

Impact Players

Kim Kwan-jin

By Andy Lim

Who is he?

Kim Kwan-jin is the nominee to be the new Republic of Korea (ROK) National Security Advisor. Currently, Minister Kim is the 40th Minister of National Defense (2010-2014), having held that position during the Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye administrations. He returned to public service in December 2010 as the defense minister in the aftermath of the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island, replacing Minister Kim Tae-young. Before retiring from the armed services in 2008, Minister Kim was a four-star general in the ROK Army and served as the 33rd Chairman of the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) from 2006 to 2008.



Minister Kim graduated from the 28th class of the Korea Military Academy and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1972. During his military career, he served in many senior positions: Commanding General, 35th Infantry Division (1999-2000), Commanding General, 2nd Corps (2002-2004), and Chief Director of Operations at the Joint Chiefs of Staff (2004-2005). He was promoted to four-star general in 2005 when he became Commanding General of the 3rd ROK Army (TROKA).

Why has he been in the news?

President Park Geun-hye announced on June 1 that the current Minister of National Defense Kim Kwan-jin will be her nominee to be the new National Security Advisor, replacing Kim Jang-soo, a former classmate of his who resigned on May 22 along with Director of National Intelligence Service Nam Jae-joon for their poor handling of the *Sewol* incident. He will take office immediately since his position does not require National Assembly's approval, and will also continue his duties as the defense minister until the new nominee, fellow former chairman of the JCS GEN Han Min-koo, has been approved.

What can we expect from him?

Minister Kim's resume speaks for itself, not only is he the first defense minister to serve in two different administrations, but he is also one of the longest-serving in ROK history. He has built a reputation as a hardliner, shown in the past three and a half years by his willingness to stand up to provocations from North Korea, and to retaliate if needed. His nomination on June 1 therefore prompted a quick verbal attack by North Korea, who, through the official newspaper *Rodong Sinmun*, immediately labeled him a 'military gangster' and a 'traitor.' His track record makes him an ideal choice to become President Park's top security advisor, especially at a time of increased provocations coming from Pyongyang, and when national security and a strong defense posture is a top priority for the President. Furthermore, his long experience of working with South Korea's allies, especially the United States, and interacting with the top military leaders of South Korea's neighbors, China and Japan will bring valuable expertise to the presidential staff.



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