

# PATRICK LAWRENCE: It Was Kim That Walked Away

There are two sides to the story about why the second North Korea peace summit fell apart last week, writes Patrick Lawrence.

By **Patrick Lawrence**

*Special to Consortium News*



The abrupt and unexpected failure of the second Trump–Kim summit last week raises many questions. Let’s get one out of the way before addressing the others: No, the collapse of talks between President Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un, the North Korean leader, does not scuttle the most promising chance for peace on the Korean Peninsula since the 1953 signing of the armistice ending the Korean War. There is more to come. This was plain within hours of the summit’s end.

At this point it’s still difficult to discern even what transpired between the two leaders. The U.S. and North Korean accounts of the proceedings in Hanoi are widely at variance on key points. With history in view, it is very likely that the North Korean version comes closer to the truth than what the Trump administration is putting out and what the U.S. press is dutifully reporting.

By Trump’s account, Kim agreed to dismantle his most important nuclear production facility, at Yongbyon, roughly 60 miles north of Pyongyang. In exchange, Kim asked for all sanctions now in force against North Korea—some passed at the UN, others imposed by Washington alone—to be lifted.

Here is Trump talking to correspondents after the bust-up Thursday morning:

“Basically, they wanted the sanctions lifted in their entirety, and we couldn’t do that. They were willing to de-nuke a large portion of the areas that we wanted, but we couldn’t give up all the sanctions for that... They wanted sanctions lifted but they weren’t willing to do an area we wanted.”

The “large portion” Trump mentioned is Yongbyon: There is no dispute about this. Pyongyang has shut down the reactor at Yongbyon twice in the past, in 1994 and in 2007. In 2008 Kim Jong-il, the reigning Kim’s father, ordered the cooling tower at Yongbyon demolished—a televised event many readers will remember. The site was reactivated in succeeding years following a series of multi-sided talks that went nowhere.

### **Kangson Facility**

The “area we wanted” appears to refer to an alleged nuclear facility at Kangson, also near the North Korean capital. What the North actually does at Kangson has never been verified, but it was one of a number of sites the U.S. side also insisted Pyongyang close.

Translation of the U.S. version of events in Hanoi: Kim offered us only one item on our list while demanding we give him everything he wanted. Who could possibly agree to such a deal?

North Korean officials tell a different story. After Trump offered his post-summit description of events, the North’s

foreign minister, Ri Yong-ho, gave his own press conference; a rarity among North Korean officials. Kim had agreed to shutter the North's main nuclear facility, by Ri's account, if the U.S. consented to lift only the five sets of sanctions imposed by the U.N. Security Council in 2016 and 2017.

Unlike restrictions on weapons and nuclear-related equipment, these covered entire export sectors, including minerals, metals, coal, agriculture and seafood. These, Ri said, were the measures that directly hurt the lives and livelihoods of ordinary North Koreans. Layer upon layer of other sanctions would remain in effect.

### **What's Wrong?**

Translation of the North Korean position in Hanoi: We will take a considerable step toward denuclearization providing you take one of corresponding magnitude. Now the question changes: What exactly is wrong with such a deal?

You have to go back to Trump's early months in office to understand what appears to have transpired in Hanoi. The administration's initial position was simple but ridiculous: The North had to completely disarm before Washington would even begin talks.

Only when the absurdity of this maximalist demand became too obvious to sustain—"give us everything we will negotiate before we negotiate"—did the Trump administration alter its demands, if reluctantly and slightly.

Moon Jae-in, South Korea's president, countered this as soon as Trump agreed last year to meet Kim, as they did in

Singapore last June. The way ahead was “action for action,” in Moon’s phrase. Pyongyang’s term for the same thing is “corresponding measures.” Elsewhere the concept is called “sequencing.” Whatever one calls it, a gradual, step-by-step process is the only logical way forward after nearly seven decades of mutual distrust.

## **Trump’s Refusal**

In effect, Kim proposed a sequenced approach when he met Trump last week. And in effect, Trump refused it. It is no wonder John Bolton, Trump’s national security adviser and the administration’s hyper-hawk on North Korea, has been assuring like-minded colleagues not to fret about the Trump-Kim summits because they are guaranteed to fail.

“This kind of opportunity may never come again,” Ri, the North’s foreign minister, said at his late-night press conference. This is not where the odds lie.

First, Moon Jae-in pledged to help mediate between the North and the U.S. as soon as the Hanoi summit collapsed. And it has been clear since Moon was elected South Korea’s president in May 2017 that control of the agenda on the Korean Peninsula has gradually passed from the U.S. to Seoul and those working with it, notably China and Russia.

Second, Moon enjoys a trustful rapport with Kim. And the latter is unquestionably serious about shifting the North’s priorities from nuclear capability to economic development. Kim wants a deal, in short.

The primary danger to future advances toward a lasting settlement in Northeast Asia lies in Washington. It has been

the spoiler on the Korean question before, let us not forget. In the early 2000s, the U.S. never delivered two light-water reactors it had promised the North in exchange for its cessation of its nuclear program. After Yongbyon was shuttered in 2007, the U.S. failed to supply promised shipments of heating fuel, citing “an understanding between the parties” about which neither China nor Russia, who were also signatories to the agreement, had ever heard.

This time around, there is little question that Bolton and other hawks in the Trump administration intend to block progress as long as they can. They have just succeeded in scuttling Moon’s long-gestating plans to develop a series of cross-border economic projects. The South Korean leader had hoped that a planned communiqué to be issued at the summit’s end in Hanoi would have opened the way for these ventures to proceed. Trump and Kim never signed it.

“We had to walk away,” Trump said at his press conference in the Vietnamese capital. It is more likely that Kim is the one who walked away first.

“It occurs to us that there may not be a need to continue,” Choe Son-hui, Kim’s vice-foreign minister, said later. “We’re doing a lot of thinking.” It is difficult to blame Pyongyang for this, given the outcome in Hanoi.

**Patrick Lawrence, a correspondent abroad for many years, chiefly for the *International Herald Tribune*, is a columnist, essayist, author, and lecturer. His most recent book is “Time No Longer: Americans After the American Century” (Yale). Follow him @thefloutist. His web site is [www.patricklawrence.us](http://www.patricklawrence.us). Support his work**

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## The Prisoner Says ‘No’ to Big Brother

The refusal by Australia’s foreign ministry to honor the UN’s declaration that Julian Assange is the victim of “arbitrary detention” is a shameful breach of the letter and spirit of international law, says John Pilger.

By [John Pilger](#)  
in Sydney, Australia



Whenever I visit Julian Assange, we meet in a room he knows too well. There is a bare table and pictures of Ecuador on the walls. There is a bookcase where the books never change. The curtains are always drawn and there is no natural light. The air is still and fetid.

This is Room 101.

Before I enter Room 101, I must surrender my passport and phone. My pockets and possessions are examined. The food I bring is inspected.

The man who guards Room 101 sits in what looks like an old-fashioned telephone box. He watches a screen, watching Julian. There are others unseen, agents of the state, watching and listening.

Cameras are everywhere in Room 101. To avoid them, Julian maneuvers us both into a corner, side by side, flat up against the wall. This is how we catch up: whispering and writing to each other on a notepad, which he shields from the cameras. Sometimes we laugh.

I have my designated time slot. When that expires, the door in Room 101 bursts open and the guard says, "Time is up!" On New Year's Eve, I was allowed an extra 30 minutes and the man in the phone box wished me a happy new year, but not Julian.

Of course, Room 101 is the room in George Orwell's prophetic novel, *1984*, where the thought police watched and tormented their prisoners, and worse, until people surrendered their humanity and principles and obeyed Big Brother. Julian Assange will never obey Big Brother. His resilience and courage are astonishing, even though his physical health struggles to keep up.

Julian is a distinguished Australian, who has changed the way many people think about duplicitous governments. For this, he is a political refugee subjected to what the United Nations calls "arbitrary detention".

The UN says he has the right of free passage to freedom, but this is denied. He has the right to medical treatment without fear of arrest, but this is denied. He has the right to compensation, but this is denied.

As founder and editor of WikiLeaks, his crime has been to make sense of dark times. WikiLeaks has an impeccable record of accuracy and authenticity which no newspaper, no TV channel, no radio station, no BBC, no *New York Times*, no *Washington Post*, no *Guardian* can equal. Indeed, it shames them.

That explains why he is being punished.

For example:

Last week, the International Court of Justice ruled that the British Government had no legal powers over the Chagos Islanders, who in the 1960s and 70s, were expelled in secret from their homeland on Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean and sent into exile and poverty. Countless children died, many of them, from sadness. It was an epic crime few knew about.

For almost 50 years, the British have denied the islanders' the right to return to their homeland, which they had given to the Americans for a major military base.

In 2009, the British Foreign Office concocted a "marine reserve" around the Chagos archipelago.

This touching concern for the environment was exposed as a fraud when WikiLeaks published a secret cable from the British Government reassuring the Americans that "the former inhabitants would find it difficult, if not possible, to pursue their claim for resettlement on the islands if the entire Chagos Archipelago were a marine reserve."

The truth of the conspiracy clearly influenced the momentous decision of the International Court of Justice.



WikiLeaks has also revealed how the United States spies on its allies; how the CIA can watch you through your iPhone; how Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton took vast sums of money from Wall Street for secret speeches that reassured the bankers that if she was elected, she would be their friend.

In 2016, WikiLeaks revealed a direct connection between Clinton and organized jihadism in the Middle East: terrorists, in other words. One email disclosed that when Clinton was US Secretary of State, she knew that Saudi Arabia and Qatar were funding Islamic State, yet she accepted huge donations for her foundation from both governments.

She then approved the world's biggest ever arms sale to her Saudi benefactors: arms that are currently being used against the stricken people of Yemen.

That explains why he is being punished.

WikiLeaks has also published more than 800,000 secret files from Russia, including the Kremlin, telling us more about the machinations of power in that country than the specious hysterics of the Russia-gate pantomime in Washington.

This is real journalism – journalism of a kind now considered exotic: the antithesis of Vichy journalism, which speaks for the enemy of the people and takes its sobriquet from the Vichy government that occupied France on behalf of the Nazis.

Vichy journalism is censorship by omission, such as the untold scandal of the collusion between Australian

governments and the United States to deny Julian Assange his rights as an Australian citizen and to silence him.

In 2010, Prime Minister Julia Gillard went as far as ordering the Australian Federal Police to investigate and hopefully prosecute Assange and WikiLeaks – until she was informed by the AFP that no crime had been committed.

Last weekend, the Sydney Morning Herald published a lavish supplement promoting a celebration of “Me Too” at the Sydney Opera House on 10 March. Among the leading participants is the recently retired Minister of Foreign Affairs, Julie Bishop.

Bishop has been on show in the local media lately, lauded as a loss to politics: an “icon”, someone called her, to be admired.

The elevation to celebrity feminism of one so politically primitive as Bishop tells us how much so-called identity politics have subverted an essential, objective truth: that what matters, above all, is not your gender but the class you serve.

Before she entered politics, Julie Bishop was a lawyer who served the notorious asbestos miner James Hardie which fought claims by men and their families dying horribly from asbestos.

Lawyer Peter Gordon recalls Bishop “rhetorically asking the court why workers should be entitled to jump court queues just because they were dying.”

Bishop says she “acted on instructions ... professionally and ethically.”

Perhaps she was merely “acting on instructions” when she flew to London and Washington last year with her ministerial chief of staff, who had indicated that the Australian Foreign Minister would raise Julian’s case and hopefully begin the diplomatic process of bringing him home.

Julian’s father had written a moving letter to the then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, asking the government to intervene diplomatically to free his son. He told Turnbull that he was worried Julian might not leave the embassy alive.

Julie Bishop had every opportunity in the UK and the U.S. to present a diplomatic solution that would bring Julian home. But this required the courage of one proud to represent a sovereign, independent state, not a vassal.

Instead, she made no attempt to contradict the British Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, when he said outrageously that Julian “faced serious charges”. What charges? There were no charges.

Australia’s Foreign Minister abandoned her duty to speak up for an Australian citizen, prosecuted with nothing, charged with nothing, guilty of nothing.

Will those feminists who fawn over this false icon at the Opera House next Sunday be reminded of her role in colluding with foreign forces to punish an Australian journalist, one whose work has revealed that rapacious militarism has smashed the lives of millions of ordinary women in many countries: in Iraq alone, the US-led invasion of that country, in which Australia participated, left 700,000

widows.

So what can be done? An Australian government that was prepared to act in response to a public campaign to rescue the refugee football player, Hakeem al-Araibi, from torture and persecution in Bahrain, is capable of bringing Julian Assange home.

The refusal by the Department of Foreign Affairs in Canberra to honor the United Nations' declaration that Julian is the victim of "arbitrary detention" and has a fundamental right to his freedom, is a shameful breach of the letter and spirit of international law.

Why has the Australian government made no serious attempt to free Assange? Why did Julie Bishop bow to the wishes of two foreign powers? Why is this democracy traduced by its servile relationships, and integrated with lawless foreign power?

The persecution of Julian Assange is the conquest of us all: of our independence, our self respect, our intellect, our compassion, our politics, our culture.

So stop scrolling. Organize. Occupy. Insist. Persist. Make a noise. Take direct action. Be brave and stay brave. Defy the thought police.

War is not peace, freedom is not slavery, ignorance is not strength. If Julian can stand up to Big Brother , so can you: so can all of us.

*John Pilger gave this speech at a rally for Julian Assange in Sydney on March 3, organized by the Socialist Equality Party. You can watch it here:*

**[John Pilger](#)** is an Australian-British journalist and filmmaker based in London. Pilger's Web site is: [www.johnpilger.com](http://www.johnpilger.com). In 2017, the British Library announced a John Pilger Archive of all his written and filmed work. The British Film Institute includes his 1979 film, "Year Zero: the Silent Death of Cambodia," among the 10 most important documentaries of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some of his previous contributions to Consortium News can be [found here](#).

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## Media Serve the Governors, Not the Governed

Since 2006 WikiLeaks has been censuring governments with governments' own words. It has been doing the job the U.S. constitution intended the press to do, says Joe Lauria.

By [Joe Lauria](#)  
in Sydney, Australia



**I**n his 1971 opinion in the Pentagon Papers case, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black wrote: "In the First Amendment the Founding Fathers gave the free press the protection it must have to fulfill its essential role in our democracy. The press was to serve the governed, not the governors. The Government's power to *censor* the press was abolished so that the press would remain forever free to *censure* the Government."

That's what WikiLeaks and Julian Assange have been doing

since 2006: censuring governments with governments' own words pried from secrecy by WikiLeaks' sources—whistleblowers. In other words, WikiLeaks has been doing the job the U.S. constitution intended the press to do.

One can hardly imagine anyone sitting on today's U.S. Supreme Court writing such an opinion. Even more troubling is the news media having turned its back on its mission. Today they almost always serve the governors—not the governed.

The question is why.

Consolidation of media ownership has increased obedience of desperate journalists; entertainment divisions have taken over news departments; and careerist reporters live vicariously through the power of those they cover, rejecting the press' unique power to hold those officials to account.

It comes down ultimately to lifestyles. Men go to war to protect and further their lifestyles. The press cheers them on for residual material betterment and increase in status.

Millions of lives erased for lifestyles.

It used to be accepted in television that news departments would lose money and would be supported by the entertainment division. That's because news was considered a public service. TV newsmen—they were almost all men in those days—were former wire service and newspaper reporters. But greed has put the presenters' personalities before public service, as entertainment masquerades as news. Newspapers have sacrificed investigative units to maximize

profit. Government is the winner.

The abdication of the mainstream media of their constitutional responsibility to serve the governed and not the governors has left a void filled for more than a decade by WikiLeaks.

No longer do today's Daniel Ellsbergs need to take their chances with editors at *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*, or with their reporters spinning the damning information they risk their freedom to get to the public—no matter how disinterested and distracted the public may be.

Now the traditional media can be bypassed. WikiLeaks deals in the raw material—that when revealed—governments hang themselves with. That's why they want Assange's head. They lust for revenge and to stop further leaks that threaten their grip on power. That the corporate media has turned on Assange and WikiLeaks reveals their service to the state and how much they prioritize their style of life—disregarding the carnage they help bring about.

In that Pentagon Papers' decision, the majority of the court ruled that the First Amendment prohibited the government from exercising prior restraint—or censorship—on the media *before* publication of classified information. But the majority of the court also said the government could prosecute journalists *after* publication.

Indeed the U.S. Espionage Act, which has withstood First Amendment challenges, criminalizes a publisher's or journalist's mere possession, as well as dissemination, of classified material. A 1961 amendment to the Act extended U.S. jurisdiction across the world. Assange is threatened by

it.

U.S. administrations have been reluctant to take the step of post-publication prosecution, however. Nixon did not prosecute Sen. Mike Gravel, who was constitutionally protected when he read the Papers, given to him by Ellsberg, into the Congressional record. But Gravel could have been prosecuted for publishing the Papers as a book. Barack Obama decided to back off Assange when it was plain *The New York Times* and other corporate media would be as liable as Assange and WikiLeaks for publishing classified information. The virulently anti-media Trump administration, however, may take that step if Assange is arrested.

From their point of view it's easy to understand why the U.S. wants to crush Assange. But what is Australia's excuse? Why is it fighting America's battles? Why has the Australian mainstream media also turned against Assange after an election held in the U.S., not here? What has happened to Australia's sovereignty? That's a question that can be answered by Australians coming into the streets, like today—and staying there until their compatriot is at last free to leave that damned embassy. Free to continue to do the job the media refuses to do.

*Joe Lauria gave this speech at a rally for Julian Assange organized by the Socialist Equality Party in Sydney on March 3. You can watch the video of the speech here:*

Video by Cathy Vogan

**Joe Lauria is editor-in-chief of Consortium News and a former correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*, Boston**



*Globe, Sunday Times* of London and numerous other newspapers. He can be reached at [joelauria@consortiumnews.com](mailto:joelauria@consortiumnews.com) and followed on Twitter [@unjoe](https://twitter.com/unjoe) .

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