

Moon and Trump Highlight Korean-American Friendship

By **Ned Forney**

With Americans, Koreans, and millions of people in the international community concerned about tensions on the Korean peninsula, US President Donald Trump's two-day visit to South Korea will be headline news around the world - and for good reason.

Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump's threats, counter-threats, and seemingly reckless leaps into the unknown have sent a wave of anxiety crashing against the shores of Seoul, Pyongyang, Tokyo, Beijing, Moscow, and Washington. People around the world are understandably worried about what might happen next: another missile launch from Kim Jong-un, a pre-emptive strike by the US, or a miscalculation on either side that unleashes a nuclear war of unprecedented proportions.

But with uncertainty and "what ifs" flooding our televisions, laptops, and smartphones, there is at least one thing we can be certain of when thinking about the North Korean dilemma. The ROK-US alliance is strong and getting stronger.

South Korea and the United States have agreed to increase their military spending and joint exercises. They have also invested billions of dollars in the recently-opened Camp Humphreys, a 3,500-acre military complex with more than 500 buildings. Located about 45 miles south of Seoul, the US Army's "flagship" installation is one of America's largest overseas bases. With a price tag of over \$14 billion - paid in large part by the South Korean government - Camp Humphreys has become a symbol of the US-ROK alliance and will eventually be home to some 28,000 servicemen and women and their families. Camp Humphreys will be Trump's first stop in his whirlwind tour and will showcase America's military commitment to the defense of the ROK.

But Trump's visit will also illustrate the differences that have arisen between the two governments over the past few months. South Korean President Moon Jae-in and Trump obviously don't agree on everything. From KORUS FTA and THAAD to the OPCON transfer and North Korean sanctions, there's plenty for the leaders to discuss. If all goes well, a resolution - or more likely a compromise - will be reached. Nothing will get finalized over the next 48 hours, but Trump and Moon's time together and their willingness to listen and empathize with one another will be crucial to a successful summit.

The two leaders must also work hard to send a clear message to Kim Jong-un, and any organization or country that aids him, that the political, economic, and military bonds between the US and ROK, forged during the Korean War, are steadfast and enduring.

Yes, Moon and Trump have differences, but as leaders of democratic societies both men are well aware that disputes, heated discussions, and protests occur between - and within - countries. The ability to disagree, debate, and question our leaders is the true strength of a democracy and something the US, South Korea, and Japan all have in common. Freedom is the cornerstone that makes democratic nations able to withstand and ultimately defeat the attacks of authoritarian regimes.

As an American living in Korea and the grandson of a US Marine colonel who fought in the Korean War and returned to Korea from 1957-'59 to help instruct and mentor the nascent ROK Marine Corps, it is my hope that President Trump's words and actions - not his tweets - will showcase Korean-American friendship and cooperation.

From his time at Camp Humphreys and helicopter tour over the capital, to his speech at South Korea's National Assembly and visit to Seoul National Cemetery (similar to Arlington in America), Trump will have the opportunity to demonstrate to the citizens of South Korea, the United States, and our allies around the world that the security of Northeast Asia, the denuclearization of North Korea, and the economic and political stability of the region is a priority for him and the US government.

During my time in Korea, I have seen first hand - on subway trains and sidewalks, in restaurants and coffee shops, and along Han River bike paths and walking trails - that Korean-American friendship is alive and well. Now, more than ever, our leaders must show this friendship to the world. For those eager to see the disintegration of the ROK-US alliance and the defeat of freedom and democracy on the Korean peninsula, Moon Jae-in and Donald Trump must leave no doubt as to their intentions of protecting their citizens and denuclearizing North Korea. As Trump stated on Monday, the "era of strategic patience is over."

There's a lot at stake during Trump's visit to South Korea.

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