

Tillerson, Trudeau to plan meeting on North Korea

Secretary of State will also meet with Freeland about international talks coming to B.C.

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U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson will travel to Ottawa on Tuesday, where he will meet with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and iron out the details of a major international meeting on North Korea to be held in Vancouver early next year.

Mr. Tillerson will also meet with Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland during his first visit to Canada as Secretary of State. Officials say he and Ms. Freeland will discuss the North Korea meeting. Earlier this month, Reuters reported that Canada and the United States will co-host the meeting in Vancouver in January to seek a non-military solution to the nuclear crisis.

Mr. Tillerson's visit comes amid an apparent rift between him and U.S. President Donald Trump on the U.S. approach to North Korea, and weeks after reports that the White House has a plan to force the top diplomat out.

Days after Mr. Tillerson committed to talk to North Korea "without precondition," he retreated to Mr. Trump's position



Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland and U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson meet at the State Department in Washington on Oct. 11.

YURI GRIPAS/REUTERS

last week, saying the North must "earn its way" to negotiations. The change came after The New York Times reported last month that the White House was planning to replace Mr. Tillerson with CIA director Mike Pompeo.

However, Mr. Tillerson does not appear to be going anywhere or backing away from the North Korean issue.

Speaking on condition of anonymity on Monday, a senior state department official said the coming meeting on North Korea will be a "major topic of conversation" between Mr. Tillerson and Ms. Freeland. The official did not say exactly when in January the Vancouver conference will take place.

"It will include South Korea, Japan and other key affected

countries to discuss how the global community writ large can deal with North Korea's threat to international peace," the official said.

Mr. Tillerson and Ms. Freeland announced the meeting in November after North Korea said it had carried out a missile test that put the U.S. mainland within reach. A Canadian government official told The Globe and Mail the meeting grew out of conversations between Ms. Freeland and Mr. Tillerson about creating a political dialogue that was not just focused on exerting pressure on North Korea, but also trying to find a diplomatic solution.

On the diplomatic front, Mr. Trudeau has said Canada could play a key role in defusing the situation in North Korea by working with Cuba. Mr. Trudeau said he discussed the possible course of action with Cuban President Raul Castro when he travelled to Havana last year. The state department official did not say if Mr. Tillerson will discuss the possibility of Canada forming a back channel to North Korea through Cuba with Mr. Trudeau or Ms. Freeland.

The state department official said Mr. Tillerson will also discuss border security and the continuing crises in Ukraine and Venezuela with Ms. Freeland. Mr. Tillerson will also meet with the cabinet committee on Canada-U.S. relations.