

Mystery “Grim Reaper” CIA Officer Thrust into Spotlight Ahead of Kim Summit

By [Zero Hedge](#)

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While President Donald Trump seems intent to make a deal with North Korea seemingly at any cost, the CIA has apparently deployed one of its most hawkish North Korea hands to be at the president's side during the summit, allowing the intelligence community to rein in any of the president's excesses as it angles for a historic diplomatic achievement.

In a piece published late Wednesday, [Bloomberg](#) profiles Andrew Kim, a CIA officer who first came to prominence when he was photographed sitting alongside Secretary of State Mike Pompeo during Pompeo's first meeting with Kim Jong Un in Pyongyang.



Source: Zero Hedge

Kim has become an integral part of the White House's North Korea team – a role that is unusual for an intelligence official.

“It does seem unusual,” said Bruce Klingner, the former CIA deputy division chief for Korea and now a fellow at the Heritage Foundation.

“Just as the policy community isn't supposed to infect the intelligence community, the intel community provides information to enable policy makers to make the best informed decisions possible but are not supposed to provide advice.”

Born and raised in South Korea, Kim is distantly related through his mother's side of the family to Chung Eui-yong, South Korea's national security adviser. He also briefly attended the same prestigious Seoul high school as Suh Hoo, the leader of Korea's national intelligence service. Somehow, he ended up leading the CIA station in Seoul, and has since become known as the “Grim Reaper” for his extremely hawkish views on North Korea.



Source: Zero Hedge

Pompeo, who led the CIA before becoming Secretary of State, is said to trust Kim so absolutely that he now includes him in nearly every meeting on North Korea. Kim has directly briefed President Trump, and is set to attend the Singapore summit on June 12. During Pompeo's meeting with Kim Jong Un, Kim monitored the North Korean translators to make sure they were feeding accurate translations to the North Korean leader.

Fellow North Korea hawks will probably welcome Kim's presence, given Kim's proven skepticism.

"The North Korean side regards diplomacy as war by other means," said Nicholas Eberstadt of the American Enterprise Institute. "The North Korean government doesn't do 'win-win,' it doesn't do 'getting to yes.'"

Notably, Kim has the approval of both Republicans and Democrats – a rare feat in modern times.

James Clapper, the former director of national intelligence in the Obama administration, waved off questions about Kim during an interview in Washington earlier this week, then relented just a bit.

"He's excellent, he's really excellent," Clapper said. "He's very realistic about North Korea."

But Kim has done far more than serve as translator. He's used his knowledge of North Korean politics to help the White House discern Kim Jong Un's intentions heading into the Singapore Summit. His elevation has "pushed seasoned diplomats and policy-makers to the sidelines" as he's become involved in "almost all levels of the government strategy toward North Korea."

"He is in effect the connective tissue right now across the dialogues with the North Koreans," said Rexion Ryu, a partner at the Asia Group and former White House official and Pentagon chief of staff. "I wouldn't be surprised if the reality is Andy is perhaps the most influential player right now."

The question is: *Will having a CIA-trained hawk in the negotiating room be an obstacle to peace? Or will he help Trump strike a better deal?*

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