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Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

TOPLINE TAKEAWAYS

- *Bolton's plan to kill diplomacy with North Korea seems to be working.*
- *Mike Pompeo charts a course for regime change in Iran.*
- *The House lays down a marker on war with North Korea and Iran: It's not authorized.*

TRUMP CANCELS NORTH KOREA SUMMIT; 'THIS IS A TOTAL GOAT RODEO'

Just one day after Trump canceled his upcoming summit with Kim Jong-un, the beleaguered president -- citing a [positive response](#) from the North Koreans -- [said](#) it might be on after all. If you're feeling dizzy, it's not just you.

Key points:

- North Korea's response to Trump cancelling the summit -- "We express our willingness to sit down face-to-face with the U.S. and resolve issues anytime and in any format" -- is indeed positive, and an indication that the North Koreans are serious about making a deal. But...
- ... Trump and his aides have bungled this operation from the get-go. Consider:
 - Trump -- desperate for any kind of "win" that would suit his own domestic purposes -- hastily agreed to have a meeting with Kim without any consideration or preparation.
 - His top aides like National Security Advisor John Bolton threw wrenches in the spokes whenever they could, for example by publicly placing maximalist conditions on North Korea and threatening war and regime change.
 - Team Trump failed to understand North Korean intentions, particularly misreading North Korea's view of "denuclearization."

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- Trump abruptly cancelled the summit [without consulting](#) our South Korean and Japanese allies.
- Diplomacy is not dead. Negotiating complex issues like nuclear disarmament takes time and patience. Setbacks are to be expected. Both sides left the door open to resuscitate the summit. But going forward, Team Trump needs to do its homework, get serious, plan properly, and limit the influence of officials with ulterior motives.
- We must not let Trump administration officials, some of whom have been gunning for war with North Korea for years, use this opportunity to justify a push for the military option. War with North Korea would be [catastrophic](#).

JOHN BOLTON: THE SPOILER BEHIND THE CURTAIN

NBC [reported yesterday](#) that sources inside the administration said Secretary of State Mike Pompeo “blamed Bolton for torpedoing the progress that had already been made” and that “it was Bolton who drove the decision to cancel and that he had convinced Trump to make the move.” Bolton’s negative influence was confirmed [by the Washington Post](#).

That makes a lot of sense considering that -- in addition to his preference for war with North Korea -- Bolton’s career M.O. has been to [sabotage international arms control agreements](#), including previous deals with North Korea.

Bolton was also the one out front in calling for the “Libya model” -- the idea that the North Koreans would completely abandon the entirety of its nuclear program, rhetoric that angered Pyongyang.

Expert Ankit Panda [observes](#):

“There’s a clear line here: Bolton’s Libya talk sets expectations for Trump, who slips up and threatens North Korea with regime change, which leads to Pence defending Trump, which leads to North Korea lashing out, which leads to Trump canceling the summit. **The dysfunction within this administration in the lead-up to this meeting ultimately brought the summit crashing down.**”

When asked for an assessment of how Trump has handled the North Korea issue over the past few months, non-proliferation expert Jeffrey Lewis said, “goat rodeo.” And when asked to expand on that, Lewis replied, “[This is a total goat rodeo.](#)”

“Never has such chaos attended the public behavior of a U.S. president on a matter of such gravity,” the Washington Post [noted](#).

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See our [statement](#) on Trump's decision to cancel the summit here and share it on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). We're also [asking](#) Congress to speak out against war and for diplomacy with North Korea.

Also check out [this interactive](#) feature in the New York Times by IISS's Mark Fitzpatrick that allows you to game out whether a preventive attack on North Korea is a viable option (spoiler: it's not).

POMPEO'S FIREHOSE OF BULLSHIT CLEARING THE WAY FOR WAY FOR REGIME CHANGE IN IRAN

It seems like 15 years ago, but Secretary of State Mike Pompeo delivered a speech earlier this week outlining how the Trump administration plans to deal with Iran and its nuclear program after Trump decided to violate the JCPOA.

The short version is that the Trump administration has no strategy to deal with Iran.

Instead, Pompeo offered a [series of demands](#) that the Iranians will never accept (call it a "[pipe dream](#)" if you will. Our allies [weren't impressed](#) either). And on top of those demands, Pompeo's speech was merely a [laundry list](#) of old neoconservative hits, falsehoods, and misleading statements, proving once again that this administration has no idea what its doing.

He even threw out some rather strange whoppers, like saying that Iran has assassination squads roaming about Europe, a claim that the Guardian [reported](#) "has bewildered security experts and Iranian exiles, who say they are not aware of any evidence for the allegation."

National Security Action's Jeff Prescott [noted](#) that Pompeo's presentation sounded eerily familiar to the case that the Bush administration was making for war with Iraq in 2002. This is exactly the case the Trump administration has been making all along. Referring to a speech UN Ambassador Nikki Haley made last year accusing Iran of nefarious activities, Lawrence Wilkerson, former chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell, [noted](#): "We've seen this before: a campaign built on the [politicization of intelligence](#) and shortsighted policy decisions to make the case for war."

A CALL FOR REGIME CHANGE

Jason Rezaian, an Iranian-American Washington Post reporter who was recently imprisoned in Iran on trumped up charges but released soon after the Iran deal was reached, [lampooned](#) Pompeo's speech, calling it "completely divorced from reality," adding that Pompeo was actually arguing for regime change. Rezaian [wasn't the only one who noticed that](#). (Coincidentally, the

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Center for International Policy's Bill Hartung [figured out](#) that regime change would only cost a few trillion dollars.)

It's no wonder then that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (countries that are adversarial to Iran and strongly opposed the Iran deal) "[were eager](#)" to help Trump win the 2016 presidential election.

Diplomacy Works [has more](#) on Pompeo's speech.

HOUSE SAYS WAR WITH IRAN OR NORTH KOREA IS NOT AUTHORIZED

This week the House [passed](#) H.R. 5515, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year 2019 -- which includes a whopping \$717 billion authorization for conventional and nuclear weapons, war, and almost everything (the White House was still [not satisfied](#)) the Pentagon [wants](#).

Yet one positive development amid this giant lump of authorization for [wasteful spending](#) and endless war, was the House's timely and consequential adoption of measures declaring that **there is no congressional authorization for the use of military force against Iran or North Korea.**

"The unanimous passage of this bipartisan amendment is a **strong and timely** counter to the Trump administration's withdrawal from the Iran deal and its increasingly hostile rhetoric" [said](#) Rep. Keith Ellison, the lead sponsor of two of the Iran-related AUMF amendments. "This amendment sends a powerful message that the **American people and Members of Congress do not want a war with Iran,**" he added.

Rep. Barbara Lee, the lead sponsor for one of the North Korea measures called the adoption "timely." "Not many good things to say about this wasteful, irresponsible NDAA. But I am glad that it includes my amendment explicitly prohibiting the Trump Admin from using this legislation to justify war with North Korea." Lee [said](#).

In addition, some other adopted amendments, among several, worth mentioning include:

- Representative Ro Khanna's [amendment](#) that requires an investigation into potential violations of international law, including torture of prisoners, by the United States and its partner forces in Yemen.

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- Representative Adam Schiff's attempt to enhance [Congressional oversight and transparency](#) into Defense Department's legal basis for our operations in Syria, including the unconstitutional April 2017 and April 2018 Syria strikes against the Assad regime.
- Representative Eliot Engel's [measures to sanction](#) and hold the Burmese military to account for its mass atrocities and [murder and displacement campaign](#) against the Rohingya people and other ethnic groups (which passed with an overwhelming majority vote of 382-30).

Despite these positive developments, yet again, House leadership [prevented](#) consideration and [meaningful debate](#) of dozens of other amendments that would have had consequential impacts on war and peace, including measures to [reduce funding](#) for nuclear weapons, compel [U.S. withdrawal from the Saudi-led war](#) and humanitarian nightmare in Yemen, and rein in wasteful spending at the Pentagon. Countless amendments that would have advanced protections and rights for service members who are DREAMers, women, and LGBTQ+ individuals also were not considered.

All members of Congress have a moral and constitutional responsibility to provide proper oversight and meaningful debate on these issues, and it remains unclear what will come out of the Senate's version of the [NDAA](#). But the Senate Armed Services Committee's summary report that was [just released](#) implicates that we probably shouldn't expect much.

Read statements from partners on the FY-19 House NDAA here: [J Street](#), [NIAC](#), and [The Wildlife Society](#), and [Win Without War](#).

BURIED LEDES

MS-13 and a [revealing anecdote](#) that **unmasks Trump's dehumanization game**.

Check out how much big corporations are making by [selling arms](#) around the world.

Human rights [groups](#) and progressive foreign policy [orgs](#) **want to block a big arms sale to Bahrain**.

Here's [a look inside](#) **Saudi Arabia's campaign to take down the Iran deal**.

WATCH: Students at the University of Houston [protested](#) the **Trump administration's response to Israel's recent assault on Gaza** during a speech by UN Ambassador Nikki Haley.

Speaking of Israel-Palestine, a libertarian Republican legislator [helped stop](#) a Missouri bill **that would have penalized businesses that participate in BDS**.

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During his U.S. tour back in March, U.S. media were quick to label Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman “a reformer” because he let women drive. This week, however, Saudi [authorities](#) have **arrested activists who had campaigned for the right for women to drive.**

Do [we really need](#) **\$716 billion for the Pentagon?**

How a four-hour **battle between Russian mercenaries and U.S. commandos** [unfolded in Syria.](#)

The war in Afghanistan [is still happening.](#)

NBD: Service members entrusted with [guarding nuclear missiles](#) that are among the most powerful in America’s arsenal **are taking LSD and other mind-altering drugs.**

Donald Trump’s [words](#) are **a green light to dictators and torturers around the world.**

And finally, this Memorial Day, we at Win Without War remember the sacrifices our **service members have made.** If you find yourself with some extra time for reflection this weekend, [check out some of our recommended reading.](#)