

The Korea Times

Former US Envoy to Korea Passes Away

White House Photo 1981



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Former U.S. Ambassador to Korea James R. Lilley (1986-89) [US Presidents Regan and George HW Bush. ltd] died in Washington, D.C., last Thursday local time from complications related to prostate cancer. He was 81.

Lilley was born in 1929 in Qingdao, China, to an oil executive father and a schoolteacher mother. He grew up there, paving the way for his expertise on the country, until his family moved back to the U.S. at the outbreak of the World War II.

Graduating from George Washington University, the former ambassador was hired by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), in which he spent the next 30 years covering various Asian countries, including Japan, Taiwan, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand.

His post in Korea between 1986 and 1989 was his second diplomatic post after Taiwan. Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo were in office, and public revolts against the non-democratic government ran high.

Many Koreans remember him as the envoy who visited Cheong Wa Dae to dissuade then-President Chun

Doo-hwan from declaring martial law in June 1987 when the nation was in great turmoil amid the popular call to introduce a direct presidential election system.

In his autobiography, "China Hands," published in 2004, Lilley recalled the 6.10 Democratization Movement in 1987, a rally against then-President Chun's appointment of Roh as his party's candidate for the presidential election slated for the same year.

People stood against Chun's appointment, as it was perceived as handing Roh the presidency.

Lilley delivered to Chun then-U.S. President Ronald Reagan's hand-written letter pleading against the appointment.

After Korea, he served as the U.S. Ambassador to China.

While in China between 1989 and 1991, he witnessed the 1989 Tiananmen protest, came forward publicly to criticize the crackdown and sent reports of unfolding events directly to President George [HW] Bush, with whom Lilley had a special connection.

When Bush learned of Lilley's passing, he said in a statement that he was "a most knowledgeable and effective ambassador, who served with great honor and distinction."

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who is currently on a tour of Asia, also called him one of the finest diplomats of all-time who served during "one of the most difficult periods in our bilateral relations" with China.

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CKVA COMMENT

We extend our sympathy and prayers to the family and friends Ambassador Lilley: well done, good and trusted patriot of America—a *legacy of diplomatic distinction*.

Ambassador Lilley served during the overlapping periods of command of two Commanders in Chief, UN Command, Combined Forces Command, and US Forces Korea/8th Army: General William J Livsey-1984-1987- and General Louis C. Menetrey- 26 Jun 87 - 26 Jun 90. As the article reports there were many times of stress and threats to the mutual alliance during that period.

Ambassador Lilley, along with Dr. Kim Sang-chul, was also instrumental in the formation of the US Korea Allies Council in Washington, DC, May 11, 2007. Ambassador Lilley was an honored member and advisor of the Council.

I was elected the Chairman. I ask that you review with me a portion of the my remarks made at the National Press Club at the charter meeting—views shared by Ambassador Lilley--because they seem freshly appropriate even after a change of administrations in each of our Nations, and especially after almost three more years of North Korean lies and gyrations.

The **US-Korea Allies Council for Korean Reunification (UKAC)** is an organizing group of citizens of both of our Nations who **insist** that our Nations **persist in our half century objectives AND resist the enticements to surrender** just as our fighting forces did for almost three years, 1951-1953. The Council does not advocate force of arms—and it condemns surrender. Many men died in that **PANMUNJOM** period, on both sides and we ended up with a ceasefire—not yet a peace treaty and not surrender—which in blood birthed the alliance of our two Nations, that has fostered the growth of freedom ever more strongly each day since July 27, 1953. Our group believes—as stated in the old motto of America's first War Department: **THIS WE WILL DEFEND! A Free KOREA secure in an agreed and implemented PEACE TREATY FOR THE NUCLEAR FREE PENINSULA.**

WHY NOW?

*Some might question the need for our actions at this time—after all, were not the recent accords successful. That all depends upon how one defines success. If spreading a thin veneer over **NORTH KOREAN** actions, ambition, betrayal of signed protocols, and inhumane treatment of its own citizens is success, then the talks accomplished something. UKAC does not regard that as a success by any definition. In fact, we have now seen continued prolongation of promises that go unmet, debts as it were, ignored. Today the development of nuclear weapons—and other deadly weapons—continues in **NORTH KOREA**.*

Why Now? *Return with me for a moment to **PANMUNJEON** as we experienced it each day for nearly three years. Men died by our sides each one of those days—the majority of the combat losses came after the talks began. In 1951, 52, 53 we did not seek to encourage progress by diminishing our forces or resolve in the face of **CHINESE** and **NORTH KOREAN** threats, boycotts, prisoner riots, or even when Dr. Rhee disagreed. We—the armed forces of the **REPUBLIC OF KOREA** and of the **UNITED STATES** and certain other **UN** members were resolute and we prevailed, at least part of the way: the ceasefire. **WE HAVE YET TO PERSEVERE TO A PEACE TREATY.***

WHAT IS THE UKAC, WHAT DO WE BELIEVE, and WHY WE ARE ORGANIZING—BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT IRRESOLUTION WILL NOT BRING PEACE TO THE KOREAN PENINSULA.

Ladies and Gentlemen, GOD bless the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, GOD bless AMERICA, and may GOD bless our efforts.

*Louis T Dechert
May 11, 2007*

We salute Ambassador Lilley and rededicate ourselves to the purposes which he so admirably served during a distinguished career. We suggest a more detailed rendering of Ambassador Lilley's career be viewed at

http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/nov/15/veteran-china-hand-lilley-dies/?feat=home_top5_shared

Louis T Dechert
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National President and Chairman of the Board, KWVA/USA, 2004-2008
Founder and Co-Chairman, US Federation of Korea Veterans Organizations, USFKVO
[Sponsors of Medal of Honor Resolution for Father Emil Kapaun, Chaplain,
8th Cavalry Regiment, Died in Captivity, Korea, 1951]
Chairman, US-Korea Allies Council, UKAC