



North and South Korea Trade Peaceful Overtures Ahead of Upcoming Winter Olympics

During a New Year's Day address, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un struck an unusually conciliatory tone for the usually belligerent strongman, calling for peace on the Korean peninsula. In his address, Kim said: "North and South must work together to alleviate the tensions and work together as a people of the same heritage to find peace and stability," according to a CNN translation of his speech.



The tensions that Kim referred to, observed a Reuters report, have stemmed from North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, which the communist state has been pursuing in defiance of years of UN Security Council resolutions. There has also been frequent bellicose rhetoric coming from both Pyongyang and the White House. Furthermore, the North has also described the regular war drills between the South and the United States as preparations for war.

The following day, a South Korean spokesman proposed holding high-level talks with North Korea next week in Panmunjom, a village straddling the border north of Seoul, the South Korean capital.

"We hope the two sides sit down for frank talks," the *New York Times* said, quoting a statement made in a news conference by Cho Myoung-gyon, South Korea's unification minister charged with pursuing relations with the North.

Reuters also quoted Cho's statement: "We look forward to candidly discussing interests from both sides face-to-face with North Korea along with the North's participation in the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. I repeat: The government is open to talking with North Korea, regardless of time, location and form."

The *Times* report noted that if North Korea agrees, it will be the start of the first official dialogue between the two Koreas in two years. South Korean officials hope the talks will lead to more peaceful relations on the Korean peninsula after years of high tensions and threats of war over the North's development of nuclear weapons and long-range missile tests. However, the report noted, analysts have warned that a sudden move to improve ties between the two Koreas could also strain relations between South Korea and the United States. With those relations in mind, Cho said that South Korea was closely consulting with Washington about its diplomacy with the North.

A report from Reuters noted that South Korea's offer to hold high-level talks with the North on January 9 have been discussed with the United States. Cho also said a decision on whether to push back a massive joint military drill between South Korea and the United States until after the Winter Olympics is still pending.

CNN reported that Park Soo-hyun, the spokesman for South Korean President Moon Jae-in, said the president's office welcomed Kim's comments about the need to improve inter-Korean relations and his offer to send a delegation to the Winter Olympics, which are to begin in February in the South Korean town of Pyeongchang,



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on January 2, 2018

“The [President’s office] has been expressing its intent to talk with North Korea anytime, anywhere and regardless of formality if this is for the normalization of the inter-Korean relations and for the peace of the Korean Peninsula,” the spokesman said. The spokesman added that the president’s office also “hopes South and North Korea will peacefully resolve North Korea’s nuclear issue while closely cooperating with the international community.”

President Trump also commented on Kim’s unusually benign overtures to the South. “Rocket man now wants to talk to South Korea for first time. Perhaps that is good news, perhaps not — we will see!” Trump said on his Twitter account.

“Sanctions and ‘other’ pressures are beginning to have a big impact on North Korea,” Trump stated, citing recent defections by North Korean soldiers.

Though the tone of the rhetoric coming from North Korea has apparently mellowed, that does not change a basic observation we made in an article last August: [“What Does the U.S.-North Korean War of Words Really Mean?”](#) That observation was that North Korea is generally considered to be a “rogue” state that presents such a danger to world peace because Kim’s bravado exceeds his common sense. However, we noted there are more likely explanations for North Korea’s continued development of dangerous nuclear weapons and ICBMs. We cited one such explanation found in an article written by *The New American’s* foreign correspondent, Alex Newman:

Far from being “alone,” the communist regime in North Korea has had friends in high places from the beginning, and still does today. First and foremost, the regime is a puppet and close ally of the powerful communist dictatorship enslaving mainland China’s 1.3 billion people — a regime that is increasingly projecting its power globally

Considering Newman’s assessment of North Korea, it follows that if the Pyongyang regime — at its worst — is not completely directed by a single irrational madman, but is, instead, a globalist pawn acting on behalf of communist China, the same should apply to Kim at his best. If so, then China and other outside forces might very well be directing Kim to tack to the uncharacteristically diplomatic position he revealed in his New Year’s Day speech.

Trump said, “Sanctions and ‘other’ pressures are beginning to have a big impact on North Korea.” Among those unnamed pressures may be Pyongyang’s senior partners in Beijing.

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