

Nikkei 21690.10 1.95% ▲

Hang Seng 28542.62 -0.28% ▼

U.S. 10 Yr -2/32 Yield 2.031% ▼

Crude Oil 59.86 2.38% ▲

Yen 108.27 0.35% ▲

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WORLD

## Trump Steps Into North Korea as Two Sides Agree to Restart Nuclear Talks

The two leaders held spontaneous summit in demilitarized zone dividing North and South



Trump Shakes Hands With Kim and Crosses Into North Korea

After meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un at the demilitarized zone that divides the two Koreas, President Trump said official nuclear talks would resume. He is the first sitting American president to set foot in North Korea. Photo: AP

By [Timothy W. Martin](#), [Alex Leary](#) and [Andrew Jeong](#)

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SEOUL—President Trump became the first sitting U.S. president to step across the boundary dividing North and South Korea, leading to a hastily organized meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and a commitment to restart nuclear talks.

Mr. Trump said Sunday the two nations had agreed to designate nuclear negotiating teams that will begin work over the next several weeks. “We’re not looking for speed. We’re looking to get it right,” he said. “We’re on a very good path. This was a terrific day.”

While the sequence of events was remarkable, experts on North Korea expressed caution about the unexpected burst of diplomacy. The two sides remain deeply divided over how, and when, Pyongyang should relinquish its nuclear arsenal, a disagreement that became clear when talks abruptly broke down at a February summit between Messrs. Trump and Kim in Vietnam.

The weekend’s moves underscored the unconventional detente between the U.S. and North Korea, longtime adversaries whose leaders have struck a personal connection. The prelude to Sunday’s meeting was an exchange of letters that Mr. Trump called “beautiful” and Mr. Kim described as “excellent.”

On Sunday, after Mr. Trump stepped over the low curb dividing South and North Korea he shook Mr. Kim's hand. The two walked some 19 paces, where they stopped for photographers. Then they returned to the border—where the president posed a question to Mr. Kim.

“Would you like to come over?” he asked.

Mr. Kim agreed and entered a building called the Freedom House on the South Korean side. There he sat down with Mr. Trump and answered several questions, saying he had been surprised by the last-minute U.S. request to meet.

The two men, joined by members of their nuclear teams, then headed into a closed-door meeting that lasted nearly an hour. They emerged with the commitment to restart talks.

Expected to be brief—handshakes and a quick hello—the gathering in total stretched to around 66 minutes, indoors and outdoors.

“Stepping across that line was a great honor,” Mr. Trump later recalled. Asked if he would invite Mr. Kim to the U.S., he answered: “I would invite him right now.”

The meeting between Messrs. Trump and Kim set off a scramble by reporters, photographers, White House aides and North Korean security officials. Stephanie Grisham, two days into her role as White House press secretary, was bruised in the chaos, according to reporters who saw her later. The commotion was partially captured on a video in which Ms. Grisham can be heard telling reporters: “Go, go!”

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### U.S. Presidents Visit the DMZ Through the Years

A number of President Trump's predecessors visited the demilitarized zone dividing the two Koreas, though he is the first to meet a North Korean leader there



President Ronald Reagan visiting U.S. troops at Camp Casey, near the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea, on Nov. 13, 1982. DAVID HUME KENNERLY/GETTY IMAGES

Despite the day's plot twists, North Korea watchers said the high-profile gathering followed a familiar script in Trump-Kim diplomacy: engage in a glitzy event but leave with vague assurances.

"Theatrics and histrionics are fleeting. Now we have to look forward to what might lie ahead," said Soo Kim, a North Korean expert at Rand Corp., a policy think tank, and a former Central Intelligence Agency analyst.

In an early Monday report, North Korean state media said new breakthroughs were possible and both sides had expressed "great satisfaction" with the latest Trump-Kim meeting.

At an earlier joint news conference with President Moon Jae-in of South Korea, Mr. Trump dismissed a question that suggested nothing substantial had changed since the last time he and Mr. Kim spoke, contending that his efforts since being elected have resulted in significant strides toward an accord.

Mr. Trump repeatedly said the news media hadn't given him enough credit and expressed relief that his invitation to Mr. Kim, delivered Saturday on Twitter, didn't go unanswered.

The snap Sunday meeting is an extraordinary development, though it is doubtful either side has changed its negotiating stance, said Kim Chun-sig, a former senior official at South Korea's unification ministry.

"Once talks resume, both sides will run into the same wall of repeating what has been said so far," he said.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that Stephen Biegun, the U.S. special representative for North Korea, would probably begin the new working-level talks with his counterparts from the North Korean foreign ministry in the middle of July at a location yet to be determined. Mr. Pompeo said it wasn't yet clear who the North Korea negotiators would be.

"Even in Hanoi we made progress," Mr. Pompeo said of the February talks as he prepared to fly to Washington. "And so we think we do have a jumping-off point for these discussions, which will put us in a place where we can truly evaluate if there is any clear path forward. Having listened to Chairman Kim today, I think there is."

Mr. Pompeo said the two sides didn't have a common definition of denuclearization but asserted that they were "not at square one."

This round of Pyongyang engagement—unfolding in summits last June in Singapore and then in Vietnam—has contrasted with previous denuclearization efforts through the substantial role the two countries' leaders have taken in the deal-making. Previous efforts leaned more on working-level talks to iron out disarmament agreements.

Pyongyang wants the process to unfold in a gradual, step-by-step process, as the U.S. removes some economic penalties on the cash-strapped regime. Washington desires a grander bargain in which the North agrees to specifics before sanctions are relaxed.

In Hanoi, the North offered to close some parts of its Yongbyon complex, the country's main nuclear facility that produces plutonium and highly enriched uranium. But in return, Mr. Kim demanded a comprehensive rollback of recent sanctions that block much of the North's international trade and sharply restrict its oil imports.

Washington refused those terms, seeking a broader concessions package beyond the Yongbyon facility.

Pyongyang blamed Washington for the no-deal outcome in Vietnam. The North has flashed its frustrations in recent months, test-firing weapons and lobbing insults at senior U.S. officials and policies in state media.

Mr. Kim, in a rare April policy speech, warned the U.S. to shift its negotiation stance by year's end or face the prospect of a "gloomy and very dangerous" outcome.

The North Korean leader has promised his people an economic revitalization, a turnaround not possible while the nation is hit with the existing sanctions. That has security experts questioning how much time the two sides really have to broker a deal, raising the stakes for a next Trump-Kim sit-down.

"If Kim loses again, I think that will be somewhat fatal to his regime security," said Kim Sung-han, a former South Korean vice minister of foreign affairs and now a graduate-school dean at Korea University. "So he will have to become a big gambler for the next six to nine months."

Mr. Trump, too, faces political risk if Mr. Kim becomes so angered he returns to launching long-range missiles. The Trump administration has touted the absence of such testing as evidence that its approach with Pyongyang is working.

In one of many unusual moments Sunday, Mr. Trump was asked whether he knew if members of Mr. Kim's past negotiating team were alive. "I can tell you the main person is," he replied. "I would hope the rest are, too."

Mr. Trump was the fifth U.S. president to visit the DMZ, but the first in more than seven years. But none had crossed the line to North Korea while in office.

President Bill Clinton traveled to North Korea in 2009, years after leaving the presidency, and brought back two journalists who had been detained. President Jimmy Carter went there three times after leaving office, twice on diplomatic missions and once to retrieve a detained U.S. citizen.

It is unknown whether the U.S. and North Korea have offered new, more-flexible stances in their denuclearization talks. But some security experts saw value in the third meeting nonetheless because it would reduce the likelihood that Pyongyang will turn to even smaller-scale provocations.

"Goodwill gestures like these are important," said Kristine Lee, a North Korea specialist at the Center for a New American Security, a Washington-based think tank.

*—Na-Young Kim in Seoul and Michael R. Gordon  
in Washington, D.C., contributed to this article.*

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