

RENO from page 15

Korean companies employ more than 18 thousand South and North Korean workers side by side. This complex allows North Koreans to get a first hand look at market economic principles and modern management practices. Meanwhile, North Korea used to have heavy artillery positioned in Kaesong, but today the North Korean Army has had to move 7 miles north.

To carry the momentum of our engagement policy forward, next week, the leaders of South and North Korea will meet again — for only the second time ever.

We expect this historic summit will reinforce progress in the Six Party Talks and expedite resolution of the nuclear issue. We are also seeking to enhance inter-Korean ties, improve confidence-building measures in military affairs, expand our economic cooperation and exchanges, and create an atmosphere to openly discuss peace and stability on the Korean peninsula in the future.

Reducing tension on the peninsula and improving stability in the region are goals pursued jointly by Korea and the United States, and we view the summit in this context.

The most urgent matter that must be resolved for our relationship to develop further remains the North Korean nuclear issue. The primary vehicle we're using to address this challenge is the Six Party Talks forum.

In September of 2005, the Six Parties agreed on a Joint Statement that contains all the basic principles for a comprehensive solution. In the agreement, North Korea committed to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing programs — in exchange for economic assistance and security assurances. Other elements include normalization of relations with the US as well as Japan, and the establishment of a permanent peace regime on the Peninsula.

In February this year, the Six Party Talks produced a plan to implement this comprehensive agreement — in effect, moving the process from talk to action.

After a few bumps in the road, we are back on track and the Parties are meeting in Beijing this week. We are hopeful that by the end of the year we will be able to get from the North a declaration of all their nuclear programs as well as action on disabling the key facilities. We also hope to hold Ministerial level talks between the Six Parties in the near future.

Importance of the ROK-US Alliance

In sum, I hope you can appreciate how important the United States-Korea relationship has been during the past half century. As a final point, I would like to explain briefly why Koreans also consider the relationship vital to our future.

Some 125 years ago, Korea and the United States officially established bilateral ties with the Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce and Navigation of 1882. But despite good intentions, the relationship did not immediately get off the ground.

Meanwhile given Korea's geography, we became a pawn in the rivalry among East Asia's aggressive powers — first as a vassal state; then as the colony of a neighboring country; and after World War II, as a casualty of the ideological conflict of the Cold War.

In 1950, however, things changed. When the communist North Korean troops streamed south across the 38th parallel, the United States decided to draw the line. Korea's independence was preserved, our alliance

was born.

So after the first half of the century under foreign domination, we learned a critical lesson — that Korea needs the US alliance to ensure our security and stability. Likewise, the US needs Korea as a strategic anchor and stabilizing partner in the important Northeast Asian region.

Mainstream Koreans understand this view. That is why a recent survey found that 83 percent of our people regard the United States as the most helpful and important country for security, peace and stability.

Clearly, ours is a special bond — a bond forged in blood, and one that transcends party politics and passing differences. Still it is one we cannot, and do not, take for granted.

So I would like, once again, to thank those of you who were present at the creation of our historic alliance. I hope that today you know that Korea was a country worth saving — a people worth protecting — and a war worth fighting.

If I might conclude with the last 3 verses of the poem I opened with:

Those whose names we can't forget

We remember, we remember

Comrade spirits with us yet

Oh do we remember

Heartbreak Ridge and Pork Chop Hill

We remember, we remember

If we don't honor them, who will?

Oh do we remember

Those who died when far too young

We remember, we remember

It is for them, this song is sung

Oh do we remember

Thank you very much.

Membership Report

The KWVA has 17,177 members for the year 2007. At this time last year, we had 16,970 members. That is an increase of 207 members for the year 2007 so far. We picked up two dozen new members at the KWVA National Convention alone.

At the National Convention in Reno, the KWVA came up with a National Recruiting Award for the chapters. The Chapter that recruits the most members will receive a nice KWVA Recruiting Plaque.

We have pins and decals on sale on our national website at www.kwva.org

We also have posters you can download of the website and bring to Staples, Kinko's, etc. to get expanded and laminated. Several chapters are putting them up in VA Hospitals or various posts—and are getting members.

Many chapters are having new banners made with wording such as this to promote recruiting:

KOREAN VETERANS OF AMERICA

CHAPTER 299 OF THE KWVA

www.koreaveterans.org

These banners draw a lot of interest from the public.