

## Trump's Approach on North Korea a Test of Ties With Asian Allies

The president says military exercises with South Korea would be cancelled, breaking with longstanding U.S. policy

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SINGAPORE—President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un declared the “opening up of a new future” for their countries after talks on Tuesday. But their agreement also raised new and complex questions for Washington’s regional allies, chiefly Japan and South Korea.

In a joint statement, Mr. Trump “committed to provide security guarantees” to North Korea, a key subject of concern for the U.S.’s partners and one with potentially far-reaching consequences for Asia’s security landscape.

The document didn’t give details of what was promised, but Mr. Trump said in a press conference later that military exercises with South Korea would be canceled, in a conciliatory move to Pyongyang that breaks with longstanding U.S. policy.

“Under the circumstances when we are negotiating a very comprehensive, complete deal, I think it’s inappropriate to have war games,” Mr. Trump said. He described the exercises as “provocative” and “tremendously expensive.”

At an unprecedented summit in Singapore, Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un displayed friendliness, but talks offered few specifics on denuclearization. WSJ Eun-Young Jeong reports from the city-state.

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South Korea’s defense ministry appeared unaware of Mr. Trump’s decision and on Tuesday said it was still trying to determine the exact meaning of his remarks.

Japanese Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera on Wednesday sounded a note of caution about the move to cancel the war games. “U.S.-South Korea exercises and the U.S. military presence in South Korea have an important role in the peace and security of East Asia,” he told reporters in Tokyo.

Mr. Trump articulated a transactional approach to U.S. security partnerships, speaking at length about the expenses involved in flying U.S. combat aircraft from Guam to South Korea “to practice and drop bombs all over the place and go back to Guam,” playing down the strategic significance of the collaboration.

“The amount of money we spend on that is incredible,” Mr. Trump said. “South Korea contributes, but not 100%, which is certainly a subject we have to talk to them about also.”

Mr. Trump said a drawdown of U.S. troops based in South Korea wasn’t a part of negotiations, but stressed that he ultimately wanted to “get our soldiers out.” He added: “I’d like to be able to bring them home.”

Fumio Ota, a retired Japanese admiral and member of a foreign-policy think tank in Tokyo, said Mr. Trump had “conceded too much to North Korea” without extracting “concrete commitments” from Pyongyang on denuclearization.

“Military exercises are a very strong bargaining chip and a way to pressure North Korea,” Mr. Ota said. “Mr. Trump should not have given it up.”