



(S//SI) Back in Time: A Look at the US-ROK SIGINT Relationship

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(S//SI) The SIGINT relationship with the Republic of Korea (ROK) began initially as a way of ensuring a steady flow of SIGINT to American forces during wartime, and even with the cessation of hostilities, the primary concern of U.S. planners remained war-related. The fact that its primary reason for existence revolved around issues of peace and war allowed the relationship to remain under NSA aegis rather than reverting to CIA control. This in turn influenced the course taken in managing subsequent foreign relations.

(S//SI) At the time of the armistice in 1953, the cryptologic community took stock of its operations in Korea, assessed future needs in terms of threat and resources to meet the threat, and made arrangements to implement these assessments. In reevaluating wartime arrangements, the US cryptologic community found them unsatisfactory for a number of reasons and sought to reshape the US-ROK SIGINT relations in beneficial ways.

(S//SI) The process began with temporizing measures to ensure the flow of signals intelligence to US forces in Korea; was followed by a period of uncertainty in which senior intelligence officials discussed options in policy; and concluded with the negotiation of a bilateral agreement concerning SIGINT. In undertaking this process, the US forced the consolidation of two existing ROK military SIGINT units into an organization loosely modeled on its US counterparts, creating for the ROK a national SIGINT service. At the same time, the US established its own entity, the United States Special Liaison Advisor Korea (SUSLAK), to deal with the new organization.

(S//SI) The central ROK SIGINT authority, The Defense Security Agency (DSA), subordinate to the Ministry of National Defense, was created at the time the bilateral agreement became effective on 10 January 1956. [REDACTED] was appointed as Director, DSA, with Colonel Cho Yong Il as his deputy. [REDACTED], from the Pacific Division of NSA's Office of Analysis, was nominated as the first Chief of SUSLAK on 6 December 1955.

(S//SI) **The ROK-US agreement marked several new developments in Third Party relations.** For one thing, it was negotiated and managed by NSA instead of CIA, a departure from past practice. The value of the agreement is borne out by its longevity and its stability. Despite the fluctuation in relations between the two countries in the early years, the SIGINT relationship has continued -- and deepened. Over many decades it has proved a strong cornerstone of US SIGINT policy in East Asia.



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