

US, South Korean leaders pledge greater military cooperation in war drive against China

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The United States and South Korea on Monday took steps to deepen military cooperation and further inflame tensions in the Indo-Pacific region. Washington is showing that even as it provides complete support for Israel's genocide in Gaza, there will be no easing of the war drive aimed at China.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin arrived in Seoul late Saturday alongside the Pentagon's Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Charles Brown. On Monday, Austin and South Korean Defense Minister Sin Wonsik held the 55th annual Security Consultative Meeting (SCM). They released the 2023 Tailored Deterrence Strategy (TDS), the first revision to the TDS in ten years.

The revisions emphasized "extended deterrence" collaboration, ostensibly directed at North Korea. In reality, this means joint cooperation between Washington and Seoul on the use of US nuclear weapons through the new Nuclear Consultative Group (NCG), announced following the April summit between Presidents Joe Biden and his South Korean counterpart Yoon Suk-yeol. The NCG is modeled after a similar body that decides nuclear policy within NATO.

A joint communiqué released after the SCM declared that the "NCG will serve a key role in developing combined defense posture as a bilateral consultative body to strengthen extended deterrence, discuss nuclear and strategic planning, and manage" the supposed North Korean threat.

The communiqué is an outline for a US-instigated nuclear war with China. It employs Washington's typical thinly-veiled language used to denounce Beijing. Austin and Sin reaffirmed their supposed "respect for international law including freedom of

navigation and overflight and other lawful use of the seas, including the South China Sea and beyond." They further "acknowledged the importance of preserving peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait."

These are not innocent remarks. For years Washington has stoked formerly minor territorial disputes in Southeast Asia to put pressure on Beijing while also overturning the "One China" policy on Taiwan in all but name. The references to the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait are designed to ratchet up tensions by placing them at the center of the allies' military planning.

The communiqué reiterates US plans for building a web of alliances in the region, first and foremost a trilateral military alliance with South Korea and Japan. The document states that the war-planning summit at Camp David in August "marked a new chapter in US-ROK [South Korea]-Japan security cooperation" and called for the expansion of "trilateral security cooperation including senior-level policy consultations, trilateral exercises, information sharing, and defense exchange cooperation."

Both Japan and South Korea are key components of Washington's war plans and the construction of a ballistic missile system targeting China. Austin and Sin met Sunday with Japanese Defense Minister Minoru Kihara, who attended the session remotely from Tokyo, and pledged to launch a three-way missile detection system, sharing information in real-time by next month. They also agreed to develop more detailed plans on holding trilateral war games "more systematically and effectively" beginning in January.

These developments, unveiled shortly before President Biden is set to meet with Chinese President

Xi Jinping in San Francisco on Wednesday, serve to apply additional pressure beforehand. Beijing criticized the US-South Korean military plans through a November 13 opinion piece in the *Global Times*. It warned: “The US-Japan-South Korea security cooperation could accelerate the NATO-ization of the Asia-Pacific region, which will not only have a significant negative impact on the security environment around China, but also on the cooperation process in East Asia.”

The danger of war is not giving the US pause. For all of Washington’s claims of “respect for international law,” the genocide Israel is conducting in Gaza with the full backing of the US makes it glaringly clear what Washington really means by the “rules-based order.” The declaration by the Biden administration that there are no “red lines” for Israel when it comes to slaughtering Palestinians, likewise means there will be no red line Washington will not cross in stoking and conducting a war with China, including the use of nuclear weapons.

Seoul is using the slaughter in Gaza to promote the US war agenda. At a meeting with Austin on Sunday, South Korean President Yoon called on the US to “maintain the joint Korea-US defense posture that can immediately and firmly punish North Korea even if it miscalculates and carries out any provocation including a Hamas-style surprise attack.”

Seoul has denounced Hamas’ supposed “surprise” attack on October 7, which in reality was a popular uprising against the fascistic Netanyahu regime after decades of brutal suppression by Israel. Yoon has essentially endorsed Israel’s fraudulent claims that it is defending itself, as well as the genocidal methods it is using against the Palestinians. At the same time, Yoon’s administration is creating an atmosphere, without any evidence, that Pyongyang is planning some sort of “surprise” attack.

This provides Washington and its allies with the pretext to continue their military buildups, as they whip up tensions with North Korea, an impoverished former colonial country of 26 million people, through threats and economic isolation. Washington then seizes on any response by Pyongyang to blame China for the situation.

Last week, during a visit to Seoul following a G7 foreign ministers meeting in Tokyo, US Secretary of

State Antony Blinken claimed that Beijing was not doing enough to influence Pyongyang to give up its weapons programs. “China has a unique relationship with North Korea,” he stated. “We do look to China to use that influence to play a constructive role in pulling North Korea from this irresponsible and dangerous behavior.”

Blinken declared that the Indo-Pacific remained an “area of sustained focus” for the US.

Emphasizing this point, Washington has deployed a number of strategic assets to the region in recent weeks. This includes dispatching a B-52 bomber to the Korean Peninsula, with such an aircraft landing in South Korea for the first time. The bomber took part in trilateral air force drills, the first held between the US, South Korea and Japan. The US has also sent the USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier strike group to the region, joining the USS Ronald Reagan aircraft carrier.

Both US aircraft carriers have held significant drills over the past week, with the Carl Vinson taking part in the Exercise 2023 alongside Japan, Canada, Australia and the Philippines, close to where the war games took place.

Currently, the US has two aircraft carrier groups in both the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific, effectively threatening wider and potentially nuclear wars on each side of the Eurasian landmass.



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