

Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT

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“Keynote Remarks”

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FEATURING

Jonathan Fritz

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Victor Cha: OK. Thank you. Good morning, everyone. Victor Cha. I'm president of geopolitics and foreign policy here at CSIS Korea Chair and also professor at Georgetown.

And we are – welcome to the 10th ROK-U.S. Strategic Forum 2025 at CSIS. We're very happy and honored to have here with us Jonathan Fritz, who is going to offer some keynote remarks for our conference.

Jonathan Fritz is the principal deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs. Previously, he served as chief of staff to the undersecretary for economic growth, energy, and the environment; and deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs responsible for China, Mongolia, and Taiwan. Before that, he was director for bilateral and regional affairs in the State Department's Office of International Communications and Information Policy. He was also at our embassy in Beijing, where he held a number of roles including active deputy chief of mission and chargé d'affaires. He's had previous postings in Australia, Afghanistan, Mexico, Hong Kong, (Maine ?) state, and other places, a list that's very long which I could not possibly go through. And he is a graduate of Stanford University, where he did his B.A. and M.A. in East Asian studies.

So, ladies and gentlemen, if you could give a warm welcome to Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Jonathan Fritz. (Applause.)

Jonathan Fritz: Good morning, everyone. And thank you, Dr. Cha, for those very kind introductory remarks and for inviting me to speak here this morning at the ROK-U.S. Strategic Forum. It is a real privilege to be here with such distinguished colleagues and guests. I see my former boss, Deputy Secretary Biegun – good to see you, sir – and many other friends.

I'd like to start off with what I hope is a blindingly obvious observation: The Republic of Korea is one of America's closest allies. Our two countries' alliance was forged in blood 75 years ago and our security partnership is the foundational pillar of our broader bilateral relationship.

The U.S.-ROK alliance remains central to peace, security, and prosperity for Northeast Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific region. Very important to note that President Trump has a great relationship with President Lee, with whom he has already met twice since President Lee took office back in June.

As I'm sure all of you are keenly aware, our two countries recently released a joint fact sheet on the outcomes of the president's historic October state visit to the ROK, inaugurating a new chapter in the U.S.-ROK alliance. Our joint commitments, as laid out in that fact sheet, focus

on eight key lines of effort: number one, rebuilding and expanding our critical industries; number two, maintaining foreign exchange-market stability; number three, enhancing commercial ties; number four, promoting reciprocal trade; number five, protecting our economic prosperity; number six, modernizing the U.S.-ROK alliance; number seven, coordinating on Korean Peninsula and broader regional issues; and number eight, advancing our maritime and civil nuclear partnership.

Together, these commitments mark a major, even historic milestone that demonstrates how far our alliance has come and where it's headed. Over the past seven decades, our alliance has evolved through several such milestone moments. Initially, there were the commitments that shaped our early security cooperation. Then there was the dramatic deepening of our economic ties. And now this most recent step, which signals a broad modernization of the relationship. This once-in-a-generation upgrade to the U.S.-ROK alliance reflects not only shared interests, but shared values and a shared determination to build a more secure and prosperous future for both of our peoples.

During his visit to Korea in October, President Trump secured billions of dollars for the American economy in landmark deals. These efforts build on the ROK's status as one of the leading investors in the United States and will support American job creation, fuel America's world-leading energy industry, promote trusted technology leadership, and strengthen our maritime partnership. The ROK is absolutely key to the president's commitment to reindustrializing America. We need the ROK's continued investment in key sectors, whether shipbuilding, energy, semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, critical minerals, or AI and quantum.

And we also need the ROK's help to get these investments up and running, sending experts on temporary visas who can train our great American workers how to run these precision manufacturing operations. Following the September incident in Georgia, our deputy secretary of state, Christopher Landau, expressed our government's regret while in Seoul in early September himself, and he has since reiterated this sentiment publicly. President Trump has also been very clear that we welcome Koreans to come to our country temporarily to train American workers in these high-precision jobs.

We are committed to ensuring qualified personnel can travel to the United States to support the ROK's historic investments here in U.S. manufacturing, and I'm happy to say that we are making great progress on this front. We have established a Korea Investment and Trade Desk at our embassy in Seoul to support exactly this kind of specialized travel, and we're on track with welcoming vetted temporary workers in

accordance with U.S. law. All of this is done to support America's reindustrialization and expand job opportunities for our own workforce of skilled Americans.

Meanwhile, we are coordinating more closely than ever with Seoul on issues affecting the Korean Peninsula and the broader Indo-Pacific. One example is in shipbuilding, a sector where the ROK has established notable prowess. President Trump also expressed U.S. support for the ROK to build nuclear-powered, conventionally-armed submarines, working together with us to identify and address requirements and challenges. This is a clear example of bilateral cooperation that advances our collective capabilities against regional threats.

In short, we are evolving our traditional security alliance into a more comprehensive partnership that is integrated economically and industrially, and aligned with broader Indo-Pacific priorities. As we enter this new chapter, I want to stress that the fundamentals of our alliance are stronger than ever, and I'll note three key areas where there is this very visible continuity.

Number one, the U.S.-ROK alliance and our extended deterrence commitments remain ironclad.

Number two, on North Korea we are in complete alignment. We continue to call for the complete denuclearization of the DPRK. Both Presidents Trump and Lee support meaningful dialogue with the DPRK and have called on it to abide by its international obligations, including abandoning its weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs.

Three, we will also work with the ROK and other partners across the Indo-Pacific to uphold the international law of the sea and peace and stability, whether in the Taiwan Strait, the South China Sea, or elsewhere in the region.

Let me conclude by pointing out that this new chapter is truly a historic one. We're looking forward to exponentially increased exchanges between our two countries and accelerating innovation in manufacturing technology, defense, and other key fields. When our two nations stand together, the United States and the Republic of Korea and not only make each other stronger; we help shape a more secure and prosperous future for the entire Indo-Pacific.

Thank you again for having me here to speak, Dr. Cha, and I wish you the best of success for your Forum today. Thanks. (Applause.)

(END.)