

North and South Korea to Hold Talks

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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For the first time since December 2015, officials from both countries will meet in Panmunjom near the DMZ on January 9.

According to Seoul's unification ministry spokesman **Baik Tae-hyun**, talks will focus on Pyongyang's participation in the February Winter Olympics, along with ways to improve inter-Korean relations, adding:

His government's position on denuclearizing the peninsula remains unchanged. North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's New Year's day address called for reducing tensions between the two nations.

On Thursday, Trump and South Korean **President Moon Jae-in** postponed scheduled military exercises until after the Winter games conclude.

Pyongyang justifiably considers them provocative rehearsals for war. They're unrelated to defending against possible DPRK aggression.

Trump "took credit" for upcoming North/South talks, tweeting:

"Does anybody really believe that talks and dialogue would be going on between North and South Korea right now if I wasn't firm, strong and willing to commit our total 'might' against the North."

38 North provides "analysis of events in and around the DPRK." It's a Johns Hopkins University Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies US-Korea Institute program - managed by former State Department official **Joel Wit** and USKI assistant director **Jenny Town**.

On January 4, it headlined "North Korea Likely Preparing for New Rocket Engine Test at Sohae," saying:

"An examination of commercial satellite imagery from November 23,

December 25 and December 31 shows no indications of preparations for a new satellite launch mission at Sohae, where all satellite launches have taken place since 2012,” adding:

“There are, however, several indicators that suggest preparations for an upcoming rocket engine test at the facility’s vertical engine test stand.”

“Both color and near-infrared imagery, however, show no indications that an engine test has taken place since November 23, suggesting that if the current activity is test related, it is likely preparations for a future test.”

Or perhaps they’re related to “normal maintenance and repair...”

Days earlier, **Nikki Haley** ranted about provocative reports of an upcoming DPRK missile test – highly unlikely ahead of upcoming talks with Seoul.

Hawkish Japanese **Prime Minister Shinzo Abe** is a reliable US ally. At a time his nation faces no threats, he lied claiming otherwise, saying Japanese security is more endangered than any time since WW II – vowing to boost the country’s defenses, instead of reducing tensions by conciliatory outreach to North Korea.

In 2017, Tokyo increased its defense budget for the sixth consecutive year at a time its only enemies are invented ones.

Abe wants Japan’s pacifist constitution amended, aiming to loosen constraints on his regime’s militarism, something public sentiment in the country opposes.

Possible US aggression is the region’s only serious threat. It’s why Pyongyang continues developing its nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities – strictly for defense, not offense, an agenda polar opposite Washington’s.

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My newest book as editor and contributor is titled “Flashpoint in Ukraine: How the US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III.”

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