

1985

# North Korean Nuclear Negotiations

1985 – 2019

Nuclear negotiations between the United States and North Korea have proceeded in fits and starts across three decades and have failed to halt the advance of the North's atomic weapons program.



# 1985

December 1985

## North Korea Joins Nonproliferation Regime



*Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il oversee the construction of a dam. KCNA via AP Photo*

North Korea ratifies the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), a multilateral agreement whose dozens of signatories have committed to halting the spread of nuclear weapons and technology and promoting peaceful cooperation on nuclear energy. North Korea built its first nuclear facilities in the early 1980s.

# 1991

September 1991

## United States Removes Nukes From South Korea



*U.S. President George H.W. Bush and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev at the signing of the START agreement. Sputnik via AP Photo*

The United States announces it will withdraw roughly one hundred nuclear weapons from South Korea as part of the original Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. The agreement between President George H.W. Bush and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, known as the START treaty, limits the deployment of offensive nuclear weapons abroad.

# 1992

January 1992

## Koreas Agree to Denuclearize Peninsula



*North Koreans in traditional dress perform for President Kim Il-sung. Pierre Bessard/AFP via Getty Images*

The governments of North and South Korea agree to “not test, manufacture, produce, receive, possess, store, deploy, or use nuclear weapons,” as well as ban nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment facilities. The treaty also commits the two Koreas to use nuclear energy only for peaceful purposes.

# 1993

*March 1993 – June 1993*

## North Korea Threatens NPT Withdrawal



*North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok-ju announces his country's withdrawal from the NPT. Jim Cooper/AP Photo*

Pyongyang rejects inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and announces its intent to leave the NPT. However, the country suspends its withdrawal following talks with U.S. diplomats in New York. Pyongyang agrees to comply with IAEA safeguards, including inspections at seven declared nuclear sites. The first inspections take place in March 1994.

# 1994

June 1994

## Carter Visits North Korea



*North Korean leader Kim Il-sung meets with former U.S. President Jimmy Carter weeks before Kim's death. KCNA via AP Photo*

Amid escalating tensions on the peninsula, Jimmy Carter becomes the first former U.S. president to visit North Korea, where he meets with Kim Il-sung, the country's founder. Carter's trip paves the way for a bilateral deal between the United States and North Korea. Kim dies weeks later and is succeeded by his son, Kim Jong-il.

October 21, 1994

## Deal Freezes Pyongyang's Nuclear Program

AGREED FRAMEWORK BETWEEN  
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND  
THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

GENEVA, OCTOBER 21, 1994

Delegations of the Governments of the United States of America (U.S.) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) held talks in Geneva from September 23 to October 21, 1994, to negotiate an overall resolution of the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula.

Both sides reaffirmed the importance of attaining the objectives contained in the August 12, 1994 agreed statement between the U.S. and the DPRK and upholding the principles of the June 11, 1993 joint statement of the U.S. and the DPRK to achieve peace and security on a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula. The U.S. and DPRK decided to take the following actions for the resolution of the nuclear issue:

I. Both sides will cooperate to replace the DPRK's graphite-moderated reactors and related facilities with light-water reactor (LWR) power plants.

*The first page of the Agreed Framework.*

The United States and North Korea sign the Agreed Framework [PDF], in which North Korea commits to freezing its illicit plutonium weapons program and halting construction on nuclear reactors, in Geneva. In exchange, the United States pledges to provide sanctions relief, aid, oil, and two light-water reactors for civilian use. Earlier in the year, the CIA assessed that North Korea had produced one or two nuclear weapons.

# 1995

March 1995

## Allies Found KEDO



*Representatives of Japan, South Korea, and the United States sign the KEDO treaty. Jon Levy/AFP via Getty Images*

The United States, Japan, and South Korea establish the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) to implement the 1994 Agreed Framework and oversee the financing and construction of the two light-water reactors. KEDO breaks ground in August 1997.



# 1999

September 13, 1999

## North Korea Imposes Missile Moratorium



*North Korean television broadcasts an image of a ballistic missile. Reuters*

North Korea agrees to suspend testing of long-range missiles following talks with the United States; in exchange, the United States eases economic sanctions for the first time since the beginning of the Korean War in 1950.

# 2000

*June 2000*

## First Inter-Korean Summit



*North Korea's Kim Jong-il poses with the South's Kim Dae-jung upon his arrival in Pyongyang. So09/Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images*

South Korean President Kim Dae-jung meets with Kim Jong-il in Pyongyang for the first summit between Korean leaders since the peninsula's division five decades prior. The rapprochement results in a number of joint commercial and cultural projects, including construction of an industrial complex and the reunification of families separated during the war. Following the summit, the United States eases sanctions further, allowing some trade and investment.

October 2000

## Washington and Pyongyang Host Goodwill Trips



*Kim Jong-il toasts U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in North Korea.*

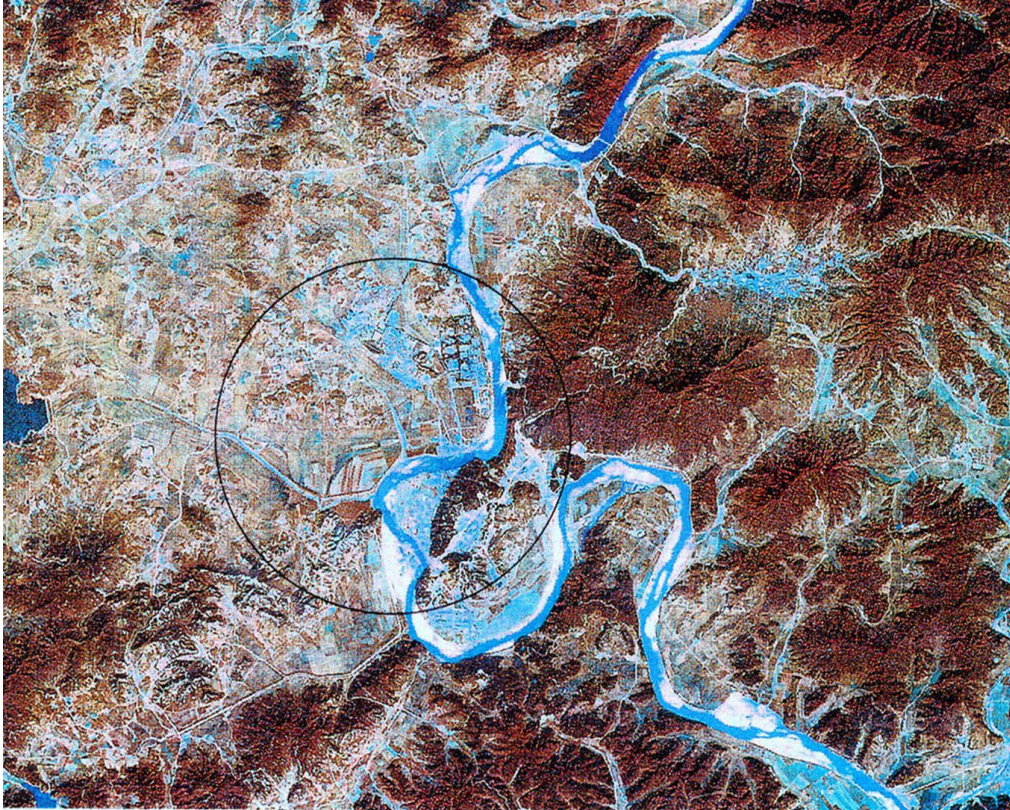
*Chien-Min Chung/AFP via Getty Images*

North Korean General Jo Myong-rok meets with U.S. President Bill Clinton in Washington, making Jo the highest-ranking North Korean official to visit the United States. A few weeks later, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright travels to North Korea to discuss the country's ballistic missile program and missile technology exports. The diplomatic overtures lead to missile talks in November, but Clinton's presidency ends without making additional nuclear or missile deals.

## 2001 – 2002

*January 2001 – April 2002*

### Bush Challenges North's Commitment to Deal



*Satellite imagery from February 2002 depicts North Korea's nuclear facilities.*

*U.S. International Security Research Institute via Getty Images*

President George W. Bush takes office in 2001 and pursues a harder line toward Pyongyang, characterizing North Korea, along with Iraq and Iran, as part of an “axis of evil” and imposing new sanctions. In April 2002, Bush states in a memorandum that the United States will not certify North Korea’s compliance with the 1994 Agreed Framework, due to a rocket test and missile-related transfers to Iran.

## 2002 – 2003

October 2002 – January 2003

### Pyongyang Exits the NPT



*Thousands rally in Pyongyang after North Korea's withdrawal from the NPT. Gong Yidong/Xinhua via AP Photo*

Pyongyang admits to running a secret uranium-enrichment program to power nuclear weapons, a violation of the Agreed Framework, the NPT, and agreements between North and South Korea. By December, the country says it will reactivate its nuclear plant in Yongbyon. The following month, North Korea withdraws from the NPT after disrupting IAEA monitoring equipment and expelling inspectors.

# 2003

August 9, 2003

## Six Party Talks Open



*Heads of the delegations to the Six Party Talks meet. Ng Han Guan/Reuters*

Amid an increasingly tense climate, South and North Korea, China, Japan, Russia, and the United States launch a diplomatic initiative known as the Six Party Talks. There are no breakthroughs during the first round of talks, in Beijing, where North Korea denies having a uranium-enrichment program.

# 2005

September 12, 2005

## U.S. Freezes North Korean Funds



*Commuters pass by a Banco Delta Asia bank branch in Macau. Tim Johnson/MCT/  
via Getty Images*

The U.S. Treasury Department designates the Macau-based Banco Delta Asia a primary money laundering concern and freezes \$25 million North Korea holds there. These funds will prove to be a sticking point in negotiations between the United States and North Korea.

*September 19, 2005*

## Disarmament Principles Emerge From Talks



*Negotiators in Beijing shake hands after the fourth round of the Six Party Talks.  
Guang Niu/Getty Images*

Despite stalemates at previous rounds of the Six Party Talks, its members agree to a joint declaration in which North Korea commits to abandon its pursuit of nuclear weapons and to implement IAEA safeguards and the terms of the NPT. As part of the agreement, the United States asserts that it has no intention of attacking North Korea.



# 2006

October 9, 2006

## North Korea Shocks With First Nuclear Test



*South Korean television broadcasts North Korea's first nuclear test. Jung Yeon-je/AFP via Getty Images*

North Korea carries out an underground nuclear test with an explosion yield estimated around one to two kilotons. In July, North Korea tested seven short-, medium-, and long-range ballistic missiles. These tests prompt the UN Security Council to issue unanimous condemnations and trade sanctions.

# 2007

February 13, 2007

## Six Party Members Agree to Action Plan



*A ship destined for North Korea is loaded with oil in South Korea. Chung Sun-jun/Getty Images*

North Korea commits to halting operations at its Yongbyon nuclear facilities in exchange for fifty thousand tons of oil. The deal is part of an action plan agreed to by the Six Party members to implement the September 2005 statement.

*October 2007*

## Nuclear Diplomacy Inches Forward



*U.S. President George W. Bush gives a statement on North Korea in June 2008.*

*Jonathan Ernst/Reuters*

After the United States releases the \$25 million in frozen North Korean funds in June, the Six Party Talks resume. Its participants issue a joint statement outlining the North's commitment to declare all of its nuclear programs, disable its facilities, and stop the export of nuclear material and technology. In exchange, the North is to receive nine hundred thousand tons of oil and the United States pledges to remove the country from its list of state sponsors of terrorism.

# 2008

February 2008

## South Korea's New Leader Takes Harder Line



*Lee Myung-bak takes his inaugural oath before the South Korean parliament. Lee Jae-won/Reuters*

Lee Myung-bak is elected president of South Korea. As the leader of a conservative government, Lee shifts from his predecessors' push for reconciliation to exert more pressure on North Korea to denuclearize. He takes office a few months after the second inter-Korean summit, held between the North's Kim Jong-il and South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun.

*June 2008*

## North Korea Declares Nuclear Sites



*A cooling tower at a North Korean plutonium-producing reactor is demolished.*

*Kyodo via Reuters*

Pyongyang declares its fifteen nuclear sites to Beijing, the chair of the Six Party Talks, stating that it had thirty kilograms of plutonium and used two kilograms in its 2006 nuclear test. In turn, Bush rescinds some restrictions on trade with North Korea, announces plans to take the country off the list of state sponsors of terrorism, and waives some sanctions. In October, the U.S. State Department announces a preliminary agreement with North Korea on verifications. However, by December, discussions break down because of disagreements on verification procedures.

# 2009

*January 2009 – December 2009*

## Obama Attempts Diplomatic Restart



*A U.S. delegation arrives in Pyongyang in December 2009. KCNA via Reuters*

President Barack Obama takes office signaling a willingness to revive the Six Party Talks, but these efforts are initially rebuffed by North Korea, which launches a rocket believed to be a modified version of its long-range ballistic missile. It also ejects international monitors from its nuclear facilities in April and the following month tests a second nuclear device, which carries a yield of two to eight kilotons. In December, Obama administration officials hold their first bilateral meetings with their North Korean counterparts.

# 2010

November 2010

## North Korea Reveals Uranium Plant



Smoke rises from Yeonpyeong after North Korean artillery hit the South Korean island. Getty Images

Pyongyang reveals its new centrifuge for uranium enrichment, which was built secretly and swiftly, as well as a light-water reactor under construction, suggesting that despite sanctions, the regime is committed to advancing its weapons program. The news comes amid escalating tensions on the Korean Peninsula after forty-six South Koreans were killed when a patrol ship, the *Cheonan*, was torpedoed and then sank in March. The South blames North Korea for the attack and cuts economic ties. The North denies its involvement and later fires artillery at the South Korean island of Yeonpyeong.

## 2011

December 2011

# North Korea Heralds New Leader



*Kim Jong-un and other top North Korean officials accompany the coffin of Kim Jong-il during the late leader's funeral procession. KCNA via Reuters*

Kim Jong-il dies after seventeen years in power and is succeeded by his son Kim Jong-un. The not-yet-thirty-year-old Kim is relatively unknown, and foreign observers anticipate a political struggle until he begins to assert power.



## 2012

February 29, 2012

# Nuclear Operations Briefly Suspended



*North Korean leaders attend a parade honoring the seventieth birthday of the recently deceased Kim Jong-il. David Guttenfelder/AP Photo*

Following a meeting between the United States and North Korea in Beijing, North Korea commits to suspend its uranium enrichment operations in Yongbyon, invite IAEA monitors, and carry out a moratorium on long-range missile and nuclear testing. In exchange, the United States is to provide tons of food aid. The deal falls apart after North Korea launches a rocket and displays road-mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles at a military parade.

## 2013 – 2016

February 2013 – December 2016

### North's Nuclear Program Advances Despite Isolation



*Kim Jong-un inspects the tip of a rocket warhead. KCNA via Reuters*

Diplomacy stalls for several years as the Obama administration opts for “strategic patience,” in which the United States and its partners ratchet up sanctions in hopes that the regime will return to the negotiating table. Meanwhile, North Korea carries out nuclear tests in February 2013 and again in January and September 2016. Its ballistic missile capabilities improve, with more tests of short-, medium-, and long-range missiles carried out under Kim Jong-un than under his father and grandfather combined.

## 2017

January 2017 – November 2017

January 2017 – November 2017

## President Trump Ratchets up Rhetoric



**Donald J. Trump** ✓  
@realDonaldTrump



North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un just stated that the "Nuclear Button is on his desk at all times." Will someone from his depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works!

1/2/18, 6:49 PM

*President Trump tweets a reaction to provocations from North Korea's Kim. Twitter*

President Donald J. Trump is inaugurated in January 2017 and shifts course in U.S. policy toward North Korea. In September, Pyongyang conducts its sixth nuclear test, which it claims is a hydrogen bomb and raises international alarm due to the yield of its explosion. Trump redesignates North Korea a state sponsor of terrorism in November. U.S.-North Korean relations during Trump's first year are volatile as Pyongyang boasts it can reach U.S. soil with nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles and the Trump administration threatens a military strike.

# 2018

March 2018

## Trump Agrees to First U.S.-North Korea Summit



*The planned meeting of Kim and Trump, later slated for June 12 in Singapore, would be the first between a sitting U.S president and North Korean leader. KCNA and Lucas Jackson/Reuters*

South Korea's national security advisor announces in Washington that Trump has accepted an invitation to meet with Kim Jong-un in Pyongyang by May. The news comes on the heels of diplomatic overtures between the North and South spurred by the Winter Olympic Games, hosted by South Korea in Pyeongchang.

*April 27, 2018*

## Kim Makes Historic Visit South



*Kim and Moon meet in the demilitarized zone separating the two Koreas. Reuters*

Kim becomes the first North Korean leader to cross the border south for a summit with South Korea's Moon Jae-in at the truce village of Panmunjom. The summit marks the first meeting between the heads of the Koreas in eleven years. The two pledge to convert the armistice that ended the hostilities of the Korean War into a formal peace treaty. They also confirmed the shared goal of achieving a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.

May 24, 2018

## Trump Calls Off Singapore Summit

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We greatly appreciate your time, patience, and effort with respect to our recent negotiations and discussions relative to a summit long sought by both parties, which was scheduled to take place on June 12 in Singapore. We were informed that the meeting was requested by North Korea, but that to us is totally irrelevant. I was very much looking forward to being there with you. Sadly, based on the tremendous anger and open hostility displayed in your most recent statement, I feel it is inappropriate, at this time, to have this long-planned meeting. Therefore, please let this letter serve to represent that the Singapore summit, for the good of both parties, but to the detriment of the world, will not take place. You talk about your nuclear capabilities, but ours are so massive and powerful that I pray to God they will never have to be used.

I felt a wonderful dialogue was building up between you and me, and ultimately, it is only that dialogue that matters. Some day, I look very much forward to meeting you. In the meantime, I want to thank you for the release of the hostages who are now home with their families. That was a beautiful gesture and was very much appreciated.

If you change your mind having to do with this most important summit, please do not hesitate to call me or write. The world, and North Korea in particular, has lost a great opportunity for lasting peace and great prosperity and wealth. This missed opportunity is a truly sad moment in history.

*Trump's letter to Kim canceling their meeting. The White House*

The U.S. president pulls out of the meeting with North Korea's Kim Jong-un, citing "anger and hostility" in North Korea's latest statements. Threats out of Pyongyang had raised doubts about whether the summit would go forward. Still, North Korea had taken some action in recent weeks to demonstrate good faith by releasing three U.S. prisoners and demolishing the nuclear test site at Punggye-ri, where foreign journalists were invited to witness the event.

*June 12, 2018*

## Kim, Trump Pledge New Era of Relations



*Kim and Trump shake hands after their summit. Susan Walsh/Pool/Reuters*

In an about-face, Kim and Trump hold a historic meeting in Singapore, where they signal a desire to change the U.S.-North Korea relationship. The two leaders sign a joint statement pledging to pursue lasting peace and complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, although the declaration provides few details. They also commit to recovering the remains of U.S. soldiers who fought in the Korean War. Separately, Trump says he would suspend U.S.-South Korea military exercises and Kim agrees to destroy a missile-engine test site.

*September 18 – 20, 2018*

## Moon, Kim Hail Progress Toward Nuclear-Free Korea



*South Korean President Moon Jae-in and his wife, Kim Jung-sook, pose for photographs with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and his wife, Ri Sol-ju, at the Heaven Lake of Mt. Paektu in North Korea. Pyeongyang Press Corps/Reuters*

In the third summit between Kim and Moon, this time in Pyongyang, the leaders sign a joint declaration outlining steps toward reducing tensions, expanding inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation, and achieving denuclearization. It states that the North will permanently shut down the Dongchang-ri missile test site, allow international inspectors into North Korea, and dismantle its nuclear site pending “corresponding measures” by the United States. An accompanying military declaration outlines steps to curtail ground exercises, establish no-fly and no-sail zones under the jurisdiction of inter-Korean bodies, and transform the demilitarized zone into a peace zone. The two sides also pledge to strengthen economic cooperation.



# 2019

February 27 – 28, 2019

## Second Trump-Kim Summit Ends Early, Without Deal



*Trump and Kim speak during their second summit in Hanoi. Leah Millis/Reuters*

Trump and Kim's second summit, held in Vietnam, collapses after the leaders disagree over sanctions relief and denuclearization. Trump says Kim agreed to dismantle the nuclear and fissile material production facilities at Yongbyon in exchange for complete sanctions relief, but the U.S. president wanted more substantial steps on denuclearization and verification. North Korean officials dispute Trump's account, saying Kim demanded only partial sanctions relief. Both leaders leave Vietnam early, without signing a planned joint statement, but indicate talks will continue. Trump says they parted on "friendly" terms, while North Korea's foreign ministry warns it will not change its position.

*June 30, 2019*

## Trump Steps Into North Korea, Vows to Revive Talks



*Trump and Kim meet in the demilitarized zone separating North and South Korea.*

*Kevin Lamarque/Reuters*

Trump and Kim agree to restart stalled nuclear negotiations after meeting in the demilitarized zone that separates North and South Korea. Stepping across the border, Trump becomes the first sitting U.S. president to set foot in North Korea. In statements to the press, both leaders highlight their “great relationship.” But Trump’s failure to publicly mention North Korea’s nuclear program makes experts skeptical that the meeting will result in substantive talks on denuclearization.

