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War danger remains despite North and South Korean leaders holding second summit

The North and South Korea leaders held unscheduled talks on Saturday following US President Donald Trump's announcement last Thursday that he was cancelling his June 12 summit with North Korea's Kim Jong-un.

Whether the June 12 meeting proceeds or not, one thing is clear. If the North fails to fall into line with Washington's demands, the complete destruction of North Korea will be on the table, setting the stage for a nuclear war between the US and China.

The meeting between Kim and the South's Moon Jae-in was the second between the pair in a month and aimed at getting the planned Trump-Kim summit back on track.

Moon and Kim met at Panmunjom on the North side of the Demilitarized Zone for approximately two hours. Seoul claimed Pyongyang requested the meeting.

According to the North Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), Kim "expressed his fixed will on the historic DPRK-US summit talks" during the discussion. Moon confirmed this, telling a press conference on Sunday: "We two leaders agreed the June 12 North Korea-US summit must be successfully held."

Both expressed support for the "Panmunjom Declaration," reached when they first met on April 27. It includes an agreement for the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula as well as a peace treaty to formally end the 1950–1953 Korean War. One of Pyongyang's primary concerns is that it receives security guarantees in such a treaty to avoid what it has called the "miserable fates" of Iraq and Libya.

Moon stated: “What remains uncertain to Chairman Kim Jong-un is whether he can trust the US promise to end their hostile relationship and guarantee North Korea’s security once the North denuclearizes.”

The two sides agreed to hold high-level talks on June 1, which were initially scheduled for May 16 but cancelled by the North, ostensibly in response to US-South Korean military drills. Kim and Moon also agreed to meet often in the future.

By threatening to cancel the June 12 summit, Trump intended to wring further concessions from Pyongyang, while sending a message to China not to interfere. Trump last week accused China of exerting a negative influence on Kim.

China’s *Global Times* took issue with the accusations that China was somehow sabotaging dialogue. “The Chinese people wish for a positive result from this recent roller-coaster-type situation concerning the Korean Peninsula,” an editorial said. “It is not a healthy mindset to think China somehow plays a hand in the recent events and is deliberately creating complications.”

Beijing has long pushed for dialogue between the US and North Korea, but as part of the stalled six-party talks that include China, Russia, Japan and South Korea. Beijing hoped that through such a medium it could address its own security concerns as the United States and Japan pursue military buildups in the region, aimed at subordinating China to their separate imperialist interests.

Trump backtracked from his cancellation of the summit with Kim almost immediately. He praised the inter-Korean talks and on Saturday said, “We’re looking at June 12th in Singapore. That hasn’t changed. And it’s moving along pretty well, so we’ll see what happens.”

Preparations for the summit may never have truly stopped. US presidential spokeswoman Sarah Sanders indicated the administration was still sending people to Singapore to prepare for the summit in case it goes ahead.

North Korea responded in a conciliatory tone, an indication that Pyongyang is willing to adopt a more pro-US stance. The North Korean Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Kim Kye-gwan stated: “We had set in high regards President Trump’s efforts, unprecedented by any other president, to create a historic North Korea/US summit.”

However, North Korea has bristled at the references by various Trump administration officials, including Vice President Mike Pence and National Security Advisor John Bolton to the “Libyan model” for denuclearization—a thinly veiled military threat. Despite reaching a deal with Washington in 2003 to give up its nuclear program, Libya was

devastated by a US-led bombing campaign in 2011 and its leader Muammar Gaddafi murdered.

Pyongyang has also criticized US media outlets for suggesting North Korea is coming to the negotiations in order to obtain economic aid, in other words, from a position of weakness and subordination to Washington.

Regardless of how it is phrased, Pyongyang is ready to offer up its working class as a source of ultra-cheap labor for global capitalism, but is concerned about its own stability. Moon delayed by a day announcing the results of his second summit with Kim at the latter's request, who cited the internal situation in the North.

Pyongyang provided extensive media coverage domestically of Saturday's summit. Kim Yong-hyun, a professor at Dongguk University, stated that the North, "[b]y publicizing the summit in an active manner" ... appears to be "[drumming] up support from its people about its policy toward the South and the US going forward."

In 2013, Pyongyang announced a new "special economic zone" and 13 "economic development zones" to attract foreign investment. Via its police-state apparatus, Pyongyang's elites would enforce the demands of international companies, while enriching themselves as "joint owners" of new enterprises.

North Korea is therefore working to ward off social anger towards this stepped-up form of exploitation. If a deal is actually reached, the division of Korea would continue while South Korean workers would be subjected to parallel attacks on their conditions in the name of remaining competitive. This is where the true interests of Kim and Moon lie.

Washington's demonization of the Stalinist regime in Pyongyang has never been about its weapon programs or human rights abuses. The US has used North Korea as a rationale for building up its military presence in the Asia-Pacific to an ever-greater extent, targeting China above all. The Pentagon's National Defense Strategy earlier this year formally declared that it is preparing for great power conflicts with China and Russia.

Beijing will demand that any deal include a reduction in US troops and military hardware, including the dismantling of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery stationed in South Korea. Ostensibly installed to defend against a North Korean attack, the THAAD system is part of the Pentagon's preparations for war with China.

Ramping up its pressure on China, the US yesterday launched another so-called freedom of navigation operation (FONOP) against China in the South China Sea. Two US navy vessels—a destroyer, the USS Higgins, and a cruiser, the USS Antietam—passed within 12 nautical miles of Chinese-claimed islets in the Paracel Islands.

The Chinese navy challenged the US vessels and the National Defence Ministry said Washington had “gravely violated Chinese sovereignty.” The clash underscores the danger of a US-China conflict that could escalate into a wider war.