

**STATEMENT OF
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COMMANDER, UNITED STATES-REPUBLIC OF KOREA COMBINED FORCES
COMMAND;
AND COMMANDER, UNITED STATES FORCES KOREA**

**BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

FISCAL YEAR 2022



INTRODUCTION

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Rogers, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the dedicated personnel who tirelessly work to execute the missions of United Nations Command (UNC), Combined Forces Command (CFC), and United States Forces Korea (USFK). I also thank the committee for your continued support for our Service Members, Civilians and contractors who serve in Korea; they are the embodiment of US commitment to peace and security in the region.

North Korea continues to pose a threat to the international security environment with no indication that they have ceased development of nuclear capabilities. Their persistent investment in advancing weapons systems underscores the importance of the United States - Republic of Korea (US-ROK) Alliance. This Alliance is one of a kind, forged in the crucible of combat and continues to provide a shield over the Peninsula based on our shared sacrifice, core values, and demonstrated commitment against any adversary that threatens us. Our alliance deterrence efforts serve as a bulwark for regional stability, successfully preventing a resumption of hostility over the last 71 years. It is a privilege to work with our outstanding Republic of Korea allies to maintain a stable and secure environment on the Korean Peninsula.

The last year has presented unexpected challenges to readiness that continue to influence decision making. No country has been spared from the COVID-19 pandemic, and we on the Korean Peninsula experienced its impact sooner than most. Our Commands have been successfully confronting this challenge, maintaining our readiness while protecting the force, and demonstrating what a strong, resilient, and transparent bilateral relationship can accomplish when working together. Our US-ROK Alliance is not only Ironclad, but we have also demonstrated it is COVID-19 proof!

Additionally, the continued lapse of the Special Measures Agreement for all of 2020 and into 2021 has challenged our ability to maintain readiness in Korea. We also continue to experience training range access and airspace limitations, impacting our ability to effectively train on the Korean Peninsula and maintain combat ready formations. These constraints require some of our units to train off the Peninsula in order to keep our units at the highest levels of readiness. Through it all, however, our posture has never wavered, and our greatest resource, our people, ensure we can act decisively when required.

My assessment is that the US-ROK military Alliance and our combined defense posture remain strong. Our Service Members are trained, ready, and postured to respond to a potential crisis or provocation, and secure our interests in

the region. The combined force stands as a strategic deterrent, ready to “Fight Tonight” to defend the Republic of Korea and US national interests if called upon.

This posture statement provides a summary of the changes in our operating environment, an assessment of our posture and readiness, an overview of our training planning and execution, a discussion of our efforts against COVID-19, and an overview of how we care for our Service Members, Civilians, and their families. The continued support of this Committee for the incredible men and women of UNC, CFC, and USFK is deeply appreciated. We are able to sustain military readiness and maintain our Alliance commitments through predictable, stable resourcing by the Appropriations Bill/NDAA you passed in December 2020. We are a well-postured force because of your unwavering commitment to military readiness on the Korean peninsula.

A CHANGING SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

The US-ROK Alliance preserves peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. Our forces face an increasingly dynamic security environment with North Korea continuing their development of nuclear and advanced missile systems, cyber capabilities, as well as other conventional and emerging asymmetric military technologies.

The reduction in tension and nascent confidence building measures established in 2018 remained across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and Northern

Limit Line (NLL) throughout 2020 and into 2021. Additionally, there have been no intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) or nuclear tests since 2017, all to say that the chance for miscalculation or mistake continues to be low, and Armistice conditions remain steady. However, the threat from North Korea persists.

Over the past year, North Korea's strategic intentions have remained even when the impacts of COVID-19 initially forced their focus to turn inward.

Although the North Korea regime claims that they have zero COVID cases in the country, the World Health Organization (WHO)'s "COVID-19 Situation Report" estimates that there were a total of 32,011 people in isolation as of October 2020. North Korea also pursued a vaccine through the WHO.

In order to prevent the virus from entering the country, the North Korean regime closed their borders to implement tightly controlled movement and social distance policies including 'shoot-to-kill' orders along the North Korea-China border. These measures have led to an economic downturn that appears to be further exacerbated by three major typhoons that occurred at the end of 2020. For example, various reporting indicates that imports from China have seen an 80% reduction. While crop production likely stayed within normal output during 2020, without opening the borders for fertilizer imports from China this coming April, harvest numbers could decrease by additional 10-15%, further exacerbating their food security situation.

It is worth highlighting, however, that we should not look at these COVID countermeasures strictly as a means to prevent mass outbreak of COVID; rather, they are also measures for the regime leader to gain back more control of the economy.

Even against this background, we have seen no indication to suggest that the North Korean regime has taken any action toward denuclearization. North Korea also continues to exhibit the potential for new capabilities, most recently during the military parade in recognition of the 8th Party Congress in January 2021. The parade included a new type of submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) and a brand new solid-propellant ballistic missile. The North Korean regime characterized the SLBM as “the world’s most powerful weapon.” There remains a significant gap, however, between asserting North Korea possesses the “most powerful weapon” and certifying they possess not only the actual weapons but also a platform capable of successfully delivering it. Projecting a capability in a parade, while an effective communication strategy, does not necessarily equal the ability to deliver it. In fact, there has been no reporting to indicate that North Korea has exhibited a platform capable of delivering the weapons we were shown. Nevertheless, this new, possibly larger, SLBM may signify an intermediate step towards the regime’s stated goal of eventually obtaining solid-propellant ICBMs.

THE US-ROK ALLIANCE

The US-ROK Alliance is a standard bearer of modern military alliances. For 71 years, the Alliance has contributed to a stabilized security environment for South Korea. It has borne witness to the country's development into the vibrant democracy and strong economy that exists today. Our Alliance represents a relationship born of blood and sacrifice with shared values and mutual trust, cemented during the Korean War. Our Alliance remains Ironclad.

Combined Forces Command remains the heart of the US-ROK Alliance, standing ready to provide for the combined US-ROK defense of the Korean Peninsula and serves as a clear deterrent to any North Korean provocative behaviors. CFC is the living embodiment of our bilateral defense relationship governed by and subject to bi-national decision-making and agreement. Looking toward the future, CFC will continue to represent our bilateral, combined relationship, and this equal representation will remain constant in the future when we complete the conditions-based Operational Control (OPCON) transition plan.

The United States is fully committed to the conditions-based approach to OPCON transition and the Conditions-based OPCON Transition Plan (COTP), which includes the ROK fully meeting the conditions prior to transition. This conditions-based plan has three mutually agreed requirements: 1) the ROK must acquire the military capabilities required to lead the combined defense; 2) the

Alliance must have comprehensive response capabilities against North Korean nuclear and missile threats; and 3) the security environment on the Korean Peninsula and in the region must be conducive to a stable transition. Steady progress by the ROK Ministry of National Defense (MND) and ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff is ongoing, and they have pledged to complete all preparations necessary to fully satisfy all three conditions in accordance with COTP. While it is too early to state a specific date upon which the transition from a U.S.-Commanded CFC headquarters to a ROK-Commanded CFC will be complete, South Korea is a proven partner, and we remain confident that they are up to the task.

To advance these goals, investing in COTP specific military capabilities must remain a priority for the Republic of Korea. The ROK Government has been increasing defense expenses, spending approximately 2.8% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on defense and increasing their defense budget by 7.4% in FY2021. In addition, the ROK's use of foreign military sales facilitates advancements in capabilities and offers a unique partnership with defense, government, and industry organizations in the United States. Further, the aggregate result of over seven decades of committed partnership has significantly increased the need for secure interoperable systems. Through a holistic and innovative approach to integration, joint and combined training with the ROK military will open doors to path-changing opportunities for subordinate combined component commands.

Our continued presence is with the approval of the ROK government. As such, we need to work closely with the ROK to ensure we continue to appropriately utilize the land allocated by our host nation. We signed the Land Partnership Plan (LPP) and Yongsan Relocation Plan (YRP+) with the ROK government in the early 2000s to consolidate and relocate U.S. forces in and north of Seoul to two principle hubs on the Peninsula. As of December 2020, 112 of 137 YRP projects (82%) and 43 of 51 LPP projects (84%) are complete.

Moreover, the bilateral US-ROK team is preparing for the restationing of the CFC Headquarters (HQ) from U.S. Army Garrison (USAG)-Yongsan to USAG-Humphreys, which is anticipated in summer 2022. Movement of CFC HQ and other remaining US capabilities to USAG-Humphreys will enable the beginning of handover of the majority of USAG-Yongsan to the ROK government. This move will further reduce the footprint of US forces in Seoul, while also allowing for the future return of high-value properties to the ROK government. Some facilities will remain on approximately 25 acres of USAG-Yongsan to sustain communications and partnerships with the ROK government, other government, and non-governmental agencies.

Although we are still several years from the final completion of the YRP and LPP programs, the ROK government contributions have been and continue to be a true testament to our enduring Alliance.

In the past, the ROK has also contributed to USFK through the Special Measures Agreement (SMA) between the ROK and the United States. Unfortunately, the SMA lapsed in 2020. Although both sides continued to work closely on finding a mutually-acceptable deal, our approximately 9,000 hard-working and dedicated Korean National employees had to bear the highest cost of the lapse as USFK was required to furlough approximately half of them on April 1, 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. These employees provide key critical support services across our staff and garrisons. We were grateful to the Secretary of Defense for exercising his Title 10 Authority, per 10 USC 2350j, in June 2020 to accept a ROK MND burden sharing contribution, which provided ROK funding for Korean national employee labor costs through the end of 2020, allowing all furloughed workers to return. Since ROK funded construction has halted, future US MILCON requests may be needed based on facility condition and mission requirement. Lack of Logistic Cost Sharing through the SMA affected warfighter readiness and base logistics services across the Peninsula, including ammunition care, storage and handling, transportation services and the movement of fuel and goods. Clearly, a lapse of the SMA directly impacted the readiness of our Armed Forces stationed in Korea and potentially affected the strength of the US-ROK Alliance. Fortunately, our two governments have now reached an agreement in principle for a new SMA that will ensure that cost-sharing to cover

our employees, logistics contracts, and construction will resume and be maintained for the next five years.

Every alliance has challenges and bumps in the road, but we have proven our ability to overcome any obstacles as we live together, work together, and train together. Although our partnership continuously evolves, our commitment to one another never wavers. As I said last year, the US-ROK Combined Forces Command remains the most capable, ready, combined, joint warfighting force in the world. Sustaining and growing this relationship remains one of our highest priorities, ensuring our enduring alliance is ready to “Fight Tonight” if called upon.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS

United Nations Command (UNC) embodies the international commitments to the peace and security of the Korean Peninsula. UNC enforces the Armistice Agreement and would be the coordination HQ for international troop contributions if there is a crisis. While diligently carrying out its mission, UNC maintains the utmost respect for ROK sovereignty and will continue to do so. The important work done by UNC reduces the chance of inadvertent clashes or miscalculations and continues to help lessen tensions across the Korean Peninsula. Further, UNC enhances the bond with our international partners, ensuring a true multilateral effort while armistice conditions remain.

Critical to UNC's mission is the United Nations (UN) Sending States who continue to provide meaningful contributions to the security and stability of the Korean Peninsula by preserving the international community's interest and engagement on North Korea issues. The immeasurable impact of our global partners is seen in demining operations in the DMZ to allow for remains recovery, demilitarizing operations of the Joint Security Area through removing guard posts, and actively supporting the 2018 Inter-Korean Comprehensive Military Agreement implementation. Additionally, the Sending States' meaningful contribution to maintenance and enforcement of the terms of the Armistice continues to provide the foundation upon which all other progress towards peace on the Korean Peninsula is built. UNC, along with the UNC Military Armistice Commission, the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission, and the UNC-Rear element in Japan, remains the critical link between the international community, CFC, USFK and the ROK.

TRAINING AND READINESS

We honor our sacred obligation to defend the Republic of Korea by maintaining a deeply committed, well-integrated, and highly capable "Fight Tonight" force. Over the past few years, the US-ROK Alliance has adjusted the size, scope, volume and timing of training to provide room for diplomacy toward denuclearization of North Korea. These modifications have not stopped our

training, with USFK and its Component Commands executing 86% of our total planned training events over the last two calendar years. In addition, CFC, the operational warfighting command of the US-ROK Alliance, is fully capable of responding to a crisis and defeating any adversary that threatens the ROK.

Our forces conduct combined training throughout the year, highlighted by semi-annual theater level Combined Command Post Training (CCPT) events conducted with our ROK counterparts. The importance of this theater-level command post training cannot be underscored. For over three weeks, ROK, US, and multinational service members operate in our decentralized, warfighting command posts, and are immersed in a very realistic and challenging scenario. This training stresses UNC, CFC, USFK, and ROK systems, improves interoperability, and refines our processes as well as tactics, techniques, and procedures, allowing for the most realistic training possible. CCPT is a rigorous training event, with dynamic situations across all domains, which effectively and efficiently maximize our combined readiness.

Over the past few years, our force posture readiness has been improved through investments by Congress and the DoD in the “set the theater priorities.” USFK continues to benefit from additional essential preferred munitions, ballistic missile defense systems, and pre-positioned wartime stocks. Additional investments in Joint All-Domain Command and Control will further promote

battlespace awareness through interoperability across the Joint Force and mission partners to deter, fight, and win. Continued transition to a Mission Partner Environment common networking standard will also allow seamless communication across the ROK - US Alliance and coalition members. It is a complementary capability to Joint All-Domain Command and Control and remains one of my top resourcing priorities.

The recently created Pacific Deterrence Initiative will also focus resources within the region, and assist with maintaining stability in Northeast Asia, where we still face an asymmetrical threat. These budget priorities will further support USFK's mission to deter aggression and, if necessary, defend the ROK. USFK continues to work with the Department to address deficiencies in deep look persistent and semi-persistent Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance capabilities.

While improvements to our overall readiness continue, there are challenges that affect our ability to fully maintain a ready force. Since 2006, my predecessors and I have testified about our concerns surrounding access to reliable training ranges and airspace across the Peninsula. Over the past several years, these constraints on training have continued to challenge US Forces' ability to maintain "Fight Tonight" readiness. This challenge is especially relevant to live-fire and air

crew training, which USFK must mitigate by rotating forces off the peninsula to maintain proficiency.

Specifically, the existing range training constraints within the ROK allow approximately half of the assigned US Air Force air crews to maintain the requisite level of combat capability, while none of our 24 assigned AH-64 aircrews can achieve full combat qualification on the Peninsula. Range constraints will be further exacerbated over the next year because the designated primary training range will close for required maintenance. This will increase the number of off-peninsula training deployments and US costs because currently the United States is shouldering the associated fiscal burden as this is not a category supported by the SMA. Further, each time a unit leaves the Korean Peninsula to train, I accept a moderate level of risk because these forces are not present to respond immediately to crisis or hostilities. The short term solution to this challenge is to conclude the ongoing bilateral study to determine if a day and night Combined Arms Joint Multi-Purpose Live Fire Training Complex could be constructed in the ROK that meets the training requirements of both US and ROK forces. If this study concludes this is possible, it would alleviate readiness challenges the Alliance has faced since 2006. It is imperative that we face this emerging readiness challenge together with our ROK counterparts and secure ready access to robust range facilities.

COVID-19 AND ITS CHALLENGES

This past year presented unique challenges as COVID-19 spread beyond Northeast Asia to have a worldwide impact. When the virus first appeared, all three Commands responded aggressively and implemented mitigation measures to protect the force. USFK was the first US force to experience the direct impacts of COVID-19 and led the way in a number of “firsts”. On January 27, 2020, USFK stood up 24/7 enhanced watch and commander-led operations in response to rising cases within South Korea. Countering early transmission of the virus outside of China, we were the first to lock-down and place restrictions of movement on our installations. We partnered with the ROK government to receive and analyze tests before the DoD had capabilities, and we matched, or sometimes exceeded, local government requirements for 14-day quarantine for all inbound personnel. Additionally, we began daily COVID updates to provide transparency to our USFK community, Families, and Korean partners; regular updates have been continuing as the situation persists. Our “Kill the Virus” campaign based on the core tenets centers on protecting yourself, protecting your bubble, and protecting others continues to this day.

Because of those early efforts, USFK maintains an exceptionally low number of instances of local spread with zero cases of transmission between inbound USFK members and the local community. As of February 19, 2021,

USFK has reported 740 cases, with 641 cases, or 86%, attributed to personnel newly arriving to the ROK. There have been only 20 cases among Service Members assigned to South Korea. Our vigilance continues with a 24-hour response team prepared to quickly react to any reported cases on the installations, including cleaning, contact tracing and medical teams.

Part of the early response effort to COVID-19 required the postponement or cancellation of some planned training events. This included a US-ROK bilateral decision to postpone the CCPT that had been scheduled for March 2020 (CCPT 20-1). These decisions were not taken lightly but necessary because our highest priority was to protect the health and safety of our force and their families. After reviewing health and safety procedures, we were able to resume training with a modified Combined Flying Training Event (CFTE) in April 2020, and later, a Maritime/Counter special operations forces combined event.

As we learned more about the virus and the population became more disciplined in respect to the virus, we executed and completed CCPT 20-2 in August 2020. This training could not have happened without the mutual trust of our partners and the Combined Forces Command's use of innovative measures to develop safety requirements, which resulted in all members working and training together with zero positive cases. Most militaries do not have the will or capacity to train during a pandemic, but resumption of our training events have reinforced

the fact that in any environment we will adapt and overcome to safely maintain a high level of readiness at all times. Sustaining readiness in a COVID-19 environment has demonstrated our force is ready and credible.

All three Commands continue to take precautions and mitigate risks posed by COVID-19. We began administering the vaccine on a voluntary basis at the end of December with 12.35% of our total population (approximately 65,000 including DoD Civilians, contractors, family members and retirees) fully inoculated as of February 19, 2021. We cannot fulfill our US-ROK combined defense requirements if a significant number of the force is sick. Our first priority is to protect the force, thereby protecting the mission. I am proud of the way the personnel of all three Commands, alongside our ROK partners, have responded to this challenge. This is the embodiment of “*Katchi Kapshida - We Go Together.*”

Quality Of Life on the Korean Peninsula

One of the USFK’s priorities is to provide a safe and inclusive environment for our personnel and their families to live and work in, and this Command must uphold the highest standards.

There is no place in our force for sexual assault, sexual harassment, discrimination, bigotry, or racism. They erode the very fabric of trust in our military formations and that is unacceptable. Eliminating the scourge of sexual assault and harassment is our top priority. Our Commands are confronting these

issues head on. We continue striving to eliminate these corrosive detractors to morale and readiness throughout the Commands with initiatives such as listening sessions, addressing unconscious biases, team building exercises, workforce surveys, education, and enhanced prevention programs. The number of sexual assault or harassment incidents across USFK in FY2020 was down 3.9% from FY2019, continuing a reduction in cases.

We have reinforced to our leaders that they have the authorities and responsibilities, in accordance with service regulations, to foster an environment of dignity and respect that is free from discrimination. Following listening sessions with our community, we established a Strength in Diversity Council to support the command's goal of creating an environment at all levels that allows individuals to speak openly and candidly about diversity issues without fear of reprisal. Our goal is enhanced community awareness, dialogue, reporting, and feedback to eliminate perceived and actual discrimination within our community. Senior US leaders in Korea will continue to impress the importance of these initiatives upon their subordinates, and initiatives addressing Strength in Diversity are incorporated throughout all levels. I will continue to expect leadership engagement at all levels, and my zero tolerance policy has always been and will continue to be non-negotiable. Treating all people with dignity and respect is the foundation of everything we do; we will never concede it.

COVID-19 has emphasized that the health of our force directly links to our overall readiness. The Brian Allgood Army Community Hospital (BDAACH) at Camp Humphreys is the medical asset equipped to support 65,000 eligible beneficiaries. Patients generally do not have to seek treatment off the installation as many specialties are offered at the facility such as pediatrics, behavioral health, physical therapy, and sports medicine. In addition, under the 65th Medical Brigade, BDAACH has expanded their medical practices to base clinics throughout the Peninsula. Since the onset of COVID-19, BDAACH has been instrumental in our fight against the virus. The medical staff, more specifically our junior enlisted members, have met the challenge of testing, contact tracing, quarantine, and management of isolation facilities with amazing courage, endurance, and perseverance.

With multiple installations throughout South Korea, USFK has a myriad of infrastructure and housing priorities such as increasing on-post housing, addressing aging infrastructure, and meeting new mission requirements. USAG-Humphreys has six new housing tower units under construction, with the last of these to be completed in 2023. These new towers will provide the capability to house 40% of the command sponsored military families at Humphreys, an increase of 24% from prior capacity. We also have under construction or in design other projects including additional unaccompanied enlisted housing at Camp Humphreys, an

additional wing to the Humphreys Army Lodge that is used to house individuals and families who are making permanent changes of station in or out of Korea, two housing tower units at Camp Walker and the Osan East Campus Fitness Center at Osan Airbase. Needless to say, we cannot do this without the MILCON support from Congress and ROK Funded Construction from our Korean partners.

Providing safe spaces to live and work is only one aspect that improves the morale and welfare of those stationed in South Korea. Installation leadership continuously seeks opportunities to enhance the experience of all those within the commands. Over the past year, as COVID isolation requirements continued, we encouraged virtual and physically distanced community activities. We have provided support for families experiencing distance learning for the first time, while the DoD Educational Activity (DoDEA) actively provided remote learning to the children of our Communities. In compliance with ROK government guidance, we reviewed guidelines for reopening travel within South Korea when conditions allowed. We continue to look for ways to build our community now and into the future to ensure Korea remains an assignment of choice for our personnel and their families.

CONCLUSION

I am deeply honored to have the opportunity to command and lead this dedicated joint, combined, and multinational force in one of the most vital regions

of the world. Those who serve in Korea are motivated, capable, and well-supported. The force is postured to deter aggression, protect American interests, and defeat any adversary if called upon. Our solemn obligation is to defend and protect our two nations, and we can only do that successfully together with our ROK allies. Our shared sacrifice, core values, and demonstrated commitment to one another are the critical elements that make up our Ironclad alliance. As long as the threat persists, the US-ROK Alliance remains vigilant, determined, and steadfast in our defense.

We have confronted several challenges over the past year, and others will emerge on the horizon; however, I have great confidence in this Alliance and the ability of UNC, CFC, and USFK to be a military-strong, collaborative, and vibrant force. Our will is resolute, and we remain always ready to “Fight Tonight.”