

Korea Chair Monitor

February 11— February 24, 2016

The Korea Chair team takes a biweekly look at events of interest in Washington, Seoul, and the region.

U.S.-ROK RELATIONS

President Obama Signs H.R. 757

On February 18, U.S. president Barack Obama signed into law H.R. 757, the “North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act.” The new bill has received bipartisan support and will strengthen the U.S. sanctions regime against the DPRK.

Admiral Harris and General Scaparrotti Briefs Congress

On February 23 and 24, Admiral Harry B. Harris, Commander of U.S. Pacific Command, and General Curtis M. Scaparrotti, Commander of UNC/CFC/USFK testified at hearings before the Senate and House Armed Services Committee, respectively. Both expressed concern about DPRK’s continued provocations, and were in support of discussions concerning the deployment of THAAD to the ROK as part of strengthened layered defenses.

Cho Tae-Yong Visits Washington

On February 18, ROK deputy national security adviser Cho Tae-yong met U.S. deputy secretary of state Antony Blinken in Washington. They discussed U.S.-ROK coordination on DPRK policy and agreed to maintain close bilateral consultations in responding to provocations.

DOMESTIC POLITICS

President Park Addresses the National Assembly on DPRK

On February 16, ROK president Park Geun-hye spoke at the National Assembly to explain the government’s response to recent DPRK actions, including the decision to close the Kaesong Industrial Complex, and to call for cooperation from the National Assembly. She emphasized that current strategies toward DPRK should be changed into more firm ones in order to change North Korea.

Parties Continue Bills Discussion at the National Assembly

On February 19, the National Assembly held a plenary session to discuss pending bills, but failed to pass them. On February 23, another plenary session was held, but it came to a halt when Kim Kwang-jin from the Minju Party began the first filibuster in 47 years to oppose Speaker of the National Assembly Chung Ui-hwa’s direct introduction of the antiterrorism bill.

Parties Agree on Redistricting Principles

On February 23, leaders of the Saenuri and Minju Party and speaker of the National Assembly Chung Ui-hwa agreed on the principles for redistricting electoral districts for the upcoming April general elections. The standards were sent to the Redistricting Commission for final review before it can be passed at the next plenary session.

ECONOMIC POLICIES AND TRADE

11th RCEP Trade Negotiation Committee Meeting

From February 15 to 19, members of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) held the 11th round of negotiations in Brunei to discuss the goal of concluding the free trade agreement (FTA) by 2016. Yoo Myung-hee, head of the ROK Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Energy’s FTA negotiation bureau, attended as the representative for the ROK.



Conan in Seoul!

Conan O’Brien, host of the television talk show Conan, arrived in Seoul on February 14 to enthusiastic fans. He was joined on this five-day trip by Korean-American actor Steven Yeun. Highlights of this trip included a visit to the DMZ, as well as a feature of O’Brien in an episode of the drama *One More Happy Ending*. O’Brien also purchased an octopus at the Noryangjin Fish Market (now residing at the COEX Aquarium).

Photo Credit: Conan O’Brien Presents: Team Coco Facebook Page.



U.S. Naval Forces Korea Move Headquarters to Busan

The opening ceremony for the new U.S. Naval Forces Korea (CNFK) headquarters in Busan took place on February 19, following its relocation from U.S. Army Garrison Yongsan. The ceremony was attended by the U.S. ambassador to the ROK Mark Lippert and the Commander of UNC/CFC/USFK General Curtis Scaparrotti.

Photo Credit: U.S. Forces Korea Facebook Page, photo by Sgt Russell O. Youmans.

ECONOMIC POLICIES AND TRADE (CONTINUED)

Aid Provisions for Kaesong Industrial Complex Businesses

On February 14, ROK deputy prime minister and minister of strategy and finance Yoo Il-ho convened a meeting to discuss potential business aid for tenant companies affected by the shutdown of the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC) on February 10. The government has activated the cooperative resolution board to work on KIC-related aid issues. On February 24, the KIC Business Emergency Planning Committee announced the asset damage for the 123 KIC tenant companies amounted to \$660.3 million.

GLOBAL RELATIONS

Foreign Minister Yun Delivers a Keynote Speech in Munich

On February 11, ROK minister of foreign affairs Yun Byung-se delivered a keynote speech titled “NATO’s Far Eastern Flank” to the Munich Security Conference hosted by the German Atlantic Association. Minister Yun discussed DPRK’s continued violations of international laws and requested active cooperation from European countries to respond to DPRK provocations.

REGIONAL RELATIONS

ROK-China High-Level Strategic Dialogue in Seoul

On February 16, ROK first vice minister of foreign affairs Lim Sung-nam and Chinese executive vice minister of foreign affairs Zhang Yesui cohosted the 7th ROK-China High-Level Strategic Dialogue between Foreign Ministries in Seoul. The focus of the talk was their responses to recent DPRK provocations, including ongoing discussions on a new UN Security Council resolution.

John Kerry Meets Wang Yi in Washington

On February 23, Chinese minister of foreign affairs Wang Yi met U.S. secretary of state John Kerry in Washington. They discussed the recent DPRK provocations, and shared the view that DPRK’s violations of UNSCRs are a threat to international peace and security and “merit an appropriate response.”

NORTH KOREA

Ri Myung-Su Becomes New KPA Chief of Staff

DPRK state media Korean Central News Agency officially referred to Ri Myung-Su as the new chief of staff of the Korean People’s Army in a report on Kim Jong-un’s visit to a military training site on February 21. This means Ri Myong-su has replaced Ri Yong-gil, who reportedly has been purged by Kim Jong-un.



Third Round of Korea–Central America FTA Talks

From February 22 to 26, ROK ministry of trade, industry, and energy’s director general for FTA policy Cheong Seung-il met his counterpart Melvin Redondo in San Francisco for the third round of negotiations for the Korea–Central America FTA.

Photo Credit: ROK Ministry of Trade, Industry, & Energy.



Korea Chair Bids Farewell & Welcome to KF Fellows

This February, the CSIS Korea Chair bid a fond farewell to Chanil Jung (left), who has been with us for the past 6 months as a CSIS- Korea Foundation Junior Researcher, working on the North Korea and Defense sections of the Monitor. He is succeeded by Hyo Jung Lee (right).

Looking Ahead

Our Friday morning preview of events to watch in the weeks ahead.

- **February 26–29** | Bank of Korea governor Lee Juyeol will attend the G20 meeting for finance ministers and central bank governors from February 26 to 27 and the Bank for International Settlement (BIS) governors meeting from February 28 to 29, both of which will be held in Shanghai, China.
- **March 1** | DPRK minister of foreign affairs Ri Su-yong is expected to travel to Geneva and attend the 31st session of the UN Human Rights Council on March 1.
- **March 7** | The U.S.-ROK Marines Corps combined military exercise Ssang Yong 2016 will begin. It will be the largest combined Marine Corps drills since it first started in 2012.
- **March 7–April 30** | The annual U.S.-ROK Key Resolve and Foal Eagle joint military exercise will be held, which includes the new joint wartime operational plan “OPLAN 5015.”

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