

MacArthur Asia Security Initiative 2010 Annual Meeting

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Speech Transcript

As Delivered

Speaker

General Walter L. Sharp

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The transcript of General Walter L. Sharp's speech at the MacArthur Asia Security Initiative 2010 Annual Meeting is as follows.

Professor Lee; Professor Chun; East Asia Institute and MacArthur Security Initiative Fellows; Distinguished Guests;

It is definitely an honor to address the MacArthur Asia Security Initiative and the very distinguished audience here today. I have the privilege of discussing America's strongest alliance and a nation and region that is absolutely vital to American security and prosperity. Korea is a key strategic ally in the most vibrant and important region in the world today. I am honored to lead the Combined Forces Command, which represents this dynamic alliance, an alliance which is not only critical to the stability and security on the Korean Peninsula, but also plays a vital role in the region.

My goal is to ensure that everything we do at the United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, and the United States Forces Korea is aligned with my three command priorities. These priorities are to be prepared to fight and win against any threat to the Republic of Korea, to strengthen the Republic of Korea - U.S. Alliance, and to improve the quality of life for Service-members, all DoD civilians, and all Family-members serving here in Korea. Everything I talk to you about today relates to these priorities.

2010 has proven to be a very fast paced

year. I'd like to begin our discussion today by sharing with you three things which I think greatly influence and impact our efforts: First, the north Korean threat, second, the north Korean attack on the *Cheonan*, and third, our combined transformation efforts.

First, north Korea poses a serious asymmetric threat to peace and stability in Northeast Asia. While the responsible nations of the world are looking to reduce their weapons of mass destruction, north Korea is continuing its development of these weapons systems and their delivery vehicles. Clearly this is a dangerous situation, not just for the United States, not just for the Republic of Korea, but for the entire region.

Another unconventional threat posed by north Korea is in the size and disposition of their special operations forces. Even in armistice, north Korea has displayed the willingness to use these forces. The threats of the north Korean forces have shown themselves in their attack on the *Cheonan*, and the assassination team targeting the senior most individual to have defected from north Korea.

North Korea also continues to build their conventional capabilities and threaten their use as a means to manipulate the world community. One of north Korea's largest capabilities, in terms of quantity and disposition, exists in the form of artillery and missile forces. This poses an asymmetric threat, one that holds at risk the capital of one of the world's most important economies right here in Seoul. While north Korea remains a potent military threat, they do not have the ability to reunify the peninsula by

This product presents a transcript of General Walter L. Sharp's speech at the MASI 2010 Annual Meeting.

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force.

However, as demonstrated by the attack on the *Cheonan* and the asymmetric aspects of the north Korean threat that I discussed earlier, this merely changes the nature of the threat and how we are prepared to deter and defeat it. Let me be clear, by no means does north Korea's inability to reunify the peninsula by force equate to an absence of a serious military threat. Rather, north Korea maintains a range of capabilities to engage in provocations. However these provocations and north Korea's irresponsible behavior in the international arena to include events such as the continued oppression of its own people, the seizure of ROK assets at the Mt. Kumgang Resort, the sinking of the *Cheonan*, and the development of nuclear capabilities have significantly eroded their ability to effectively use other means to exercise national power in the region.

With very few diplomatic, informational, and economic options available, north Korea is forced to rely almost exclusively on military instruments when it decides to engage in provocations and we must therefore be ever vigilant.

Sun Tzu once said, "Thus the highest form of generalship is to attack the enemy's strategy; the next best is to attack his alliances; the next, in order, is to attack the enemy's army in the field..." More so than ever before, north Korea knows that they cannot defeat our strong and well prepared armies, air forces, navies, and marines, so they are now attacking us in other ways.

Now that I have covered the threat from north Korea, I would like to spend some time discussing the tragic and unprovoked attack on the *Cheonan*. After the attack, the Republic of Korea conducted an objective and very scientific multi-national investigation which the United States, the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom, Australia, Sweden and Canada participated in, endorsed, and supported. In addition, a Special Investigative Team, representing 12 countries, from the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission and the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission reviewed the findings and also sought to determine if any Armistice Agreement violations were made. All groups came up with the same

conclusion.

We condemn this attack, and President Obama has been absolutely clear that the United States steadfastly supports the ROK. As contained in a White House press release dated 24 May 2010, the "U.S. support for South Korea's defense is unequivocal, and the President has directed his military commanders to coordinate closely with their Republic of Korea counterparts to ensure readiness and to deter future aggression." More recently in Canada, President Obama stated that our nation stands foursquare behind the Republic of Korea.

However, the ROK-US Alliance needs more from the entire international community and all countries in the region, in particular China, to work with us in responding to north Korean provocations. We strongly desire Chinese cooperation in addressing north Korea's aggressive behavior, and in particular would welcome Chinese action, even if behind the scenes, to assist in convincing north Korea that its path to security and prosperity lies in stopping its provocative behavior, better relations with its neighbors, and complete, irreversible denuclearization.

It is important that we be willing to have detailed discussions with the Chinese about interests related to the Korean peninsula. I believe it is safe to say that the U.S. and ROK are willing and eager to engage in discussions about each of our interests. We hope that China will do the same. The more we can talk and reach a common understanding about regional security challenges, the better we are able to maintain stability and prosperity in this region. America's five bilateral treaty alliances in Asia have long underpinned regional stability and prosperity. In Northeast Asia, our relationships with Korea and Japan serve as a foundation for American efforts to provide regional stability and prosperity. We look forward to the continued strengthening of these Alliances and the contributions that they make to the region.

I would now like to spend a little bit of time discussing where the ROK-U.S. Alliance is heading in the next few years. From what I mentioned earlier, it is clear that north Korea has increased their efforts to attack our Alliance and our strategic objectives. In addition, the security environ-

ment requires that we continue to prepare for any possible threats. To do this, we are continuing to strengthen the Alliance through our ongoing transformation initiatives. We will first demonstrate to the north Koreans that our Alliance and our collective Armed Forces remain strong and cannot be broken. Secondly, we will continue to modify our strategy to create adaptive, agile plans and combat forces that can anticipate and defeat our enemy's provocations, deter aggression, and if deterrence fails, to fight and win.

The decision to delay the transition of wartime operational control until late 2015, as announced by President Lee and President Obama at last weekend's G-20 meeting in Toronto, Canada, demonstrates the strength and agility of this Alliance. Although the ROK and U.S. militaries were on track for OPCON transition in 2012, this adjustment will provide us with additional time to look at OPCON in a broader construct and to further synchronize the various Alliance initiatives and focus on meeting the established timelines for these initiatives. It also allows us to ensure each of the initiatives are mutually supportive and that they collectively support the Joint Vision Statement signed by President Lee and President Obama in 2009.

We will proceed very rapidly to develop a new OPCON Transition plan. This new plan, a plan for the Alliance of 2015, will help align all of our transformation initiatives we have worked on. It will truly be an overarching plan for the Alliance of 2015. Detailed discussion will start at this month's 2+2 talks here in Seoul and be approved at the autumn Security Consultative Meeting between the Secretary of Defense and the Minister of Defense.

The goal of all of our ROK and U.S. transformation efforts is to build adaptive capabilities to deter and defeat any future provocations and to fight and win on the peninsula if this deterrence fails. Transformation efforts consist of the preparation for the transfer of Wartime Operational Control; refining and improving our combined plans; the definition and development of new organizational structures and command and control relationships; the procurement, and integration of Republic of Korea capabilities to lead

the warfight; more realistic training based on the north Korean threat of today and the future, as well as continued support for exercises and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief operations in the region; the consolidation of U.S. military units into two enduring hubs; and lastly, tour normalization for U.S. forces here in Korea.

Let me talk briefly about each of these elements, because these are the elements we will synchronize between now and 2015. To move to the Alliance of 2015, we will seek to better align in our planning efforts. We are taking the opportunity to review our plans and ensure they are realistic based upon the full scale of possible scenarios. This includes north Korean provocations, instability, or full-scale war on the peninsula. We will also ensure that our plans properly address the KORCOM to ROK JCS supporting to supported command and control structures. By doing so, we will ensure that we have the correct and most up-to-date plans in place to guarantee security and stability in the region.

Next, we will be continuing our transformation efforts in the areas of organizational structure and command and control. U.S. Forces Korea will become the United States Korea Command or U.S. KORCOM, providing the necessary manpower for our supporting relationship with the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff. As a result of the OPCON transition, the KORCOM staff will be dual-hatted as Combined Forces Command, much the same way the U.S. Forces Korea staff is dual hatted in CFC

At the same time the United States is transforming our organizational structures, the ROK will also continue to strengthen and build on the "JCS centric operational execution system" which will ensure and reinforce its intelligence, operations planning and execution and joint battlefield management capabilities. The Republic of Korea JCS is developing the command and control systems capable of real time battlefield management and enhanced warning and target acquisition. In turn, the ROK Army is transforming its forces and creating a Ground Forces Operations Command. This command will be stood up a certified by 2015 before OPCON transition takes place.

In support of their planned defense reform, the ROK

is already undergoing a process of procuring equipment, and training and organizing forces to lead the warfight. Until these capabilities exist, the United States will provide the agreed upon bridging and enduring capabilities. If OPCON transition had occurred in 2012, ROK forces would have had to rely on some U.S. bridging capabilities, but by adjusting OPCON transition to 2015, the Republic of Korea will have time to field many of the critical organic systems in their Defense Reform plan that will enable them to lead the warfight.

The new Alliance 2015 plan improves our overall readiness by allowing time for these key war-fighting headquarters to be established and the Republic of Korea to acquire critical Command and Control systems and capabilities. The final hand off of wartime Operational Control will be smoother and the end result will be better command and control of Alliance forces. The Strategic Alliance plan for 2015 also gives us the ability to better synchronize and improve our exercises... more robust and realistic exercises that will be based on the north Korean threat of today and the future.

We will also look for opportunities to improve our training by providing support to exercises and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief activities in the region. As partners, the Republic of Korea and the United States are a pillar of peace and stability in Northeast Asia. We will continue our efforts to ensure that we are ready for disasters and humanitarian crises.

The decision to adjust OPCON transition also allows us to synchronize the movement of U.S. forces on the peninsula. Currently, U.S. forces are undergoing two major infrastructure moves as part of this transformation. The major southward moves to U.S. Army Garrison-Humphreys will begin in 2012 and will accomplish several goals. First, the relocation allows the United States to give back land, including the Yongsan Garrison here in Seoul, back to the Republic of Korea. Second, it allows for a consolidation of U.S. forces into two hubs and will reduce the KORCOM footprint from 110 installations down to 48. The KORCOM headquarters will remain at in Seoul until after the OPCON transition is complete. These two miles-

tones are synchronized with the rest of the strategic Alliance plan for 2015, and will greatly increase KORCOM's ability to command and control US forces and support Korean forces.

The U.S. is committed to ensuring all elements of the new Alliance plan are in place to facilitate its completion by late 2015. We are also reaffirming our commitment through the Tour Normalization program, which directly affects our ability to be able to fight across the full spectrum of conflict that I spoke about earlier. Since the beginning of the summer of 2008, the number of families in Korea has increased from 1,700 to over 4,200 with a goal of almost 5,000 families here by the summer of 2011. Moving forward, we will begin to assign families to Korea for three years, while unaccompanied and single Service-members will serve here for at least two years.

Tour Normalization greatly benefits the Alliance by demonstrating our enduring commitment to the Republic of Korea and Northeast Asia through our intended long-term presence by changing the conditions for U.S. forces from being forward deployed to being forward stationed with families. Tour Normalization also enables us to have a much more proficient force by reducing personnel turnover, it allows military personnel to build stronger relationships with their Korean counterparts, and it reduces stress on our families as we eliminate unaccompanied tours. Overall, longer tours under Tour Normalization greatly increase our ability to be able to deter aggression, defend the Republic of Korea, and deal with other regional and global security issues of mutual concern.

I am absolutely confident that our new bilateral plan to get us to 2015 – the strategic alliance of 2015 – will better synchronize our ongoing transformation efforts, it will reaffirm the U.S. commitment to the ROK and the region; ensure both nations are even better prepared to swiftly counter, deter, and defeat any north Korean provocations and aggression; and will ultimately result in a much stronger Alliance.

So in conclusion, as we move towards our respective transformation end states, we will have the right plans; the right organizations; the right capabilities and systems; the

right exercises; and the right force structure and alignment to ensure that the Alliance grows ever stronger and is ready to fight tonight across the entire spectrum of conflict.■