

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 29, 2019

The Honorable Patrick M. Shanahan
Acting Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Acting Secretary Shanahan:

Diplomatic engagement with the North Korean regime is the best option to reduce the threat posed by Pyongyang's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs. But we are concerned the ongoing suspension of exercises with the Republic of Korea (ROK) Armed Forces may be undermining readiness for little benefit.

Since the June 2018 Singapore summit, the United States has suspended ULCHI FREEDOM GUARDIAN, VIGILANT ACE, and other smaller exercises with the ROK Armed Forces. Your office has characterized this suspension as a "good faith gesture to enable diplomacy." But with the International Atomic Energy Agency assessment that the North Korean nuclear program is continuing and developing further, we believe it would be appropriate to resume exercises in coordination with the ROK.

Ultimately, the timing and scope of bilateral exercises should be dictated by national security interests, not the whims of the Pyongyang regime. And we do not view military exercises as contrary to ongoing diplomatic efforts. By demonstrating the U.S. commitment to a treaty ally and promoting readiness, military exercises with the ROK Armed Forces are complementary to joint efforts to pressure North Korea to reduce or eliminate its nuclear program.

We urge you to work with your South Korean counterpart to resume bilateral exercises, thus delinking the issue of military cooperation with an ally from ongoing negotiations with North Korea. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



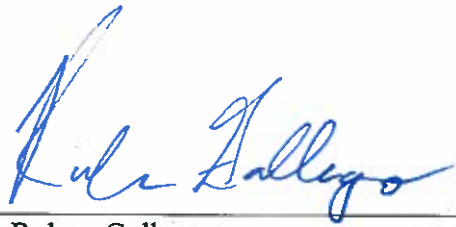
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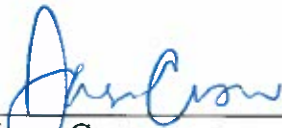
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