

Impact Players

Mark W. Lippert

By Andrew Kwon

Who is he?

Mark William Lippert is currently the Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense Charles Hagel. Immediately prior to his current position, Mr. Lippert served as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs (2012-2013). Mr. Lippert is a noted national security expert who has extensive experience in both the Executive and Legislative branches of the U.S. Government. Between 1999 and 2005, Mr. Lippert worked as a staff member to prominent Democratic figures such as former Senator Tom Daschle, for whom he was a Defense and Foreign Policy Advisor.



In 2005, Mr. Lippert joined the staff of then Senator Barack Obama as a Foreign Policy Advisor; a role he would retain through the latter's 2008 presidential campaign. Upon President Obama's successful election, Mr. Lippert was appointed Deputy Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff for the National Security Council. In 2009, Mr. Lippert briefly left government to complete a two-year rotation as a Naval Intelligence Officer with Naval Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan and Africa, before returning to join the Department of Defense in 2012. He holds a B.A. in Political Science and M.A. in International Policy Studies from Stanford University.

Why has he been in the news?

On May 1, the White House announced that President Obama intended to nominate Mr. Lippert as the next U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Korea, succeeding Ambassador Sung Kim who is expected to complete his three year term in August 2014. Though Mr. Lippert's potential nomination had been rumored since as early as January 2014, the recent announcement nevertheless met with strong approval from the South Korean government the day after. If confirmed, Mr. Lippert's age (41 years old) will not only be the youngest U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Korea since formal relations were established, but also his status as being part of the Obama "inner circle" will be important for shaping U.S.-Korea Policy.

What can we expect from him?

Lippert is one of the most knowledgeable people on Asia policy in the Obama administration. While his areas of expertise are political-military issues, Lippert will have to manage the complex and large economic and business relationship between the two countries. Once he is confirmed by Congress, agreement in Seoul should come fairly quickly in order for him to start work right away.



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