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U.S. researcher says cuts in troops not act of pique
By Chae Byung-gun

The U.S. troop cuts on the peninsula will not weaken the alliance between Washington and Seoul, a U.S. military expert said, dismissing widely repeated speculation that the United States was withdrawing its soldiers to express its displeasure with the Roh administration.

Stephen Flanagan, the National Defense University's vice president for research and the director of Institute for National Strategic Studies at the university, visited Seoul to attend a security workshop late last month.

His institute and South Korea's Korea Institute for Defense Analysis sponsored the event.

Mr. Flanagan said the reduction of a third of 37,000 American troops in South Korea was a part of U.S. global strategy, rejecting the idea that it was the Bush administration's reaction to the Roh administration's political positions.

He also stressed that the troop cut would not weaken the U.S. and South Korean deterrence against the North.

Asking South Korea and the United States to expand their alliance into a global one, Mr. Flanagan said the two countries should work together on counter-terrorism operations, humanitarian activities and post-war stabilization missions in Iraq.

He said that even if the United States decided a policy, South Korea would not have to be involved automatically, stressing that consultations and agreements between the two countries were vital to redefine and expand the roles of the two countries' half-century alliance.

Mr. Flanagan served as a special assistant to the president and senior director for Central and Eastern Europe on the National Security Council staff from July 1997 to October 1999.