

The 37th Security Consultative Meeting Joint Communiqué

1. The 37th Republic of Korea-United States Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) was held in Seoul on October 21, 2005. ROK Minister of National Defense Yoon Kwang Ung and U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld led their respective delegations, which included senior defense and foreign affairs officials. Before the SCM, the Chairmen of the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Lee Sang Hee and representing the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Senior U.S. Military Officer Assigned to Korea General Leon LaPorte, presided over the 27th ROK-U.S. Military Committee Meeting (MCM) on October 20, 2005.
2. Secretary Rumsfeld expressed his appreciation for the continued deployment of the ROK armed forces in Iraq and Afghanistan and recognized that the ROK armed forces are making a critical contribution to both Iraqi and Afghan reconstruction, helping to build a safe and free nation for their people. The Minister and the Secretary shared the view that the bilateral cooperation on the Global War on Terrorism between the two countries would better enhance the ROK-U.S. Alliance. Moreover, both leaders pledged to maintain a seamless information exchange system to sustain a vigilant counter-terror posture at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' Meeting, scheduled to be held in Busan, on November 18-19, 2005.
3. Minister Yoon Kwang Ung offered his condolences and encouragement on behalf of all Koreans for the severe damage caused in the United States by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Minister Yoon expressed the ROK government's sincere commitment to provide strong support for full recovery, while also wishing for an early recovery to allow the local residents to return to their normal lives. Secretary Rumsfeld expressed his appreciation for the assistance of the ROK government and the Korean people.

4. The Minister and the Secretary expressed their hope that the North Korean military threat will diminish gradually through advancements in the Six-Party Talks and efforts in inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation. However, both sides noted that North Korea's continued development of WMD, and long-range missiles, along with the danger of the proliferation of those weapons and technologies, are causes of significant concern for the ROK-U.S. Alliance and the international community.

5. The Minister and the Secretary welcomed North Korea's commitment to abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs, to return, at an early date, to the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to IAEA safeguards, at the 4th round of the Six-Party Talks held last September. The Minister and the Secretary expressed their earnest hope that the Joint Statement in Beijing would facilitate the verifiable nuclear dismantlement in order to realize the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula at the earliest opportunity.

6. The Minister and the Secretary welcomed the development of the ROK-U.S. Alliance into a comprehensive and dynamic bilateral relationship. Both sides concurred that the ROK-U.S. Alliance remains vital to the interests of the two nations and that a solid combined defense posture should be maintained in order to secure peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia. Both sides praised the fact that the ROK-U.S. combined force capability remains at peak readiness.

7. The Minister and the Secretary agreed on the need to maintain a U.S. troop presence in the ROK to ensure security on the peninsula and stability in Northeast Asia. Both sides recognized the importance of the United Nations Command's role in maintaining the Armistice Agreement. Secretary Rumsfeld reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to the security of the ROK, and to the continued provision of a nuclear umbrella for the ROK, consistent with the Mutual Defense Treaty. Similarly, Minister Yoon reaffirmed the ROK commitment to mutual defense.

8. The Minister and the Secretary reviewed the progress of relocation of Yongsan Garrison and the realignment of other United States Forces Korea (USFK) bases. Both sides agreed to exert greater effort to advance the relocation of USFK bases as planned, while noting that the successful completion of the relocation will serve as the cornerstone for the future of the ROK-U.S. Alliance.

9. Secretary Rumsfeld recognized the successful implementation of mission transfers and combined military capability enhancement plans based on the close consultation between the two countries, and assessed with satisfaction that the ROK is assuming an increased role in its national defense. The Minister and the Secretary agreed to appropriately accelerate discussions on command relations and wartime operational control. They also reaffirmed the continuing importance of the strategic flexibility of U.S. forces in the ROK and pledged to continue discussions on the issue based on the spirit of the Alliance.

10. The Minister and the Secretary received reports on the results of the ROK-U.S. Security Policy Initiative₁ discussions and expressed satisfaction with the fact that pending issues are being resolved through these close consultations, and that the Joint Study on the Vision of the ROK-U.S. Alliance will produce an in-depth analysis of the future of the Alliance. Both sides agreed to continue SPI consultations in 2006 based on the successes of this year.

11. The Minister and the Secretary welcomed the conclusion of the Special Measures Agreement for 2005-2006, and assessed that defense burden sharing contributes to strengthening combined defense capabilities on the Korean Peninsula. Secretary Rumsfeld acknowledged the ROK contributions to sharing non-personnel stationing costs for U.S. forces in the ROK.

12. Minister Yoon Kwang Ung explained the background, process, and future direction of the draft ROK Defense Reform Plan. Secretary Rumsfeld expressed his understanding of the basic approach of the ROK's draft Defense Reform Plan and conveyed the United States' support. Minister Yoon further explained that the proposal, in line with the 'Cooperative Self-reliant Defense Plan', is being pursued to transform the ROK armed forces into a technology-oriented, qualitative defense force. The Minister and the Secretary shared the view that the draft plan will support the future development of the Alliance.

13. The Minister and the Secretary concurred that the 37th SCM and the 27th MCM provided a valuable opportunity to further strengthen the ROK-U.S. security Alliance, by discussing issues pertinent to present and future security relations. Both sides agreed to hold the next SCM at a mutually convenient time in 2006 in Washington D.C.