



**DATE:** August 11, 2017

**SUBJECT:** Korea Defense Reform 2.0 |The Sejong Society

**MAIN POINTS:**

- ROK military reform history presents its endeavor to innovate the existing conditions of the military system.
- ROK should raise powers with divergent values and visions and build a cooperative relationship within the region.
- Given its own exposure to war threats from North Korea, ROK should check the current state where it stands and propose the diversified solutions using the Art of War written by Sun Tzu.
- ROK makes an earnest request for continuous support and cooperation from the US in diplomatic and defense affairs.

The event can be viewed at: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?432101-1/south-korean-military-defense>.

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## EVENT OVERVIEW

**Date:** Thursday, August 4, 2017

**Time:** 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m

**Location:** Rome Auditorium, 1619 Massachusetts Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20036

**Attendees:**

- **CHUN, In-Bum**, Lieutenant General (R), Visiting Fellow, Center for East Asia Policy Studies

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## SUMMARY

### Introduction

Lieutenant General Chun said that he would talk about Korea's armed forces reform, give an overview of what Korea has been doing for the past forty years, and try to see where Korea is right now. There have been more than 10 to 15 military reforms in the history of the Republic of Korea's armed forces. Now, most military reforms occur either because they have a new strategy, a new way of thinking, or a new weapons system such as a machine gun, said Chun. He asserted that actual military reform, unfortunately, comes when a war has been lost, thus the worst thing that can happen to a military is continued success. However, Koreans have been constantly trying to conduct reform for the past 30 or 40 years, said Chun.

### Plan 818: President Roh Tae-woo (1988-1993)

Lt. Gen. Chun started with Plan 818, emphasizing that it was a very important stage in Korea's military history because it was the first time the South Korean military started to modernize its armed forces. It started with President Roh Tae-woo's administration, and there are two things to remember:

- 1) Unified Command: The first thing that President Roh wanted to do was to create a unified command, a chief who would be able to command the ground, air, and naval forces. Before this endeavor started, the chief of naval operations, the air force chief of staff, and the army chief of staff all had separate command authority to conduct operations for their troops. President Roh wanted this because it was much more effective to have a unified command. Such system defined most communist states at that time, so the Koreans thought that having a unified command would be the most effective way to build a military at this time.
- 2) Division of Command and Administrative Authority: Another thing was the concept of divided command and administrative authority. When you have "command" of someone, you can tell them what they have to do, assign them positions, pay them, promote them, the whole spectrum. What President Roh wanted to do, or what he was forced into doing, was to divide the promotion and assignment part from the command part. This was a compromise because the service chiefs who had all of this authority

were very reluctant to give it up to a Supreme Chairman. Therefore, in order to come up with a deal that everyone could enjoy, he came up with this concept of divided command and administrative authority. Another challenge that he had was the lingering suspicion by the Korean public of creating a super military commander because this was back in 1990. Back then and even to this day, there has been suspicion that a powerful military strongman would not be a politically smart thing to do from a civilian perspective. It did not fully succeed, but partially succeeded in that he was able to have a much stronger Chairman who now had the authority to conduct operations, especially during armistice. In 1994, operational control of Korean forces was retained by the Koreans and the Chairman had operational control of Korean forces during armistice.

### **Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung administrations (1993-2003)**

During the Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung administrations, there were changes but not changes that can be seen as a military reform. During this time, President Kim Dae-jung truly believed that peace on the Korean peninsula was possible, said Chun. The first notions of having a smaller military started to spring up during Kim Dae-jung's era. South Korea had about 700,000 men under arms at that time and Kim's administration was the first administration that said Korea could probably do well with about 500,000 soldiers. It was a good estimate at that time because this concept, by the time that Roh Moo-hyun became president, fulfilled itself into Defense Reform 2020.

### **Defense Reform 2020: Roh Moo-hyun (2003-2008)**

Defense Reform 2020 had three main focuses:

- 1) More Balanced Tri-service: The Koreans thought the army had too much influence and thus needed to have a military that was more balanced, which was against what South Korea's allies - the United States in particular - thought. Rather, those allies thought South Korea has a great air force. The US has a huge navy and they thought they could take care of that for South Korea, but wanted South Korea to do the ground battle, said Chun. That idea of the US' was different from the concept of Defense Reform 2020.
- 2) Robust Civilian Control: They wanted more robust civilian control, and during this process, wartime operational control became an issue in that wartime operational

control needed to be retained or transferred back to the South Koreans.

- 3) Smaller Force: In the beginning of the administration, they were quite confident that they could do it with a smaller force, so the catchphrase at that time was, “A smaller military, but high-tech.” When the Roh administration came in, about 75% of the total force was conscripted, but now it is about 60%, which implies an increase of 60% more “professionals,” at least with a minimum of four and half years in service. It has become a much more career oriented force during the past 15 years.

### **Plan 307: Lee Myung-bak (2008-2013)**

1) Revising the Direction of Defense Reform: This plan came because the ROK military had a failure when the North Korean military sank one of corvettes in the ROK naval fleet (ROKS Cheonan) and had the audacity to fire about 250 rounds at one of the islands of South Korea (Yeonpyeong Island). During these two critical incidents, South Korea found out that they had a major problem in their defense. Namely, since the service chiefs could promote, pay, and assign people, the local commanders—and the Chairmen—were calling their service chiefs first as they were supposed to.

2) Parameters of the 307 Plan: The 307 Plan focused on i) the North Korean artillery threat directly towards Seoul, so they bought more precision guided bombs, ii) the cyber threats, so they established cyber command, and iii) the North Korean special forces threats, so they started to change their procurement priorities. The navy increased procurement for anti-submarine warfare, including minesweepers, anti-submarine helicopters, and sensor systems.

3) Changes in the Structure: As a part of the 307 Plan, President Lee wanted to give the Chairman the authority for promotion to at least the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). The Chairman would function as the theater operational commander with limited administrative authority (personnel, logistics, and training) over the military services, and especially authority for mobilization. It “beefed up” the Chairman's authority. As a compromise, the Service Chiefs who until then had no command authority, could promote, assign, and pay, but they could not conduct operations.

### **Defense Reform 2.0: Moon Jae-in (2017)**

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The Moon administration recently announced Defense Reform 2.0. It is an extension of the reform that the Roh administration started. It focuses on i) the North Korean nuclear and missile threat, ii) better civilian control, iii) waste and fraud related to defense industry, and iv) human rights for soldiers.

As for the North Korean nuclear and missile threat in particular, continuance of the current military systems to counter North Korea plays an important role.

- 1) Kill Chain: It is a military defense system that detects signs of a nuclear attack by the North and launches an attack on Pyongyang. For the Kill Chain, the military plans to rent four to five intelligence satellites from overseas to monitor North Korea.
- 2) KAMD (Korea Air and Missile Defense): It is a military defense system that traces and shoots down North Korean ballistic missiles heading for South Korea. The military planned to introduce one radar system. Due to the increasing threats from the North's submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM), the military is planning to secure an additional radar system.
- 3) KMPR (Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation): It is a military defense system that is used to punish and retaliate against North Korea if it strikes South Korea. The military plans to mobilize its locally developed surface-to-surface ballistic and cruise missiles, the Hyun-moo, for the operational concept.

This is what has been going on the defense reform in South Korea for the past 30 years. How we are going to know if we have been a success or not is a big question, said Chun.

## The Art of the War

Chun proposed a defense reform strategy using the Art of War written by Sun Tzu and compared it with five factors: 道(Mission), 天(Climate), 地(Ground), 將(Command), 法(Methods)

- 1) 道(Mission, Dao): Dao is translated into morals. It is the understanding between a sovereign and his people about what they are trying to do and why they are doing it. Sun Tzu said if the sovereign is able to make his people understand why they are fighting, then he will have a good chance of winning. To be able to build consensus, to be able to

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tear off tri-service rivalries, what is good for the overall effectiveness of the armed forces should be considered, said Chun. Will Koreans and the Moon administration be able to do this is the big question that we must ask and look for support.

- 2) 天(Climature, Tian): Tian is heaven, the weather, and the direction of the wind. In ancient times, knowing the wind strength and direction was very important. The ROK is getting new UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle). Chun said that he feels that there are things we could do more on the intelligence and information side, emphasizing that North Koreans have a very robust cyber capability that they can theoretically wipe out all bank accounts in South Korea if they wished, even without nuclear weapons that they might have.
- 3) 地(Ground, Di): Di is translated into terrain. In modern times, it can be translated into intelligence and information. Every article pertaining to defense reform in Korea always points to the fact that the South Korean military lacks the required information and intelligence about North Korea. Clearly, South Korea knows there is a problem or a shortfall in intelligence gathering towards North Korea and to the surroundings of the Republic of Korea. According to open sources, Korea is endeavoring to get new satellites, said Chun. A Global Hawk is being purchased through the United States.
- 4) 將(Command, Jiang): Jiang means leadership. A good general needs to have knowledge, needs to be a good person, a man of courage, and a man of integrity. Leaders need to be trusted, and need to be a person who could command trust from not only his subordinates, but also by his peers and his boss. Leaders should be strict on themselves. Chun said that Korea has great potential, but they still need to work a lot on the issue of leadership. Although, even at this very moment, there are some scandals going on in South Korea pertaining to the senior military leaders, Chun emphasized that it is very healthy that Korea has now evolved into a society where people can criticize senior generals openly, and even prosecute senior generals who are not doing their job or are misusing their authority. In addition, he emphasized that tri-service rivalries really need to be suppressed and that we need to think about what is most effective for the defense of the Republic of Korea
- 5) 法(Methods, Fa): Fa means law and management. It is about how orders are related, how the troops are trained, and especially how awards and medals are given out. Sun Tzu said leaders should always punish bad deeds and always reward good deeds. Chun said this is very important because most of leaders do the punishing part really well, but seldom do the rewarding part. Chun divided this into i) organization, ii) command and

control, iii) training, iv) equipment, and v) sustainment. As for Organization, making the armed forces effective should be the objective. In order to do that, it requires downsizing the army and increasing the air force, and it should not be the other way around. For command and control, Korea is the best connected country in the world, with the best internet service, and yet still its communications, radios, and tri-services need to have separate computer systems, said Chun. Training in Korea has been a peculiar challenge because every man goes to the military. However, the training system should be improved through realistic education, effective personnel management, and through innovative logistics management by shaping elite reserve forces and improving the logistics system. As for equipment, Korea has the best aircraft, the F-15 and F-16, and radar equipped ships, said Chun. However, South Korea still uses 30-year old rifles. Defense reform really needs to look at the fundamentals of equipment. Finally, as for sustainment, South Korea had about 690,000 men 15 years ago. Now, it has about 620,000 men, which suggests that 70,000 have been reduced already. There should be a plan to cover the reduced number of troops by training advanced fighters and securing surveillance aircraft, naval platforms, and ground combat vehicles.

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### Q&A

**Q (Andrew, Program Coordinator of Sejong Society):** I want to ask a question regarding the reduction of the length that soldiers have to dedicate in the military service in Korea. For Korean males, when they become 21, they have to serve 21 months for army corps, 23 months for navy, and 24 months for air force. According to the reform suggestions, it's about to be decreased if passed. There are many criticisms, but the core argument is that we have increased the number and quality of professionals. I strongly agree with that, but still I think there is a problem with the whole military and big picture, which is raising the respect, making civil society pay attention, and giving certain credit to the military as a whole. In Korea, it is compared to the US which has a strong military mind in which people pay their sincere respect. In Korea, there is a low level of respect so how can you raise the level of respect that civil society can pay in the Republic of Korea?

**A (In-Bum Chun):** You asked a two-part question. One part is about the duration of service for conscripts in the military and the other part is about getting respect from the general public. As for getting respect, we are now in an open society where military people do not lie to

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our people. It is going to take a little bit more time, but if we stay on this course, we will be able to gain the respect from the Korean people. Concerning your comments about reduction in service time, I think it is set in stone that the Moon administration will reduce it from 21 months to 18 months. The challenge that we have is that a large percentage, more than half of units are rotating every year. It is the job of the professionals to figure out how we are going to do this and how we can make this workable. I think there is a way to do that.

**Q (American citizen):** Have you studied something to do with coordination with the government as interagency cooperation, not having to do with the military background agencies?

**A (In-Bum Chun):** No, I haven't, but there was a discussion during my career that we, the South Korean military, could be a place where we are able to educate our young men and some of our women about the values of freedom and democracy. In fact, Plan 307 had an emphasis on that kind of education and in order to do that, we did coordinate with the Ministry of Education to introduce a credits system for military service in academia. The Ministry of Health & Welfare is another agency who we could coordinate with.

**Q (American citizen):** When I left Seoul, there was a significant effort and problem that was being addressed with the birth rate and I am wondering if it is still a problem there. Is the youth still refusing to create families?

**A (In-Bum Chun):** It does not correlate with the birth rate or reduction and does not have any kind of correlation with generating or increasing the birth rate. However, due to low birth rates, we now recognize it would be very difficult to maintain 500,000 men and that is why we are employing more women.

**Q (American citizen, intern at a law firm in Washington, DC):** Does this apply to the Korean Coast Guard? What is coming to my mind is the issue with search and rescue, particularly the example of the Sewol Ferry disaster a couple of years ago.

**A (In-Bum Chun):** Defense reform and the Coast Guard have no direct correlation. The shoreline of South Korea is now managed by military units, and they are responsible for smuggling as well as infiltration by North Korean agents or armed insurgents.

**Q (John Walsh, a student at Strategic Studies):** You mentioned a medium-term/long-term transition from a force structure optimized for a joint fight with the US to something more



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balanced with a capability of a blue-water navy and long-range air operations. Does that reflect a new mission set and what is driving that choice?

**A (In-Bum Chun):** That was the thinking in the early 2000s. At that time the North Korean threat was comparatively not as critical as now, so we thought the armed forces needed to be more general in its ability to conduct operations not only towards defense against the North Korean invasion or intrusion but also for other missions that would take us to, for instance, anti-piracy operations with a warship in the Persian Gulf. So that kind of effort prompted and resulted in these capabilities.

**Q (Joel, a graduate student at the University of Texas):** I just had a question about the organization and integration with the ROK Army and USFK. I wondered how the movement from Yongsan to Camp Humphreys will affect the abilities of the two different forces to work together.

**A (InBum Chun):** It is going to multiply the challenge. It is going to require more effort to make it as effective as it is now. Basically, combined operations between two nations require a lot of efforts. We are now going to be physically about an hour and a half away. We have VTCs and other mechanisms, but still it is different. We are going to see a lot of train rides between these two organizations, and there is still going to be a significant number of Koreans stationed at Camp Humphreys in Pyeongtaek, so hopefully they can do their job well. Hopefully fiber-optics will help with their jobs. And back in Seoul, they have dedicated spaces where partners can come to use national assets. So, we are going to do that. But having somebody physically an hour or an hour and a half away is going to increase the effort required.

**Q (Andrew, Program Coordinator of Sejong Society):** How about the effectiveness of the unified division? Should it increase the amount of the divisions and multiply more divisions into the command of the unified commander who orders both ROK and US soldiers or just maintain the quantity for now and see how it rolls out?

**A (In-Bum Chun):** When you said unified division, are you talking about the US?

**Q (Andrew, Program Coordinator of Sejong Society):** Yes.

**A (In-Bum Chun):** The American 2D Infantry Division has now become a combined division. It has more than 50 Korean officers serving at the division staff, taking orders and

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directions from the 2ID Commander, and they work in critical conditions such as planning, operations. The commander is quite satisfied with the performance of these officers. In wartime, the 2D Infantry Division will be augmented with Korean units, and the good news is that they are practicing every day. Remember the training issue I told you about? When training with Americans, Koreans did a lot better, and this is an added value that is coming out. If you are asking me if we should expand that, I am sure I would. It costs money, but I think it is worthwhile. I think it is an endeavor that we did right. By the way, my nickname is the “father of the combined division,” so I might be biased in my comments.

**Q (A visiting student at Johns Hopkins):** I think we can observe the international trend of increased outsourcing of military operations and resources to private military companies, also known as PMCs, like Blackwater. I was wondering what implication this riding PMC would have on Korea and the overall capacity?

**A (In-Bum Chun):** Let me use an example. In a Korean unit, which is mostly a battalion sized unit, you have five companies. One is the headquarters company, three are rifle companies, and one is a weapons company. And any given day, except for the headquarters company, one of these companies is always committed to guard duty. What that means is the battalion commander is unable to deploy all of his troops on a field exercise. He can only do this for two months out of a year when they are freed from guard duty and the commander is allowed to take his troops out. If you have a location of 50% or more troops a year, it means that individual soldier probably gets maybe one or two experiences where he sees his entire unit move around. So, how much money should we be investing in alleviating this problem? If we were to spend a couple of thousand dollars on some company having some retired military people who have a nice little pension, and who would be more than willing to do this job for a thousand dollars a month, outsourcing this is something that is do-able. Also, maintenance of modern-day equipment is not like what it used to be. These helicopters and tanks are ten million dollars. We need to make sure they run and get oil, and you do not screw on the screw too hard or too light.

**Q (Stanley, American citizen):** This is a session on defense reform and you have given a very judicious professional overview. I'm sure you are familiar with a lot of the political debate here on North Korea. There are a lot of people now arguing that we must consider military preemption. And since you are here as a professional military officer, from South Korea, I was wondering what your opinion might be on this regard.

**A (In-Bum Chun):** There is a talk that it will be thousands of people dying over there,

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not here. However, if you think that anything bad happens on the Korean peninsula is going to end there, look again. Japan is going to get involved quickly. And probably the Chinese will get involved. Once that happens, all of you, your sons, and your daughters will get involved. I know there is a lot of planning and thinking going on, I just hope that the United States has learned a lot of lessons from initial operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Double-check your intelligence information. The targeting information you have might not be as sufficient as you think.

*Report by: Huiwon Yun, Legal Research Intern*