

▶ Chapter 10

Turmoil and Transformation in the Security Alliances between Japan, the USA, and ROK ——Restoration of the US-ROK Alliance and Renewal of the Japan-US Alliance

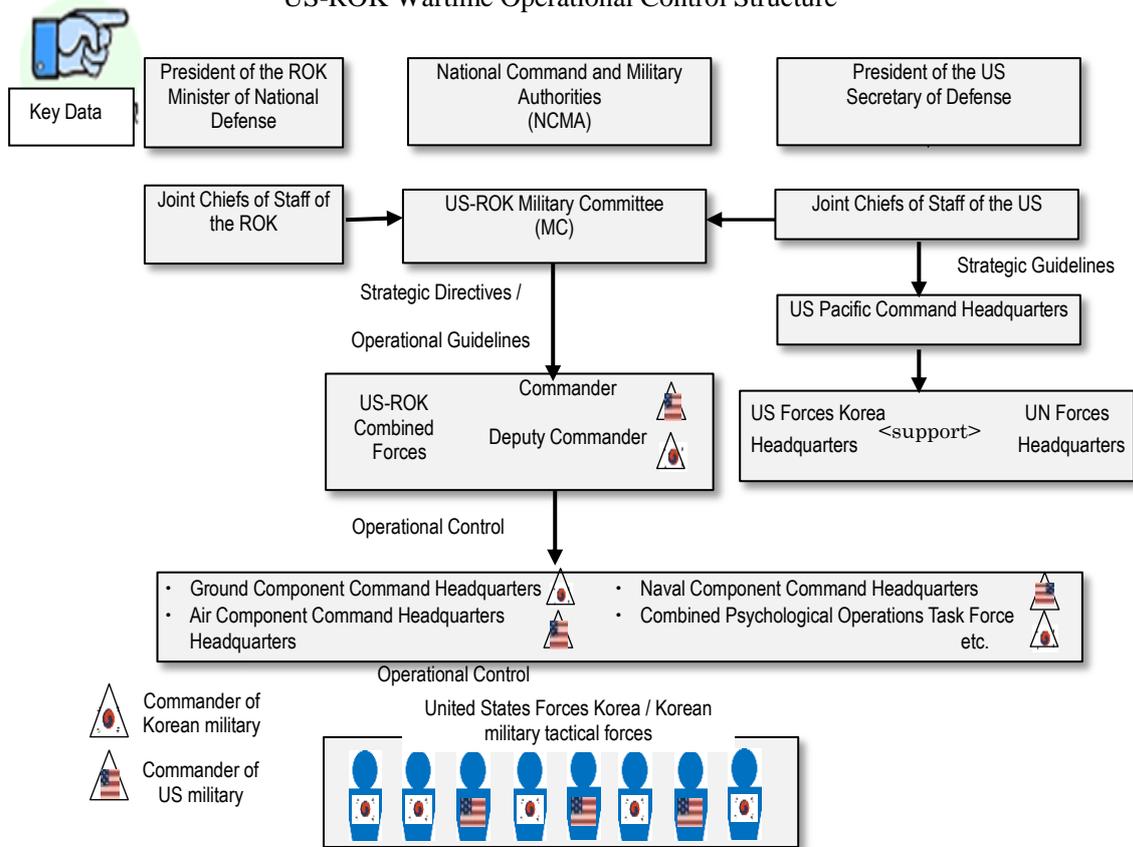
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[Key Points]

- In October 2014, the US and ROK agreed to delay the transfer of wartime operational control from the US military to ROK's military authority for the time being and to keep a major US military unit in ROK at its current base north of Seoul. This agreement has considerably alleviated ROK's concerns about decoupling of the US mainland from any localized hostilities on the Korean Peninsula, thereby easing anxiety that ROK would be abandoned by the US in a time of war.
- The decision by the US and ROK means the maintaining the structure wherein the US military would control the ROK military and cooperate with the Self-Defense Forces in the event of a contingency on the Korean Peninsula. Naturally, the renewal of the Japan-US Alliance in the form of the revised Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation also has an impact on relations between Japan and ROK. The logistical support by the Self-Defense Forces referred to in Japan's new security legislation will contribute to the safety of both Japan and ROK. As the US military retains the right of operational control over ROK in wartime, it would be difficult to restrain only the Self-Defense Forces – which would be providing logistical support for deployment – while Korea entrusts control to the US military.
- Strengthening regional security cooperation with a primary focus on Japan, the US, and ROK is essential to addressing the military risks posed by North Korea. Peacetime policy coordination between Japan and South Korea is required, to ensure that the US military's right of wartime operational control does not conflict with the direction taken by the President of the ROK, who holds supreme command. There is an urgent need for Japan and ROK to conclude an agreement to facilitate the smooth exchange of goods, services, and military intelligence.

US-ROK Wartime Operational Control Structure



Source: Compiled by the author