

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

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## THE U.S. – KOREA BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP: AMERICA'S FORGOTTEN ALLIANCE

Dear Colleague:

On June 25, 1950, at approximately 4 a.m. (Korean Standard Time) on a rainy Sunday morning, Democratic People's Republic of Korea Army (DPRK - North Korea) artillery and mortars open fire on Republic of Korea (ROK - South Korea) Army positions south of the 38th Parallel, the line then serving as the border between the two countries. The opening barrage is followed shortly by tank/infantry attacks at all points along the Parallel. At 11 a.m., North Korea announced a formal declaration of war and what is now known as "The Korean War" officially began. By the time a cease-fire agreement was signed on July 27, 1953, millions of soldiers and civilians had perished. The armistice ended the fighting, but Korea has remained divided for decades since and subject to the possibility of a new war at any time.

The Korean War was one of the most destructive of the 20th century. Perhaps as many as 4 million Koreans died throughout the peninsula, two-thirds of them civilians. Economic and social damage to the Korea Peninsula was incalculable. Decades later, Koreans still seek reconciliation and eventual reunification of their torn nation.

Forged in the heat of battle, the U.S.- South Korea bilateral relationship continues to be one of our most vital and vibrant partnerships politically, militarily and economically; and South Korea remains one of America's most important strategic partners in East Asia.

The Korean War is often called the forgotten war but the courageous service and sacrifice of our Korean War veterans is commemorated and honored every day by the strong and enduring U.S.-South Korean partnership. As we pass the 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Korean War I wanted to remind you of the continuing contributions made by South Korea to our mutual alliance – some that are all too often forgotten:

- South Korea is the United States' seventh largest export market and the fifth largest market for U.S. agricultural products. South Korea is also an excellent candidate for consideration of U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations.
- South Korea has been a strong ally in the U.S.-led War on Terror, having committed more than 3,270 troops to Iraq (the third largest contingent after the United States and Great Britain) and \$260 million towards the reconstruction efforts. South Korea has also committed up to 600 troops for operations in Afghanistan.
- South Korea has taken positive steps on the question of human rights in North Korea having taken in almost 7,000 refugees from the North and offering immediate and full citizenship under its "firm resettlement" policy.
- South Korea is a key partner in the Six-Party Talks to resolve North Korea's nuclear issue, despite the constant fear of war that clouds the peninsula.
- South Korea is an important military ally with over 33,000 U.S. troops stationed in the country and plays a vital part in securing peace and stability in the region. It is one of only three nations which stood alongside the U.S. in all four major conflicts that the U.S. has faced since the Korean War.
- South Korea is the prime success story of U.S. foreign policy in the post-WWII period. Having assisted South Korea in transforming itself from a war-torn "basket" economy into a full democracy with the world's 11th largest economy, the U.S. can now consider South Korea as an indispensable partner in promoting democracy and free market economy.

I look forward to working with you to strengthen and grow this important alliance.

Sincerely



Dan Burton  
Member of Congress