

Press Releases: Remarks at a Press Briefing

Remarks
Mike Pompeo

Secretary of State

JW Marriott
Singapore, Malaysia
June 11, 2018

MS SANDERS: Good afternoon. Thank you so much for your patience. It's certainly worth the wait. Welcome to Singapore and the filing center here. We'll keep this short.

I'd like to welcome the Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, who will answer questions specific to the summit that will take place tomorrow. And we'll be around to follow up with other questions beyond that. Thanks so much.

Mr. Secretary.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Good afternoon. I want to give an update in advance of President Trump's summit with Chairman Kim Jong Un. As the President said on

Saturday, this is truly a mission of peace.

This afternoon, the President called Prime Minister Abe of Japan and President Moon of South Korea. Earlier today, our Ambassador, Sung Kim, led a delegation to meet with Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui and his North Korean – or excuse me, her North Korean delegation. The talks continue this afternoon, even as we sit here now. They're, in fact, moving quite rapidly. And we anticipate they will come to their logical conclusion even more quickly than we had anticipated.

Before discussing the summit, I want to address a report in The New York Times that suggested that the U.S. team lacks the technical expertise on dismantling North Korea's weapons program as part of these talks. I want to address that report directly.

For over three months, an interagency working group of over 100 experts across government has met multiple times per week to address technical and logistical issues associated with dismantling North Korea's weapons programs. They include experts from the military charged with dismantling nuclear weapons; the Department of Energy, including PhDs and experts from DOE labs; and officials from the intelligence community covering North Korea. Those same experts also cover North Korea's nuclear, chemical, biological, and missile programs.

These experts include dozens of PhDs who have expertise in nuclear weapons, the fuel cycle, missiles, chemical and biological weapons. They have advanced degrees in nuclear engineering, physics, chemistry, aerospace, biology, and other relevant fields.

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.

Any suggestion that the United States somehow lacks the technical expertise across government or lacks it on the ground here in Singapore is mistaken.

North Korea has previously confirmed to us its willingness to denuclearize, and we are eager to see if those words prove sincere. The fact that our two leaders are sitting down face to face is a sign of the enormous potential to accomplish something that will immensely benefit both of our peoples and the entire world.

President Trump believes that Kim Jong Un has an unprecedented opportunity to change the trajectory of our relationship and bring peace and prosperity to his country. We are hopeful this summit will have set the conditions for future productive talks. In light of how many flimsy agreements the United States has made in previous years, this President will ensure that no potential agreement will fail to adequately address the North Korean threat.

The ultimate objective we seek from diplomacy with North Korea has not changed. The complete and verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is the only outcome that the United States will accept.

Sanctions will remain until North Korea completely and verifiably eliminates its weapons of mass destruction programs. If diplomacy does not move in the right direction – and we are hopeful that it will continue to do so – those measures will increase.

President Trump recognizes Chairman Kim's desire for security, and is prepared to ensure that a North Korea free of weapons of mass destruction is also a secure North Korea. The President has also expressed his openness to expanding access to foreign investment and other economic opportunities for North Korea if they take the right steps.

All the preparations for the summit have come together very nicely. The President met this afternoon with Minister Lee of Singapore. It was an important opportunity to thank the Prime Minister of Singapore for his partnership in helping make this summit a reality. Singapore is home to over 4,000 American companies and is a longstanding commercial partner, and we thank them for their help in making this summit what it is.

The President also had a chance to visit with our embassy team here in Singapore and thank them for their tireless work to make this summit a success. For example, at tomorrow's summit, there will be some 5,000 members of the media from all over the world that will be covering this historic event.

President Trump is going into this meeting with confidence, a positive attitude, and eagerness for real progress. He has made it clear that if Kim Jong Un denuclearizes, there is a brighter future for North Korea. Tomorrow, we will get our 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.

QUESTION: 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?

SECRETARY 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.

QUESTION: 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?

SECRETARY 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.

QUESTION: Would it be erroneous to assume that that's not on the table?

SECRETARY 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.

QUESTION: But you know the sensitivity –

SECRETARY 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.

QUESTION: 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?

SECRETARY 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. The backdrop against which these negotiations are taking, President Trump has said, in a way that is fundamentally different than before.

The President has made very clear: Until such time as we get the outcome that we're demanding, economic relief is not going to be provided. That's

different. 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: Catherine Lucey with the AP.

QUESTION: Secretary, the President says he'll know within a minute whether Kim is serious based on his "feel." These are obviously incredibly complex nuclear issues that have tens of millions of civilians in the crosshairs. Is it wise for the President to be going on his gut? And have you established any specific criteria for the conditions that lead him to walk out tomorrow?

SECRETARY POMPEO: The President is fully prepared for the meeting tomorrow. I have personally had the opportunity to make sure that he's had a chance to hear lots of different voices, all of the attendant opportunities and risks, and that we have put these two leaders in the right place.

As I said in answer to the previous question, President Trump has truly laid out a process here that is fundamentally different than the ones that we've gone through before. And I expect that the process from tomorrow forward will also be fundamentally different, with a resolved America working to try and provide an outcome that benefits both countries. That's different than what we've done before.

QUESTION: Can you tell us anything about the preparations, sir?

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 communiqué. So perhaps you can answer both of those questions. Thank you.

SECRETARY 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.

MS SANDERS: We'll take one last question. Phil Rucker, Washington Post.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, this morning at his hotel in Singapore, President Trump had harsh words for Prime Minister Trudeau. And what are you doing, as the country's top diplomat, to repair relationships with our country's oldest allies – closest allies in Europe? And do you agree with the statement made by one of your administration colleagues yesterday that there's a special place in hell for the Canadian Prime Minister?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, I came here today, here in Singapore, to talk about North Korea. But I'm happy to talk about work with our European partners as well. We wouldn't be in this place, we wouldn't have this historic opportunity, without the diplomatic work that's been done by our European partners alongside of us.

President Trump has led an enormous coalition, including those very same European partners, those G7 partners to which you refer, who have helped us get to this point. I have every expectation that they will continue to do that.

There are always irritants in relationships. I am very confident the relationships between our countries – the United States and those G7 countries – will continue to move forward on a strong basis. I'm unconcerned about our capacity to continue to do what we need to do to get the outcome we're looking for in North Korea as a result of what you described having taken place in Canada.

MS SANDERS: Thank you.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department.

External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.