



| ASAN WASHINGTON FORUM 2013 |

# Keynote Address

## Richard Cheney

Former Vice President of the United States

### Summary

Former Vice President Richard Cheney shared his experiences with the Korean Peninsula and observations on US foreign policy as a keynote speaker for the Asan Washington Forum 2013, marking the 60th anniversary of the ROK-US alliance. Cheney recalled his earliest memory in association with Korea, when he viewed an American sergeant receiving the Congressional Medal of Honor for his service in the Korean War. This captured Cheney's early understanding of the efforts made to defend South Korea and build a robust ROK-US alliance. That alliance remains critical today, and it is tasked with dealing with potential proliferation of nuclear technologies by North Korea.

Cheney recalled the attacks of September 11, 2001 and how terrorism was no longer a matter of law enforcement but of war. In addition to responding to the 9/11 attacks, it was necessary to think ahead and prevent the next attack, which could involve the use of nuclear material by terrorists. Cheney observed how since 9/11, nuclear proliferation threats from Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, and the A.Q. Kahn network based in Pakistan were eliminated. Yet additional threats remain. North Korea was found to be directly involved in nuclear and missile developments in the Middle East despite its participation in the Six-Party Talks, including constructing a nuclear reactor in Syria. Cheney said the situation in Syria today is serious, including concern about chemical weapons, but he said the situation would be much worse if the North Korean-built nuclear reactor in Syria had not been destroyed by the Israelis in 2007.

Cheney was critical of the current administration's policies regarding North Korea, Iran, and reductions in the US defense budget. He was critical of the Obama administration's focus on missile reduction with Russia rather than focusing on the



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nuclear potential of rogue states. Cheney questioned whether Obama's policy for preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear technology is sufficiently robust. He argued the administration's withdrawal from Iraq failed to leave a needed troop presence, and that the reduction of US military presence in the Middle East and pivot toward Asia are driven by budgetary rather than strategic considerations. Cheney voiced apprehension over the consequences of what he says is a lack of trust between the United States and its allies and a lack of fear of US capabilities by potential enemies.

In conclusion, Cheney expressed his concern that the current administration's push to redirect resources from defense and national security to domestic programs will hinder future presidents' ability to respond to crises and keep commitments to US allies around the world, including South Korea. He encouraged Asan Washington Forum participants to be candid about their perspectives on the direction that should be taken by future US administrations.

\* The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies.