

“Remembering the former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld” by Mong Joon Chung, Honorary Chairman of Asan Institute for Policy Studies

Media Contact: Communications Department
(82-2-3701-7338, communications@asaninst.org)

When I heard the news that the former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld passed away, I remembered meeting him in Washington ten years ago.

In October 2011, I visited the former Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld's office in Washington, D.C. to discuss various issues, including ROK-U.S. relations. The conversation was later written in my book titled “Communications with Leaders of the World” published at the end of that year.

I had met Secretary Rumsfeld several times before, but it was the first time I had such a long conversation with him. He was by nature a calm person. The conversation included a good sense of humor. As someone who had served as the U.S. Secretary of Defense twice and had been concerned with conflicts large and small around the world, he seemed to be at ease. It was impressive that he was not trapped by the circumstances while looking at the reality calmly.

In an interview at the time, he said, "I do not think the North Korean regime will give up its nuclear weapons" and emphasized that "We need power to keep the peace." And then he argued, “If I were a South Korean, to have the power to persuade or deter North Korea, I would want the government to become stronger by investing more in defense spending.”

Secretary Rumsfeld added, "China will not pose a military threat to the United States, but it will pose a potential threat to the world." He continued on by saying that “the majority of democratic countries located around China must work together to ensure that China does not act coercively.” It was an insight that had accurately predicted the present situation ten years ago.

Even these days, I occasionally read the book containing conversations with the former Secretary Rumsfeld that is always on my desk. I was planning to visit the United States and meet him when the pandemic subsides. When I heard the news of his passing, I felt I lost a friend who has been most helpful to my country.

May Secretary Rumsfeld rest in peace

July 2, 2021.

Mong Joon Chung

Honorary Chairman, Asan Institute for Policy Studies

###

The Asan Institute for Policy Studies (<http://en.asaninst.org/>) is an independent think tank that provides innovative policy solutions and spearheads public discourse on the core issues in Korea, East Asia and the world. Our goal is to assist policymakers to make better informed and mutually beneficial policy decisions.