SECURITY OF DEFENSE ASH CARTER: Good morning, everyone.

Thank you for being here.

It's been my privilege to host Korean Minister of National Defense Han Min Koo here for what is the 48th U.S.-Republic of Korea security consultative meeting. These meetings are valuable opportunities for our nations to come together to address shared security challenges.

And I want to thank Minister Han for his continued leadership. This is the sixth time that we've met. I want to thank him for his friendship. I admire him for his steadiness as he and I have planned our response together during some difficult moments of North Korean provocation. And while we sometimes need to be on the phone together in the middle of the night formulating our strong responses to North Korean provocations, it's a pleasure to see him in person for a longer and deeper discussion.

Always good to see you.

Today's productive discussions will help ensure the U.S.-Korea alliance remains the linchpin of regional security and stability. For over 60 years, we've built this strategic alliance based on common values, shared interests, and mutual trust. And we've stood together to ensure peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific.

But as that consequential and dynamic region changes and as threats evolve, so too does our alliance. So this week, we discussed how we can better address three issues: ensuring deterrence on the Korean Peninsula; opening new frontiers of cooperation in our alliance; and expanding the global role of our alliance.
First, we discussed the continued threat from North Korea. Indeed, North Korea's nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches, like the one that failed last evening, threaten the stability of the Korean Peninsula and the broader Asia-Pacific region. As with previous tests, we strongly condemn last night's attempt, which even in failing, violated several U.N. Security Council resolutions, and affirm that this latest provocation only strengthens our resolve to work together with our Republic of Korea allies to maintain stability on the peninsula.

Indeed, the United States remains committed to defending our allies against any threat with the full spectrum of American military might. That's why we're adapting our force structure on the peninsula, most recently by agreeing as allies to deploy THAAD to defend against North Korean missile threats. And that's why we're ensuring we remain ready to, as we say, "fight tonight." And we're working together to achieve a conditions-based transfer of wartime operational control.

And that's why the United States is reaffirming its ironclad commitment to defend South Korea with our extended deterrence capabilities. We agreed yesterday to establish the Extended Deterrent Strategy and Consultation Group through which we will discuss further steps we can take.

Make no mistake, any attack on America or our allies will not only be defeated, but any use of nuclear weapons will be met with an overwhelming and effective response.

Second, just as we've recommitted ourselves to ensuring peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and throughout the region, we're also capitalizing on new opportunities for cooperation at sea and in new domains like cyberspace. We're examining ways that our two navies can better cooperate on maritime security. We're also pleased that the U.S.-ROK Cyber Cooperation Working Group is helping to synchronize and enhance cyber efforts within our alliance.

And, as I described at the Shangri-La dialogue this spring and affirmed in San Diego last month, we're working together with our allies and partners across the Asia-Pacific to continue to build a principled and inclusive security network and to undergird that network with a new phase of the U.S. rebalance to the Asia-Pacific.

Minister Han and the Republic of Korea are leading the way, especially with the growing trilateral defense cooperation between the Republic of Korea, Japan and the United States. Just last week, Chairman Dunford hosted his counterpart to discuss the North Korean threat, and I'm certain our trilateral cooperation will grow in the years ahead.

And third, beyond the Asia-Pacific, we discussed how our alliance can make a better world. I commend Korea's active contributions to global security, including its financial assistance to Afghanistan, its support for peace keeping in South Sudan and its contributions to the coalition to deliver ISIL a certain and lasting defeat.
Time and again, the Republic of Korea has proven to be a reliable and capable provider of global security. And we'll continue to work together in more ways and in more places around the world.

As we look to the future, we'll continue to count on this remarkable alliance. We've fought together, we've rebuilt together. And today we confront the North Korean threat together. While we've been tested many times, we've adapted to every challenge. And as we've done so, we've ensured security and prosperity for our nations, the region and the wider world.

Many of you know the slogan of our alliance is Katchi Kapshida, which means we go together. As we continue to partner together on defense, we'll also go further together into new domains on new missions in the region and around the world.

Minister Han, it's been my pleasure to reaffirm our bond this week and discuss our great alliance's future because we go together today and always. Thank you. Please.

MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENSE HAN MIN KOO (through translator): First I'd like to thank Secretary Carter for his interest and attention towards the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula and the progress of the ROK-U.S. alliance. This year's SCM was hosted under grave security circumstances; one highlighted by an advancement of North Korea's nuclear missile capabilities and continued threats from the DPRK. In this year's SCM, we have reviewed the accomplishments made by the United States Department of Defense and the Republic of Korea Ministry of National Defense within our bilateral relations and within our combined defense posture. It was also a precious opportunity in which we identified the direction of future improvements.

At this SCM, Secretary Carter and I shared an understanding on the internal and external circumstances that North Korea is facing and also shared and understanding on North Korea's prospects. We have agreed to maintain a close cooperation posture with the United Nations and international community while strengthening the momentum of applying pressure and sanctions to lead North Korea to relinquish its nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, we have assessed the stability of Kim Jong Un's regime and North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities as continuously advancing and North Korea's conventional forces. We have agreed to strengthen our stalwart combined defense posture so that we may respond to any North Korean provocation.

In this year alone, North Korean has conducted two nuclear tests and blatant threat to the (inaudible) of the United States and the international community by stating it will weaponize its nuclear capacity and conduct ICBM engine test to strike the continental United States.

Under such great circumstances, the United States commitment towards the Republic of Korean ensures that any North Korean attack will be met with failure and that the United States will respond effectively and overwhelmingly to any North Korean usage of nuclear weapons has offered firm deterrence against North Korea and strengthen to Korean peoples' trust towards the United States extended deterrence.
Secretary Carter and I, in order to respond to escalating North Korean nuclear WMD, ballistic missile threats, has discussed various measures to promote effective execution capabilities of extended deterrence measures on the Korean Peninsula. Regarding specific measures, additional review will be conducted.

We have also agreed to further develop bilateral naval cooperation to respond to maritime threats posed by North Korea, highlighted by its ICBM test launches. To this end, we will establish an integrated research team which includes representatives from the Ministry and National Defense, JCS, and the Navy early next year to seek specific areas for cooperation.

The DOD and the MND have agreed to further strengthen defense cyber cooperation to effectively respond to North Korea cyber attacks and threats. To this end, we will operate a bilateral cyber working group task force from October to reach specific measures for bilateral cyber cooperation.

During this year in which North Korean nuclear missile threats have continued, we assess the significant progress in trilateral cooperation between Korea, United States, and Japan. We will continue to develop trilateral cooperation in 2017.

To this end, we will continue to conduct a missile warning exercise, a search-and-rescue exercise, maritime extradition exercise that was hosted as part of this year's RIMPAC exercise in the coming year while also promoting a trilateral intelligence sharing. By reaffirming the United State's firm commitment towards the defense of the Republic of Korean and towards extended deterrence (and) while reviewing the alliances will and its response capabilities based on a solid ROK-U.S. combined defense posture, I assess that this year's SCM, which was hosted under great security circumstances, served as an opportunity to showcase the value of the alliance to the Korean people while building the trust the Korean people have towards our alliance. It has also sent a stern message to those in North Korea and highlighted the ironclad nature of the ROK-U.S. alliance to the international community.

I’d like to extend my gratitude once again to Secretary Carter for the course he has offered, and the United States government, and to the American people. I also thank Secretary Carter and the DOD for their cooperation and support for the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula and to the development of ROK-U.S. alliance.

Q: (off-mic.) yesterday (inaudible) Secretary Carter has called a failed attempt. What does that tell you about the state of the Musudan program at this point? And do you have the -- can you say whether Kim Jung Un was actually present for this launch?

And may I also ask a question, Secretary Carter, on Turkey? The Turkish government says that its planes and artillery attacked more than a dozen YPG positions in Northern Syria. Given that you're going to be visiting Turkey soon I'm wondering if you can say whether you're concerned
you're going to be visiting Turkey soon, I'm wondering if you can say whether you're concerned that the partnership with Turkey is unraveling in any sense as they escalate their actions against the U.S.-aligned Kurdish forces in Syria? Thank you.

Q: (untranslated)

MIN. HAN (through translator): I'll answer that question first.

Regarding North Korea's failed Musudan launch yesterday, Musudan launches occurred since 2007 and they've operationally deployed this asset without conducting sufficient tests before as such. In other words, it has been deployed without going through the necessary test phases.

And in one occasion they failed five times consecutively and succeeded on the sixth time. So, for political purposes, they're conducting these Musudan launches and through these failed tests, they've shown their limits. I personally assessed that Musudan launches will continue in the future. Although it has not been confirmed, we assessed that there was a high possibility that Kim Jong Un was at the site when the launch occurred.

SEC. CARTER: Thank you, and if I could add something as a general matter, we work very hard to anticipate and stay ahead of any possible developments in the North Korea missile threat. That's the reason for our deployments of missile defenses and taking other steps to protect the Korean Peninsula in the case of THAAD, the United States in the case of our other missile defenses.

So, our missile defense and other efforts are intended to stay ahead of whatever might happen in the various North Korean missile programs. With respect to Turkey, our partnership is very strong in the counter ISIL campaign. We're working with the Turks now very successfully to help them secure their border area. And we work with them in a number of ways on the counter-ISIL campaign. They're strong partners in that.

I will have an opportunity to discuss that with our continuing counter-ISIL efforts and all the other things we do with Turkey, as a strong and longstanding NATO ally, when I see Minister Isik, which I expect -- I expect to do a couple of times over the next week or so.

So our counter-ISIL efforts together are very strong. And I can't -- we're still gathering facts about this report to which you refer, so I can't comment on that or confirm that. But our partnership in general is very strong. We work through issues as they arise. We've managed to do that successfully, and I expect that that will continue. And that will be one of the purposes of my meeting with my counterpart over the next week.

(CROSSTALK)

Q: A quick follow-up, sir?
PRESS SECRETARY PETER COOK: A quick follow-up.

Q: Isn't it also a problem that the Turks in Iraq, though, with their forces, which the Iraqi government doesn't want to be present -- isn't that a problem for the coalition?

SEC. CARTER: Well, anybody who operates in Iraq needs to do so with respect to Iraqi sovereignty. We do that. And we don't conduct any operations that are not cleared through the government of Prime Minister Abadi. So that's a principle for us in every way.

At the same time, Turkey is a member of the counter-ISIL coalition. And so we'll be discussing with our Turkish counterparts and our Iraqi counterparts, and all the other parties to ongoing operations, which are very encouraging in terms of their -- the way in which the planned envelopment of Mosul step-by-step is proceeding.

And we continue to work with everyone who has a stake in the outcome of that, which are all the members of the counter-ISIL coalition, and a number of different parties within Iraq. This is a complicated situation. One of our roles as a leader of the counter-ISIL coalition is to keep everybody focused on the central threat, which is ISIL.

MR. COOK: Our next question is from -- (inaudible).

Q: (through translator): Two questions.

For Mr. Han. You just mentioned extended deterrence measures that were discussed in the meeting. Can you tell us specifically what measures were discussed?

For Mr. Secretary, concerning the fifth nuclear test, what is your assessment on the level of nuclear technology that North Korea has reached after its fifth nuclear test?

And I know there are discussions of preemptive strike on North Korea in some factions. What is your take on such arguments and statements?

MIN. HAN (through translator): Regarding special measures on extended deterrence, I know there have been many measures that were mentioned across the press, such as the deployment of strategic assets permanently on the Korean Peninsula on a rotational basis. I know many measures were discussed in the press, but I'll give you a further answer in a different time.

SEC. CARTER: Thank you and if I can just repeat what the minister said with respect to your first question, we discussed a number of ways that extended deterrents can be further strengthened recognizing -- and no one should have any doubt about this -- we have today the capabilities for extended deterrents. We've had them for a long time and I emphasized that in my statement. The full weight of our alliance capabilities, including all U.S. capabilities and they're very strong, very robust, very ready.
We are, however, talking about a number of measures, and you named one, to further enhance deterrents. That's why we set up the working group that we set up. And with respect to the conduct of the fifth nuclear test, I can't comment on intelligence matters and the assessment of that. So, I can't add anything to your information on that. I'll just say that it has led once again to the further isolation and increasing pressure, including through international sanctions, on North Korea, and I think that that is very significant. At the same time, it redoubles our resolve as an alliance to continue to strengthen deterrence. Not just extended deterrence, but our deterrence, I mentioned OPCON transfer and other things that we discussed today. This is an alliance that grows stronger and continues to spread out in terms of the domains of warfare in which it exercises deterrents.

MR. COOK: Barbara Starr, CNN?

Q: Mr. Secretary, Mr. Minister, for both of you. Because you -- Mr. Secretary, you've just spoken a couple of times about the full weight of U.S. strategic deterrents to defend South Korea and because of your own expertise in nuclear matters, I want to ask you questions of policy not politics. Nonetheless, it was said last night that -- and I want to quote -- and let me just finish the question, sir, if I might. That there are about four minutes between the order being given and people responsible for launching nuclear weapons to do so.

I want to ask you not about that. I do want to ask you, is it classified to discuss nuclear launch timeframes? It's either classified or it's not.

And my second question to both of you is CIA Director John Brennan has now openly, publicly talked on camera about his concerns that North Korea could try some destabilizing move during the transition in power in the United States irrespective of who wins. Secretary Brennan says it's something that the new team and the current team is looking at very closely and will need to be able to address.

For both of you, what are your concerns that North Korea may attempt a destabilizing action during the U.S. transfer of power?

SEC. CARTER: Well, if I can take that second part first and I'm sorry but I'm not going to answer your first part because it is cast in terms of the ongoing presidential campaign and I said repeatedly I'm not going to answer questions in that context. So, not going to answer on that one.

With respect to provocations from North Korea, I'll say it and then let Minister Han say we remain concerned about that as an alliance, irrespective of where the United States is in its election cycle. Kim Jong Un is unpredictable. He is prone to provocations. And one of the things we talked about today is our counter-provocation planning, our counter-provocation consultation. Every time that occurs, Barbara, Mr. Han and I are on the phone. As necessary, our two presidents are on the phone to coordinate our response.
And I'll just close by saying that this -- I mentioned that this was the 48th SCM. This is an alliance that's been going on for six decades. And I expect it to go on for decades to come, unless North Korea fundamentally changes its behavior and the circumstance on the Korean Peninsula changes.

You don't see any sign of that now, and that's why the United States and South Korea are redoubling their efforts.

Q: Well do you, Sir, with respect, have concern? Do you agree with the CIA director that there are concerns, irrespective of who wins the election -- that's not the issue -- that just simply during a transition of power in the United States, during this timeframe, North Korea may attempt a destabilizing action?

SEC. CARTER: Well, that may be, but the point I was making was even broader than that. I think irrespective of where the United States is in its election cycle, we're very concerned about the possibility of North Korean provocations. They've conducted them in the past. We're constantly assessing the disposition of their forces. And Minister Han and I constantly, and in the last two days of meeting together, discussed both our plans for that kind of circumstance and our close consultative mechanism, which we've had to exercise a number of times in recent years. So, this is an abiding concern of the alliance, these provocations.

Minister?

MIN. HAN (through translator): I think Secretary Carter should answer most of the questions. But regarding the question regarding North Korea, I'll give you a little -- the position of our ministry.

North Korea, as you well know, is an unstable regime. And its leadership acts upon suspicious situations. Concerning North Korea's nuclear missile threats, we believe we need to change the calculus of North Korea to respond to such aforementioned threats.

As an extension of applying pressure and sanctions through psychological operations, we intend to expose North Korea to the realities of the outside world.

MR. COOK: And our final question is from KBS. Mr. Kim.

Q:(through translator): Secretary Carter and Minister Han, I know you've got a very busy meeting. I'll have one question for each of you.

I know naval cooperation was a key point in your discussion. I'd like to know the background on which naval cooperation in particular, of all the service branches, was emphasized.

Although it's not confirmed, there are reports that North Korea has a submarine that could load
multiple SLBMs. And I just wanted to know if such developments have been reflected in emphasizing naval cooperation in this SCM.

And for you, Secretary Carter, on the issue of naval cooperation, General Brooks in particular has emphasized the need for maritime-based interception capabilities in Korea. There is speculation as to whether Korea will introduce SM3.

Now, THAAD deployment in Korea was very much a controversy domestically. I foresee that SM3 might enjoy the same controversy domestically. What are your thoughts on this issue?

MIN. HAN (through translator): For your first question, naval cooperation, and the emphasis on naval cooperation. As you've pointed out, it's a response to North Korea's SLBM threats. And this has raised the need for cooperation between our two navies, and has addressed the need that this cooperation must be enhanced and advanced further more in the future.

And such background is the important reason on which naval cooperation is a key talking point in this SCM.

In regards to trilateral cooperation, we believe this, too, must be strengthened in the future.

Concerning a new submarine that you mentioned, it has not been confirmed. But we're not ruling out the possibility. And we're making preparations for any potential circumstance that we may face.

SEC. CARTER: Well, I would just concur with what Minister Han just said on the naval front. And I can add also that there are a number of ways in which naval cooperation can strengthen the alliance in general and the ability to respond to provocations and to conflict.

So naval cooperation is very important, even as we have great cooperation already in our navies and in the air and on land, and as I mentioned, expanding into cyberspace.

With respect to missile defense and THAAD, the purpose there is very simple. Everyone can see that North Korea is determined to try to expand its missile threat to the peninsula, to the region, and to the United States. And our missile defenses are necessary to protect our people. That's the purpose of THAAD and any other missile defenses that we develop or deploy together.

This is a threat we need to stay a step ahead of. And that's why we're making the deployments we are doing as an alliance. And that's why the alliance has taken the decision to deploy THAAD.

MR. COOK: Thank you, everybody.

SEC. CARTER: Thanks, everybody.