

Trump prepares for summit with North Korea's dictator... by not preparing at all



DAVID PRATT

IT IS almost mano-a-mano time again as US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un prepare for their summit meeting in Singapore today.

I say prepare, but all the signs are Mr Trump himself, at least, feels there is no need for any real forward planning, arguing instead that high-stakes nuclear talks would be based more on "attitude" than advance legwork.

"It isn't a question of preparation," Mr Trump was quoted as saying last Thursday. "It's a question of whether or not people want it to happen, and we'll know that very quickly," the US leader said.

To say the last few days have been something of a confrontational test for Mr Trump would be an understatement. Even before he arrived in Singapore yesterday for his face-off with "little rocket man" – as he has dubbed Mr Kim – he has just had a tense and bitter meeting with leaders of the G7 group.

Although much has been made of the bonhomie between Mr Trump and his French counterpart, Emmanuel Macron, the latter was not holding back at the talks.

Meanwhile, host country Canada's Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, has been no less sparing in his criticism of Mr Trump's tariff proposals.

No-one should underestimate what was at stake at the G7. But, energetic and volatile as the talks proved, they could be little more than mere limbering up compared to what Mr Trump might encounter when he sits down with North Korea's reclusive young leader on Singapore's Sentosa Island.

The island, while now a resort whose name translates as "peace and tranquillity", was once home to a prisoner-of-war camp run by wartime Japanese forces known as "Rear Death Island".

An ominous portent perhaps for a historic summit aimed at nuclear arms reduction.

On the table though is a possible deal



North Korean leader Kim Jong-un is welcomed by Singapore's Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan, third from right, at Singapore Changi Airport.

in which Mr Kim dismantles his nuclear arsenal in return for concessions from the US that could include security assurances and an end to economic sanctions.

That, at least, is how the meeting between the two men has been presented. The outcome, however, could well prove to be something else entirely.

For his part, the US President will aim to get Mr Kim to "completely, verifiably, and irreversibly" abandon nuclear weapons.

But many diplomatic and strategic analysts remain convinced the Trump administration has misread Pyongyang's willingness to denuclearise.

Instead, they say, Mr Kim's real intention is to preserve North Korea's core nuclear weapons capability.

The North Korean leader, they believe, is more out to achieve a PR

coup, aiming to portray his country as "responsible" and capable of joining other nuclear weapons states.

Sceptics of the summit are not in short supply. Among them are those within the US administration who have shown no real appetite for the on-again, off-again, on-again diplomatic meeting between the two leaders.

Some US officials have even raised concerns as to the actual value and morality of sitting down with such an avowed enemy as North Korea. The United States and North Korea are technically still at war, they are quick to remind us.

But, swaggering as ever, Mr Trump last Thursday predicted "great success" at the summit and said it's possible he could sign an agreement with Mr Kim to formally end the Korean War. Some within his administration, however,

have done little to reassure Mr Kim and his regime that the US is genuine or can be fully trusted on any count.

That feeling was not helped when US National Security Adviser John Bolton suggested the model for North Korea's denuclearisation should be Libya in 2003 – essentially, crating up the North's weapons and sending them to America. Unsurprisingly, this did not go down well in Pyongyang where the Libya model still resonates.

Writing recently in the US magazine, Foreign Policy, Doug Bandow a senior fellow at the Cato Institute think-tank summed up US thinking at that time.

"US President George W Bush announced in 2003 that Libya's 'good faith will be returned.' For eight years, the US and Europe showered Colonel Muammar Gaddafi with flowers and whispered sweet nothings in his ear."

He was later overthrown and

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Every picture tells a story:

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murdered. The Libyan experience means verbal assurances and paper guarantees will never convince the North to give up its weapons.

Mr Kim, many remain convinced, has no intention of falling for that old line from the Americans.

Time magazine's Beijing correspondent, Charlie Campbell, says dealing with North Koreans is always fraught, as they are "punctilious about protocol".

He says the main problem for the summit will be in laying down the law or making any unbending demands at the outset, adding: "If it's just a meet and greet, it should go fine."

For many observers, though, the prospect of any major breakthrough strikes them as unfathomable. Mr Kim is an absolute dictator who not only presides over forced-labour camps but consistently and clinically eliminates perceived political opponents and who only last month threatened the US with a possible nuclear "showdown".

But let's look on the bright side. At least it's a start – and any jaw-jaw is always better than war-war.



Donald Trump arrives at Paya Lebar Air Base in Singapore.

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Ban fish farm sonic alarms say marine experts as dolphins and whales suffer

MARTHA VAUGHAN

CAMPAIGNERS are calling for a ban on the use of underwater electronic "scanners" to keep seals away from fish farms because of the damage they may be doing to whales and dolphins.

The Acoustic Deterrent Devices (ADDs) are said to have a detrimental impact on cetaceans, including harbour porpoises and minke whales.

A new report authored by the Scottish Association of Marine Science (SAMS) examining "low frequency" ADDs is due to be published via the Scottish Aquaculture Research Forum (Sarf) later this month.

In response to complaints that ADDs used on Scottish salmon farms – 164 of which use the devices, according to the Scottish Government – are "recklessly disturbing" cetaceans and breaching the EC Habitats Directive, a "new generation" of low-frequency "cetacean

friendly" models have been assessed by a Sarf project funded in 2016.

However, in a report on the environmental impact of salmon farming published in March, the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee recommended that "fish farms cannot use ADDs".

In April, the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust's written submis-



Salmon being netted on a Loch Linnhe farm.

sion to the Scottish Parliament's salmon farming inquiry cited new research on the impact of ADDs, even at low frequencies, on minke whales.

David Ainsley, a whale-watching tourist operator based in Argyll, said: "Turning down the volume of ADDs will not solve the problem."

"Lower frequency ADDs may be less disturbing for porpoise

but worse for dolphins and minke whales. The use of ADDs by salmon farms constitutes 'reckless disturbance' and is an offence under Scottish law and the EU Habitats Directive.

"As with the shooting of seals there must be a zero tolerance to ADDs. "All current ADDs, including the so-called 'cetacean friendly' models, emit very loud noises well above the reported thresholds for disturbance and hearing damage to cetaceans."

Mr Ainsley, who filed a complaint with the European Commission in April, added: "This is why no ADDs can comply with the requirements of the law protecting cetaceans from disturbance and injury."

"Because ADDs are not very effective, seal shooting will continue until farms stop using ADDs and instead fit double-skinned anti-predator nets, as used in British Columbia where licenses are no longer being issued for ADDs."

Flu poses high risk to asthmatic children

ASTHMATIC children should get the flu jab to stop them ending up in hospital, a new study argues.

When children, particularly infants, get the flu, it weakens them and if they then get an asthma attack they often respond poorly to treatment such as steroids and require hospital admission.

But the flu jab could ward off the double whammy of an asthma attack and a respiratory virus.

A study found over one sixth of asthmatic children do not respond

to emergency treatment – but if they also have the flu this number soars to two fifths.

Asthma affects one in 11 UK children (1.1 million) and one in 12 UK adults – 4.3 million.

But Canadian research has found only three fifths of asthmatic children get the flu jab.

University of Montreal's Professor of paediatrics Francine Ducharme said: "We now know that if these kids get the flu the risks are very high that emergency treatment for an asthma attack will fail."

Police said he sustained significant injuries and was taken to Inverclyde Royal Hospital before being transferred to Queen

Man, 20, left 'critical' by blade murder bid

LAURA PATERSON

A MAN has been attacked with a weapon in a "shocking" daylight murder attempt, police said.

The 20-year-old was with three friends in Union Street, Greenock, when he was assaulted by a man with a large bladed weapon at around 3.40pm on Saturday.

Police said he sustained significant injuries and was taken to Inverclyde Royal Hospital before being transferred to Queen

Elizabeth University Hospital in Glasgow, where he is said to be in a critical condition.

Detectives said the attempted murder is believed to have been "targeted" and they are following a positive line of inquiry

The victims' friends, aged 19, 20 and 31, were not injured in the attack on a busy thoroughfare.

The suspect, who was wearing dark clothing, is described as white, in his 20s, with a tanned complexion.

He ran off after the attack through a church and into Nelson Street.

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