

Suspicious Killing of North Korean Leader's Half Brother

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Kim Jong-nam was North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's paternal half brother.

On February 13, he was killed in Malaysia at Kuala Lumpur's airport, the bizarre incident captured on security camera videotape for the whole world to see - an obvious red flag.

Malaysian authorities said he died from VX poisoning, a banned lethal nerve agent. At one time, he was considered heir apparent to his father, Kim Jong-il, later exiled in 2003 after falling out of favor with ruling authorities.

South Korea's ruling party spokesperson called his killing a "naked example of Kim Jong-un's reign of terror."

Media scoundrels blamed Pyongyang for his death. He'd been out of the country for around 14 years, posed no apparent threat to his half-brother or the government.

No information suggested he planned returning to challenge Kim Jong-un's leadership. So why was he killed?

Why an eruption of media reports about an obscure figure, away from the center of power in Pyongyang for years? Why now? Why publicly to be seen worldwide on videotape?

Who had motive and opportunity to kill him? If North Korean authorities wanted him eliminated, why did they wait so long? Why a public execution, making it easy for its detractors to automatically lay blame where it likely doesn't belong.

Here's what we know. North Korean senior representatives were preparing to come to New York to meet with former US officials, a chance for both sides to discuss differences diplomatically, hopefully leading to direct talks with Trump officials.

The State Department hadn't yet approved visas, a positive development if arranged.

Reports indicate North Korea very much wanted the meeting to take place. Makes sense. It would indicate a modest thaw in hostile relations, a good thing if anything came of it.

So why would Pyongyang want to kill Kim Jong-nam at this potentially sensitive time, knowing it would be blamed for the incident, talks likely cancelled?

Sure enough, they're off, Pyongyang accused of killing Kim, even though it seems implausible they planned and carried out the incident, using agents in Malaysia to act as proxies.

Reports indicate North Korea planned sending its Foreign Ministry director of US affairs Choe Son Hui to lead a delegation. On the US side, former Carter official/National Committee on American Foreign Policy senior vice president Donald Zagoria and former Clinton 1994 chief denunclearization deal negotiator Robert Gallucci were involved.

Pyongyang denied involvement in Kim Jong-nam's death. It makes sense. Why sabotage talks it wanted held?

The Trump administration cancelled them anyway – an opportunity lost, likely undermined far from Pyongyang, maybe in Seoul with CIA help.

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His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: How the US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

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