

Center for Strategic and International Studies

ROK-U.S. Strategic Forum 2017: Now and the Future of the ROK.-U.S. Alliance

“Welcoming Remarks” and “Opening Session”

**Welcoming Remarks:
Richard Armitage,
President, Armitage International;
Former Deputy Secretary of State;
Trustee, CSIS**

**Lee, Sihyung,
President,
The Korea Foundation**

**Opening Session:
Stephanie Murphy,
U.S. Representative for Florida’s 7th Congressional District**

**Moderator:
Victor Cha,
Senior Adviser and Korea Chair, CSIS;
Professor and Director, Asian Studies Program, Georgetown University**

**Introduction:
Lisa Collins,
Fellow, Korea Chair,
CSIS**

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LISA COLLINS: Good morning. Thank you all for coming to the 2017 U.S.-ROK Strategic Forum. We would like to thank our partner for this event, The Korea Foundation, for their support. We are fortunate to have CSIS trustee, Ambassador Richard Armitage, and the president of The Korea Foundation, Ambassador Lee Sihyung, here today to give some opening remarks.

But before I introduce them, I would like to say a few words about safety here at CSIS. We feel very secure in our building, but we have a duty to prepare for any eventuality. My name is Lisa Collins, I'm a fellow in the Korea Chair, and I will serve as your responsible safety officer for this event. Please follow my instructions, should the need arise. Please also familiarize yourself with the emergency exits in the back of the room on the right and on the left.

Now, to introduce our first two speakers. Ambassador Richard Armitage is currently the president of Armitage International. He was formerly the deputy secretary of state and the deputy assistant secretary of defense for East Asia and Pacific affairs in the office of the secretary of defense. He has had a distinguished career in government and in policy.

Ambassador Lee Sihyung has served as president of The Korea Foundation since May of 2016. Prior to that, he was South Korea's ambassador to the OECD from 2013 to 2015. Ambassador Lee has had a long, esteemed career, working in South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador Armitage will give remarks first, followed by Ambassador Lee.

RICHARD ARMITAGE: Thank you very much. Good morning, everyone. On behalf of John Hamre, let me welcome you to CSIS. Quite a crowd here. Something going on on the peninsula of Korea? Something I haven't heard about? You know, when I was asked by Dr. Cha to speak here, make a few remarks – appreciating Ambassador Lee, or President Lee, as you may prefer – I was wondering what we were going to talk about.

And in the space of a couple of weeks, 10 days or so, we've had an ICBM shoot over Hokkaido. We've had an alleged hydrogen bomb. We have ICBMs allegedly moving to the coast now in North Korea. We've got a president here in the United States that's bellowing about appeasement from South Korea, and bellowing about the possibility of removing ourselves from KORUS, which is exactly the wrong thing to do, in my view, at this time.

This is not – this doesn't recognize the spectacular things we've witnessed in the Republic of Korea in the last several months. It wasn't very long ago, right upstairs, we had Moon Jae-in here for a dinner. He made a wonderful presentation here in this very room, and he made a wonderful presentation at dinner. Here's a Republic of Korea who had just come out of a beautiful, peaceful, democratic election, while the previous president was being put in jail and on trial. And it was all done seamlessly. This is a nation that deserves support.

So I have a charge for all the Americans in the room here today. When this conference is over, there should be no doubt in the mind of any of our friends from the Republic of Korea that the United States is 100 percent behind them, behind them in military and security terms, behind them in economic terms, behind them politically. This is a charge I give to my American friends. And so. (Applause.)

So I've spoken my piece. You know what I think. And now we'll hear from someone who really knows what he's talking about. Mr. President, President Lee. (Applause.)

LEE SIHYUNG: Thank you, Ambassador. Thank you for your strong commitment and short remarks, which gives me a little more time to speak. Thank you very much. His excellency, Ambassador Richard Armitage, Congresswoman Stephanie Murphy and Victor Cha, who are going to join us, Vice Foreign Minister of Korea Mr. Cho Hyun, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, very good morning and welcome to the ROK-U.S. Strategic Forum 2017. On behalf of Korea Foundation, it is my great pleasure to stand here once again, as we open the second Korea-U.S. Strategic Forum in cooperation with CSIS here in Washington, D.C.

Well, first of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of you for your commitment in participating in this forum. My special thanks go to those who traveled here from outside of Washington, D.C., and especially those who made the long journey from Seoul. Actually, a couple of Korean attendants arrived after midnight last night. It was exactly nine months ago today when I stood here. It was time to open the first Korea-U.S. Strategic Forum. At that time, I remember the sense of anticipation we all had for the new president-elect – U.S. president-elect, and the concerns and anxiety that we shared over the then-president of the Republic of Korea.

Since then, as Mr. Armitage just mentioned, many changes have occurred – each requiring our timely attention and critical analysis. I think we can all agree that another December forum in 2017 was too long a wait. Hence, we moved today's forum forward to September, in order to address these critical issues at hand. (Inaudible) – I would like to draw your attention to several points of common interest that are of particular note this year.

Firstly, this year marks the 135th anniversary of the establishment of the Korea-U.S. diplomatic relationship, in 1882. At a small port city on Korea's western coast, peoples of the U.S. and Korea, then Joseon, encountered each other as almost strangers, and finally signed the first agreement between our two countries.

Secondly, this year marks the fifth anniversary of the KORUS FTA, which was the result of several years of negotiations. Even after the deal was reached, five more years were needed for the Korean side to gain the approval of the National Assembly. With the KORUS FTA in place since 2012, the interdependence of our two countries – not only as an integrated market but also as even stronger security allies – has become increasingly reinforced.

Thirdly, the new administrations launched in Washington, D.C. and Seoul, respectively. While Americans were experiencing a different style of leadership to that of the past, Koreans were exercising their democratic freedoms as they changed their president in a surprisingly lawful and peaceful manner. They turned a political crisis into an opportunity for rebirth, serving as an exemplary model democracy for the world. A solid 70 to 80 percent approval rating – which President Moon Jae-in has enjoyed since his inauguration – I believe reflects the pride of the Korean people.

Lastly, there is a final factor that casts a long, dark shadow over all other issues on Korean Peninsula. That is, of course, North Korea. Early morning on the day before yesterday, Sunday, I was awoken by a breaking news alert on my mobile phone. It was about President Trump's announcement of a possible withdrawal from the KORUS FTA. By then, I thought my opening remarks were in need of slight change, slight modification.

Then, at midday, the latest news on North Korea broke. And I sat there transfixed, gazing at the news on my TV and computer screen. Most part of the text I had prepared for this moment lost its

relevance. So I began to think what message I could deliver in my brief remarks. I couldn't find words to replace the already-prepared ones, and decided to delete the whole part. I felt, actually, helpless, as I watched the North Korea's report, bragging about so-called successful test of H-bomb live on one of the Seoul TV channels.

What shall we do? Do we have any option other than another round of verbal condemnation, sanction resolutions, and displaying U.S. strategic asset in Korea? Could the tightest-ever sanctions ultimately stop North Korea from becoming a nuke state? Can we really expect any productive dialogue with the Kim Jong-un regime if and when it really becomes a nuke state? I unfortunately have no answer to those questions. I am hoping some of you, or most of you, do.

However, as an ordinary citizen of Korea, who was born right after the war, one thing I am sure of is that no matter how great the situation becomes, any military action that risks ending up with full-fledged war on the peninsula can never be an option, unless it is truly the last resort for the survival of the ROK and its allies.

Ladies and gentlemen, let us not forget the fact that beyond the North Korean nuclear issue there is another pressing issue that demands our attention, economic cooperation. In addition to security cooperation, economic cooperation under the KORUS FTA has stood as a second foundational pillar for our bilateral relationship. When it was signed, the KORUS FTA was the most significant trade agreement for Korea in every sense. Also, for the United States, it was the first commercially meaningful free trade agreement since the signing of NAFTA.

Despite the fact that the world's trade volume has continued to flounder in the years following the financial crisis in 2008, and despite the rapid rise of China as a major trading partner for both Korea and the U.S., our two nations still enjoyed a rise in both trade volume and market share last year. A special session of the joint committee under the KORUS FTA was held on August 22nd in Seoul at the request of the USTR. I must concede that I have no knowledge of whether President Trump's announcement on Saturday about possible withdrawal from the FTA was based on the assessment of this first joint meeting or not.

I carefully read – sorry – I carefully read the article written by Ms. Wendy Cutler with renewed respect for her insight. And I could not agree more with most of the points she made therein. Today, we have the best speakers and discussants not only on the issues of security but also on trade from both Korea and the U.S., including Wendy. Where is she now? That's why I am confident that the session three will be also a productive one, to show the way how to proceed the next steps for the future for the KORUS FTA to the government delegations.

Dear guests, I do not wish to take too much time away from the wonderful speakers we have lined up for today's forum, except for a few words on Korea Foundation that I'm representing. Every year the Korea Foundation puts a heavy emphasis on projects and programs in the United States. The Foundation has provided the lion's share of funding available to it for the programs proposed by the U.S. universities and think tanks. Since Korea Foundation's establishment in 1991, these efforts have further strengthened the relationship between our two countries and have promoted better understanding between our two peoples.

For this year's forum, The Korea Foundation and the CSIS have invited the best scholars, experts and diplomats to discuss the challenges at this critical juncture in our two countries' diplomatic history. Among the Korean delegates you can find a few familiar faces that you may remember from

our forum last year. At the same time, you can see permanent scholars and former government officials, together with a few incumbents, most of whom should be no stranger to you even if this is the first time for you to see them at our forum.

I'm especially glad that Vice Foreign Minister Cho Hyun was able to find his time to speak at our luncheon here today. Altogether, I believe we, the Korean delegates, are ready to share both our personal views as well as the official policy line of the newly formed Moon Jae-in government. This is the first occasion for The Korea Foundation to arrange a forum with a partner of the U.S. in this town since the Moon Jae-in government was formed.

On the security front, the ROK-U.S. alliance is facing perhaps the greatest threat on the Korean Peninsula since the ceasefire was put in place in 1953, obviously due to escalating nuclear test and the missile launching provocation of North Korea. On the economic front, it seems we stand at crossroads, where the future of the 5-year-old KORUS FTA is to be decided. We have to overcome this crisis and bring our economic cooperation beyond the FTA. This is why I sincerely believe that this forum will provide us with a timely – a truly timely platform to share our views with each other on opportunities and challenges for the alliance. I'm certain that as a result of this forum we can offer guidance to both the U.S. and Korean policymakers on the now and the future of the alliance.

Last but not least, I'd like to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. John Hamre, whom we are going to meet with tomorrow, Victor and all the staff of the CSIS for their hard work to make this forum possible. Thank you. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MS. COLLINS: Thank you very much, Ambassador Armitage and Ambassador Lee. We'll have them take their seats and Dr. Cha, the Korea chair at CSIS, will now introduce Congresswoman Stephanie Murphy, who will come out and give a speech shortly. Thank you very much. Just bear with us for a few minutes while we introduce Congressman Stephanie Murphy.

VICTOR CHA: Good morning, everyone. My name is Victor Cha. I'm the senior advisor and Korea Chair here at CSIS and professor at Georgetown. And on behalf of Ambassador Armitage, John Hamre, and everyone here at CSIS, we want to welcome you here this morning for what should be a very interesting day-long series of discussions about critical issues regarding Korea at a very critical time. My role this morning is to introduce our keynote speaker, Congressman Stephanie Murphy – Congresswoman Stephanie Murphy. This, as many of you know, is the first day back from recess, but Congresswoman Murphy was kind enough to join us this morning. We were talking backstage, they have a very full schedule over the next 12 days. And so we're especially grateful that she was able to join us this morning.

Congresswoman Murphy represents Florida's 7th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives. She currently serves on the House Armed Services Committee and the House Small Business Committee, where she ranks – serves as ranking member on the Subcommittee on Contracting and Workforce. Previously, Congresswoman Murphy was a businesswoman and college instructor, after serving as a national security specialist in the office of the secretary of defense, where she received numerous awards for her distinguished service including the Secretary of Defense Medal for Exceptional Civilian Service. She worked on a variety – a range of security issues, from counterterrorism to foreign military relations, to strategic planning for the Defense Department. Prior to her public service, she was a strategy consultant at Deloitte. Congresswoman Murphy, and this is very important, holds an M.S. in foreign service degree from Georgetown University, and a B.A. in economics from the College of William and Mary.

So, ladies and gentlemen, if you could please join me in welcoming Congresswoman Murphy for her remarks this morning. (Applause.)

REPRESENTATIVE STEPHANIE MURPHY (D-FL): Thank you. And thank you to CSIS and The Korea Foundation for inviting me to speak. I'm really honored to be here this morning. And especially given recent events on the Korean Peninsula, I don't think that this event could have been more timely.

And, Victor, thank you for that warm introduction. In addition to serving as a senior advisor at CSIS, as he mentioned, he's the director of Asian studies at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, which is where I received my master's degree. And Victor is a terrific teacher and an even better public servant. And I'm really hopeful that his distinguished career in government will soon have another chapter. I also hope that Professor Cha is not grading my performance today. And if he is, I hope I do better than that B-plus that was my average in grad school. (Laughter.)

So for the benefit of the audience here and online, let me briefly reintroduce myself. My name is Stephanie Murphy and I'm a first-term member of Congress. I was born in Vietnam and I came to the United States as a refugee with my family several years after the fall of Saigon in 1975. I'm honored to represent a district in central Florida that includes Orlando and the northern suburbs. And I'm also a member of the House Armed Services Committee, where I serve on the Subcommittee for Readiness and the Subcommittee for Emerging Threats and Capabilities. In addition, along with Congressman Seth Moulton from Massachusetts and Congressman Jimmy Panetta from California, I co-chair the House Democratic Caucus' National Security Taskforce.

So the purpose of this recently established taskforce is to help Democrats in Congress propose strong, smart, and strategic national security policies, and to support the current administration when it advances policy – foreign policies that comport with our nation's core interest and values, and to vigorously oppose the administration when it proposes policies that undermine those interests and values. You know, as leaders of the taskforce, we don't really see any value in reflexively opposing the administration, nor any more value in blindly supporting them. So I think it's about being fair and presenting smart and strong policies that work for this country.

Before coming to Congress, I worked in a variety of roles as a civilian employee at the Department of Defense, where my primary region of focus was the Asia-Pacific region. And although I identify as a moderate Democrat in Congress, at DOD I staffed two secretaries of defense who were appointed by a Republican president – Donald Rumsfeld and Robert Gates. I can't tell you how different those experiences were. I am a firm and almost fanatical believer in the old-fashioned maxim that to the greatest extent possible, politics should stop at the water's edge. And despite the partisan divide in Washington today, I continue to cling to this principle with a sense of determination and, at this point, quite frankly, desperation.

In my brief framing remarks, I'd like to underscore the importance of the alliance between the United States and South Korea to identify what I believe are the two main challenges to this alliance and to offer some personal views from my perspective in Congress regarding how these challenges can be addressed. So let me begin with a few words about the alliance itself. It has become something of a cliché for government officials to assert that the relationship between two nations is built on common interest and common values. But in the case of the U.S. and South Korea, this statement – however trite it might sound – is true. But of course, it goes well beyond that.

This alliance is special because it was built in battle, forged in fire, and shaped by shared sacrifice. Between 1950 and 1953, the citizens of our two nations fought, and often fell, side-by-side to repel North Korea's invasion of South Korea, and to preserve South Korea's very existence. In 1953, following the armistice, we signed a mutual defense treaty that commits each country to come to the other's defense if attacked. And in the decades since, South Korea has evolved from a dictatorship to democracy, from a largely underdeveloped country to an economic powerhouse. And the U.S. has been consistently there to lend a helping hand through the provision of economic and security support.

And there are currently over 28,000 U.S. troops stationed in South Korea to help defend our ally. But make no mistake about it, South Korea's success over the years is attributable, first and foremost, to the talent, ingenuity and grit of the South Korean people and their leaders. Put differently, South Korea's remarkable rise, like so many consumer products the world has come to depend on, was made in South Korea – products like the phones I see many of you using to fact-check my speech. (Laughter.)

Because our two nations fought together in a war that has never really ended, and because our service members continue to stand together along perhaps the most dangerous border in the world, our relationship is the furthest thing from transactional, temporary, or tactical. Instead, it's authentic, deeply personal, and resilient – likely to endure, despite the occasional setbacks, tensions, and differences of opinion that are inevitable between any partnership between proud, sovereign, and democratic nations. At the same time, I believe a warning is in order. The proven depth and durability of our security and economic relationship should not breed complacency. A strong alliance, like a strong marriage, is not self-sustaining. Just ask my husband. It requires patient and persistent upkeep by officials in both nations. It should never, ever be taken for granted.

So let me now turn to identify what I see as the two broad challenges to the U.S.-South Korea alliance, and to outline a few thoughts on how each challenge should be confronted to maximize the chance of success. The first and most obvious challenge is the one posed by the increasingly belligerent, unpredictable, and dangerous regime in North Korea – the alliance's original *raison d'être*. As everyone in this room knows painfully well, North Korea has now conducted six nuclear tests since October 2006 – each one a violation of international law. The last four tests were conducted under the current leader, Kim Jong-un. And this past weekend, North Korea carried out its latest detonation of a nuclear device, one that appears to have a vastly more powerful yield than the device it tested back in September 2016.

This is a profoundly dangerous, defiant, and destabilizing event. And as expected, the test has generated verbal condemnation from the international community, including China and Russia. But it's too early to say whether these strong words will be followed by strong actions. And if so, what those actions will entail and whether or not they'll make any difference in altering North Korea's strategic calculus.

Meanwhile, North Korea continues to develop and test missile delivery systems of increasing range and sophistication, having already conducted approximately 16 separate tests this year alone. Tests conducted in July led the U.N. Security Council – including China and Russia – to vote unanimously to tighten existing sanctions and to impose strict new sanctions on Pyongyang, which is certainly cause for cautious optimism. However, it remains to be seen whether these new sanctions will be adequately enforced, especially by Beijing, who accounts for upwards of 85 percent of North Korea's international trade.

It also remains to be seen whether the Security Council will agree to strengthen these sanctions even further in light of North Korea's latest nuclear test. More generally, it's unclear what precise impact sanctions will have on North Korea's economy and on the regime's inclination – if any – to negotiate a nuclear freeze or reversal in exchange for some degree of sanctions relief. In the short term, North Korea responded to the new sanctions in its typical fashion – firing a missile last month that flew over Japan. And of course, North Korea proceeded with its latest nuclear test in the face of broad international opposition.

The reality is – the reality is that we are now in truly uncharted territory, and we've not yet cracked the code on how to influence decision making in Pyongyang. North Korea's evident goal is to develop an arsenal of nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles that can reliably hit the U.S. territory of Guam, the U.S. state of Hawaii, and eventually the U.S. mainland. According to conventional wisdom, Kim Jong-un's primary reason for pursuing this capability is to avoid the fate that befell leaders like Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Muammar Gadhafi in Libya, to deter invasion by outside forces and, therefore, ensure regime survival.

This rationale naturally bewilders policymakers in the United States and other likeminded countries. We may detest the regime in Pyongyang, but we regard North Korea's relentless progress in its nuclear and missile programs as the sole behavior that could compel the international community to take action that would result in regime change or collapse in North Korea. From this perspective, North Korea seems to be making a fundamental miscalculation regarding what's in its own best interests, and its provocative conduct could bring about the exact result – regime extinction – that Pyongyang seeks, above all, to avoid. And this is the conundrum that lies at the heart of the debate over what to do about North Korea. How do we get Kim Jong-un to conclude that a negotiation leading to denuclearization is the best and, indeed, the only way to ensure his regime survival?

As Victor has argued, North Korea has another, less obvious, goal in pursuing nuclear missiles capable of reaching the United States. And that is to weaken the U.S.-South Korea alliance that we're all gathered here today to discuss. Specifically, he asserts that North Korea seeks to threaten the U.S. homeland in order to undercut the credibility of the United States' extended deterrence guarantee to South Korea under our so-called nuclear umbrella. I agree with his analysis. Kim Jong-un may well believe his actions could cause U.S. policy makers to act in a more unilateral fashion, undermining the alliance. Kim may even believe that the U.S. would hesitate to come to South Korea's defense if the U.S. perceives that doing so could expose the U.S. to direct attack.

Again, however, I believe Kim is making a fundamental miscalculation. If anything, the increasing threat to the U.S. homeland posed by North Korea should bring the United States and South Korea closer together, not drive a wedge between us, because our fates are so closely intertwined. U.S. policymakers must make crystal clear that the U.S. commitment to South Korea, and the importance that Washington attaches to cooperation with Seoul, is stronger than ever. As Victor and Jake Sullivan noted in a recent op-ed, North Korea is the land of lousy options. But those options only become worse if there's any real or perceived erosion in the U.S.-South Korea relationship.

And that leads me to what I see as a second main challenge to the alliance, is the changing and complex political dynamics in Washington and Seoul, with the recent elections of President Trump and President Moon. Let me focus on the former. And I think it's safe to say that we have a significantly unconventional leader in the White House. When it comes to the Trump administration and its approach to the multifaceted U.S.-South Korea partnership, my concerns fall into two categories. First,

I'm concerned about the apparent inability of the administration to nominate and secure Senate confirmation of qualified individuals to fill positions at State and Defense responsible for policy towards Korea and East Asia.

For example, nearly eight months into this administration there's no nominated U.S. ambassador to Seoul. There's no nominated assistant secretary in the State Department's Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs. There's no undersecretary for arms control and international security. There's no special envoy for the North Korean human rights issues. And over at the Department of Defense, no individual has been nominated and confirmed for the position of assistant secretary of defense for Asia and Pacific Affairs, or deputy assistant secretary of defense for East Asia. I mean absolutely no disrespect to the individuals who may be holding these positions on an interim or acting basis. Some of them are excellent. But we all know that Senate confirmation provides enhanced credibility and stability.

And when it comes to international affairs in general, and alliance preservation in particular, personnel is policy. I'm heartened that irresponsible individuals like Steve Bannon and Sebastian Gorka have departed the administration., and that experienced national security professionals like the White House Chief of Staff John Kelly, the Secretary of Defense James Mattis, and the National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster seem to be gaining in influence. Nevertheless, the fact remains that you need subject matter experts in place at every level in the national security bureaucracy to develop and execute policy, to reassure allies, and to deter adversaries. The administration has been severely lacking in this respect.

My second concern about the Trump administration is this: Too many members of the administration – including the president himself – do not appreciate that the rhetoric they use and the actions they take to appeal to certain domestic political constituencies can cause relationships with foreign allies harm, and therefore undermine our national security. Consider, for example, President Trump's initial reaction via Twitter to North Korea's most recent nuclear test. If there were an event whose gravity called for a thoughtful and deliberate and sober-minded response – not limited to 140 characters – this was it. Unfortunately, the president turned, again, to social media. And even more troubling than the medium though which he chose to deliver his message was the message itself.

The president accused South Korea, under President Moon, of appeasement – evoking the historical memory of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's failed effort to stop German aggression by agreeing to Hitler's demands. Use of such a loaded term may play well with a certain segment of the president's base, but it's hard to overstate just how false, how foolish, and how potentially damaging this claim can be. Here we are, facing an unprecedented threat of military escalation by a rogue nuclear state, and the leader of the most powerful nation on Earth choose to Twitter-shame and Twitter-inflame our close ally. If one of North Korea's goals is to test the U.S.-South Korea alliance – as I believe it is – then Pyongyang must be positively gleeful over this Twitter exchange.

I'm also worried by reports that the Trump administration – again, with an eye to pleasing a domestic political audience – could announce that it intends to withdraw from KORUS FTA. This agreement was initiated and signed under the Bush 43 administration, and was modified, finalized, and approved by Congress with bipartisan support under the Obama administration. The United States and Korea are major economic partners. And the United States is Korea's second-largest trading partner, after China. And Korea is the United States' seventh-largest trading partner. The KORUS FTA is the centerpiece of this very important economic relationship.

And my purpose here is not to defend every clause in KORUS FTA, although I do believe it is, on net, a beneficial agreement for both countries. Instead, I want to emphasize that both President Bush and President Obama saw the KORUS FTA as more than simply a trade deal. They also correctly viewed it as a vehicle to deepen and expand influence with a vital ally in a key region. China has an FTA with Korea. And for this, and many other reasons, U.S. policymakers should want our economy and Korea's economy to be tied more closely together, not less.

Against this backdrop, a unilateral decision by the United States to withdraw from this agreement – even if it's a tactical ploy to renegotiate aspects of the agreement – is likely to be seen by South Korea as a betrayal of America's commitment to the broader alliance at an incredibly precarious time. And if the United States can't be trusted to do business with South Korea on the basis of a mutual agreement negotiated by two presidents of both political parties, why should Korea believe our security assurances are real? I hope the Trump administration is asking itself hard questions like this, and that it will proceed with wisdom and care – unfortunately, two characteristic I've seen in short supply thus far in this administration.

Let me close with a thought about the importance of U.S. leadership and the role of Congress in ensuring that our Congress does not retreat from its global responsibilities in an age of rising populism. You know, I understand why calls for – to put America first can resonate with hardworking families throughout the United States who are struggling here at home and who sincerely wonder why our country is spending precious taxpayer dollars on defense, diplomatic and development abroad. At the same time, I firmly believe that the United States is safer, stronger, and more prosperous when our service members, our diplomats, our trade officials, and our aid workers are sufficiently numbered, adequately resourced, and deeply engaged with the world. The world's a better place when we work side-by-side with our partners in Asia and other regions, both to prevent conflict and to prepare ourselves to prevail should conflict occur.

I have a little personal story to share how strongly I support this principle, that the U.S. and global security flow from and depend on U.S. global engagement and leadership. You know, earlier this summer I had a chance to host 10 6-year-olds from my son's kindergarten class. And that is bravery, just saying. They were visiting Washington. And we were walking towards the World War II museum. And one of the little boys asked me, you know: Ms. Stephanie, why hasn't there been a World War III? And, you know, I gave what I believed to be a truthful and perhaps not exactly age-appropriate response. You know, I told him, there are two main reasons why we've not experienced direct and devastating conflict between major powers in the last 60 years. And the first is U.S. leadership around the world. And the second is the web of institutions and alliances that the United States and its partners in Asia and Europe established after World War II. And so rest assured, if this child grows up to be the next U.S. Pacific commander, I'll take credit. (Laughter.)

My experience on Capitol Hill has led me to believe that there's a strong bipartisan recognition in Congress that U.S. global engagement, leadership, and alliance matter, and matter a great deal. Which is good, because I'm also of the view that Congress, as a co-equal branch of government, and the one with the primary power of the purse, should not be timid about exercising its considerable authority when it comes to foreign policy. We should use the power conferred upon us by Article I of the Constitution, and wield it in a way that is consistent with our longstanding national interest and values. Ideally, with the approval of the executive branch, but over its objections if necessary. If Congress sees the Trump administration take any step that would weaken our alliance with South Korea, Congress should step in.

And with that, I'll wrap up here. I look forward to the Q&A. And thank you, again, for the invitation. Thanks. (Applause.)

MR. CHA: Well, thank you, Congresswoman Murphy. She has agreed to take a few questions – again, despite this being her first day back from recess and a very full agenda. So I'll open the floor in a minute, let you think of a couple of questions.

In the meantime, if I could ask you, Stephanie, the – there are – you know, Congress has been quite active on the North Korea issue, passing a lot of bills that have been, I think, arming the administration – whether it's Republican or Democrat – with the tools to move forward in terms – particularly in terms of sanctioning. But in your discussion – I thought a very thoughtful discussion of North Korea – you mention that part of the solution here is they have to recognize that their survival comes through negotiation, some sort of negotiated settlement. And I guess the question then is, from your perspective and your colleagues', what is – what does the Congress see in terms of that side of the equation, in terms of this question of negotiation and some sort of diplomatic settlement?

REP. MURPHY: I think that there is general agreement that the best path forward is diplomatic. And so we have to exhaust all means possible in that. And I think one of the things is, though we have provided the tools on sanctions, there is still a level of uncertainty as to how well-implemented those sanctions have been. It's why earlier this year I introduced a bill to call for a North Korea intel fusion cell. But within that – and the intel fusion cell would have all of the intel agencies work together. And CIA has since put together their own intel fusion cell, but I do think it needs to be expanded.

But within that bill, one of the areas of focus was to gather the information we need to know to ascertain whether or not – how well these sanctions have been implemented, and whether or not they're having an effect. You know, I think, as you've said, people don't think sanctions work, until they do, right? But it requires everybody being on board and actually executing on their piece of that. And so, you know, I think we need to push forward and make sure that those sanctions are implemented to the full extent possible, and see what other means we can apply to create pressure to encourage North Korea to come to the negotiating space.

MR. CHA: Great. You know, the other place that Congress has played a very important role has been on human rights. I mean, the North Korean Human Rights Act I think is up for renewal pretty soon. There was a groundswell of interest in this issue with the U.N. Commission of Inquiry report a few years ago. Are you – I mean, to what extent does Congress – do you and your colleagues see yourselves playing a role and in what way would the – the act would be renewed and – you know, I mean, what is the view on that? Because it seems to have – attention toward that issue seems to have dissipated in the past few months.

REP. MURPHY: Well, I think one area that we have expressed through a letter to the administration is that appointment of that special envoy on human rights. And that had multiple cosigners. So I think that there still is an interest in seeing human rights addressed, and particularly because of the connection that you've often raised, which is that there's a connection between North Korea's human rights violations and the way that it's getting resources to fund some of its missile development.

MR. CHA: Mmm hmm, yeah. Thanks. Terrific. So let me open the floor now to questions. If you ask a question, please first tell us who you are. And then, I think for the sake of our guest and for the audience, we'd appreciate questions rather than questions disguised as something else. (Laughter.) So –

REP. MURPHY: That's a hard task in D.C. It's like asking a politician to be brief.

MR. CHA: I know. (Laughs.) We'll go to Rob Warren (sp) right here. Rob, wait for the mic. It's coming.

Q: Congresswoman, thank you for an excellent address. President Trump has indicated that perhaps he is considering giving notice that he would withdraw from KORUS FTA. There's a six-month trigger, I believe. Would it be possible that the Congress could override him on this? You had bipartisan support, overwhelmingly, before for the KORUS. Do you think it would be again, and initiative could be taken?

REP. MURPHY: I think that, you know, withdrawal from KORUS would be a huge mistake. It has been – it has been beneficially to a lot of states across this country. And so I think there are members of Congress who are very deeply interested in seeing it continue. The ways in which, from a tactical perspective, that Congress could, if the president were to announce that, prevent it from happening is to put in an appropriations bill that no funds shall be used to implement a withdrawal from KORUS FTA. And so that would be one option on how Congress could intercept something like that.

MR. CHA: Yes. The mic is coming.

Q: I'm Yoshi Komori with the Japanese newspaper Sankei Shimbun.

You stated in your speech that the Trump administration has yet to fill many important positions for its policy toward Asia within their executive branch, you know. In your observation, why? Why do you think that the reason is?

REP. MURPHY: Well, we can go with conspiracy theory or we can – (laughs) – you know, I think that there – when it comes to the State Department, there have been a number of articles that have been written about the dismantling of that department. And I really believe that, you know, if you look at your budget and your personnel policy you'll see what your priorities are. And so I'm actually fearful that the lack of personnel appointments, and also some of the funding cuts that I've seen in the diplomatic and development space is actually a reflection of where this administration's priorities are. But again, that's an area where I would disagree. You know, our tools of national power include diplomacy and intel and economics, not just military. So we can't just fully fund that and rely solely on that.

MR. CHA: Yes, right here.

Q: Yeah. Ken Meyercord, a TV producer.

Yesterday a representative of one of the member states of the U.N. made the following statement: When a rogue regime has a nuclear weapon and an ICBM pointed at you, you do not take steps to lower your guard. No one would do that. We certainly won't. Was the speaker a representative of the United States or North Korea? In case you haven't guessed, it was Nikki Haley,

our representative. But if you pluralize nuclear weapon and ICBM, couldn't the North Koreans make the same statement with equal legitimacy?

REP. MURPHY: Could you repeat the last part? Before –

Q: Excuse me?

REP. MURPHY: Could you repeat the last sentence? I'm sorry.

Q: Couldn't the North Koreans make the same statement that Nikki Haley did, with equal legitimacy?

REP. MURPHY: You know, I think that it's in Korea's – North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and their missiles are in violation of international law. The possession of – the U.S. possession of our weapons is not. I mean, so this – their development is in violation of international law.

MR. CHA: Great. Thank you. Yes. I'll go to this side in a second to – yes, here.

Q: Suh Jin Kyo, visiting fellow at the U.S.-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University.

The American handling of the Cuban issues look very interesting to me. The normalization with Cuba may be in danger, or not. What kind of implication can I find from the Cuban case? Thank you.

REP. MURPHY: You know, at a time when North Korea is so aggressively advancing its nuclear weapons and its missile technology in violation of international law, it's hard to imagine a – some sort of return to normalization, like with Cuba. I mean, I think those are a very, very different scenarios. What North Korea is doing right now in the region is aggressively destabilizing, flaunting international norms. I think that moving to normalization without some sort of halt or some sort of agreement to roll back what they have done illegally would be a mistake.

MR. CHA: Yeah, I feel like that quite often, I mean, for those of us who study this people bring up Cuba, they bring up Iran, and try to draw parallels. And I think that, you know, on the surface there may look like there are parallels, but, I mean, if you look at it in – with any degree of detail, they're very different. And in the Cuba case, you know, the obvious difference is Cuba didn't have – was not testing – as you said, was not on an aggressive testing campaign to threaten U.S. territory, which made the conditions for any sort of even internal discussion about a Cuba model very difficult, I think, at this time.

So let me go over to this side of the room. At least – I can't see behind this podium. Yes, ma'am, right there.

Q: Kristina Yun (sp), U.S. Air Force legislative fellow.

I think in light of recent events kind of the big elephant in the room is this question of South Korean – nuclearizing South Korea. And earlier this year, President Trump had stated that he'd be open to considering a nuclearized South Korea, or South Korea developing kind of nuclear capabilities. If you could please share with us kind of the pulse of the U.S. Congress on this particular issue.

REP. MURPHY: You know, we have spent decades with a lot of effort into nonproliferation and reducing nuclear weapons around the world. I don't think that necessarily in this – that we should allow what is going on here with North Korea to escalate and nuclearize the peninsula further. I think that's – I mean, the point of the collective deterrence or the nuclear umbrella is so that South Korea does not have to develop its own nuclear weapons. And so long as that commitment exists and is a firm commitment on the U.S. part, there shouldn't be a need for South Korea to develop its own nuclear capabilities.

But, having said that, you know, there are a number of areas where it appears this administration is making some adjustments to South Korea's defensive capabilities. And we all understand that – even those conventional weapons, those thresholds, payloads, things like that changing creates a response by China and Russia. So we have to proceed very carefully how we allow our response to North Korea's actions to contribute to or take away from the stability of the region.

MR. CHA: Could you – I mean, you mentioned – you just mentioned China. Could you say a little bit about your views on how you think China has been handling this and whether you think that the administration's policy of having these secondary sanctions sort of in their back pocket to directly sanction and list Chinese companies and entities if the Chinese aren't cooperating – do you think that's a sound strategy? I mean, I'd love to hear your views on the China piece of this.

REP. MURPHY: You know, I think China has a really important role to play here. And whether or not its exercised its full range of ability to influence this situation I think – I think the answer to that is probably it's fallen short of its full range – although, Chinese government officials will tell you that we're overestimating China's power over North Korea. And so, you know, secondary sanctions are just to encourage China to think differently about it.

But I wonder if this nuclear test doesn't make it think differently about its role. And I think it has to think both in terms of carrot and stick, right? So what we've been pushing China to do is, you know, sanction North Korea, make it painful for them with – not to continue the Game of Thrones theme, but winter is coming on the Korean Peninsula. And so one would imagine any sort of oil sanctions at this time would be particularly pronounced and felt strongly by North Korea.

So I think that's the stick part of it, right? But what are the carrots that are available for Korea? And how do you look at what it is that North Korea is trying to achieve and see – you know, I don't know that the U.S. is ever going to be able to assure North Korea that we won't topple them, right, no matter who – how many people say it. But can China provide some sort of assurances on that carrot side, in addition to the sticks, to get some traction in this scenario?

MR. CHA: Yeah, yeah. The Game of Thrones one went over my head. I'm not a Game of Thrones person. But I'm sure, like, 99 percent of the people here are. Yeah, no offense to HBO or anything, so. (Laughs.)

Yes, let's take a question here.

Q: I'm a journalist from – Dong-hyun Kim (sp), and I'm a journalist from Chosun in South Korea.

I have two questions to you. And the first question is about the – it's actually under this alliance that's part of the alliance. I would like to know that the – your – under Bush administration and the Trump administration, what will be the commonalities and differences between the policies towards the Korean Peninsula? And the second question is about the – maybe since Victor – Dr. Cha is here today – you as the new – nominated as the new ambassador to Korea, what would be your arrival date to Korea as the new ambassador? (Laughter.) I mean, is there a specific, like, time? Just wondering about that.

REP. MURPHY: That's news to you, isn't it?

Q: Maybe that's a, like, question which you can answer. Or why has it been delayed – so many positions that has been under this Trump administration, which you briefly touched on today, that there are – many of the positions regarding the Asian issues are still empty. So I just want to know the reason of that as well. Thank you.

MR. CHA: Do you want to go first?

REP. MURPHY: Yeah, sure. (Laughter.) I'll give you a moment to accept your new position.

So differences in the alliance. You know, as with many things with this administration, there's more rhetoric than actual substantive change in policy, as of yet, right? Obviously if we move forward with pulling out of KORUS that would be a significant change in policy. But right now, we're just hearing a change in tone and tenor of how we're talking to a dear ally. But if you look at what we've done as a government – you know, in the NDA that was passed, there's a significant investment in Asian security. We continue to do exercises with South Korea. I mean, all of the things that have been cornerstones of the alliance are continuing to date. But that's not to take that for granted that it will continue. But I think right now we're just trying to deal with a little bit of the rhetoric. And that's been the main change.

MR. CHA: Well, great. Well, Stephanie, thank you so much for taking the time. (Laughter.) I thought – I mean, your comments were extremely thoughtful. I know that you've traveled to the region and you're emerging as one of the leaders on Asia policy and Korea on the Hill. And again, knowing that this is your first day back and the agenda you have in front of you, we really do appreciate you taking the time to be with us. So, ladies and gentlemen, if we could thank the Congresswoman very much. (Applause.)

REP. MURPHY: Thank you.

MS. COLLINS: Thank you. We will now have a 15-minute coffee break. We'll reconvene here at 10:45. Thank you.

(END)