

North Korea's unexpected warning to US before Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un meet

WITH just weeks to go before Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un will hold their first-ever summit, Pyongyang takes aim at the US.

WITH just weeks to go before President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un are expected to hold their first-ever summit, Pyongyang has taken aim at the US.

It has criticised what it called “misleading” claims that Trump’s policy of maximum political pressure and sanctions are what drove the North to the negotiating table.

The North’s official news agency quoted a Foreign Ministry spokesman warning the claims are a “dangerous attempt” to ruin a budding détente on the Korean Peninsula after Kim’s summit late last month with South Korean President Moon Jae-in.

At the summit, Kim agreed to a number of measures aimed at improving North-South ties and indicated he is willing to discuss the denuclearisation of the peninsula, though exactly what that would entail and what conditions the North might require have not yet been explained.

Trump and senior US officials have suggested repeatedly that Washington’s tough policy toward North Korea, along with pressure on its main trading partner China, have played a decisive role in turning around what had been an extremely tense situation.



Donald Trump, left, and Kim Jong Un, right. Picture: APSource:AP

Just last year, as Kim was launching long-range missiles at a record pace and trading vulgar insults with Trump, it would have seemed unthinkable for the topic of denuclearisation to be on the table.

But the North's statement on Sunday seemed to be aimed at strengthening Kim's position going into his meeting with Trump. Pyongyang claims Kim himself is the driver of the current situation.

"The US is deliberately provoking the DPRK at the time when the situation on the Korean Peninsula is moving toward peace and reconciliation," the spokesman was quoted as saying.

North Korea also warned Washington that claiming Pyongyang was forced into talks by US pressure risked returning the peninsula "back to square one".

DPRK is short for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the North's formal name.

Kim and Trump are expected to meet later this month or in early June.

Trump has indicated the date and place have been chosen and said he believes the Demilitarized Zone that divides the Koreas might be a good venue. Singapore was also believed to be a potential site.



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, left, and South Korean President Moon Jae-in cross the military demarcation line to the South side at the border village of Panmunjom in the Demilitarized Zone, South Korea. Picture: *APSource:AP*

Experts are split over whether Kim's statement made with Moon at the DMZ marks a unique opening for progress or a rehash of Pyongyang's longstanding demand for security guarantees.

Sunday's comments were among the very few the North has made since Trump agreed in March to the meeting.

The spokesman warned the US not to interpret Pyongyang's willingness to talk as a sign of weakness.

He also criticised Washington for its ongoing "pressure and military threats" and its position that such pressure won't be eased until North Korea gives up its nuclear weapons completely.

Before Trump meets Kim, Washington is hoping to gain the release of three Korean-Americans accused of anti-state activities.



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, right, and South Korean President Moon Jae-in talk at the border village of Panmunjom in the Demilitarized Zone, South Korea. Picture: APSource:AP

Trump hinted the release of Kim Dong Chul, Kim Hak Song and Tony Kim was in the offing.

There was no sign of an imminent release on Sunday, though the men had reportedly been moved to the capital.

The White House, meanwhile, has announced a separate meeting between Trump and Moon at the White House on May 22 to “continue their close co-ordination on developments regarding the Korean Peninsula.”

Tensions have run high between the two men over the last year, with both leaders trading threats of war and colourful personal insults that sparked global concern.



In this image released by the White House, then-CIA director Mike Pompeo shakes hands with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Pyongyang, during a 2018 trip. Picture: APSource:AP

“We now have a date and we have a location. We’ll be announcing it soon,” Trump told reporters Friday from the White House South Lawn before departing for Dallas. He’s previously said the summit was planned for May or early June. A meeting with Kim seemed an outlandish possibility just a few months ago. But momentum for diplomacy has built this year as the rival Koreas have patched up ties.

But in a dramatic diplomatic turnaround, Kim vowed with Moon to seek denuclearisation and pursue a formal end to the 1950-53 Korean War through a peace treaty with Seoul.

Kim also pledged to close its nuclear test site this month, which is said to be in very bad shape, and invited US experts and journalists to verify the move.

According to South Korea, Kim has said he’d be willing to give up his nukes if the

United States commits to a formal end to the Korean War and pledges not to attack the North. But his exact demands for relinquishing weapons that his nation spent decades building remains unclear.

Trump said that withdrawing U.S. forces from South Korea is “not on the table.” Some 28,500 U.S. forces are based in the allied nation, a military presence that has been preserved to deter North Korea since the war ended in 1953 without a peace treaty.

“Now I have to tell you, at some point into the future, I would like to save the money,” Trump said later as he prepared to board Air Force One.

“You know we have 32,000 troops there but I think a lot of great things will happen but troops are not on the table. Absolutely.”

The New York Times reported that Trump has asked the Pentagon to prepare options plans for drawing down American troops.

It cited unnamed officials as saying that wasn’t intended to be a bargaining chip with Kim, but did reflect that a prospective peace treaty between the Koreas could diminish the need for U.S. forces in South Korea.

Source: <http://www.news.com.au/finance/work/leaders/north-koreas-unexpected-warning-to-us-before-donald-trump-and-kim-jongun-meet/news-story/9f28608e91d940b3dbb0b529ef69e4ad>

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