

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2021

The President's News Conference With President Moon Jae-in of South Korea
May 21, 2021

President Biden. Hello, everyone. Please. Please be seated.

Today I've been honored to welcome to the White House President Moon. And I got an opportunity to spend some private time with him, as well as with our delegations. This is only the second person—head of state—second head of state to visit the White House since I've been President. And it's been a real joy.

It's a reflection of how much we value the 70-year alliance with the Republic of Korea and how essential we know the relationship is to the United States, the future of the Indo-Pacific region, and quite frankly, to the world.

Today has been particularly special because this afternoon, in addition to our bilateral meetings, President Moon participated in a ceremony, right in this room, that—awarding the Medal of Honor to a veteran of the Korean war, a true American hero, Colonel Ralph Puckett, Jr.

And I want to thank you again, Mr. President, for joining us. It was special. I don't know that there's ever been an award of the Medal of Honor with the head of state of the country where the award was won. It meant a great deal to me and to the family and to our country.

And—but today has not only been an affirmation of our shared history of sacrifice that binds the Republic of Korea and North—and the North—excuse me, and the United States together; it's a commitment to expanding cooperation and shaping our shared future in accordance with our democratic values that have made our nations strong and agile and highly competitive in the 21st-century economies. The Republic of Korea and the United States are both nations built on innovation, and we must both meet the challenges facing us today and look to what is possible for tomorrow.

Our partnership is grounded on our ironclad commitment to shared security. Our alliance has long been the linchpin of peace, security, prosperity, and the region growing more prominent and us being together.

I was grateful that our two nations were able to quickly conclude a new cost-sharing agreement for forces in Korea in March, which will benefit both our peoples. And I thank, again, the President for that agreement.

Today we made important progress on a range of issues. We spoke about the shared approach of the Democratic—shared approach to the Democratic People's Republic in Korea and continuing threat of the D.P.R.K.'s nuclear and missile programs. My team consulted closely with President Moon's team throughout the process of our D.P.R.K. review, and we both are deeply concerned about the situation.

Our two nations also share a willingness to engage diplomatically with the D.P.R.K. to take pragmatic steps that will reduce tensions as we move toward our ultimate goal of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Today I affirmed to President Moon that the United States will proceed in close consultation with the Republic of Korea and our strategy and our approach. And to help drive all these efforts, I'm pleased to announce that Ambassador Sung Kim, a career diplomat and with deep policy expertise, will serve as a U.S. Special Envoy for the D.P.R.K. Ambassador Kim—you're here

somewhere today—stand up, will you? Thank you for being willing to do this. Thank you for taking on this important role. We appreciate it very much.

The U.S.-R.O.K. partnership also extends beyond the goals of the Peninsula. The address—they address issues of regional and global concern through stronger cooperation with partners in the region, including the ASEAN, the Quad, and trilateral cooperation with Japan.

The multilateral cooperation is particularly important to coordinate in the approach to the situation that exists in Burma, as we work to pressure the junta to restore democracy for the people of Burma, and to address issues critical to regional stability, such as maintaining freedom of navigation in the South China Sea and preserving peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits.

Today we also discussed ways that the Republic of Korea and the United States will work together to address the challenges of our time, beginning with our efforts to end the COVID-19 pandemic globally. We agreed to establish a comprehensive vaccine partnership to expand the manufacture of vaccines that have been approved safe and effective. And we can scale up global—and so we can scale up global vaccine supplies.

We'll strengthen our ability to fight the pandemic and respond to future biological threats. When it comes to fighting climate change, the Republic of Korea and the United States are committed to making ambitious 2030 targets aligned with the effort to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions no later than 2050. And we're going to work together both to mobilize climate finance for developing countries and to make sure that international financing is aligned to promote our climate goals.

We also talked about how to harness our nation's technological advantages to ensure the Republic of Korea and the United States are cooperating to shape—to shape—emerging technologies around our shared value system.

This includes everything from strengthening our cybersecurity to deepening our cooperation to build out an open secure G5 network—5G network, I should say. I'm talking about the G5, that's another organization. *[Laughter]* I'm thinking organization, Mr. President—to secure the 5G networks.

And I'm particularly gratified that so many leading South Korean companies see the benefits of investing in the United States, including this morning's announcement of more than \$25 billion in new investments from Samsung, Hyundai, SK, and LG. I understand the executives of those companies are here. Would you please stand up? Thank you, thank you, thank you. And I think we'll do great work together.

These new investments are going to create thousands of good-paying jobs and jobs of the future right here in the United States. And they're going to help fortify and secure the supply chains for things like semiconductors and electric batteries.

I know, as I said, that the CEOs made the effort not only to do this, but to be here today. And again, I thank them for being here. I thank you for making the investments in our future and yours.

Finally, I want to note that yesterday I had the honor of signing into law the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act to help Americans of Asian descent from having to live in fear just walking down the streets of the United States. Quite frankly, I've been ashamed—ashamed—at the way some Americans have responded.

And there's a long history in this country of contributions of Asian Americans being overlooked, forgotten, and ignored. And I affirmed to President Moon today what I said yesterday: that we're committing and we're going to stay committed to stopping the hatred based on this bias. I promise you.

Our peoples share a long history. Our soldiers have fought alongside one another. Our scientists work side by side in both our countries. Our students study together, share ideas, and seed new opportunities for future collaboration.

And our people-to-people and cultural connections are only growing. And K-Pop fans are universal. *[Laughter]* And I can tell those who laughed know what I'm talking about. *[Laughter]* Well, anyway, I'll get back to that later. Anyway. *[Laughter]* A Korean actress took home an Oscar for Supporting Actress this year, following up on the four Oscar wins for the movie "Parasite" last year.

And so our two countries—our two nations have the tools and the deep connections that we need to make even stronger alliances with stronger cooperation.

And I want to thank you again for the meetings today, Mr. President, particularly our long, private meeting. I appreciated that a great deal.

And I'm looking forward to working closely with you and your team as we expand and strengthen our efforts to shape the future together—and I mean that literally—to shape the future together. So thank you.

Mr. President.

President Moon. Honorable President Biden, Madam Vice President, I extend my deepest gratitude to you for your special hospitality and welcome.

Today leaders and delegates of Korea and the United States met each other's eye and had a dialogue. For the peoples of our two nations, this will give them hope for recovery from COVID-19, as well as a meaningful gift for celebrating the 139th anniversary of our diplomatic relations.

President Biden and I had an awarding ceremony for the Medal of Honor to the Korean war veteran, a one-on-one meeting, as well as an expanded summit. For many hours together, we've had a very frank dialogue, like old friends.

As regards to promotion of democracy, inclusive growth, the strengthening of the middle class, climate change response, as well as many other areas, two of us were able to see for ourselves that we had common interests and commitments. In particular, we reaffirmed the strength of the R.O.K.-U.S. alliance and confirmed the common vision for developing it into an even stronger one.

During my visit this time, the trust that has been built up between President Biden and I will foster a deeper friendship between our two peoples and lay a firm foundation that will undergird the sustainable development of the R.O.K.-U.S. alliance, and I say this with confidence.

The most urgent common task that our two countries must undertake is achieving complete denuclearization and permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula. Recently, the Biden administration concluded its D.P.R.K. policy review. Building on past agreements, including the Singapore joint statement, while taking a calibrated and practical approach to seeking diplomacy with North Korea is indeed a welcome direction of the Biden administration's North Korea policy. And during the course of the review, our two countries closely coordinated with each other in lockstep, which I note with much appreciation.

Moreover, I welcome President Biden's appointment of Ambassador Sung Kim as Special Representative for North Korea Policy. This reflects the firm commitment of the U.S. for exploring diplomacy and its readiness for dialogue with North Korea. I have high expectations, all the more, as such a man of high caliber with expertise in the Korean Peninsula issues has been appointed.

President Biden and I discussed the dialogues based on commitments made between the two Koreas and between the U.S. and North Korea are essential for making a peaceful Korean Peninsula. This is the belief that we were able to reaffirm.

Moreover, President Biden also expressed his support for the inter-Korean dialogue and cooperation. Under close cooperation with the U.S., we will work to facilitate progress in inter-Korean relations so as to achieve a virtuous cycle with U.S.-D.P.R.K. dialogue.

Moving forward as well, Korea and the United States will continue close communication while exploring our North Korea approach through dialogue and diplomacy. On that, I expect a positive response from North Korea.

When strong security is firmly in place, we can preserve and make peace. Two of us agreed to further reinforce our combined defense posture and reaffirmed our commitment to a conditions-based transition to wartime operational control.

It is also with pleasure that I deliver the news on the termination of the revised missile guidelines. The signing of R.O.K.-U.S. Special Measures Agreement on burden-sharing in the early days of the Biden administration displays for the world the robustness of our alliance as a symbolic and practical measure.

Today, at the summit, President Biden and I decided to expand our cooperation in new emerging areas that are relevant for the changing times and landscape. First, to surmount COVID-19, our most urgent task, we pledged to pull our strength together. America's advanced technologies and Korea's production capabilities will be married to establish a comprehensive KORUS Global Vaccine Partnership. Collaboration between our two countries will boost global vaccine supply and contribute to accelerating a complete ending of COVID-19 through the Global Health Security Agenda, which aims to enhance infectious disease response capability. Multilateral cooperation will be pursued as well.

Under this broad framework of vaccine cooperation, illustrating the robust R.O.K.-U.S. alliance, an important announcement was made: President Biden pledged to supply vaccines to Korean servicemen. I thank you, Mr. President. This announcement of the U.S., I believe, extends the R.O.K.-U.S. alliance to the field of health in a meaningful measure.

Second, from semiconductors, EV batteries, pharmaceuticals to other cutting-edge manufacturing technology sectors, in an effort to build a secure supply chains, we've committed to work in close concert. Digital transformation is accelerating and the areas of cutting-edge emerging technologies are gaining greater importance.

Korea and the U.S., in response to a post-COVID-19 era, plan to strengthen our cooperation in civil space exploring—exploration, 6G, and green energy to secure global competitiveness. Furthermore, to join the advance into overseas nuclear power plant markets, we decided to bolster our partnership.

Third, in a bid to address climate change, we will further solidify coordination between our two countries. Our two nations are already spearheading global cooperation in climate change response.

Last April, the U.S. hosted a Leaders Summit on Climate successfully. Korea, for its part, next week, is hosting P4G Seoul Summit, once again trying to build the international community's collective will for climate change response. President Biden will participate in the P4G Seoul Summit next week virtually. I welcome his participation, which will certainly help us catalyze the international community to come together.

President Biden and I participated in the ceremony for awarding a Medal of Honor to a Korean war veteran, Colonel Ralph Puckett, Jr. Based on the R.O.K.-U.S. alliance and rooted in

the noble sacrifices of our heroes, our two nations will usher in a new future together without a doubt.

Today's meetings between President Biden and myself, and between the U.S. and Korea, will mark another milestone for bilateral cooperation towards a new era. President Biden has extended such warm hospitality, and I express my deepest gratitude once again. I look forward to our frequent communication and continued close coordination—consultation.

Last but not least, yesterday Israel and Hamas agreed on a cease-fire, which is indeed a relief. I appreciate President Biden's hard work and leadership in this regard.

Thank you.

President Biden. Thank you. Well, first question, I'm told, is MaryAlice Parker [Parks]* of ABC.

Israel-U.S. Relations/Middle East Peace Process/Intercommunal Violence in Israel/Reconstruction Efforts in Gaza/U.S. Assistance to Palestinian Authority

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I appreciate it. What is your message to Democrats who want you to be more confrontational with Israel and, specifically, to those that are saying that there should be an end to arm sales? I mean, do you recognize that there's been a shift, an evolution in your party, Mr. President, in the last 20 years on this issue?

President Biden. There——

Q. And I have a question for President Moon, but I can wait, or I can ask that now.

President Biden. There is no shift in my commitment and the commitment to the security of Israel, period. No shift. Not at all.

But I'll tell you what there is a shift in: The shift is that we have to—we still need a two-state solution. It is the only answer. The only answer.

And what I am convinced of, is that we can now move—as I had—did even before, when I was able to negotiate—well, I shouldn't—before the cease-fire was negotiated, that I made it clear that—and I spoke with President Abbas—we were—we're going to make sure that we are going to provide for security in the West Bank. And we renewed the security commitment as well as economic commitment to the people on the West Bank.

I also indicated to the Israelis that I thought it was very important that they stop, in Jerusalem, this innercommunal fighting that has extremes on both sides. It has to end. It has to end.

And I'm prepared to put together—and I'm going to attempt to put together a major package, with other nations who share our view, to rebuild the homes and—without reengaging—without providing Hamas the opportunity to rebuild their weapon systems—rebuild the Gaza—rebuild Gaza. And they need the help, and I'm committed to get that done.

And so I don't—and I think that, you know, my party still supports Israel. Let's get something straight here: Until the region says, unequivocally, they acknowledge the right of Israel to exist as an independent Jewish state, there will be no peace.

Q. Can I ask a question to President Moon? I'm curious if the two of you have offered any assurances, behind the scenes, to Taiwan, and if President Biden has pushed you to take a tougher stance when it comes to China's posture towards Taiwan.

* White House correction.

President Biden. Good luck. [Laughter]

President Moon. Well, fortunately, there wasn't such pressure. But, as for peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, we agreed how important that region is, especially considering the special characteristics between China and Taiwan. We decided to work more closely on this matter going forward.

President Biden. You can ask—answer—[inaudible].

President Moon. So we have a question from a Korean journalist this over here. Yes, two from the left.

North Korea/Regional Security

Q. Thank you for giving me this opportunity. I am Kang from Yonhap News, Yonhap News.

I have a question to both of the Presidents here. As was mentioned by the former journalist, I understand that the Israel and Palestine issues are very important, but North Korea's nuclear issues is equally important. On your to-do list, what's the number that's given to the North Korean nuclear issue on your priority list, Mr.—President Biden?

And also, to Mr.—President Moon, in terms of your roadmap for resolving the nuclear issue in North Korea, I want to understand whether your time schedule actually matches and is equal to one another in terms of resolving the nuclear issues on the Korean Peninsula.

President Moon. So, to begin, under the new Biden administration, the D.P.R.K. policy review has been completed in a rather fast period of time. That means that the Biden administration puts priority on its North Korea policy among its diplomatic tasks.

And also, in terms of reviewing its D.P.R.K. policy, there was a very close coordination, as well as consultations, between the United States and the Republic of Korea. So the principle of the negotiations towards North Korea has already been announced by the U.S. Government. A very calibrated, practical, gradual, step-by-step manner, and very flexible—that is the approach that the current administration is aiming to adopt. So that is the common understanding that we have with the United States and that we're going to continue to work forward on this.

And in terms of the timeline for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, there aren't any differences in terms of how we think about this—no differences in terms of our opinions.

President Biden. I agree with what the President just said. Our goal is and remains complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. We want to make practical progress and increase security in the United States—for the United States and our allies.

You know, we closely studied what others have tried, and—what worked and what hasn't worked. And you know, under—we're under no illusions how difficult this is, none whatsoever. And the past four administrations have not achieved the objective. It's an incredibly difficult objective.

As we move forward, we're going to stay in very close coordination with our friends and our partners in the region, including President Moon. And we fully recognize that this is about our collective security in the Indo-Pacific region. And so—but total denuclearization is our objective and remains so.

Well, I get the next question, huh? I'd like to ask the press a question, if I may. [Laughter]

Nancy Cordes, CBS.

Chairman of the State Affairs Commission Kim Jong Un of North Korea

Q. Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I have one question about North Korea and one question about Israel.

President Biden. We've changed this "one question" thing, haven't we? [*Laughter*]

Q. Two foreign policy questions.

President Biden. Okay.

Q. You have said in the past that you would not meet with Kim Jong Un, the leader of North Korea, without certain preconditions.

President Biden. Yes.

Q. What are those preconditions? And do you believe he would ever be able to meet them?

President Biden. Well, what I never do is, I never make a judgment what a man or woman is going to do or not do based on what they said. We'll see. If he made any commitment, then I would meet with him. And if there was a commitment on which we met—and the commitment has to be that there's discussion about his nuclear arsenal, and if it's merely an—a means by which how do we deescalate what they're doing.

And so, if that was the case, I would not meet unless there was some outline made that my Secretary of State and others would have negotiated as to how we would proceed.

But what I would not do is, I would not do what had been done in the recent past. I would not give him all that he's looking for is: national—international recognition as legitimate and say—and give them what allowed him to move in the direction of appearing to be more—how can I say it?—more serious about what he wasn't at all serious about.

I'd have to know specifics. But the idea of never meeting with North Korea—I would make sure that my team had met with his counterparts—my—their counterparts and I know exactly what we're meeting on.

Gaza Conflict With Israel/International Diplomatic Efforts/Intercommunal Violence in Israel

Q. And then, in the wake of all of your conversations this week, what is your relationship like now with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu? Do you have certain expectations that he will bolster the rights of the Palestinian people in some way? And if so, did you convey that to him in your conversations?

President Biden. One of the reasons why we were able to get the cease-fire in 11 days, they didn't do what other people have done: I don't talk about what I tell people in private. I don't talk about what we negotiate in private.

What I can assure you, though, is that, the last time, it took 56 days and then 6 months to get a cease-fire. I'm praying this cease-fire will hold. I take Bibi Netanyahu—when he gives me his word, I take him at his word. He's never broken his word to me.

And—but what I've made clear is that it's essential—it's essential—that the Palestinians in—on the West Bank be secured, that Abbas be recognized as a leader of the Palestinian people, which he is. Hamas is a terrorist organization; we've recognized that. But that doesn't mean we should not be in Gaza, rebuilding Gaza for all those innocent people who in fact have been hurt and had been collateral damage, including loss of home and a whole range of other things—as well as insisting that Israeli citizens, whether they be Arab or Jew, are treated equally as Israeli citizens. And that's what was going on in Jerusalem.

And so that has to come to an end. And Bibi know—the Prime Minister knows my views and—but the commitment that was given had—was immediately kept. I—from the very beginning, I told him what our objective was: that there needed to be a cease-fire. And he, in fact, kept his commitment in the timeframe in which he said he would do it. Thank you.

And by the way, I wasn't the only one that spoke to him. We had—I look down here—every major player on my team—from the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, all the way down the line, and our National Security Adviser, were in constant contact with their counterparts in Israel, in Egypt, and throughout the Middle East.

This was not something that was just done with a casual conversation between myself and Bibi. I have—presumptuous of me to say this but, Mr. President—but I think I've got a great team. And the—and I spent a lot of time with Elsisi on the phone in—in Egypt. And they've done a commendable job of bringing Hamas to the table and getting them to agree to a cease-fire as well. Thank you.

Is that it? I think there's one more question over here.

President Moon. Yes. A lady? Our ladies do not raise their hands? Do we not have female journalists from Korea?

Coronavirus Vaccination Efforts in South Korea/Vaccine Manufacturing Cooperation

Q. Good afternoon. I'm from Korea Herald. My name is Lee Ji-yoon. The Korean people are very curious about vaccines, and they're waiting for the good news regarding vaccine. I understand that you've had a lot of discussions with President Biden regarding vaccine, and I wonder whether you have any good news to deliver to the people of Korea. And has there been any meaningful achievement that you want to go into the details of?

President Moon. Yes. Regarding vaccine cooperation, you can read the joint statements and also the remarks that were issued as press release today. But, to emphasize it once again, between the U.S. and Korea for vaccine cooperation, there will be a comprehensive partnership to be established between our two nations, and there has been an agreement between our two sides on that.

The U.S. has the ability to develop vaccines, and Korean companies have the capacity to produce a biomedicine. And we are going to combine those capabilities so that we can boost vaccine supply, so that we can accelerate the rollout of vaccines to the entire world, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. For supplying vaccines to that region, I believe that we'll be able to make a contribution in that regard.

And in that process, Korea, in my opinion, will get some help in stabilizing our vaccine supply. And at the same time, for the sake of the R.O.K.-U.S. alliance, President Biden decided to provide vaccines to the servicemen in Korea as soon as the U.S. is ready. I understand there will be an announcement to be made by the U.S. side.

President Biden. By the way, I can just prematurely make that. And we're going—there are 550,000 Korean soldiers, sailors, airmen who work in close contact with American forces in Korea. We'll provide full vaccinations for all 550,000 of those Korean forces engaging with American forces on a regular basis, both for their sake, as well as the sake of the American forces.

In addition to that, we've talked about the ability to have vaccines produced with our—working with—and this is in the offing—working with one of the major vaccine producers in the United States and to—where Korea is incredibly sophisticated. And with the help of that particular company, we'll be able to make significant numbers of vaccines for themselves.

And lastly, it is my hope and expectation—I cannot commit to it because we don't know for certain—but we think that, over the remainder of 2021, we're going to be able to vaccinate every American. We have enough vaccine to vaccinate every American, period, right now. And we're going to be able to do that by the mid-summer, and we're going to continue to get more people to engage in seeking the vaccine. I don't believe—I never have believed—that there's a large percentage of Americans who will not take the vaccine. And we're doing very imaginative things, and the States are, to get people to show up and have the vaccine.

But we believe—we believe—that, between the second half of 2021 and going in through 2022, we can produce as many as another billion doses of vaccine. Because it's not just—and this is what I like about this President—he's not just talking about it, any more than I'm just talking about the United States or just Korea; he's talking about the Indo-Pacific. He's talking about the world.

We, with advanced capabilities, have an obligation to do everything we can to provide for protection of the entire world. I know that is an awfully, awfully, awfully ambitious proposal, but I think the nations that have that capacity are going to be continuing to work toward getting that done.

And so thank you.

Unidentified Aerial Phenomena

Q. Time for one more, Mr. President?

President Biden. If you're not asking me a mean one like you usually do. [*Laughter*]

Q. It's something interesting, I think, that has not come up. President Obama says that there is footage and records of objects in the skies—these unidentified aerial phenomena—and he says we don't know exactly what they are. What do you think that it is?

President Biden. I would ask him again. Thank you. [*Laughter*] Come on, boss, let's go. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to actor Youn Yuh-jung; President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority; National Security Adviser Jacob J. Sullivan; and President Abdelfattah Said Elsisi of Egypt. President Moon and two reporters spoke in Korean, and their remarks were translated by interpreters. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 22.

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Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Abbas, Mahmoud; Austin, Lloyd J., III; Blinken, Antony J.; Elsisi, Abdelfattah Said; Kim Jong Un; Kim, Sung Y.; Moon Jae-in; Netanyahu, Benjamin; Obama, Barack; Puckett, Ralph, Jr.; Sullivan, Jacob J.; Youn Yuh-jung.

Subjects: Asia : South China Sea, maritime territorial disputes; Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders : Hate crimes and race-based violence; Burma : Democracy efforts; Burma : Military coup; China : Taiwan, political status; Communications : Broadband and wireless technologies; Coronavirus pandemic, international cooperation efforts; Decorations, medals, and awards : Medal of Honor; Defense, Department of : Secretary; Diseases : Coronavirus, domestic prevention efforts; Egypt : President; Environment : Climate change; Indonesia : Ambassador to U.S.; Israel : Intercommunal violence; Israel : Prime Minister; Israel : Security cooperation with U.S.; Legislation, enacted : COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act; Middle East : Arab-Israeli conflict,

peace process; Middle East : Gaza conflict with Israel, international diplomatic efforts; North Korea : Chairman, State Affairs Commission; North Korea : International diplomatic efforts; North Korea : Nuclear weapons development; Palestinian Authority and Palestinians : Hamas political-paramilitary organization; Palestinian Authority and Palestinians : President; Palestinian Authority and Palestinians : U.S. assistance; South Korea : Defense relationship with U.S.; South Korea : President; South Korea : Relations with U.S; South Korea : Relations with U.S.; State, Department of : North Korea Policy, U.S. Special Representative for; State, Department of : Secretary; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: National Security Adviser.

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