

# Tales of North Korean Abuses: No Facts, All Fiction

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Region: [Asia](#), [USA](#)

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In-depth Report: [NORTH KOREA](#)

*Claims of North Korean human rights abuses spearheaded attempts to undermine US-North Korean negotiations in Singapore. While the talks are unlikely to change the long-laid agendas of special interests across the West who have cultivated and profit from the ongoing conflict, it is important to confront these claims and diminish the intended effect they are meant to have in buttressing the notion of American exceptionalism and justifying American interventionism.*

Tales of North Korean human rights abuses are so pervasive and persistent that even those opposed to US exceptionalism and interventionism have shied away from confronting and refuting them.

## Rumors Built Upon Rumors

One would expect such significant accusations to be backed up by an equally significant amount of evidence. Yet – like most of what the Western media produces and spreads among the public consciousness – there is little evidence at all.

In most cases, tales of North Korean abuses are derived from hearsay by alleged witnesses and supposed defectors who no longer reside in North Korea.

The New York Times provides a prime example of the sort of abuses unquestioningly cited and repeated by pundits, politicians, and political “experts” alike. In its recent article, [“Atrocities Under Kim Jong-un: Indoctrination, Prison Gulags, Executions,”](#) the New York Times would claim:

Mr. Kim rules with extreme brutality, making his nation among the worst human rights violators in the world.

In North Korea, these crimes “entail extermination, murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, rape, forced abortions and other sexual violence, persecution on political, religious, racial and gender grounds, the forcible transfer of populations, the enforced disappearance of persons and the inhumane act of knowingly causing prolonged starvation,” concluded a 2014 United Nations report that examined North Korea.

The source of the New York Times’ assertions is admittedly a “2014 United Nations report that examined North Korea,” officially titled the, [“Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”](#) (PDF).

The 372-page report – however – admits under an introductory section titled, “Methods of

work,” that (emphasis added):

**In the absence of access to witnesses and sites inside the DPRK, the Commission decided to obtain first-hand testimony through public hearings** that observed transparency, due process and the protection of victims and witnesses. Victims and witnesses who had departed the DPRK, as well as experts, testified in a transparent procedure that was open to the media, other observers and members of the general public. More than 80 witnesses and experts testified publicly and provided information of great specificity, detail and relevance, sometimes in ways that required a significant degree of courage.

In other words, the entirety of the UN’s 372-page report – cited as “evidence” of North Korean “atrocities” by prominent media organizations like the New York Times – is based on hearsay gathered by an investigation that never stepped foot once inside North Korea. Despite a lack of actual evidence to substantiate these claimed abuses, the New York Times depicts the UN report’s conclusions as fact.

The New York Times would also report other unverified incidents as fact. The article would claim:

In 2016, Kim Yong-jin, the deputy premier for education, was killed in front of a firing squad after showing “disrespectful posture” in a meeting. Hyon Yong-chol, a general over the armed forces, fell asleep in a meeting. He was executed with an antiaircraft gun.

Yet even notoriously unreliable media organizations like Reuters would carefully distance themselves from reporting such stories as fact. In its article, “[North Korea executes vice premier in latest purge: South](#),” Reuters would report (emphasis added):

North Korea has executed its vice premier for education and rebuked **two high-ranking officials, South Korea said on Wednesday, which, if true**, would mark a new series of measures by leader Kim Jong Un to discipline top aides.

The article would refer to the alleged death of Hyon Yong-chol by claiming (emphasis added):

A former defense minister, **Hyun Yong Chol, is also believed to have been executed last year** for treason, according to the South’s spy agency.

Regarding the alleged death of Hyon Yong-chol, the Washington Post would claim in its article, “[North Korea said to execute top official by antiaircraft gun](#),” that (emphasis added):

North Korea’s equivalent of a defense minister has been executed by antiaircraft gun for insubordination and treason — including for sleeping during a meeting in which Kim Jong Un was speaking, South Korea’s intelligence agency said Wednesday. **The report, if true**, would starkly illustrate the brutal extent to which the young North Korean leader is going to consolidate

power.

More recent hearsay reported on by the Washington Post would even include the word “*rumor*” in the title of its article, “[The latest rumor from North Korea: Another general executed](#),” which stated (emphasis added):

Yet another North Korean general is killed by the Pyongyang regime.

**That’s the story that’s been doing the rounds this week after a South Korean news agency quoted an anonymous South Korean official from an unnamed South Korean agency** as saying that Ri Yong Gil, chief of the Korean People’s Army [KPA] general staff, had been executed for corruption.

**It fit with the pattern that has emerged since Kim Jong Un took over the leadership of North Korea from his father at the end of 2011:** Aging member of the old guard dispatched by young upstart leader.

But clearly, the “pattern” Washington Post writer Anna Fifield and many others claim to have spotted is merely a pattern of unverified claims being made by the Western media – built upon previously and likewise unverified claims, creating a cartoon-like vilification of a state writers at the New York Times and Washington Post know readers are unfamiliar with. The Western media understands their narratives are difficult for the public to question without conducting their own, extensive and time-consuming research. They depend on readers not clicking links – if links are even included – to long UN reports and understanding the paper-thin credibility of such reports when built entirely on “witness testimony.”

Image on the right: Kim Jong-nam (Source: Daily Star)



The New York Times article also cites the death of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un’s brother, Kim Jong-nam, and attributes responsibility by claiming, “*the United States said evidence showed that North Korea was responsible for the attack.*” Of course, what evidence the US was referring to has never been made public and apparently publications like the New York Times hold no qualms about repeating ascertains without such evidence.

AFP would admit in its article, “[US slaps new sanctions on North Korea over killing of Kim Jong Nam](#),” regarding US statements assigning blame for the murder to North Korea that:

The statement gave no details or evidence on how the US had come to their conclusion.

Thus, the New York Times has presented a case against North Korea that depends solely on supposed witness “testimony” and the credibility of the United States government – and did so presented as fact rather than speculation – or more likely – familiar fabrications.

### Adding Up to a Familiar Mountain of Lies

One would assume that North Korea – portrayed as a central security threat to both the United States and the world – would have a considerable amount of verified evidence to substantiate this process of vilification.

The fact that central accusations made against North Korea are built entirely upon hearsay alone indicates that North Korea – like other nations previously targeted by US aggression and regime-change – is being intentionally demonized to advance an agenda borne in Washington and otherwise indefensible in the light of truth.

It should be remembered that publications like the New York Times played a central role in previous episodes of baseless, intentionally dishonest campaigns of demonization.

It was the New York Times’ Judith Miller who fed audiences fabrications regarding “weapons of mass destruction” in Iraq that helped build a public case for the disastrous 2003 invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq. No weapons of mass destruction were found, and it was later revealed that the supposed intelligence indicating that any such weapons existed was intentionally fabricated and intentionally sold to the public to justify an otherwise indefensible war of aggression.

While Anna Fifield of the Washington Post imagines “*patterns*” regarding unverified North Korean human rights abuses, a real pattern takes shape considering Judith Miller’s WMD fabrications also included hearsay from less than reputable “witnesses.”

In a December 2001 New York Times article by Miller titled, “[A Nation Challenged: Secret Sites; Iraqi Tells of Renovations at Sites For Chemical and Nuclear Arms](#),” such witness testimony was provided, with the article claiming (emphasis added):

An Iraqi defector who described himself as a civil engineer **said he personally worked on renovations of secret facilities for biological, chemical and nuclear weapons** in underground wells, private villas and under the Saddam Hussein Hospital in Baghdad as recently as a year ago.

Miller would go on to claim that US intelligence officials were attempting to verify the claims, noting that “*experts said his information seemed reliable and significant.*”

Multiple articles regarding Miller’s lies can now be found across the web, including from other publications who likewise helped sell similar lies [including the Washington Post](#).

If similarities seem to exist between pre-war lies regarding Iraq and the current campaign to demonize North Korea – that’s because they are similar – and in some instances, exactly the same.

Reports across the Western media referencing earlier accusations to bolster the credibility of new accusations, all of which are collectively unverified and based solely on the word of defectors like those cited as “*reliable and significant*” sources by Western propagandists

like Judith Miller, should be at the center of the North Korean debate.

Instead, North Korea's "villain status" seems to be the first concession even those opposed to US intervention are willing to make – apparently assuming some sort of evidence actually exists – perhaps based merely on the size of the mountain of lies built up by the Western media over decades of covering North Korea.

Instead, the debate regarding North Korea should center on the absolute lack of evidence the West has regarding allegations made against the nation. It should also center on the fact that while North Korea has been baselessly labelled a human rights abuser based on "witness testimony" gathered from defectors living outside of North Korea – the United States is openly pursuing itself or sponsoring multiple wars of aggression around the globe – each replete with extensively documented human rights abuses based not only on witness testimony, but also on photographic, video, and physical evidence collected onsite.

North Korea is a nation whose military exists within its own borders while the United States maintains hundreds of military bases in over a hundred nations across the globe. The US currently occupies the nations of Syria and Afghanistan. It also maintains troops in Iraq as part of its enduring interference in that nation's affairs following the 2003 invasion. It maintains a campaign of drone strikes stretching from Africa to Central and South Asia.

For pundits, politicians, and "political experts" to decry negotiations with North Korea as "legitimizing" North Korea's leadership, is to deny every aspect and verified abuse regarding the last several decades of US foreign policy – from the millions killed during the US-led Vietnam War, to its perpetual military aggression in the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia to its very presence on the Korean Peninsula itself.

#### Behind Every Mountain of Lies, an Agenda

The systematic vilification of North Korea is of paramount importance to US objectives in Asia-Pacific. The US military presence on the Korean Peninsula is a necessity of America's long-stated goal of encircling and containing the rise of China.

The withdrawal of US troops from the Peninsula would represent an irreversible waning of American "primacy" in Asia-Pacific. To prevent such a withdrawal, North Korea has been built-up by special interests across the West as an imminent threat to international peace and stability – a process aided and abetted by a complicit Western media.

The supposed threat North Korea represents is just one of several alleged threats the US itself carefully cultivates across Asia to continue justifying its involvement in a region literally an ocean away from its own shores – or in the case of the Indo-Pacific – two oceans away.

Within the so-called "Pentagon Papers" – officially the "[Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force](#)" and compiled by the US Department of Defense and leaked in 1969 – it was revealed that the Vietnam War was one part of a greater strategy aimed at containing and controlling China.



## 189. Draft Memorandum From Secretary of Defense McNamara to President Johnson<sup>1</sup>

Washington, November 3, 1965.

### SUBJECT

Courses of Action in Vietnam

We confront major policy decisions with respect to our course of action in Vietnam. This memorandum attempts to frame the substance of the choices and to identify some of the problems we face.

1. *US strategy.* The February decision to bomb North Vietnam and the July approval of Phase I deployments make sense only if they are in support of a long-run United States policy to contain Communist China. China—like Germany in 1917, like Germany in the West and Japan in the East in the late 30's, and like the USSR in 1947—looms as a major power threatening to undercut our importance and effectiveness in the world and, more remotely but more menacingly, to organize all of Asia against us. The long-run US policy is based upon an instinctive understanding in our country that the peoples and resources of Asia could be effectively mobilized against us by China or by a Chinese coalition and that the potential weight of such a coalition could throw us on the defensive and threaten our security. This understanding of a straightforward security threat is interwoven with another perception—namely, that we have our view of the way the US should be moving and of the need for the majority of the rest of the world to be moving in the same direction if we are to achieve our national objective. We would move toward economic well-being, toward open societies, and toward cooperation between nations; the role we have inherited and have chosen for ourselves for the future is to extend our influence and power to thwart ideologies that are hostile to these aims and to move the world, as best we can, in the direction we [Page 515] prefer. Our ends cannot be achieved and our leadership role cannot be played if some powerful and virulent nation—whether Germany, Japan, Russia or China—is allowed to organize their part of the world according to a philosophy contrary to ours.

Screenshot from the Office of the Historian

[Three important quotes](#) from these papers reveal this strategy. It states first that:

...the February decision to bomb North Vietnam and the July approval of Phase I deployments make sense only if they are in support of a long-run United States policy to contain China.

It also claims:

China—like Germany in 1917, like Germany in the West and Japan in the East in the late 30's, and like the USSR in 1947—looms as a major power threatening to undercut our importance and effectiveness in the world and,

more remotely but more menacingly, to organize all of Asia against us.

Finally, it outlines the immense regional theater the US was engaged in against China at the time by stating:

...there are three fronts to a long-run effort to contain China (realizing that the USSR “contains” China on the north and northwest): (a) the Japan-Korea front; (b) the India-Pakistan front; and (c) the Southeast Asia front.

The Pentagon Papers provide for us today the context within which to properly view current tensions across Asia-Pacific including upon the Korean Peninsula. The vilification of North Korea represents the primary means by which Washington continues to justify its engagement along the “*Japan-Korea front*” against China as well as eastern Russia.

Of course, Washington’s attempts to maintain “primacy” in Asia-Pacific is ultimately an unsustainable strategy. While recent negotiations with North Korea are unlikely to yield real results and the threat of a “Libya-style” betrayal is still likely in the cards, there will be an eventual point in the near future where the US will have to choose between leaving Asia-Pacific kicking and screaming, or doing so with grace – reestablishing ties to the region as a partner and guest, rather than an occupying hegemon.

In the meantime, for those attempting to decipher events unfolding upon the Korean Peninsula – should their understanding be built upon the West’s mountain of lies rather than the wider and admitted geopolitical context US-North Korean tensions serve, they face an impossible task. At worst, the most egregious deceivers will end up like Judith Miller – exposed and discredited. At best, some may find themselves writing hypocritical critiques of Miller-esque lies to deflect away from their own role – wittingly or otherwise – in spreading baseless and destructive war propaganda.

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