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Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

TOPLINE TAKEAWAYS

- *Mr. Trump Goes To Pyongyang? It's good news, but it could turn out to be a big disaster.*
- *Law of war experts laugh at the Pentagon's justification for war in Yemen.*
- *Trump says he wants to kill the Iran deal. We should believe him.*

TRUMP'S MEETING WITH KIM JONG-UN IS A HUGE GAMBLE THAT COULD FAST TRACK US TO WAR

All Americans should support diplomacy with North Korea and welcome news that Donald Trump will meet with Kim Jong un. Indeed, this development would be something to truly celebrate if:

1. There were some semblance of preparation, messaging, and objectives on the American side.
2. The U.S. had an expert negotiating team. Right now, we don't have an ambassador to South Korea, nor a special representative for North Korea.
3. Kim truly intends on giving up his nukes. It's highly likely he does not.
4. This isn't just a propaganda stunt to benefit Kim. North Korean leaders have been clamoring for a one-on-one with a sitting U.S. president for decades.
5. Donald Trump isn't also using this moment for his own political purposes, as he is inclined to do.

MORE CONCERNING: WAR ON THE HORIZON?

Diplomacy takes time, a long time, years even. And that will likely be the case in this instance, given that these will be negotiations with a nuclear armed communist dictatorship still technically at war with the United States, and with a history of killing, starving, and jailing its own people. As we said in our [statement](#):

[B]ecause this kind of extraordinary moment for diplomacy takes time, focus, capacity, and effort, we remain concerned that Trump has set up a false choice between diplomacy and war. Should this diplomatic process slow down, stall, or appear intractable, it's likely that Trump, and particularly those who have recently been pushing for war, **will claim diplomacy has failed, with no other option remaining but the**

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military one.

As we've seen with recent diplomatic successes like the Iran nuclear deal, this kind of rush to war without letting diplomacy work would be a mistake.

It seems like some are already prepping for a war outcome. Sen. Lindsey Graham [said](#) in response to the news: "A word of warning to North Korean President Kim Jong Un -- the worst possible thing you can do is meet with President Trump in person and try to play him. If you do that, it will be the end of you -- and your regime."

[Share our statement on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)]

OTHER REACTIONS

- [Arms Control Association](#): "The near-term goal should be to **maintain a long-term freeze on North Korean nuclear and missile testing** and to discuss measures that can further reduce tensions on the peninsula..."
- [National Security Action](#): "**We all must root for the success of these efforts**, but diplomacy is not a prize: it's a tool. The question remains whether this administration knows how to use it."
- Former Defense Secretary [William Perry](#): "There is good reason to talk with North Korea, but **only if we are talking about something that is worth doing** and that could be reasonably verified."
- North Korea expert [Christine Ahn](#): "**Trump should understand what [South Korean President] Moon does**: North Korea's long held desire for a peace treaty and normalized relations as key to achieving a nuclear free Korea."
- [Rep. Ro Khanna](#): "**Pro-diplomacy Congress members support dialogue**. One way to show support is to join 68 bipartisan cosponsors of HR4837, No Unconstitutional Strike on North Korea Act."
- Former National Security Adviser to VP Biden [Colin Kahl](#): "[S]uccess will require the Administration to do some things **they haven't been very good at to date**."
- CAP VP [Kelly Magsamen](#): "Now the hard part begins. **The Trump administration needs to develop a diplomatic strategy** and field a negotiating team that will advance America's interests."

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EXPERTS DISCREDIT PENTAGON'S CASE FOR WAR IN YEMEN

Last week, Sens. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Mike Lee (R-UT) and Chris Murphy (D-CT) introduced a joint resolution ([S.J.Res. 54](#)) based on the War Powers Act of 1973 that will force Congress to debate and vote on America's unauthorized participation in the Saudi-led coalition's intervention in Yemen. (Click [here](#) for more details and messaging.)

TRUMP ADMIN'S LEGAL CASE FOR YEMEN WAR FALLS FLAT

Congress has never authorized America's role in this war.

The Defense Department [claims](#) it doesn't need authorization, relying on the idea that the U.S. is not actually helping the Saudi coalition fighting rebels in Yemen. But Yale Law School professor Bruce Ackerman and Reagan-era Justice Department official Bruce Fein -- both considered experts in the law of war -- poked a number of holes in DOD's argument.

"The insinuation... that the President may unilaterally engage the United States in military action to defend presidentially decreed American interests is frivolous," they [wrote in a 5-page letter](#) to Sens. Mitch McConnell and Chuck Schumer rebutting the DOD's analysis. "If the law means anything, it means that the Senate should debate and vote on S.J. Res. 54."

MORE SUPPORT FOR S.J.RES.54

Meanwhile, more than 50 national organizations [[LINK](#)] and dozens of national security experts spanning the ideological spectrum [[LINK](#)] have written letters to the Senate urging members to support S.J.Res. 54. (See news reports on these letters [here](#) and [here](#).)

Grassroots activists have been energized on this issue as well. More than 5,000 calls and 120,000 signatures to Congress were generated from [stopthewar.us](#) urging support for S.J.Res. 54. And CREDO action has generated [65,000 signatures](#) and 1,800 phone calls as of Friday in support of the measure with many more from Avaaz, MoveOn, MPower Change, Our Revolution and other coalition members.

OH YEAH, AND TRUMP WANTS TO KILL THE IRAN DEAL

It might be easy to forget, but Trump's self-imposed May 12 deadline for Congress to unilaterally make changes the Iran deal is rapidly approaching. Between now and then, it's almost certain that long-time deal opponents will tout questionable, misleading, and false claims about it. On March 6, for example, embattled Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke at the AIPAC conference railing against the Iran nuclear deal and urging Trump to kill the Iran deal if it's not "fixed."

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But the reality is that the deal is working and moving toward a unilateral “fix” will kill the agreement and bring the U.S. closer to war.

- IAEA chief Yukiya Amano said killing the deal would be a “[great loss](#).”
- Indeed, Iran’s leaders [say](#) if Trump kills the deal, it will start enriching uranium to levels closer to weapons grade material within days.

Click [here](#) for message guidance and share our [Twitter thread](#) pushing back on the lies told about the Iran deal at the AIPAC conference this week.

MUST READ: NIAC’s Ryan Costello [outlines](#) how Trump is basically turning the Iran issue into North Korea. [Share Ryan’s tweet [here](#)]

ONE MORE THING: NIAC released a [memo](#) this week detailing how a House bill targeting the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, in its current form, threatens to violate the Iran deal.

FOR MORE ON THE IRAN DEAL: [Follow](#) our friends at [Diplomacy Works](#).

BURIED LEDES

The State Department was [so excited](#) about getting \$120 million to combat Russian cyber ops that **it hasn’t done anything with it.**

The former U.S. Ambassador to Panama **explains why he decided to quietly step down** [after Trump’s response](#) to the Charlottesville riots last August.

MCCARTHYISM ALERT: Rep. Mac Thornberry, who wants to build more nuclear weapons, [claims](#) that those opposed “**might be pawns of the Kremlin.**”

UN report finds that **Russian and American airstrikes in Syria killed civilians** “[on a large scale last year.](#)”

The [headline](#) says it all: “Is President Trump about to make **this warmongering lunatic his national security adviser?**”

Trump [wanted to sell arms](#) to create jobs but **many of those jobs ended up being created overseas.**

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GOOD QUESTION: Sen. Bob Corker [wonders](#) why DOD can kill people with remote control planes and “turn entire countries into craters” **but can’t audit its finances.**

And finally, the hawkish DC think tank the Foundation for Defense of Democracies might want to [think about changing its name](#) to “**The Foundation for Defense of Inclusive Authoritarianism.**”