

# Ex-President Carter at Lafayette College: U.S. failing to promote peace

**Ex-president says nation needs to reach out to North Korea and to work harder at mediating Mideast conflict.**



Former President Jimmy Carter speaks at Lafayette College's Quad... (MICHAEL KUBEL, THE MORNING...)  
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The United States must open a dialogue with North Korea to obtain peace with its communist regime, former President Jimmy Carter said Monday at Lafayette College.

"I can tell you that what North Koreans want is a peace treaty with the United States," Carter said, "and they want the 60-year economic embargo lifted against their people so they can have an equal chance to trade."

Carter, in Easton as the first speaker in a Lafayette lecture series on international affairs, told thousands who gathered on the chilly quad that he wrote a letter to Secretary of State John Kerry last week about the need for talks with the Kim Jong-un administration.

"It's a very paranoid country," he said. "They're honestly convinced that the United States wants to attack them and destroy the country to eliminate their communist regime."

The 39th president painted a bleak picture of U.S. foreign policy. He said the nation is in violation of 10 of the 30 articles in the U.N.'s Universal Declaration of Human Rights — a document the United States helped create in 1948.

"We now are detaining people in prison without a trial and without an accusation presented against them for life," he said, referring to U.S. detainees in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

He also criticized the nation's use of unmanned "drones" to commit "assassinations."

Carter said he could think of no effort on the part of the United States to promote peace around the globe.

"I would like for our country in the future to have a reputation as a champion of peace," he said. "I think that's one of the characteristics of a superpower."

The United States should commit itself to mediating conflicts, and its top priority should be peace between Israel and the Palestinians, Carter said.

The former president has long advocated direct talks with the North Koreans. His first diplomatic mission there came in 1994, when the regime expelled international inspectors monitoring its nuclear reactors. The move brought the United States to the brink of a second war on the Korean peninsula. At the time, friends in China implored the former president to visit North Korea.

"I hated Kim Il Sung," said Carter, who served on a submarine during the Korean War and blames the North Korean leader for the deaths of 36,500 of his fellow U.S. service members.

Still, Carter said, he decided he should go for talks with Kim after at first failing to get approval from the administration of then-President Bill Clinton. Carter said that when Clinton learned his predecessor intended to visit North Korea unilaterally, he eventually gave his blessing. Carter's visit became the first open dialogue between the countries in 40 years.

The mission was a success — North Korea shut down its nuclear reactors, agreed to withdraw troops from the demilitarized zone that separates the two countries and signed other concessions.

Carter placed some of the blame for the current impasse on former President George W. Bush. He said Bush "tore up the agreement that had been consummated, and as you know now, North Korea has nuclear weapons."

In his 2002 State of the Union speech, Bush referred to North Korea as a member of an "axis of evil," further damaging relations between the countries, Carter said.

Carter's speech and question-and-answer session Monday with Lafayette President Daniel Weiss lasted just over an hour. In addition to his thoughts on foreign policy, Carter covered his accomplishments with The Carter Center, the international peace and health organization he founded to help promote democracy worldwide.

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"I think if the United States would just talk to the North Koreans," he said, "and if the United States would just talk to the Cubans, and if the United States would just talk to the Maoists, and if the United States would just talk to the Syrians, and if the United States would just talk to the Palestinians, I believe in those ways we can have peace and the United States would be a lot better off in the long run."

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