

Impact Players

Kim Jang-soo

By Sophia Zhang

Who is he?

Kim Jang-soo has been appointed the next South Korean ambassador to China, becoming the ROK's first envoy to Beijing with a military background since the two nations established diplomatic relations in 1992. Ambassador Kim was the former chief of the National Security Office established under Park Geun-hye's administration from 2013 to 2014. He joined the Saenuri Party as a proportional representative from 2008 to 2012, and served as the former minister of national defense for the late President Roh Moo-hyun from 2006 to 2008. In addition, Ambassador Kim was the army chief of staff (2005-2006) and deputy commander of the ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command (2004-2005). Kim became the first in his military class to be promoted to general, and received his fourth star in May 2004. During his thirty-five-year military career, his assignments have also included director of operations (2003-2004), commanding general of the 7th corps (2001-2003), joint chief of staff (1999-2001), and commanding general of the 6th infantry division (1997-1999). Kim received his M.A. from the Graduate School of Public Administration at Yonsei University in 1989, and underwent previous training at Korea National Defense University in 1988. He graduated from the Korea Military Academy in 1971.



Why has he been in the news?

The South Korean government appointed Kim as the new ambassador to China on March 27, just one day after Korea announced its decision to join the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Nominated by President Park on February 15, the Chinese government granted Ambassador Kim's appointment a number of weeks after his nomination. Kim was among fourteen new envoys in a personnel reshuffle of ambassadors.

What can we expect from him?

Kim's national security expertise will be valuable for advancing security cooperation between Seoul and Beijing. The new ambassador will be expected to manage an increasingly complex relationship, including growing tensions over THAAD and the troublesome North Korea issue. As one of President Park's trusted confidantes, Kim's appointment reflects her high regard for relations between South Korea and China.



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