

North Korea Warns ‘Gangster-Like’ Tactics of Bolton and Pompeo Undermining Nuclear Talks

"President Trump: Fire Bolton and Pompeo if you have to. Let's get this process back on track."

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Global Research, March 17, 2019

[Common Dreams](#) 15 March 2019

Region: [Asia](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Military](#), [WMD](#)

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*Two weeks after U.S. **President Donald Trump** and North Korean leader **Kim Jong Un** [cut short](#) their second summit with no agreement or clear path forward, a top North Korean official said on Friday the “gangster-like” behavior of Trump’s hawkish top officials helped derail the denuclearization negotiations.*

At a gathering of diplomats and foreign media in Pyongyang, North Korean **Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui** expressed disappointment that the summit ended without a deal and threatened to suspend talks. [According to](#) *The Associated Press*:

Choe, who attended the Feb. 27-28 talks in Hanoi, said Kim was puzzled by what she called the “eccentric” negotiation position of the U.S. She suggested that while Trump was more willing to talk, an atmosphere of hostility and mistrust was created by the uncompromising demands of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and National Security Adviser John Bolton. She said statements by senior Trump advisers since the summit have further worsened the climate.

“On our way back to the homeland, our chairman of the state affairs commission said, ‘For what reason do we have to make this train trip again?’” Choe told reporters. “I want to make it clear that the gangster-like stand of the U.S. will eventually put the situation in danger.”

President Moon: Call Chairman Kim. President Trump: Fire Bolton and Pompeo if you have to. Let's get this process back on track. <https://t.co/VP7SfzqBTs>

— Tim Shorrock (@TimothyS) [March 15, 2019](#)

While Pompeo [said Friday](#) morning that the administration wishes to continue talks with North Korea, Choe’s comments fueled mounting concerns that Trump and Kim may not return to the negotiating table anytime soon and followed [speculation](#) immediately after the summit that Bolton played a key role in the breakdown.

We cannot claim that we were not warned if things turn south. <https://t.co/MdXwkyMyBA>

— Vipin Narang (@NarangVipin) [March 15, 2019](#)

After the breakdown, critics called the meeting—which was the second time Trump and Kim met face-to-face—a “missed opportunity” to end the decades-long Korean war and pave a path for peace on the peninsula. However, Trump and Kim were also praised for building trust and pursuing diplomacy rather than trading [insults](#) and [threats](#), as they had done previously.

Trump [claimed](#) the talks ended in Hanoi because Kim wanted devastating economic sanctions “lifted in their entirety, but we couldn’t do that.” Earlier this month, Bolton [said](#) that if North Korea doesn’t shutter its nuclear program and everything associated with it, “they’re not going to get relief from the crushing economic sanctions that have been imposed on them and we’ll look at ramping those sanctions in fact.”

Choe claimed Friday that despite the way things ended in Hanoi, personal relations remain good between Trump and Kim. She also said the North Korean leader will soon “clarify his position” on whether to continue talks or restart missile launches and nuclear tests. In terms of sanctions, she pushed back against Trump’s explanation.

“I’m not sure why the U.S. came out with this different description,” Choe said. “We never asked for the removal of sanctions in their entirety.”

“This time we understood very clearly that the United States has a very different calculation to ours,” she added. “What is clear is that the U.S. has thrown away a golden opportunity this time.”

Duyeon Kim, a senior fellow at the Center for New American Security and columnist for the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, responded to Choe’s remarks in a series of tweets. As Kim put it,

“Choe is like the Bolton of NK during summitry; she talks tough time to time.”

However, she concluded, there’s still hope for diplomacy, and key figures from both countries should focus on that.

□1. We're seeing a Bolton-Choe moment hitting the airwaves after Hanoi. Choe is like the Bolton of NK during summitry; she talks tough time to time. Her comments reflect genuine NK frustration, but also seems to be playing hard to get & trying to force US to make move... <https://t.co/XvbwIUDGMk>

— Duyeon Kim (@duyeonkim) [March 15, 2019](#)

3. To do: ROK send intel chief Suh, persuade to keep moratorium & talk. US knock on NK door for more talks (I worry about translation issues in Hanoi & recent Biegun word choices "incremental" etc). Trump tweet something positive/send love letter (cant believe I'm saying this)...

— Duyeon Kim (@duyeonkim) [March 15, 2019](#)

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