

Trilateral Defense Ministers' Meeting Joint Press Statement

U. S. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, Republic of Korea Minister of National Defense Han Min-koo, and Japan Defense Minister Gen Nakatani held a productive and substantive meeting in Singapore on June 4 to discuss the regional security environment including the North Korean threat and trilateral defense cooperation among the United States, the Republic of Korea, and Japan. The defense ministers' meeting followed the successful trilateral summit held on March 31 in Washington, D.C.

The Secretary and the Ministers condemned in the strongest terms North Korea's recent provocative actions, including its fourth nuclear test and multiple ballistic missile launches as clear violations of United Nations Security Council resolutions. The Secretary and the Ministers affirmed the intention of the three countries to cooperate closely with one another and with the international community, to enforce United Nations Security Council resolution 2270. The three officials urged North Korea to refrain immediately from taking further actions that aggravate tensions and called on North Korea instead to focus on fulfilling its international obligations and commitments.

The Ministers and the Secretary praised the close trilateral communication and cooperation that took place at various levels before and immediately following these incidents. They concluded that the three countries should continue these efforts by utilizing the current Defense Trilateral Talks (DTT) framework to enable rapid coordination among their respective defense authorities in the event of future North Korean threats or to address non-traditional security issues, such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

The Secretary and the Ministers recognized that the United States, the Republic of Korea, and Japan face common challenges including North Korean nuclear and missile threats. The three officials affirmed that trilateral defense cooperation contributes to the individual security of the three countries, as well as to regional security. The three officials directed their respective staffs to cooperate closely through the DTT framework in fields where mutual cooperation is possible, and within this context, to explore ways to improve communication and coordination among the three defense authorities.

The Ministers and the Secretary discussed the upcoming trilateral missile warning exercise, PACIFIC DRAGON, which is to be conducted in accordance with the Trilateral Information Sharing Arrangement (TISA). The Secretary and the Ministers also decided to seek additional opportunities to promote trilateral defense cooperation, such as through defense medical related events and other cultural exchanges.

The Ministers and the Secretary reaffirmed the importance of enhancing information-sharing and decided to increase information-sharing regarding North Korean nuclear and missile threats in accordance with the TISA.

The Secretary and the Ministers also discussed regional security issues, including the importance of maritime security. The three officials reiterated that the freedom of navigation and overflight must be ensured and that disputes should be resolved peacefully.

Minister Nakatani thanked Minister Han and Secretary Carter, as well as the people of the Republic of Korea and the United States, for their swift and generous support and assistance following the April Kumamoto earthquakes.

The Secretary and the Ministers decided to continue holding consultations on trilateral security issues and affirmed their commitment to promoting defense cooperation among the United States, the Republic of Korea, and Japan in order to contribute to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and around the world.