

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

Testimony of

Dr. Peter Lavoy

Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense

Asia and Pacific Security Affairs

Department of Defense

On

The Security Situation on the Korean Peninsula

Before the

House Armed Services Committee

Wednesday, March 28, 2012

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

Statement for the Record by Peter R. Lavoy
Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense, Asian & Pacific Security Affairs
Department of Defense

Submitted to the
House Armed Services Committee
Wednesday, March 28, 2012, 10:00, 2118 Rayburn HOB

Introduction

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Smith, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for inviting us here today to discuss the security situation on the Korean Peninsula. General Thurman will provide a detailed assessment of the security landscape on the Peninsula, and I will concentrate on our policy priorities relating to North and South Korea.

For over sixty years, the United States has maintained a presence on the Korean peninsula to deter aggression against the Republic of Korea (ROK) and to fight and win should deterrence fail. More than 36,000 members of the U.S. military gave their lives in support of this mission during the Korean War. Today, the U.S.-ROK Alliance continues to be a cornerstone of U.S. strategy in the Asia-Pacific region and, at its most basic level, the mission of our Alliance remains the same today as it did six decades ago.

DoD's rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region, as laid out in the Defense Strategic Guidance, is a reaffirmation of our commitment to our ROK ally and our mission on the Korean Peninsula. As President Obama stated during a joint press conference with President Lee in Seoul two days ago, "the United States as a Pacific nation will play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future . . . and the cornerstone of our efforts is our strong alliances, including our alliance with the Republic of Korea." We will continue to strengthen the U.S.-ROK alliance, make our forces in Korea more efficient and effective, and enhance presence, power projection, and deterrence in the region.

North Korea

North Korea's provocative behavior, large conventional military, proliferation activities, and pursuit of asymmetric advantages through its ballistic missile and weapons of mass destruction program, including uranium enrichment, continue to present a serious threat to the United States, our Allies, and the region.

It was almost two years ago that North Korea brazenly sank the ROK naval vessel *Cheonan*. That event, coupled with the unprovoked shelling of Yeonpyeong Island in November 2010, provides a reminder that Pyongyang is willing to utilize military capabilities with deadly consequences. These incidents demonstrated that the United States and the ROK need to take further steps to bolster deterrence and preserve security.

We are working closely with the ROK Government and armed forces to ensure that responses to any future North Korean provocations are effective, appropriate, integrated into Alliance plans,

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

and conducted from an Alliance perspective. Furthermore, through our Extended Deterrence Policy Committee, we meet bi-annually to identify ways in which the full range of Alliance capabilities—including conventional forces, missile defense, nuclear capabilities, strategy, and doctrine—can be leveraged to maximize deterrence.

The potential for a North Korean act of provocation in 2012 remains a major concern. The April 15 centennial commemoration of Kim Il Sung's birth provides a milestone for North Korea to try to show that it has become a so-called "strong and prosperous nation." Similarly, the new leader, Kim Jong Un, is in the process of consolidating power and establishing his legitimacy, perhaps through a provocative act or display of force. The upcoming ROK parliamentary and presidential elections, in April and December, respectively, are opportunities for Pyongyang to disrupt and potentially influence South Korean political outcomes.

Our suspicions about North Korea using its celebrations this year to enhance its strategic weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs were confirmed when North Korea announced on March 16 that it plans to conduct a missile launch between April 12-16. This planned launch is highly provocative because it manifests North Korea's desire to test and expand its long-range missile capability. In addition, the launch, if it occurs, would be in direct violation of Pyongyang's international obligations, including UN Security Council Resolutions 1718 and 1874, which clearly and unequivocally prohibit North Korea from conducting any launches that use ballistic missile technology.

North Korea's announcement is also troublesome because only two weeks prior, in a February 29 statement after three rounds of bilateral talks, North Korea had agreed to implement a moratorium on long-range missile launches. During those discussions, the United States made it very clear that a satellite launch would be a deal-breaker.

South Korea

Let me now turn to South Korea. Over the last year, the United States and the ROK have sought to transform the Alliance so that it remains a viable and appropriate framework for ensuring security not only on the Korean Peninsula, but also regionally and globally. We frequently consult and coordinate with our ROK counterparts across a variety of issues, with the immediate focus being the preparation for the transfer of wartime operational control and the relocation [within the ROK] of U.S. forces.

To ensure the Alliance remains well-positioned to promote peace and stability for decades to come, our two countries have a comprehensive plan under the Strategic Alliance 2015 framework to transition wartime operational control from the U.S.-ROK Combined Forces Command to the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff by December 2015. This transition will enable the ROK to take the lead role in the defense of its nation, while maintaining an enduring U.S. defense commitment and capability in support of the ROK.

As part of that effort, and General Thurman will speak to this with more depth, we are working to consolidate and relocate U.S. forces from north of Seoul and the Seoul metropolitan area to centralized locations south of Seoul. The movement of units and facilities to areas south of the

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

Han River improves efficiency, reduces costs, contributes to the political sustainability of our forward presence, and enhances force protection and survivability by placing the majority of personnel and equipment outside of the effective range of North Korean artillery.

Although protracted discussions on certain building designs and cost estimates are causing delays on some project components, we are, by and large, on track to complete the realignment and transformation process in a timely fashion.

To address the impending North Korean missile launch—and just as we did last December during the sudden change in North Korean leadership—we are consulting closely with our Allies and partners on responses and next steps, from both the policy and operational perspectives. Although I cannot discuss in detail our military operations, plans or intelligence, I want to emphasize that the two countries are working closely together to monitor threats to international security, and we are ready to respond and defend our mutual interests.

It is important to note that trilateral cooperation among the United States, South Korea, and Japan has emerged as an increasingly important avenue for strengthening security in the Asia-Pacific region. Our trilateral defense relationship is marked by regular high-level policy coordination dialogues and increasing cooperation in the field, such as trilateral maritime exercises and information sharing to strengthen multilateral counter-proliferation, disaster relief, and maritime security initiatives.

Conclusion

North Korea's provocations and disregard of its international commitments are serious matters of strategic concern for us, and we must take appropriate measures to protect ourselves and our Allies. At the same time, the United States and our Allies will not allow North Korea to intimidate us, and we will not provide the regime with the attention it seeks.

Just yesterday, in the midst of all the tension emanating from the North, the ROK successfully concluded the Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul, which President Obama and over 50 other world leaders attended. In addition to hosting the Summit, the ROK is actively cooperating with efforts related to the Proliferation Security Initiative. Despite the immediate threat that the ROK faces, it is stepping up and demonstrating leadership on a regional and global level.

As the Defense Strategic Guidance states, "we will maintain peace on the Korean peninsula by effectively working with allies and other regional states to deter and defend against provocation from North Korea." We will continue to demonstrate to North Korea that it can serve its people best by ending its isolation and its nuclear weapons program and working towards a constructive framework of relations with its neighbors and the rest of the world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Smith, and distinguished members of the Committee. I look forward to your questions and hearing your comments or concerns.

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY