

**Trump leaves North Korea summit without nuclear deal By CAITLIN OPRYSKO Politico
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President Donald Trump has left Vietnam without the nuclear deal he was hoping to strike with North Korean Kim Jong Un — a stinging result for a president seeking a foreign policy win to carry into 2020.

The two sides appeared on the cusp of signing an agreement on some incremental nuclear disarmament vows, but scuttled those plans at the last minute.

"It was about sanctions," Trump said in a press conference shortly after the White House announced the summit with North Korea would be cut short.

"Basically, they wanted the sanctions lifted in their entirety," he added. "They were willing to denuke a large portion of the areas that we wanted, but we couldn't give up all of the sanctions for that."

It was an unexpected 180 degree turn at a summit that seemed to be moving toward a deal that Trump would portray as a major victory — another stump speech line for his rallies as the 2020 presidential race heats up. Instead, he found himself having to explain to the media at a hurried up press conference why the two sides had come away empty handed. It's a result likely to complicate the positive narrative Trump has been promoting about his overtures to North Korea, a country the international community has long isolated over Pyongyang's repeated military provocations and repression of its own population.

"Sometimes you have to walk," Trump said, noting later, "We actually had papers ready to be signed. But it just wasn't appropriate."

Trump even seemed to concede that North Korea may not want to give up its nuclear program, echoing the regional analysts and national security leaders that Trump has long dismissed on the subject.

North Korea, he told Fox News's Sean Hannity, is "not ready for that and I understand that fully, I really do. I mean they spent a lot of time building it."

Trump and Kim had been scheduled to hold a signing ceremony Thursday afternoon for their expected deal. But the event was called off less than two hours ahead of time, and Trump moved up his departure time from Vietnam.

White House officials stressed that the two sides would keep talking and both the president and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo insisted that considerable progress was made over the last two days. Pompeo said he hoped the two sides would reconnect in the coming weeks, but Trump said he had "not committed" to a third summit.

"I think everyone had hoped we could do a little bit better," Pompeo said.

Negotiators apparently couldn't agree on which nuclear sites North Korea had to dismantle before the U.S. would lift economic sanctions. Trump said Kim was willing to destroy the Yongbyon facility, the heart of North Korea's nuclear-fuel program, but would not agree to destroy other facilities that the U.S. wants eradicated.

"We asked him to do more," Pompeo noted. "He was unprepared to do that."

However, a senior North Korean official later held a news conference in Hanoi while Trump was jetting back to Washington to contradict the U.S. version of events. North Korea's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ri Yong-ho, denied that his country had insisted on the removal of all sanctions in return for dismantling Yongbyon, and added that his country would dismantle the facility if some U.S. sanctions are first lifted.

Trump had spent the morning in Hanoi setting expectations for the event, repeatedly stressing that he was "in no rush" to force North Korea to denuclearize.

"Speed is not that important to me as long as there's no testing," Trump said Thursday morning in Vietnam, referencing Pyongyang's halt of missile tests. At one point, Trump reiterated the phrase "no rush" several times in a row.

"Over the years, I'm sure we'll be together a lot," he added.

In a startling moment, Kim even responded to reporters' questions about his intentions and predictions for the summit.

“It’s too early to tell, but I wouldn’t say I’m pessimistic,” he said through a translator, perhaps answering a foreign journalist's question for the first time. “From what I feel right now I do have a feeling that good results will come out.”

Later, asked if he was willing to denuclearize, Kim responded, “If I’m not willing to do that I wouldn’t be here right now.”

But after several hours of meetings, it appeared that talks might be falling apart.

The two sides had been discussing measures such as declaring an end to the Korean War, destroying nuclear facilities in North Korea, opening liaison offices in both countries and lifting economic sanctions. But both Trump and Kim were mostly evasive when asked about each of those subjects, although both indicated they welcomed the opening of liaison offices.

Trump and Kim began their summit Wednesday night in Hanoi with a short one-on-one conversation, followed by a broader working dinner. The two held another private meeting on Thursday morning before participating in a more expansive gathering and a working lunch. Before going into his meeting with Kim on Thursday, the president returned to an argument he has made in recent days that if Kim's regime gives up its nukes, the country could become an “economic powerhouse.”

One subject the leaders didn't make progress on was North Korea’s human rights record, which has been widely condemned by most countries around the world. It’s a subject the president has rarely mentioned since starting talks with Pyongyang — a notable change from Trump's first year in office, during which he regularly trashed Kim over the subject.

At the press conference Thursday, Trump was pressed over whether he had confronted Kim about the death of Otto Warmbier, an American who was arrested while traveling in North Korea and later returned to the U.S. in a vegetative state before dying. Trump said Kim claimed ignorance about the situation — a denial the president accepted.

“I did speak about it and I don't believe that he would have allowed that to happen,” Trump said, adding that he would take Kim “at his word.”

Any joint agreement between the two leaders would have faced heavy scrutiny after criticism that Trump’s historic first summit with Kim in Singapore last year didn’t yield any kind of substantive progress.

While the pair signed a statement pledging to work toward total denuclearization on the peninsula, it did not contain a framework or specific time frame to achieve that goal. What’s more, outside analysts, as well as [members of Trump’s intelligence apparatus](#), say that in the wake of that first summit, North Korea has done little to get rid of its nuclear program.

Kim on Thursday dismissed the notion that he was unwilling to give up his nukes, saying he wouldn't be in Hanoi if he wasn't open to the idea.

In the eight months since the Singapore summit, analysts have uncovered more missile launch sites in North Korea, though Pyongyang has halted its missile testing. North Korea has also arranged for the remains of American soldiers killed during the war to be returned to the U.S. — an action Trump frequently cites.

Still, the two sides have long seemed at odds over when the U.S. would agree to roll back sanctions — with North Korea wanting some penalties lifted in exchange for incremental denuclearization steps, and the U.S. urging full denuclearization before offering any economic relief. It was that disagreement that derailed talks on Thursday.

Declaring an end to the Korean War is also a loaded issue that was once thought to be a possibility for this week's summit. The war ended in an armistice rather than an official peace treaty, and striking a formal peace agreement might require sign off from Congress and China, which backed North Korea in the war.

Additionally, Kim may view a peace treaty as a means of pushing for the U.S. to withdraw its nearly 30,000 troops from South Korea, a step that many Republicans would oppose.

As a result, any peace statement emanating from this week's summit would likely just be a political declaration.

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