

Deterrence, Escalation, and War Prevention on the Korean Peninsula

A Virtual Seminar with Lt. Gen. (Ret.) In-Bum Chun, ROK Army

Hosted by Peter Huessy | September 25, 2026

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Host/Moderator	Peter Huessy, NIDS Senior Fellow
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Abstract

This NIDS Seminar examines deterrence, escalation, alliance credibility, and war prevention on the Korean Peninsula through the perspective of retired Republic of Korea Army Lieutenant General In-Bum Chun. The discussion focuses on North Korea's expanding nuclear and naval capabilities, the limits of denuclearization policy, the importance of the U.S.-ROK alliance, and options for strengthening deterrence. Chun argues for continued U.S. force presence in Korea, a stronger and more modernized extended deterrence posture, and greater South Korean capacity and preparedness, while repeatedly emphasizing the dangers of miscalculation and the high costs of war. The seminar also explores Russia-North Korea ties, China's role, South Korean defense readiness, wartime command arrangements, alliance burden sharing, and the historical lessons that shape contemporary Korean security thinking.

Executive Summary

- North Korea's growing capabilities: Chun highlights recent North Korean naval developments and expresses concern that future capabilities could increase the direct threat to the United States as well as South Korea.
- Denuclearization and negotiation: He argues that a military solution would carry unacceptable risks and that meaningful negotiations may require accepting that North Korea's existing nuclear status cannot simply be ignored as a precondition for engagement.
- Extended deterrence and alliance presence: Chun's three-part proposition begins with permanent U.S. forces in Korea, followed by a stronger U.S. nuclear umbrella and a modernized deterrent posture.

- South Korean nuclear latency: He advocates preserving or developing South Korean nuclear latency as a hedge, while stressing that such a step should be pursued with U.S. involvement and attention to safety, control, and alliance coordination.
- Russia, China, and North Korea: The discussion treats North Korea's ties with Russia as increasingly important and potentially useful to Pyongyang for technology, resources, labor, and military learning. Chun also argues that China's leverage over North Korea is limited and may have eroded.
- Historical lessons: Both Huesy and Chun repeatedly invoke 1949-1950, the Korean War, the 1960s security crises, and later alliance debates to argue that perceived disengagement or weak readiness can invite dangerous miscalculation.
- South Korean readiness: Chun voices concern about military readiness, training, demographics, political turbulence, and the implications of wartime operational control transition. He calls for South Korea to assume greater ownership of its defense while preserving deep U.S. involvement.
- War prevention: The seminar's central theme is that deterrence succeeds when credible capabilities, visible alliance commitments, military readiness, and political resolve reinforce one another.

Editorial Note

This edition restores the full recorded dialogue in chronological order, including introductions, event announcements, informal exchanges, questions and answers, closing remarks, and brief cross-talk. It is based on the automated meeting recording transcript and preserves the spoken wording rather than condensing or summarizing it. Automated speech recognition can mishear names, acronyms, numbers, and technical terms; those items should be checked against the video before publication or quotation.

Transcript

Kimberly Cherrington: Good morning and welcome. I'm Kimberly Cherrington, and on behalf of the National Institute for Deterrence Studies or Needs, we want to thank you for taking the time to join us today for this important discussion with Lieutenant General Information. Welcome to those of you joining us live. And thank you to our sponsors, who we'd like to call out here, those on the call and those that support us behind the scenes, Bechtel, Collins, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, Moog, Techsource, Northrop Grumman, JRC, and Spa.

Kimberly Cherrington: Thank you for all you do to help us with this important program. We encourage you to submit your questions here in the chat or up at the top of the screen at the Q&A button. And we will address those questions at the Q&A portion of the seminar. This fall, we have a whole lineup of speakers for these virtual events that we do, and we add more each week.

Next Friday we have Matthew Kroenig deterring two nuclear peers America's Strategy for China, Russia, and the Future of Nuclear Deterrence. On October 16th, we have Major General Harencak speaking to us on The Nuclear Knowledge Gap: Why Deterrence Matters. On October 30th, we have Vice Admiral Robert Gaucher, Douglas Williams, and Richard Seif on the future of our under seas deterrence.

Kimberly Cherington: And we have more coming November and December. You can find this information on our website, including updates and more speakers, and register for these events at Thinkdeterrence.com. You can follow us on X and LinkedIn. Please subscribe to our newsletter on our website and receive important event updates as well as our monthly newsletter. Today, it's my pleasure to introduce our guest speaker, Lieutenant General, retired, and Bob Chun, Republic of Korean Army General. Gen. Chun served 38 years in the Republic of Korea Army culminating his distinguished military career as commander of the okay Special Warfare Command. During his service, he deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan and held senior leadership positions within the ROC Combined Forces Command. Today, General Chun is a Senior fellow with us here at the National Institute for Deterrence Studies and the Association of the United States Army.

Kimberly Cherington: He is also a contributing author to the new book called *Learning to Love the Bomb*. He is widely recognized for his expertise in Korean security, deterrence, and the critical importance of the U.S. Rock Alliance. We're so fortunate to have you here today with us, and we look forward to your insights and perspective, general. And now I'm pleased to introduce our hosts for today's discussion, the esteemed Mr. Peter Huessy, president of Geostrategic Analysis and senior fellow here at NIDS. Peter, over to you.

Peter Huessy: Thank you. Kimberly. And welcome, General Chun. For those of you in the audience, I think many of you know that in my world, the Korean people in the Republic of Korea are family. I lived there for two years as a student at John Johnson University, one of the prestigious universities in Seoul. And I must say, that was the beginning of my transformation to from environmental and energy issues to wanting to do national security issues, which is what I do today.

It is an extraordinary country that has a 19-year-old who didn't know the language. Had the privilege of having some of the most wonderful professors I've ever had. We were spoiled rotten, the three of us students. We were taught in English in the offices of the professors an hour, three times a week.

And it was an extraordinary experience. And I want to. So, this is family for me, the Korean issue. And it's something very, very dear to my heart. And I'm honored to have General Chun to be here today to speak with us. Just a couple notes. On tonight or Monday, my interview with John Batchelor or my interview by John Batchelor on The John Batchelor Show will be published.

Peter Huessy: I am now a regular contributor to his show every week, tape Everything every Wednesday and the subject of today. This event this week is the relationship between China and Russia and the United States with respect to nuclear forces, which I urge you all to review. And then I regularly publish about every two weeks or every week at Real Clear Defense.

My latest issue has essay was on the affordability of the U.S. strategic nuclear deterrent. So, I hope you will do that. The final note is on October 14th here in Washington, DC. There's going to be a conference on Korea, which I urge folks to attend and just email Kimberly or myself, and I'll get you that invitation. General Chun.

Peter Huessy: An honor to have you, sir. As I said, Korea's family for me, and this is a very, very intractable problem you're going to be talking about. So, I'm sure you have the solution in your pocket. But anyway, welcome on behalf of NIDS, our president, Jim Petrosky, who's here, and Kimberly, who's our operations manager and does such a wonderful job.

Thank you for coming. And for those out there who might be interested, I am trying to put together what I call a commanders conference, which would be all the former heads of Stratcom, Admiral Miese, General Hyten, Admiral Richard, Admiral Charles and General Chilton are the ones that I have in mind of having them come and speak to us about the lessons of the strategic nuclear deterrence, and have a dinner and have it in Washington, D.C., and hear from the wisdom of these extraordinary people.

Peter Huessy: General Chun, thank you for coming. And on behalf of NIDS, I want to thank you for being here. It's over to you, sir.

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: Well, thank you very much, Peter. I thank for this opportunity to focus on Korea. As a Korean, I am always, concerned that not enough attention is put into the Korean Peninsula. Not just because I'm a Korean, though, but because this is, to me, a worldwide issue, a worldwide. Well, a challenge. Also, I'd like to thank you for your personal comments and the words of admiration that you showed to the Korean people.

We are now in a very politically in a turmoil, but I think it's a process to becoming what the American people had always hoped that the Koreans will become a truly free and democratic nation. So, I'd like to start my conversation with what happened about 20 days ago. On 6th September, the North Koreans launched a second 5000-ton destroyer.

It to me, it looks like an Arsenal ship. It's got a lot of vertical launch tubes, and they were not shy in showing cruise missiles being launched from this second vessel. During the launching ceremony, Kim Jong un said that he would be demonstrating, and I'm quoting here that he would be demonstrating an important new naval capability.

Eight months. In about eight months, which is May of 2027. Now there are speculations as to what that could be, but I personally am very concerned that it could be the 9000 ton. Nuclear powered and probably nuclear armed North Korean submarine being launched on that date. What this means is Kim Jong UN will now have the ability to strike the United States.

Now, of course, we don't know if they have reentry capability or how good their targeting is, but with their new Russian relationship, I. I fear that the Russians might have given them or the North Koreans have acquired through other means, whatever technology that they might need to figure out how to survive a reentry for their warheads. So, if this is the case, the United States is a big problem.

Now, since I already live under North Korean threat. Now, it's not immediate. It doesn't add on to the to the already dire situation that I am in right now, but to the United States after May of next year. This could significantly alter the calculation. So, I bring that up as, as, as an issue today while this is going on, President Trump unilaterally canceled.

A portion of the annual exercises, while many people, including myself, were caught off guard. I do see value in what Mr. Trump is doing in his attempts to engage with Kim John. And this ties into the first statement that I made about a potential nuclear powered, nuclear armed submarine. So how are we going to denuclearize North Korea?

The only thing that I see is a couple of options. Number one, you know, we go to war with North Korea. I don't know about all of you out there, but it's not a good idea, especially if you're living about 40 miles away from the DMZ like I am right now. We've lost that ticket. That option has already gone. In 93, if we had bombed young Byun, maybe, you know, probably that was the thing to do, in my view.

But we lost that opportunity. So going to war, attacking North Korea. Is not a great option. And quite frankly, I'm sorry to say this, but I say this as a friend. The way you Americans conduct wars, you guys are not cruel enough. You can't you can't even take care of Iran. Anyway, I hope I didn't insult anybody.

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: You know, it's a friend talking to you bluntly.

So, I see value in Mr. Trump. So, the other option is to negotiate with the North Koreans. And the only way that Kim Jong UN is going to come to the table is, unfortunately, if we accept him as a nuclear weapon state. There's no other way that he's going to come to the table. The only other way is to bomb him.

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: And like I said, we've lost the. We lost a window. The window has closed. So I see value in Mr. Trump trying to engage, but the price is that we will have to, we will have to at least say, denuclearization is not a priority. So, in this case, a lot of Koreans are going to feel abandoned.

And it's going to be a very scary situation for us Koreans.

Although the temptation to say we want to go nuclear is right at the top. I know the limitations and I know the costs. So that's a threshold that I would cross carefully. And that threshold can and should only be crossed if the United States agrees to help us. I mean, we South Koreans are not going to sneak around and lie like the North Koreans.

We're going to come to the United States, and we're going to ask for your advice and your help and having a safe. Redeem a structure for nuclear deterrence if we ever get it. Until then, my proposition is threefold. Number one, I want permanent US forces stationed in Korea. And I do not mind. Paying cost for their stationing.

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: It is now about \$1 billion a year. Mr. Trump has mentioned 3 to 5 billion. Whatever that cost is, is fine. The only condition would be that, as is now, that whatever cost sharing is spent, that it must be spent on the Korean Peninsula. So, the deal now is that whatever the amount is, that that money is spent on the Korean Peninsula. As long as that condition is there. 3 billion. Why not 5 billion? Why not? So, for the cost of U.S. forces stationed in Korea that must be one paramount condition to accepting or negotiating with the North Koreans. Secondly, we need a better. Deterrent structure. A nuclear umbrella from the United States. I don't know what that is right now. It's pretty good. It's as good as it can be. But I need something better. And it can start with a modernized US nuclear armed forces. I've read and I hear stories about how old and dilapidated U.S. nuclear weapons systems are.

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: I'm scared that my Koreans might know this. And by the way, I would really like to see the Pershing's come back. That's the kind of weapon system that might be. Welcome to Korea if nuclear weapons ever came back here. So, whatever it is, I would like to see a better U.S. deterrence. US nuclear umbrella over the Republic of Korea.

Finally, finally, nuclear latency for South Korea.

The world is changing so much in such a direction that nobody can anticipate. I would really like to see nuclear latency for the South Koreans. It can start with this nuclear-powered submarine project that the South Koreans want. The one, two, three agreement allows us to reprocess and enrich, is my understanding. We just don't have protocols. Let's get the protocols.

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: No. By the way, we're talking about 20% or less enrichment. Come on, guys. That means I'd have to take the nuclear power submarine apart every five years or ten. If we're going to get a nuclear power submarine, can we please get one that can be economically, you know, supportive. So nuclear latency, just in case, you know, something goes wrong with number one.

And number two, I think it frees the United States from obligations that they can live with in the future.

So far, Kim has not responded to President Trump's offer or request to see him, and he will only probably accept with the understanding that his nuclear weapons are safe. I would like to end with just one more thing. I know there is great criticism about Iran and the way the United States attacked Iran. Now, I did not vote for Mr. Trump is not a great orator. And he could use, he could better use some of the terminology that he uses for us South Koreans. But in many respects, and I'm talking about, in this case, Iran, that I think he's doing the right thing by doing something about Iran. I'm not going to I'm not going to say that it was right to attack Iran militarily.

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: But, you know, the IRGC, the Iranians, they've been doing terrorist. They've been supporting their proxies for 70 years. And if Mr. Trump did not do anything about it now, do you think they would have given up nuclear weapons? I think we've already made the mistake with North Korea. And you know the old saying, right, pull me once and shame on you, but fool me twice. Fool me once and shame on me, but for me twice. Shame on you.

I think this ties in the North Korean issue, ties in with what's happening in Iran, and the United States needs to finish this as soon as possible. So, I'll end there. Thank you.

Peter Huessy: Well, thank you, general. A couple questions. I think you mentioned that 1993 was a key date in the North Korean nuclear development of nuclear weapons. Would you elaborate a little bit more on that, please?

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: Yeah. So, it's my understanding that that was when we found out that in Young Gun, there was a lot of, nuclear weapons enrichment or reprocessing that was going on. And for a brief moment, a military option was discussed. Of course, the South Koreans were adamantly against it. But at the same time, the United States, you know, didn't do anything about it, only not because the South Koreans were adamant, but because you guys were too preoccupied.

So, yeah, that's what I was talking about.

Peter Huessy: Okay. Very good. There have been this disclosures in the media of Russian and Chinese transfer of weapons technology to the North Korea. Tell us what you think is happening and whether there are any ways in which to get Russia or China to desist from this, because I think what I have seen is when North Korea sends 40 or 50,000 or 10,000 troops to Ukraine.

The quid pro quo is transfer of technology back to North Korea. So be interested in your thoughts on that.

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: So, there are estimates that, between 100 to 200,000 visas to North Koreans have been issued by the Russians. We think well, my guys and I think that it's about 100 000 ish that there. But these are not students, you know, these are these are laborers. They're building buildings, but a lot of them are in the factories that are making these drones and missiles and whatnots.

So the relationship is not just a couple of, you know, brigades of combat troops. The relationship is pretty deep and, and, strengthened. The North Koreans are getting rubles, bitcoins and our food, mostly wheat. Fuel, that kind of stuff. And technology. Now, I don't think the Russians are giving them everything that the North Koreans want. But on the other hand, I think the North Koreans are tenacious. So a long time ago, I heard a North Korean. Well, I heard a Russian guy. Tell me that they used to have North Koreans during the Soviet era to their military schools, and they did not allow these North Koreans to Xerox. And you have the material that they could read in their libraries.

And in the end, these North Korean officers would sit down and for hours copy the books by hand. That's how tenacious these North Koreans are. So right now they're in North Korea, they're in Russia. They're working in factories. They're building stuff there, you know, fighting in the front lines or supporting the front effort. And I would not be surprised if there funneling off, you know, parts.

Back to North Korea. They're stealing diagrams back to North Korea. And what they can't steal. I mean, how much would it how hard it would it be to bribe a Russian, you know, warehouse manager or supervisor? And let me be totally honest. I have absolute certainty that this is happening because we South Koreans used to do this when we were in Vietnam.

And, you know, we would bring back tanks from Vietnam. And the American logistics there knew it, but they thought these South Koreans deserved it. Maybe there's a Russian there that's thinking the same thing. So interesting. And as practical people, we must assume the worst. And the worst is that the North Koreans are getting everything. So, you know, I hope that answers your question.

Peter Huessy: General, one of the things I found fascinating when I lived in your country was the argument of Americans that we couldn't give South Korea advanced technology. For example, we prohibited the South Koreans from having missiles that could go from South Korea and land in Pyongyang, that you could maybe get across the DMZ, which is only 17 miles from Seoul.

But the fear was, and this was argued by many on the left, was that if we arms Korea. To two great an extent, the South Koreans would go north, would invade the North.

What's your sense as to whether that still holds in terms of South Korean capability?

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: I appreciate that question. And I think South Koreans need to own that kind of criticism or suspicion, because in 1949, the South Korean Defense Ministry boasted that if war ever came to the Korean state, we would be eating lunch in Pyongyang and dinner in Shiny Ju, which is right next to it. Yeah, yeah. Little river. So that kind of boasts probably scared the pants of a lot of Americans.

And it just, strengthened the argument that you just talked about in modern day. I would have said, that's just ridiculous. Until two years ago, when the acting president declared martial law was even incapable of succeeding, successfully conducting a palace coup. And before he did this, he sent over drones over Pyongyang. So, you know, it's not absurd to say that it can never happen again.

But ladies and gentlemen, let's go back to 1949 again. So, the United States decides that they're going to withdraw from Korea for reasons unknown, except that you guys were cutting down Koreans asked. Koreans begged the United States not to leave. And the and the and the Americans said, oh, Kim, don't worry. You know nothing will happen to you.

So, the Korean said, well, if you're going to have to leave, can you leave us some weapons? And of course, Bob said, what do you want? Well, what kind of weapons are you talking about? And Kim said, well, how about some tanks? And he said, oh, please look at your country. Rice paddies everywhere. Tanks will never be able to operate.

Within six months after the United States left, the North Koreans came down with 242 T-34. Right. Every South Korean officer in my generation knows that number, because those 242 T-34 were only stopped because South Korean soldiers attacked them with their bare hands, committing a lot of suicide squads. And it cost the United States 37,000 American lives. And so, you know, let's not make the same mistake again.

South Korea. So, you know, I agree with them. I don't trust myself. The Koreans, especially the ones that I know who are in authority. It's bad enough Kim Jong UN has the his finger on the red button, but it would be as bad if Park down here had had the his thumb on the blue button as well.

And like, unlike the United States, I only have three minutes. So it's going to be a really dangerous situation. That is why I think the United States should be deeply involved in the process. Now, as you said, because the United States said we can't have missiles. Guess what? You know, we Koreans, we didn't steal. Well, we borrowed maybe in some cases.

But, you know, other countries, a lot of our long range missiles come from Russian technology. You know, we're going to we're going to get it anywhere. We now have a new fighter called the, the cave 21. It flies, which is a great achievement. It's got a US engine on it, but it has a European air to air missile.

The only reason we have that is because the United States would not provide us with their missiles. Now they are saying they'll provide us with our missiles. Well, all the integration has been completed. So we're going to get it anyway. It's better to get involved where you can get control. And besides, I'm really scared that we might blow ourselves up because of safety issues.

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: Right. I'm concerned that the North Koreans will have a safety problem. It would probably be wise for the United States to come in and help us with a lot of the safety issues as well, which is another means of control. Of our capabilities, should we ever have it now? If the South Koreans were ever armed with nuclear weapons, South Korean nuclear weapons would never be used against the United States.

But it would be a real threat to the Chinese. And guys and gals, I don't know about you, but it's in our nature to go to war. The a war between the United States and the Chinese are inevitable. And in that case, it's probably going to be a good situation where you have a South Korean capability, which might even deter this inevitable situation that I am scared of.

So, I'll just finish there.

Peter Huessy: It's very interesting, General, because that's exactly the come into my next question, which was, you know, Tom Reed was former secretary of the Air Force for the United States in the President Ford's administration, but he was also deputy national security adviser to President Reagan. He worked for Judge Clark, who was the national security adviser. And in his book, *The Nuclear Express*, he has an entire chapter devoted to China's meeting in October of 1982, when Deng Xiaoping, in a secret meeting of the polar borough, said, we want to export nuclear weapons technology through Pakistan to help build nuclear weapons programs in North Korea, Libya, Iran and I believe Syria.

Iraq was not on the list that Tom Reed had, but I think there was a connection. But if you notice Libya, Syria, Iran, North Korea and Pakistan have all been trouble spots for the world, particularly the United States, in the last decades, all, not coincidentally, not successfully, but almost armed with respect to Pakistan and North Korea, successfully ran Libya and Syria trouble.

So, I have a question. This is normally never brought up to the Chinese that they deliberately created the nuclear proliferation, which in my mind is my question to you, would be what is what was the Chinese objective under Deng Xiaoping? And has it remained the same? And now we are, what, 60 years later?

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: Well, Peter, I must confess that this is, this book is and this information is new to me. So far, I've not seen a happy Chinese about a nuclear armed North Korea. So if this was indeed their grand strategy, it has backfired onto these Chinese for sure. When the North Koreans first successfully detonated their nuclear device. Kim Jong IL.

Kim Jong UN's father exclaimed. Now we don't have to worry about the Chinese. He didn't say, we don't have to worry about the Americans, he said, we don't have to worry about the Chinese. And I think it was 2016 when the North Koreans were conducting a nuclear test, and the Chinese were really trying their best not to not for this to occur.

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: So, they've lost control. You know, this is an interesting situation for us. So let's just assume that we have we have a deal with North Korea.

Their nuclear weapons will now be a potential threat to the Chinese. And I see a lot of advantages to this situation now. North Korea, they're not afraid of, you know, Minuteman or Poseidon Trident missiles. They know Americans will not attack them. Especially with South Korea, you know, next door. But what they are afraid of is Coca-Cola, McDonald's.

And they're even afraid of this. I don't know if you guys know what this is, but this is a common you know, it's like the V sign during World War two. You know, all these Koreans. This is called the little heart. This is called the big heart. And I hate these things, but they go around and take photos with, with this and saying know, smile and all that.

But North Korea society is so scared of outer influence that if you do this and take a photo in North Korea, you go to jail and sometimes they would burn you alive for doing that. So that's how how brittle their society is. Maybe, you know, just striking a deal with North Korea could be the downfall of the North Korean regime, which will have dangers of its own.

But anyway, I think that, the Chinese calculus on this one has really backfired on them.

Peter Huessy: Interesting, sir. We have another question. One of our participants, her father, served in the army in the Korean War, and her question is, she wants to thank you for your insights and your recall of events on the Korean Peninsula. You mentioned that North Korea is the hostility with China and vice versa. And I understand the history is that the Chinese as well as Japanese pirates, the Chinese would occasionally invade the Korean peninsula. Smack people around, steal stuff, and then go home.

And the Koreans would give them some booty and money and tolerate them. I think what's fascinating is the dynasty in the Korean peninsula lasted over 500 years. It lasted as long as Rome is an extraordinary civilization, which, terribly tragically, the. When the Japanese took over in the early 20th century, they destroyed much of the Korean culture, required Koreans to speak Japanese in school.

And as you know, there was that terrible half a century of this. But what I come down to is, could not China. See North Korea as a tool with which to keep the United States occupied in that part of the world? Should they move against, let's say, Taiwan?

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: Absolutely. It would only make sense. Another possibility that is that the North Korean stem cells would look at this as an opportunity. This being a Taiwan a situation as an opportunity to take advantage, for sure. Now we must remember the Second Korean War, what is referred to as the Second Korean War, which is from 1965 to early 70s when Kim IL sung, the grandfather of Kim Jong un, said, well, these Americans are preoccupied in Vietnam.

We could we should use this opportunity to force the Americans off the Korean Peninsula. So about 200 South Korean Americans were killed, about more than a 500 to 1000 North Koreans were killed during this period. So, yes, this is that is a big possibility. Now, before I go on any further, let me thank the American people for your contribution and sacrifice to the Korean people during the Korean War.

You should really visit this country that you have helped to, to, to protect. We've done wonders here. Not to mention all the cosmetics that we make. So, you know, you and your children can take advantage of it. Another thing that I would like to mention is, okay, the Koreans hate the Japanese for making us a colony.

But, you know, at this stage and all the things that we know, I must be honest. Chosen dynasty was a corrupt dynasty, and a lot of good Koreans tried to make it better. But in the end, we were we were caught off guard by international events that we that the ruling Lee dynasty just could not catch up to.

And in the end, the Japanese caught us with our pants down. Yes. And the reason that the reason that the Koreans hate the Japanese is because it was humiliating to be conquered by the to become a colony of the Japanese. But to be honest with you, we were a colony of the Chinese for like 3000 years. So now we are free from both of them.

And for us Koreans to be preoccupied with this Japanese phobia is ridiculous. You know, our priorities should be with the Chinese. And right now, about 90% of the Korean sentiment is against China. This is this is the Chinese own doing during fad. You know, they put a lot of pressure on us. And despite the fact that we do 30 to 35% of our trade with the Chinese.

The mood is not very good here. Now, to my American friends, let me ask you this question. When we were having this hard time with that, the United States did very little to help us out. You know, you could have called the Chinese and said, hey, lay off, or you could have, you know, bought some of our cosmetics, or you could have come to Seoul to, to, to fill up some of the tourist void that that really destroyed our tourism.

None of that happened. We must not let this happen again. You know a lot a lot of a lot of my Korean friends tell me that. General Chun, we must, you know, take great pains to cut our ties with the Chinese. That's what some of my Koreans are telling me. You know, we have an opportunity here. So, we really need to think about this.

Peter Huessy: And when you figure out how to do that, you gotta come to America and help us do it as well. Because we have to unhook ourselves from the Chinese tiger.

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: And again, let me thank the American people for your sacrifice in protecting the Korean people.

Peter Huessy: Well, thank you for that. A note about what is fascinating is that when I lived in Korea, one of the things every Korean cab drivers in particular get mad about something, and they swear it and blame Japan on something. But they wanted to build cars better than Japan. They wanted to build equipment better than Japan appliances.

Peter Huessy: They were going to outdo Japan, which they did in some respects. So it's it's quite remarkable how, that, that relationships are much more cordial now between the two countries than when I was there in 1969 and 70. You mentioned a thousand North Koreans had died during the conflict between the North and South, and between like 65 and 73.

Peter Huessy: Were those people killed by American military capability or South Korean?

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: Oh, a lot of them are North Korean soldiers. Remember, this was a time when the North Koreans hijacked the pueblo. Yes. Shut down. Shut down the American intelligence aircraft. This was a really a different time. This was great. Yeah.

Peter Huessy: But did the American military use force against North Korea or only North Koreans who came south?

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: It's the latter. Most of them. The ones that came south were the.

Peter Huessy: Established terrorists.

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: Okay. Infiltration? Yeah.

Peter Huessy: Okay. Because when I was in Korea, I believe that the Park Chung, his wife, was murdered by the North Koreans. And one of my Korean professors. I wanted to say tribute to him. Pyongyang was a professor at Johnson University, but became ambassador to the United States, ambassador to the United Nations, and was killed in Burma in that 1983, I believe, attack on the Korean South Korean cabinet, which is really killed almost the killed most of the cabinet and the president of the country. Mr. Chun, was delayed in the mood of the meeting in Rangoon because of a traffic jam, which doesn't usually happen in Burma. So, you know..

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: Do you know that I was there?

Peter Huessy: Yes.

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: Yes. So, yeah, I saw his body.

Peter Huessy: Yes.

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: He was.

Peter Huessy: He was my Korean. The family with whom I lived for two years and was my, he was our favorite. The three of us. He was our favorite professor.

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: Yeah, yeah.

Peter Huessy: Wonderful. Wonderful, man. I'm going to turn it over to Jim Petrosky, our president, if he has some questions for you. This has been a very enlightening and, very, very informative. This is a very, very tough issue. But, Jim, over to you, sir.

James Petrosky: Yeah. Thank you. And this is really a delight for me. Obviously, we talked before in a previous, event where, you know, I spent some time in Korea as well, and I love the Korean people and enjoyed very much my time there. What a great thing we have. We have a question from Carl. It sort of fits to what I, what I'm interested in.

Last time we talked. We discussed how the Korean people have evolved over time, and it's been almost six months, I think, since the last time you were on our show. I'd be interested in where the what your sense of the Korean peoples are. Because as you hear from your discussions you just had with Peter Huessy.

You've been up front and personal with some of the terrible things that have happened, through both, you know, the Japanese with the Chinese, with the North Koreans. You're sort of in the thick of it all. And so you live in a difficult neighborhood, and we're sort of far away. And so our public doesn't get to connect there.

How does that how is that affecting the Korean people's right now and with all the things going on? What is the sentiment that you feel and you hear from those within your, you know, within your stead? It's really, really important to us to know what that feels like.

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: So don't quote me on the exact numbers. But our economy is doing a lot better than expected. But the problem is it's 70% is related to microchips and to the chip industry. And so, when the majority of your growth is concentrated into one aspect of an economy that's really bad, consumers feel.

A great deal of, of weight in everyday living, just like what's happening in the United States. And so it's easy to criticize Mr. Trump for high oil gas prices. And and of course, Iran is running a very good and effective propaganda campaign, in my view. But the Korean economy is growing and is doing well. Our exports are skyrocketing.

But, it's on a very unstable platform, and the average Korean is not that happy. Politically, our new president, EJ Myung, is in trouble. In just two months, his approval rating has gone down from about 60% to now, maybe 30%. That's a wild figure. And it relates to how he has been dealing with his inter political agendas, especially trying to self pardon himself.

That rings a bell to you guys are and all the liberal, policies that he is trying to pursue. It's not working out for him. He's having a lot of trouble. He's trying to, come back, but I don't know if he's going to be working now. I didn't vote for the man, but I still want him to succeed.

Because this is a small country, and we need a successful and stable political atmosphere. But, he's not doing well. My forte, which is the military, is where I am really concerned. So, the liberal policies from this administration and the incompetent actions of the previous so-called, you know, Conservatives and then the previous moon administration, another liberal administration, all of these policies have nearly neutered the South Korean military. Most recently, this coup thing, this insurrection, whatever you want to call it.

4 or 5 senior officers are in prison right now. They just received their first sentence spanning from 30 to 15 years, a handful of them. And I feel they deserve it, you know, but the rest of the military, 90% didn't know what the hell was going on. They were told to be somewhere. They were there. They were told to do something.

They did it. They didn't. By the time they realized they were being told to do they were doing things that were not, you know, kosher. They were already in trouble. And because of this, hundreds of officers are now under investigation. Thousands of officers are being,

They're in a state of limbo. What this has caused is a, a, a South Korean military, which used to be one of the most potent militaries in the world into an impotent military, which means which means we're not training because training will involve some sort of dumb incident. You know, there's always the soldier who will say, are you sure this thing will go off?

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: You know, you know, it always happens. And how do you stop that? Well, you take away the weapon from it. Well, if you take away the weapon, how the hell is it going to learn not to do this? So that's what is happening now. And so, it's a very, very difficult situation for the Korean military at this time.

Added to this, the current administration has up transition, which is necessary. But in order to do a real good option transition, we must accept the fact that combined forces command will not be able to exist. We'll, we'll have to create something that's something like that. But it won't be like, you know what it is today where we have a US four star and the lead. The advantage of having a US four star in the lead is that we, we get the full weight of a US four star involved in leading the Koreans in wartime, not in peacetime.

So, we're going to lose that no matter what. And the only way, and one of the most important things in my mind is that we need we Koreans need to really revamp the way that we take ownership of the security of the Korean Peninsula. And I'm not talking about, you know, throwing money at it. Anybody can do that and it won't work.

I'm talking about something like, for example, it is now mandatory for all males to serve 18 months in the Korean military. Hey, when I started in 81, it used to be 36 months. We're having a demographic problem where we cannot maintain even half a million men, so why can't we're extend to 24 months or 36 months because of political it'll will lose votes.

That's what the politicians are thinking. So, we're going to have to make decisions like that. Maybe we should have women mandatory service again. It won't it will not be popular for politicians. That's the kind of sacrifice that we Koreans will have to make and money. And. But are the politicians, especially young, thinking about that? He's not thinking about that.

So, this upon thing is, a is a real stinker. Now, in Washington, there are people there that think, oh, you know, if the Koreans want it, let them have it. Guys, it's not it's not as easy as that. You know, I see Americans who say, well, you know why? Why should we be there? You know why we don't?

We don't need kimchi. You know I don't have a daughter. She doesn't need K beauty. Yeah, I K-drama, maybe the Japanese can make the same kind of movies. That that kind of logic is understandable. But the last time that kind of logic prevailed created a war on the Korean Peninsula, and it cost the Americans 37,000 young lives.

Not a good idea if you lose, or if you abandon Korea, the Chinese will fill the void. You'll lose Japan and the Pacific and the. When an American travels, he or she is always confident of who they are. Even there, most of you are oblivious of any kind of danger. But once this happens, Americans will be scared to travel.

Peter Huessy: Yes.

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: Yeah, yeah. So that's the we need to think about. Do we want to give that to our, you know, grandchildren?

Peter Huessy: Jim I would like to I would like to mention an anecdote if I could.

James Petrosky: Okay. I'll let you take it from here, Peter then.

Peter Huessy: No, no, no, just.

I understand it. Let me. This is important, I think. And kind of interesting is that years ago, we had a president that called up the commander of American forces in Korea named General Vessey. And they said he said to General Vesey, this is President Carter said, if you support me withdrawing all American forces from South Korea, I'll make you chief of staff of the United States Army.

And God bless General Vessey, he said. Hell, no. There was somebody called Ronald Reagan that heard that story, and he said, find me General Vessey. I want to make him chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

That's real wisdom and extraordinary. I got to know General Vessey quite well, because during the Reagan eight years and his extraordinary leadership in modernizing Americas and military forces, engaging in a struggle with the USSR, which ended up, at least at that time, successfully. And God love him, one wonderful man. And, he had the courage to stand up to his president and say, you know, I don't think so.

Which was the opposite of the decision made.

Back in the 19 and 1950, where we said that Korea was beyond our security perimeter and that even Truman tried to get money for South Korea. In lieu of withdrawing our forces. And Congress approved it by one vote in the United States Senate. But the stipulation was that the funds wouldn't go to Korea until September of 1950, which, of course, was June, July, August.

September was four months after the invasion, which we didn't know was going to happen, but it got there after the war was. And thank God our Truman had the guts to say, we need to go back and help our South Korean friends. So, General Chun, on behalf of everybody. God love you. Thank you for very candid comments.

And, Jim, I'll send it back to you and. And Kimberly.

James Petrosky: Yep. Take it away, Kimberly. Thank you. General. A great friend. Thank you.

Lt. Gen. In-Bum Chun: Thank you.

Kimberly Cherington: All right. Yes, we absolutely want to thank you. General Chun, we appreciate your time and your insights and your continued dedication and service. And we thank you for all of your work here with NIDS. If you are new to NIDS, we are 501 C3 nonprofit organization supported by generous donors and dedicated to advancing peace and stability through a strong national security and nuclear deterrent.

A special thanks to all of you who help us continue bringing these timely and critical programs, and to highlight the importance of our deterrence force and the people who keep this nation safe. Please share our content with your network and your colleagues to help us spread the word and grow our community. And we will see you next week on Friday at the same time with Matt Kroenig.

And we hope you have a peaceful day and a wonderful weekend. Thanks for being here. Bye.