Leading the great soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and civilians of the joint and combined force is the decisive factor that enables the high level of readiness that maintains the Korean Armistice Agreement to protect vital national interests and defend the Republic of Korea (ROK). This year marks the 60th anniversary of the armistice agreement and the U.S.-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty. The alliance stands stronger than ever due to the basics of leadership we live by every day. Over the last 60 years, leadership has shown the way for our servicemembers and civilians to staff the positions, walk the patrols, maintain aircraft and ships, and run our garrisons so the alliance could deter further North Korean aggression, protect generations of South Korean people, and enable the economic growth and prosperity of the ROK.

*GEN Thurman is retiring, and GEN Curtis M. Scaparrotti will succeed him. The change of command is scheduled for October 2.
Leadership is the most critical of the elements of combat power that the United States brings to the U.S.-ROK military alliance. Our leaders challenge assumptions and look for better ways to implement the commander’s intent. Our leaders remain adaptive to change when the North Korean regime adjusts its strategic, operational or tactical approach. North Korea’s evolving strategy and operational attempts over the years to turn the United States or ROK away from the alliance have been unsuccessful because of the effectiveness of our leadership and the cultivation of close personal relationships.

The U.S.-ROK alliance and the United Nations Command continue to stand vigilant and shoulder to shoulder to preserve the armistice, defend the Republic of Korea and maintain stability in Northeast Asia.

In stark contrast to the success story of the ROK, North Korea has devolved into one of the poorest, most dysfunctional and most isolated nations in the world. Its third-generation dictator, focused on regime survival, continues to choose the path of aggression instead of leading his people to basic subsistence and a chance for a better life. During this last year, North Korea entered a period of prolonged provocation and continues to invest the bulk of its scarce resources in military capabilities and weapons of mass destruction programs.

The North Korean regime adapts in order to survive, adjusting its strategic and operational approach and tactical employment, sometimes with deadly results. Along with having one of the largest conventional forces in the world, North Korea has been building increasingly lethal asymmetric capabilities. It remains a highly belligerent, isolated and defiant state willing to use provocative behavior to advance its interests.

The leadership of the U.S.-ROK alliance has been decisive in reducing tensions on the Korean peninsula. Together, we have maintained our resolve and refused to be coerced into accommodating provocative behavior from North Korea. The alliance has employed extended deterrence and strategic messaging to demonstrate our commitment and deter North Korea from further aggression.

U.N. Command: Maintaining the Armistice
The United Nations Command’s (UNC) mission is to maintain the armistice. Following the signing of the armistice in 1953, the UNC mission in Korea shifted from repelling aggression to ensuring stability by upholding and enforcing the armistice. Over the last 60 years, our UNC sending states have provided international resolve and credibility to our critical mission. Today, our 16-nation coalition stands strong with the ROK, deterring aggression and actively maintaining the armistice. Strong leadership from the sending states has made a difference in the planning and execution of our major military exercises. Our 2013 alliance exercise program will achieve the highest level of participation from the UNC sending states to date. The sending state leadership also took a leap forward in identifying a gap in logistic capabilities and then setting a course to fix it that included the UNC Logistics Summit in June.

Combined Forces Command: Deterring Aggression
The strength of our alliance can be found in Combined Forces Command, where U.S. and ROK leadership work together on a daily basis. We are a confident, competent and committed combined force of two of the most capable militaries in the world. We share the same values and place great emphasis on the critical role of leadership in operational and tactical success. The Key Resolve exercise this year is a stellar example of U.S.-ROK leadership. At the strategic and operational level, Key Resolve demonstrated...
the ROK military’s ability to plan and lead combat operations. At the tactical level, as part of Exercise Foal Eagle, ROK and U.S. leaders and troops demonstrated their capabilities and interoperability during maneuver and live-fire exercises. ROK and U.S. troops also conducted Exercise Combined Joint Logistics Over the Shore, which helped improve our mutual readiness and test a vital logistics capability.

Under the Strategic Alliance 2015 plan, the U.S. and the ROK are preparing for the transition of wartime operational control to a ROK-led, combined defense. The Combined Forces Command is critical in the development and implementation of plans required for the ROK to lead the combined defense. Our alliance motto, “Katchi Kapshida,” means “we go together.”

**U.S. Forces Korea: Assurance and Commitment**

The U.S. commitment to the ROK’s security is unwavering. The leadership of U.S. Forces Korea works to assure the ROK leadership and the Korean people of our commitment through regular, close and consistent personal coordination. Our commitment is found not only in our words but also in our actions. This was demonstrated by the commitment to developing a tailored deterrence strategy by signing the Combined Counter-Provocation Plan, ensuring a coordinated and combined response to North Korean provocations.

Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 102nd Regiment, 17th Infantry Division (ROK army) charge to secure a hillside during an air assault while conducting a joint training exercise with 2nd Infantry Division soldiers at an undisclosed location in South Korea.

Bulldozer operators from 331st Transportation Company fill the large hole known as ‘The Duck Pond’ at the end of the Trident causeway to stabilize it. The causeway allowed delivery of cargo from ship to shore during Exercise Combined Joint Logistics Over the Shore on the Korean peninsula in April.
Our Army component, Eighth Army, has been at the forefront of our commitment to the ROK with its daily coordination and training with the ROK army and its modernization programs. Eighth Army and its main warfighting command, the 2nd Infantry Division (2ID), work closely with the ROK army to ensure synchronized and combined training and readiness. During 2ID’s annual Warpath exercise, they train with ROK army units in a joint, combined, complex environment against a hybrid threat. No other division in the Army is able to train for operations like this. Operation Salmusa demonstrated U.S.-ROK interoperability when units from 2ID and the ROK 17th Infantry Division conducted a large-scale air assault exercise.

The U.S. Army has enhanced Eighth Army’s personnel readiness by raising unit staffing priorities and targeting individual incentive programs to reduce personnel turbulence. Some of the equipment upgrades include the deployment of the System Enhancement Package V2 for M1A2 tanks and M2A3 Bradley Fighting Vehicles, the upgrade of AN/TPQ-37 Firefinder radars, and the execution of the Patriot Recapitalization Program. We have upgraded our rotary-wing fleet by improving the sensor suite for our AH-64D Longbow Apaches, fielding the Common Missile Warning System and improving our UH-60 helicopters. In addition, the 23rd Chemical Battalion has relocated to the Korean peninsula and greatly improved our capacity to counter weapons of mass destruction.

Our readiness and the demonstration of our combat capabilities assure our allies and send a message to North Korea that we are committed to the defense of the ROK.

**Teamwork at All Levels**

Teamwork is an important component of sustaining and strengthening the U.S.-ROK alliance. Along with the Korean Augustation to the U.S. Army soldiers, who are integrated into U.S. units, U.S. Forces Korea routinely participates in exercises with ROK military units and coalition partners. The work that they do increases the esprit de corps of their own units and the allied units with whom they train. U.S. Forces Korea, along with the Combined Forces Command, conducts three annual joint and combined exercises: Ulchi Freedom Guardian, Key Resolve and Foal Eagle. These exercises ensure our readiness to respond to provocations, attacks and instability. Leadership and teamwork have been instrumental in the continued success of these exercises.

The exercises also provide an opportunity to train the new command and control structure for an ROK-led alliance defense. Our servicemembers, civilians and leaders extend their efforts beyond their military installations and training sites as they work with local communities and ROK civic leaders. It will take this continued spirit of teamwork between the U.S.-ROK leadership to conduct a successful transition.

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I am extremely proud of our joint force and their families for answering the call of readiness. Serving in Korea provides servicemembers, civilians and their families an opportunity to serve in one of the most critical areas of the world, be part of one of the strongest and longest military alliances the United States has, and learn about our gracious Korean hosts and their beautiful and dynamic country. The stability and prosperity of the Republic of Korea result, in no small measure, from the efforts of the joint force and their families who live and work on the peninsula. The alliance has enforced the armistice and deterred aggression for 60 years. We will continue to maintain our readiness and our resolve to protect our ROK allies.