel believed was a Syrian reactor in 2007. Saudi Arabia is nowhere near building a bomb, but neither were Iraq or Syria. If Israel decides to attack Iran, the US could find itself in the middle of a war between two of its nominal allies. That would be poetic justice seeing as the US, Saudi Arabia, and Israel would much rather take down Iran.

Saudi Arabia probably does not intend to build a bomb in the immediate future. Maybe never. What the Kingdom is engaged in is [nuclear hedging](#) against archrival Iran. The Saudis want to have the capability to quickly and easily assemble nuclear weapons should the need arise. The Trump Administration is willing to let them. So, Saudi nukes are OK, but the US has declared repeatedly that it will never permit Iran to build a bomb. The hypocrisy cannot be lost on the Iranians.

Of course, there is an important difference between the two cases. US companies will make money furnishing nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia. Kim Jong-un could have saved himself a lot of headaches if only he had purchased his nukes from the US.

\* \* \*

[Conservatives](#) are already warning Trump not to meet with Kim. We can expect much noisy yammering from the Right in the weeks to come. Conservatives find a recurring pattern in negotiations with North Korea. First, the DPRK promises to discontinue its nuclear program. In return, outside powers dial back sanctions and transfer huge sums of money to the North. Finally, North Korea violates the agreement. Conservatives would rather the US continue to pile on sanctions.

As for liberals, a mass email I received from MoveOn warns that Trump may use the meeting with Kim "to provide cover to justify even more aggression." That may be so.

The left takes a different tack. We recognize North Korea has legitimate security concerns. Kim does not want to join Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi. Nukes are Kim's hedge against overthrow by the US. Further, we on the left are confident that Kim will not initiate the use of nuclear weapons because he knows that he would be obliterated. Knowing all this, the left has never surrendered to the prevailing hysteria that

Kim must be disarmed at all costs. *All* nuclear states must disarm. That includes the possessor of the world's biggest nuclear stockpile, the US.

This brings us back to the sale of nuclear reactors to Saudi Arabia. I can think of nothing with as much potential to set the Middle East on fire. (I can't, but Trump managed to do so when he announced that the US Embassy would be relocated to Jerusalem, and that the US would recognize Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel.)

Fortunately, Congress can quash the deal. Under Section 123 of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, Congress has the power to block any transfer of nuclear technology outside the US.

We must demand that Congress reject the Saudi deal.