

South Korean president to meet Trump to resolve impasse with North Korea



President Moon Jae-in is scheduled to meet Donald Trump next week CREDIT: NICHOLAS KAMM/AFP

Donald Trump, the US president, is to meet Moon Jae-in, the South Korean leader, next week in Washington in a renewed effort to revive stalled negotiations with North Korea over its nuclear weapons programme.

The talks will be the first time the two leaders have met since the failed summit between Mr Trump and Kim Jong-un in Hanoi, Vietnam, at the end of February.

The summit was unexpectedly cut short when the Americans and North Koreans walked out before lunch after they failed to reach a deal on the extent of sanctions relief Pyongyang would get in exchange for steps to give up its nuclear assets.

The two sides initially claimed to have ended on a friendly note, but tensions have since risen over signs that North Korea has started to rebuild a key missile test site, the Sohae Satellite Launching Station, and Pyongyang has warned it is

running out of patience.

Over the weekend it emerged that Kim had been blindsided at the summit when Mr Trump handed him a piece of paper that included a blunt call for the transfer of his nuclear weapons and bomb fuel to the US.

The document, seen by Reuters, was the first time the US president had explicitly told Kim what he meant by denuclearisation and it went far beyond the more incremental approach that Washington had publicly espoused in the run-up to the summit.



President Trump's summit with Kim Jong-un started out well but ended abruptly CREDIT: EVAN VUCCI/AP

It called for “fully dismantling North Korea’s nuclear infrastructure, chemical and biological warfare programme and related dual-use capabilities; and ballistic missiles, launchers, and associated facilities.”

It also demanded a full declaration of Pyongyang’s nuclear programme, full access to US and international inspectors and a halt to all related activities and construction of any new facilities.

The demands were more in tune with the more hardline views on denuclearisation of John Bolton, the US national security adviser, and would have likely been viewed by Kim as provocative.

North Korea accused Mr Bolton and Mike Pompeo, the secretary of state, of “gangster-like” demands after the summit, and said it was considering suspending talks with the US and mulling whether to lift its self-imposed ban on missile and nuclear tests.

Mr Moon will attempt next Thursday to find a way with Mr Trump to overcome the impasse.

However, a recent briefing by Suh Hoon, head of the South Korean National Intelligence Service, to parliamentarians, suggests that South Korea’s approach is increasingly at odds with that of the United States.

Seoul believes that denuclearisation “can only proceed piece by piece,” he said, in comments reported by the Joongang daily.

“Complete denuclearisation is not something that can be done immediately since it requires a gradual process,” he said.

Source:

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