

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 9, 2026

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump,

We write with alarm at your decision to unilaterally halt the U.S.-ROK Ulchi Freedom Shield Exercise which started on August 17, and to do so without prior notice to South Korea. This decision has strained a 73-year alliance and risks undermining readiness, security, and deterrence on the Korean Peninsula. We urge you to reverse course and affirm that bilateral and multilateral military exercises with South Korea will continue as planned and not be linked to other bilateral policy issues.

Your decision appears to be in response to frustration with South Korea's unwillingness to join your war against Iran, and the dangerous misconception that North Korea poses no threat to the United States. Kim Jong Un has threatened to attack the US with an intercontinental ballistic missile and conducted its last nuclear test in 2017. Since rejecting your diplomatic overture at the 2019 Hanoi Summit, he has doubled down on North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, which threaten the United States and our allies Japan and South Korea. North Korea has sent thousands of troops to support Russia's war against Ukraine and signed a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty with Russia in 2024. Its expanded partnership with Russia and China further underscores the need for close U.S.-ROK coordination.

Given North Korea's backing from China and Russia, it is best to deal with North Korea from a united front. Negotiations with Kim will not succeed if Washington and Seoul are not aligned. By rebuffing Seoul and halting U.S.-ROK military exercises—two unilateral concessions for which you got nothing in return— you have now given Kim the upper-hand. North Korea's initial response to your decision reinforces this concern: Kim Jong Un fired 10 ballistic missiles on August 20, and Kim Yo Jong, his sister and adviser, declared that Pyongyang remained uninterested in talks with the United States.

We are especially disappointed that you announced the decision regarding Freedom Shield publicly, without consultation with South Korea. These actions demonstrate a pattern and raise serious questions about America's commitment and credibility in South Korea and among our allies across the Indo-Pacific. Those doubts may lead Seoul to reconsider its commitment to invest \$350 billion in the United States, including in the shipbuilding sector to enhance our maritime partnership. They may also make it more difficult to coordinate with Seoul against PRC coercion and malign influence. Furthermore, fears about U.S. commitment may embolden

those in South Korea that want to obtain nuclear weapons, an alarming prospect for regional security and nuclear non-proliferation.

Your public comments justifying the decision have included false claims that denigrate the alliance and economic partnership the United States shares with Korea, as well as the tangible steps that the President Lee Jae Myung has taken to strengthen the U.S.-ROK partnership. Your decision to unilaterally move THAAD assets off the Peninsula and drain essential U.S. munitions in the war against Iran had already presented challenges to South Korea. Now, by halting joint exercises at the last minute without notification and consultation, you have damaged trust between our militaries and governments and made security cooperation more difficult.

In short, while your frustrations with Seoul are misplaced, the potential harm to America's national security and economic interests are very real. We urge you to ensure that future U.S.-ROK military exercises will not be reduced absent allied consultation and a clear, verifiable security rationale. American credibility in the Indo-Pacific depends on treating our treaty allies as true partners, with whom we coordinate and cooperate with closely for our shared security and prosperity.

Sincerely,



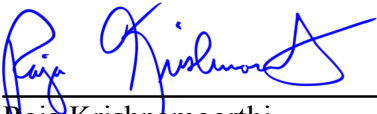
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Gregory W. Meeks  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Foreign  
Affairs



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Ami Bera, M.D.  
Member of Congress



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Raja Krishnamoorthi  
Member of Congress

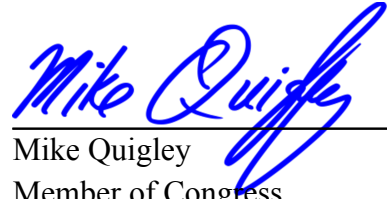


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Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress



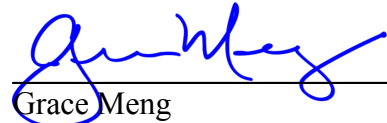
Dave Min  
Member of Congress



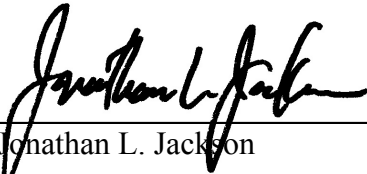
Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress



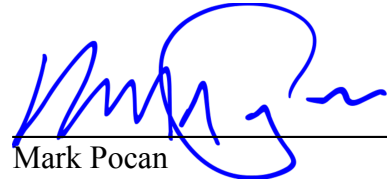
Stephen F. Lynch  
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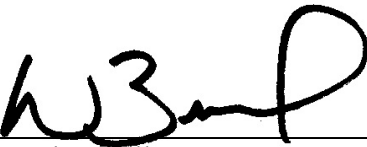
Grace Meng  
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Jonathan L. Jackson  
Member of Congress



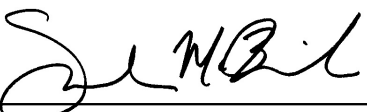
Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



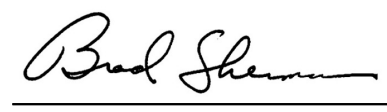
Wesley Bell  
Member of Congress



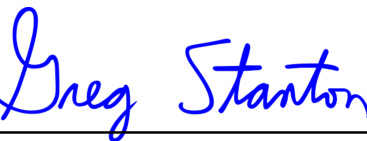
Mary Gay Scanlon  
Member of Congress



Sarah McBride  
Member of Congress



Brad Sherman  
Member of Congress



Greg Stanton  
Member of Congress



Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



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Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress



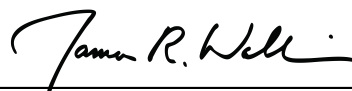
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Gabe Amo  
Member of Congress



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Jim Costa  
Member of Congress



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James R. Walkinshaw  
Member of Congress



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Thomas R. Suozzi  
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Veronica Escobar  
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