

Impact Players

Han Min-koo

Who is he?

General Han Min-koo is the 44th Minister of National Defense. He was the 36th Chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) of the Republic of Korea (ROK) from July 2010 to October 2011. Prior to his post as CJCS, General Han previously served as the 40th ROK Army Chief of Staff from 2009 to 2010. He has also previously served as the Vice Chief of Staff of the ROK Army from April 2008 to September 2009 and the Commander of the Army's Capital Defense Command (December 2006 - April 2008) and the 53rd Infantry Division (2003-2004). General Han served as the Ministry of Defense (MND) Director General of the Policy Planning Bureau from May 2005 through December 2006 where he led high-level talks with North Korea. His staff positions include MND Director General of the International Cooperation Bureau (May 2004-May 2005), Chief of the Army Strategic Planning Division (April 2002-April 2003), Chief of Staff of the Capital Corps, and Chief Secretary to the Army Chief of Staff (April 2000-April 2002).



Han Min-koo (left) and Kim Kwan-jin (right).

General Han entered the Republic of Korea Military Academy in 1971 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in March of 1975. He received a Bachelor's Degree in Western History from Seoul National University in 1979 and a Master's Degree in Foreign Affairs and National Security Studies from Yonsei University in 1992. He went through an Army College program in 1984 and completed the Security Studies Program at the National Defense University in 1992.

Why has he been in the news?

General Han was inaugurated as the Minister of National Defense on June 30. He went through his confirmation hearings at the National Assembly on June 29, where he was quoted as saying he will do his best “to ensure watertight military preparedness against a full-scale provocation from North Korea,” as well as pushing for “an early establishment of the KAMD and the Kill Chain” in response to North Korea threats. He was nominated on June 1, 2014 by President Park Geun-hye as the next Minister of Defense following her nomination of incumbent defense minister Kim Kwan-Jin as national security advisor. In a June 1st press release regarding the nomination, the Blue House said General Han is deemed a top expert in military policy and strategy, said a press statement released by the Blue House. Upon his nomination, Blue House spokesman Min Kyung-wook further stated “(The presidential office) believes that Han is the right person for the position as he has knowledge in various fields of combat operations and policy, and is largely trusted by his colleagues in the military.”

What can we expect from him?

General Han takes office during a time of transition in President Park's government precipitated by the resignation of several high level officials and a Cabinet shuffle in the wake of the Sewol ferry disaster. Furthermore, his appointment and the movement of Kim Kwan-jin into the Blue House shows that President Park believes in continuity of operations in her national security. He will need to work closely with his U.S. counterparts to make decisions regarding a possible delay of Operational Control (OPCON) transfer by October 2014. General Han brings with him previous experience in negotiations in the first round of talks in 2010 that resulted then in the agreement to delay OPCON transfer. Other pending issue for the Park administration defense and security agenda include issues related to information sharing with the United States and Japan, regional territorial disputes, missile defense system cooperation, and North Korea threats.



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