

**John C. Rood**

**Under Secretary of Defense, Policy**

**U.S. Department of Defense**

**David W. Allvin**

**Lieutenant General, U.S. Air Force**

**Director for Plans and Policy, Joint Staff**

**Joint Written Testimony on the Korean Peninsula**

**House Armed Services Committee**

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Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Thornberry, and honorable members of this committee, thank you for your invitation for the Department of Defense to discuss its role on the Korean Peninsula. We are submitting a joint statement for the record, owing to the unique political and military dynamics that underpin our efforts on the Korean Peninsula. The overall theme of our remarks will center on our efforts to strengthen and transform the U.S.-Republic of Korea (ROK) Alliance, the linchpin of peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region, while deterring aggression and demonstrating the long-term U.S. commitment to the Indo-Pacific region. The U.S. National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy both affirm the Indo-Pacific as a priority theater, and a nuclear North Korea as a principal threat.

The United States is a Pacific nation, and we are proud of the alliances, partnerships, and prosperity that the U.S. presence and activities in the region have underwritten. In addition to the Republic of Korea, the Indo-Pacific Region is home to great allies such as Japan, Australia, and the Philippines, and Thailand. We continue to invest in strong, growing security partnerships with countries such as Singapore, Vietnam, and India, which while they are not U.S. allies, are nations with whom we collaborate closely. We also face the ongoing and evolving security challenges posed by long-term strategic competition with China and Russia. China's economic, political, and military rise is one of the defining elements of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and the Indo-Pacific is increasingly confronted by a more assertive China that is willing take risks to achieve its revisionist goals. Similarly, North Korea remains a security challenge for the Department of Defense while we pursue the complete denuclearization of North Korea. By any measure, North Korea poses an ongoing, credible threat to the U.S. Homeland, our allies South Korea and Japan, in addition to undermining international arms control regimes and engaging in egregious human rights violations and abuses.

*DoD's Role in South Korea*

In the ROK, our goal is to maintain and strengthen our Alliance, while also transforming it to meet the needs of the future. As you know, the U.S. Alliance with the ROK was forged and bonded in blood—soldiers from the United States, Korea, and the many states of the United Nations Command answered the call to defend a people they never met in a country they never knew against the North Korean invasion. After the signing of the Armistice in 1953, the United

States and ROK signed a Mutual Defense Treaty that established an ongoing U.S. commitment to the defense of the ROK. This commitment and the security it provided has allowed Korea to develop into a proud, prosperous, peaceful, and democratic state with whom we share innumerable values and goals.

In the military domain, the ROK is home to three U.S.-led military commands: the United Nations Command (UNC), forged during the Korean war now charged with implementing the Armistice; U.S. Forces Korea (USFK), a major sub-unified command that administers, trains, and equips more than 28,500 U.S. troops deployed to the Peninsula<sup>1</sup>; and the Combined Forces Command (CFC), the U.S.-ROK combined fighting force and principle wartime element charged with the defense of the ROK.

We are modernizing and transforming our Alliance on a number of fronts. First, we are working to transition wartime operational control from a CFC commanded by an U.S. officer to one led by a ROK officer. To meet the requirements necessary to assume operational control during wartime, the ROK is undertaking a major military modernization program that includes more than a seven percent increase in its defense budget<sup>2</sup>; expansion of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets and strike capabilities; and comprehensive missile defense upgrades. Many of these acquisitions are procured from the United States, which help ensure interoperability, reliability, and quality.

Additionally, the Department of State is leading negotiations for the 11th Special Measures Agreement (SMA). The ROK has made laudable contributions to the Alliance over the last few decades, for which we are grateful. Looking to the future, the challenges that we face together have grown more numerous and more complex. We are adapting by investing more robustly in our defense, and asking that our partners and allies—particularly our wealthier partners—shoulder a larger share of the burden of maintaining peace, security, and stability in the evolving strategic environment. Though we are engaged in tough negotiations, we remain committed to reaching a mutually beneficial and equitable agreement that will strengthen the alliance and our combined defense.

The Department has almost completed the Yongsan Relocation Plan, two decades in the making, to relocate the three commands and U.S. Eighth Army Headquarters from downtown metropolitan Seoul to U.S. Army Garrison Humphreys in Pyeongtaek, South Korea. It is now the largest overseas U.S. military base and almost completely funded by the ROK government. All that remains is relocating the headquarters of the Combined Forces Command and some other headquarters support buildings.

Finally, the United States has supported the Inter-Korean Comprehensive Agreement in the Military Domain, commonly known as the Comprehensive Military Agreement (CMA), which has reduced tensions in and around the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and the waters surrounding the Northern Limit Line (NLL) by such actions as stopping propaganda broadcasts, disarming

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<sup>1</sup> Average U.S. troop presence on Korea in 2019 was 32,159

<sup>2</sup> It was 7.9% for FY19 and 7.4% for FY20

Joint Security Area (JSA) personnel, removing observation posts, demining activities, and covering coastal/naval guns. The CMA has also allowed the United States and the ROK to resume remains recovery activities in some parts of the DMZ.

### *Readiness*

The U.S.-ROK Alliance is broad and deep, built upon not only common security concerns, but also strong political, military, people-to-people, and economic ties and values. Our military alliance is best displayed in two ubiquitous phrases: “We go together” and “Fight Tonight!” It remains our goal to maintain a strong, capable, and ready force to enable the diplomatic space necessary for diplomacy to succeed. This was the basis for the bilateral alliance decision to pause major exercises in favor of a modified training schedule.

Since the President’s decision to suspend certain large-scale exercises in June 2018, we have conducted 273 training events. We have relocated some training events involving fifth generation and other advanced capabilities off the Peninsula, and relocated some combined fighter aircraft training to the United States. Other exercises have been modified to conduct various training events with the same standards to meet training objectives. This was done to create the space for negotiations by our diplomats regarding the denuclearization of North Korea.

### *Regional Relations*

The international community has a long history of supporting allied efforts on the Korean Peninsula, dating back to the original 16 sending states that supported South Korea during the Korean War. Over the last three years, our allies and partners grew even more engaged with regard to supporting the security of the ROK, and in seeking possible ways to support the denuclearization of North Korea. The United Nations Command is the natural home of these valuable contributions; while Switzerland, Sweden and Poland support the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission -- providing enduring oversight of Korean Armistice compliance.

We are pleased that the ROK has agreed to suspend its withdrawal from the ROK-Japan General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), which the United States views as an important tool in our common security. GSOMIA allows both parties to share breaking intelligence, deconflict, and discuss threats independent of the United States as an intermediary. These two great U.S. allies should be natural partners in a changing security environment. We have continued to emphasize the criticality of insulating our military and security relations from other tensions in their bilateral relationship. For those reasons we will continue to press for a forward-looking ROK-Japan relationship that learns from history but is not beholden to it.

We are optimistic that the ROK-China relationship will return to normal following China’s economic retaliation on South Korea for hosting a THAAD battery for the defense of the ROK.

### *DoD’s Role in North Korea Policy*

The President's North Korea strategy is multi-faceted: the United States Government is working across the spectrum of national power to achieve the complete denuclearization of North Korea. North Korea must understand that its only path out of economic isolation is for it to engage in meaningful, good-faith negotiations towards complete denuclearization. The Department of Defense's role is to provide a credible force and to field the capabilities necessary to ensure that the United States is always negotiating from a position of strength. Our allies, partners, and adversaries must understand that we take our own security, as well as that of our allies, very seriously.

The Department of Defense must be prepared for conflict, for as George Washington noted, the surest way to preserve the peace is to be prepared for war. North Korea has the world's fourth largest standing army comprising one million people under arms in the (north) Korean People's Army. Aged and obsolete equipment is offset by targeted aggressive modernization of conventional weapons, as well as nuclear, chemical, and biological programs. Over the last decade, North Korean leaders have prioritized increasing the range, survivability, complexity, and lethality of key military systems such as ballistic missiles, special operations forces, and long-range artillery.

In 2017, in a period marked by North Korean rhetoric and threats, North Korea test launched its first ICBM and performed what it claimed was an underground thermonuclear weapon test. In 2019, North Korea resumed testing short- and submarine-launched ballistic missiles. North Korea has hundreds of artillery pieces arrayed against the Greater Seoul Metropolitan Area that makes North Korea capable of unleashing catastrophic damage on civilians with little to no warning. Finally, it has shown itself willing to use isolated attacks, including with special operations forces and chemical weapons, to achieve its objectives; as it did in with the 2015 landmine incident at the DMZ and the 2010 sinking of the ROK corvette CHEONAN and shelling of Yeonpyeong-do.

One of the Department's most visible lines of effort in support of the President's North Korea Strategy is implementing and enforcing sanctions related to North Korea. Under the President's leadership, the Department works closely with the Departments of State, Treasury, Justice, and Commerce, as well as the Intelligence Community, to identify, publicize, counter, and interdict illicit North Korean trade and impose sanctions on persons who violate U.S. sanctions that target trade with or involving North Korea, including exports, and persons designated pursuant to various statutes and Executive Orders for engaging in defined prohibited conduct with the regime. The United States operates a multinational Enforcement Coordination Cell out of Yokosuka, Japan where eight nations work together toward this effort. We are working side-by-side with partners from Australia, Canada, France, Japan, New Zealand, the ROK, and the United Kingdom to implement the international sanctions regime against North Korea—particularly in the maritime domain. This effort primarily focuses on illicit North Korean exports of coal and its import of refined petroleum. Much of this trade occurs via illicit ship-to-ship transfers, often in the waters near China's coast. We continue to call upon China to convey our expectation that it upholds its obligations under UN Security Council resolutions.

It is important to note some international successes brought on by our international diplomatic efforts, such as the U.S. seizure and disposal of the M/V Wise Honest and the impounding by our Japanese and ROK allies of other vessels involved in illicit activities. Our efforts have borne fruit, but there is still more work to do.

The sanctions regime is critical to convincing North Korea that its goal of simultaneous illicit weapons developments and economic growth cannot coexist. Numerous U.S. and international sanctions strengthen this effort. Domestically, Congress has strengthened our hand with tools and authorities such as: the Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA); the Iran, North Korea, Syria Nonproliferation Act (INKSNA); International Emergency Economic Powers Act; North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enforcement Act (NKSPEA), and the Otto Warmbier Banking Restrictions Involving North Korea Act (BRINK Act). North Korea has also been designated as a state sponsor of terrorism since November 2017, and its government has been blocked since March 2016 pursuant to NKSPEA. Executive Orders aimed at trade with or involving North Korea have complemented statutory restrictions. Executive Order 13722 of March 15, 2016, for example, imposed certain restrictions on facilitation and new investment in North Korea by U.S. persons, wherever located. In addition, multiple, often unanimous, UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) demonstrate the U.S. Government's and international community's shared commitment to a denuclearized North Korea. UNSCR 1718 of October 14, 2006 provides the basis for the Department of Commerce's comprehensive restrictions under the Export Administration Regulations on the export to the regime of all dual-use items with the exception of certain foods and medicine. The most recent resolution, UNSCR 2397 passed on December 22, 2017, caps North Korea's refined petroleum imports at 500,000 barrels per annum, sets a 2019 deadline for all countries to expel North Korean overseas laborers, and authorizes countries to seize ships within their ports or territorial waters if the ship is found to be violating DPRK-related sanctions.

#### *Remains Repatriation and Recovery*

Before we close, we want to highlight one of our recent successes in recovery of the lost and missing from the Korean War. The Department of Defense, indeed the whole U.S. Government, considers the remains recovery and accountability mission a sacred duty for this Department. The 55 boxes of remains repatriated by the DPRK in July 2018 continue to be scientifically analyzed. To date, 43 U.S. Servicemen missing from the Korean War have been identified, and over 100 more identifications are expected over the next several months. More than 5,300 Americans remain missing or unaccounted for in North Korea.

Since the June 2018 Singapore Summit between President Trump and Kim Jong Un, the Department has had several communications with the Korean People's Army on the recovery of remains in North Korea, but have had no success completing an arrangement. The Secretary of State designated remains recovery as a humanitarian line of effort with North Korea, separate and distinct from denuclearization negotiations. The Department remains prepared to engage the KPA to resume remains recovery.

#### *Concluding Remarks*

In closing, allow us to once again thank Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Thornberry, and members of this Committee for the opportunity to speak with you this afternoon and for the continued support of the Congress as we work toward the complete denuclearization of North Korea, a stronger Alliance, and a more sustainable U.S. presence in the region. With that, we look forward to your questions.