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

**U.S.-ROK RELATIONS**

**Bilateral Strategic Dialogue in Washington D.C.**
On June 25, the ROK first vice minister of foreign affairs Cho Tae-yong met with U.S. deputy secretary of state William Burns in Washington, D.C., as part of the U.S.-ROK Strategic Dialogue. Vice Minister Cho is in Washington for a four-day visit (June 23-26), where he is scheduled to meet senior officials and congressmen, including the special representative of the secretary of state for North Korea policy Glyn Davies, and the U.S. assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs Daniel Russel to discuss the U.S-ROK alliance.

**United States and Korea Discuss OPCON Transfer**
The United States and the Republic of Korea held assistant secretary -level meetings on June 16 and 17 on the transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON) in Seoul. South Korea was represented by the ROK Ministry of National Defense chief of office of planning and coordination Ryu Je-seung, and the United States was represented by U.S. deputy assistant secretary of defense for East Asia David Helvey. This meeting follows the agreement reached during the bilateral meeting between Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and Minister of Defense Kim Kwan-jin at the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on May 31 to set the appropriate timing and conditions for OPCON transfer by the time the annual Security Consultative Meeting takes place in October in Washington.

**REGIONAL RELATIONS**

**President Park Geun-hye Visits Central Asia**
On June 21, President Park Geun-hye returned from her six-day trip to central Asia where she met with the presidents of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, to expand economic cooperation and infrastructure development in Eurasia. Focusing on South Korean participation in joint energy projects across central Asia, Park secured a $4 billion gas development and solar power plant project in Uzbekistan, an $18.8 billion deal to build a coal-fired power plant in Kazakhstan, and a $2 billion project to build a gas-chemical plant in northeastern Turkmenistan.

**Korea and China Meet to Discuss Maritime Borders**
ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs director-general for international legal affairs Kang Jeong-sik met with PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs director general for boundary and ocean affairs Ouyang Yujing during a closed-door meeting on June 13 in Seoul to discuss their maritime border. The talks were the first of their kind in three years, and were held to resolve disputes over the exclusive economic zones (EEZs), which have been debated between the two since 1996.

**U.S. Senate Committee Hearing Held for Mark Lippert**
On June 17 the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a confirmation hearing on U.S. Ambassador-nominee to South Korea Mark Lippert. In his testimony, Lippert vowed to ensure alignment between the United States and South Korea in their efforts to denuclearize North Korea and to work towards cutting tariffs as agreed in the KORUS FTA. Lippert’s nomination has successfully been voted out of committee and is now awaiting official confirmation from the full Senate.

*Photo credit: Vladimir Jirnov Flickr Photostream.*
REGIONAL RELATIONS (continued)

ROK Reactions to Review of Kono Statement
Japanese ambassador Koro Bessho met with ROK vice foreign minister Cho Tae-yong over the review of the Kono Statement on June 23. On June 24, ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson and deputy minister for public relations Noh Kwang-il expressed the ROK government’s concern over Japan’s review of the Kono Statement.

TRADE AND ECONOMICS

Fifth Round of Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Negotiations
South Korea is participating in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations held in Singapore June 23-27 with a delegation led by Ministry of Trade, Industry and Economics director-general for FTA negotiations Kim Young-moo. The previous round of negotiations was held in April 2014.

NORTH KOREA

Koreas Resume Joint Committee Meeting in Kaesong
The Inter-Korean Joint Committee for the Kaesong Industrial Complex resumed its quarterly meeting on June 26, breaking a six month hiatus in North-South contact in Kaesong. The meeting had been suspended on December 19 due to rising inter-Korean tensions. Led by Lee Gang-wu, the South Korean Unification Ministry’s head of the Kaesong complex promotion body, and Pak Chol-su, the North Korean vice director of the Central Special Zone Development Guidance General Bureau, the meeting discussed management issues in Kaesong and future plans to develop Kaesong into an international business center.

Republic of Korea and Russia Discuss the Korean Peninsula
ROK special representative for Korean peninsula peace and security affairs Hwang Joon-kook completed a four-day trip to Moscow June 16–19. Ambassador Hwang met with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Morgulov of Russia on June 18 to hold discussions on North Korea’s nuclear program and other issues related to the Korean peninsula.

Looking Ahead

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

- **June 29** | National Assembly confirmation hearing for minister of national defense nominee Han Min-koo.
- **July 3-4** | President of the People’s Republic of China Xi Jinping will visit the ROK on a two-day state summit.
- **August 14-18** | His Holiness Pope Francis will visit the Republic of Korea on a four-day tour in August, marking the first time the Catholic Pope has visited Asia since 1995. The trip will include visits to Sewol ferry victims and a meeting with President Park.
KOREA CHAIR MONITOR

CSIS Office of the Korea Chair contributors:

Victor Cha, Senior Adviser and Chair
Marie DuMond, Research Associate
Andy Lim, Senior Research Intern
Brian Jihyuk Kim, Research Intern
Sarah Hong, Research Intern
Dongwon Kim, Research Intern

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