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OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Minister, distinguished delegates: I am delighted to be back in Korea. I wish to thank you, Mr. Minister, for the welcome you have accorded me and for the warmth of the reception and dinner which you hosted last night.

This is my fourth visit to this country in little more than two years. I have come often because defense cooperation between our two countries is vital to the security of the United States. In addition, the friendship you always extend to me and my colleagues is such that our meetings are invariably pleasant as well as productive. Bonds of sentiment as well as strands of mutual interest link the fate and fortunes of our peoples.

In opening this twelfth annual U.S.-ROK Security Consultative Meeting (SCM), Mr. Minister, I want to affirm my conviction that U.S.-ROK security ties are in excellent shape.

- The Combined Forces Command which was established nearly a year ago is functioning smoothly.

- We share a common appreciation of the challenge posted by North Korea's continuing buildup of its military forces.

- We have recently taken complementary actions to respond to that challenge. Upon my return from my last visit here I directed my staff to examine ways in which we could improve our Force Posture.

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Several proposals were examined and I am pleased to tell you Mr. Minister, that just prior to leaving the United States, I approved the accelerated deployments of the 2nd and 3rd AWACS to Okinawa, upgrading two Howitzer Battalions to 155MM, as well as upgrading helicopter gunships deployed with the 2d infantry division. In addition we will be prepared to deploy an A-10 squadron to Korea in the early 80's if your government can finance construction of the required facilities as well as certain support costs.

-- The modifications in the U.S. troop withdrawal policy announced by President Carter in July should reinforce deterrence, provide tangible evidence of U.S. steadiness and resolve, and provide North Korea with incentives eventually to undertake a serious and substantive dialogue with your government.

-- Your government's expressed intention to expand its defense efforts, concentrating particularly upon improvement of ground forces represents, in my judgment, an appropriate response to our common assessment of the existing military balance.

These steps are timely and they are appropriate. Our task is to build upon this foundation to assure even more efficient and effective joint efforts to strengthen deterrence and to assure adequate defenses if, God forbid, deterrence should fail.

Therefore, Mr. Minister, we have important work to do in the next two days. I have come to Seoul determined to strengthen our partnership. I look forward to our discussions.

(You may then wish to introduce the U.S. delegation)

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