

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

The 40th U.S.-ROK Security Consultative Meeting

October 17, 2008, Washington, D.C.

1. The 40th United States – Republic of Korea Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) was held in Washington, D.C. on October 17, 2008. ROK Minister of National Defense Lee, Sanghee and U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates led their respective delegations, which included senior defense and foreign affairs officials. Before the SCM, the Chairman of the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Kim, Tae Young and the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael G. Mullen presided over the 30th ROK-U.S. Military Committee Meeting (MCM) on October 16, 2008. In this 40th SCM, the Minister and the Secretary noted with satisfaction that since 1968, the U.S.-ROK SCM has made invaluable contributions to strengthening the U.S.-ROK Alliance and to maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia.
2. The Minister and the Secretary reaffirmed the commitment of the ROK and U.S. Presidents to develop the U.S.-ROK Alliance into a strategic and future-oriented structure to better address changes and future needs in the security environment for the 21st Century, as agreed in the Joint Statement of the ROK-U.S. Summit on August 6, 2008. They also agreed to closely consult and coordinate to further articulate the broad vision for the future development of the strategic Alliance.
3. The Minister and the Secretary agreed that the two countries have continued close cooperation on the Global War on Terrorism. In this regard, Secretary Gates expressed appreciation for the significant contribution the ROK armed forces have made for the past four years to the stability and reconstruction of Iraq, and congratulated the “return on success” of the ROK armed forces for successfully

accomplishing its mission with honor and dignity. Secretary Gates also expressed appreciation for the ROK's continued support in Afghanistan with the Korea Medical and Vocational Training Team in Bagram. The Minister and the Secretary shared the view that the support of the international community would be required for bringing greater stability and reconstruction to Afghanistan. The two further agreed that bilateral cooperation between the two countries on the Global War on Terrorism will continue to strengthen the U.S.-ROK Alliance.

4. The Minister and the Secretary affirmed that the Six-Party Talks represents the best way forward for achieving the verifiable denuclearization of North Korea in accordance with the September 19 Joint Statement of 2005, and has contributed to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia. Both welcomed the Six-Party Talks being brought back on track through the recent agreements on verification, the subsequent U.S. action to remove North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, and the resumption of the disablement measures by North Korea. The Minister and the Secretary urged North Korea to fully cooperate on the verification regime. The Minister and the Secretary recognized the importance of close consultation between the ROK and the U.S. in the Six-Party process. The Minister and the Secretary agreed that North Korea's continued development of its Weapons of Mass Destruction program, along with its ballistic missiles and the threat of proliferation, pose a serious challenge to the U.S.-ROK Alliance and the peace and security of Northeast Asia.

5. The Minister and the Secretary shared the view that inter-Korean dialogue should resume expeditiously in order to address pending issues of mutual concern. They also agreed to continue to consult and coordinate closely on issues related to inter-Korean relations. The Minister and the Secretary agreed to closely cooperate to effectively address any future changes and emerging needs in the security environment,

recognizing the important role that the U.S.-ROK Alliance has in maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

6. The Minister and the Secretary, reiterating the mutual commitments to the fundamental mission of the U.S.-ROK Alliance through a robust combined defense posture, also affirmed that the U.S.-ROK Alliance remains vital to the future interests of the two nations and ensures the security of the Korean Peninsula and the stability of Northeast Asia. Secretary Gates reaffirmed the commitments of the U.S. and ROK Presidents during the April 19, 2008 Summit Meeting at Camp David to maintain the current U.S. troop level in Korea, and agreed to implement the commitment of both Presidents.
7. Secretary Gates assured Minister Lee of firm U.S. commitment and immediate support toward the ROK, including continuation of the extended deterrence offered by the U.S. nuclear umbrella, consistent with the ROK-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty. Minister Lee reaffirmed the ROK commitment to mutual defense for the preservation of peace and security.
8. The Minister and the Secretary received a report on the results of the U.S.-ROK Security Policy Initiative (SPI) discussions and expressed satisfaction that through close consultations, the U.S. and the ROK are making progress on the realignment of the Alliance and a range of other security issues, including United Nations Command Armistice Maintenance Responsibility adjustment, wartime operational control (OPCON) transition, U.S. Forces – Korea (USFK) base relocation, and the upgrade of the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) status for the ROK. The Minister and the Secretary agreed to continue SPI consultations in 2009 and beyond, based on the significant accomplishments of the past four years and the mutual desire to continue to enhance the U.S.-ROK Alliance.

9. The Minister and the Secretary agreed that the U.S.-ROK Alliance can play an important role in fostering regional stability, and shared the view on the need for security consultation among the states in the region.

10. The Minister and the Secretary praised the substantial progress for the transition of wartime operational control (OPCON) of ROK military forces in accordance with the Strategic Transition Plan (STP), and reconfirmed the commitment for the April 17, 2012 wartime OPCON transition date. Secretary Gates offered firm assurances that the transition of wartime OPCON will be carried out in a manner that strengthens deterrence and maintains a fully capable U.S.-ROK combined defense posture on the Korean Peninsula, noting that the U.S. remains committed, both now and into the future, to respond quickly with appropriate military power to restore peace and stability to the Korean Peninsula. The Secretary reaffirmed that the U.S. will continue to provide significant bridging capabilities until the ROK obtains full self-defense capabilities. Secretary Gates further noted that the U.S. will continue to contribute U.S. unique capabilities to the combined defense for the life of the Alliance. The Minister and the Secretary also affirmed that the implementation of the Strategic Transition Plan will be assessed and reviewed at the annual SCM/MCM and reflected in the transition process. The Minister and the Secretary praised the successful results of the Ulchi Freedom Guardian (UFG) exercise that was held in August 2008 in preparation for wartime OPCON transition, and agreed to continually conduct combined exercises for the maintenance of a strong combined defense readiness posture. The Minister and the Secretary agreed to work closely together to develop new operational plans based on the post-OPCON transition command relations structure.

11. The Minister and the Secretary praised agreements reached by the Senior Working Group for the Armistice Maintenance Responsibility (AMR) on the first phase of the Roadmap that was briefed at the 39th SCM, and expressed their intent to continue to make progress during the second phase. The Minister and the Secretary agreed to develop an implementation plan for AMR adjustment starting in 2009 and to have it fully carried out prior to the wartime OPCON transition in 2012.

12. The Minister and the Secretary reviewed the progress in implementing USFK relocation and base returns, and shared the view that successful completion of these cooperative joint efforts are in the best interest of both nations. The Minister and the Secretary shared the view that tour normalization for USFK service members would contribute to an enhancement in combined operational readiness and strengthen the long-term commitment of the United States to the development of the enduring Alliance.

13. The Minister and the Secretary shared the assessment that host nation support contributes to strengthening the combined defense capabilities on the Korean Peninsula and to developing a stable stationing environment for USFK. Secretary Gates offered his appreciation for ROK contributions to the stationing cost of USFK. Reaffirming their commitments to support defense cost-sharing, the Minister and the Secretary agreed to improve the Special Measures Agreement system in consideration of the value and importance of the U.S.-ROK Alliance.

14. The Minister and the Secretary voiced their strong support for the legislation approved in the U.S. Congress to elevate the ROK's Foreign Military Sales (FMS) status, noting that this would enhance defense cooperation between the two countries and further strengthen U.S.-ROK combined defense capabilities. Minister Lee

expressed deep appreciation for the strong support that Secretary Gates and the U.S. government gave for the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) status upgrade for the ROK.

15. The Minister and the Secretary received a report on the Military Committee Meeting (MCM) from General Sharp, Commander of the ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command, highlighting the robust capabilities and operational readiness of the U.S. and ROK combined forces.

16. The Minister and the Secretary praised the mutually beneficial agreement reached between two countries on the War Reserve Stockpile for Allies-Korea (WRSA-K) transfer, and signed the WRSA-K transfer Memorandum of Agreement, which will result in an enhancement of the combined defense capabilities.

17. Minister Lee expressed sincere appreciation to Secretary Gates for the courtesy and hospitality extended to him and his delegation by the Government of the United States, and for the excellent arrangements which contributed to the success of the meeting. The Minister and the Secretary agreed that the discussions during the 40th SCM and 30th MCM not only strengthened the U.S.-ROK Alliance, but also significantly contributed to its development into a future-oriented strategic Alliance. Both sides agreed to hold the 41st SCM in Seoul at a mutually convenient time in 2009.