

**May 18, 1978**  
**Letter to Park Chung Hee from Jimmy Carter**

**Citation:**

"Letter to Park Chung Hee from Jimmy Carter", May 18, 1978, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Korea, Republic of, 5/78-11/80, Box 2, Plains Files, President's Personal Foreign Affairs Files, Jimmy Carter Library. Obtained by Charles Kraus  
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/144955>

**Summary:**

Carter writes to Park to ask for help to reduce tensions on the peninsula and facilitate the resumption of a serious North-South dialogue.

**Original Language:**

English

**Contents:**

Original Scan

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for your kind letter of May 3 on the emergency landing of the Korean airline flight in the Soviet Union. We were glad to be of assistance, but regret the tragic and unnecessary loss of life.

I have asked Dr. Brzezinski to share with you our thoughts and to seek your own views about the future of our relations.

In my letter of July 21, 1977, I reiterated to you the commitment of the United States to the security of the Republic of Korea; that commitment remains firm. Although the speed of developments in our Congress offered minimal time for consultation with you prior to my recent decision to defer two-thirds of the first phase of withdrawal of ground combat forces until next year, I made that decision in the light of your views on the importance of adequate compensatory military measures being taken in parallel with the changes in our deployments. As I have assured you before, I shall implement this program in a manner which preserves a military balance on the peninsula, and thus protects the security of the Republic of Korea. Should circumstances affecting the balance change in any significant way, we will assess those changes in close consultation with you.

The United States is determined to help maintain peace and an environment for economic growth in Northeast Asia. We fully appreciate Korea's major sacrifices and firm dedication to the security and defense of your nation against aggression. We shall continue to provide appropriate assistance to help strengthen and modernize your armed forces.

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6  
PER 6/14/97 NK RE XLC-96-222  
BY SP NARS. DATE 6/14/97

In view of the dangers of continued confrontation and the heavy burdens of defense which your society must shoulder, I hope you will continue to look for ways of reducing tensions on the peninsula and facilitating the resumption of a serious North-South dialogue. We are fully aware of the dangerous nature of the threat you face. We are prepared to consult closely on possible steps which might ease this situation.

Rest assured that we understand what the North Koreans are trying to achieve through their current efforts to lure the United States Government into direct bilateral discussions. I have emphasized to all concerned that we will not engage in any such talks which do not include representatives of your government as full and equal participants. Suggestions by the North Koreans that they will not talk with your government, but only with a successor regime, are completely unacceptable, and I made my views on this point clear to both Mr. Tito and Mr. Ceausescu when they were recently in Washington.

I applaud the repeated willingness of your government to address these issues with the North in a pragmatic dialogue. We stand ready to support any promising initiatives which you may suggest. These are matters on which we must continue to act in close consultation and coordination.

I have been informed of the recent visit to Washington of your Minister of Energy and Resources and of the fruitful discussions he had with members of my government. The United States intends to remain a reliable supplier of nuclear power technology and fuel and we are pleased to be able to work together with you in your major electric power expansion program.

I have noted with gratification the relaxation in recent months of certain restrictions on political expression in South Korea. While the internal affairs of your government are not my direct concern, you are aware of the American people's strong commitment to the rights of the individual. I am confident that you will find your society and government strengthened by the free interplay of ideas, and

I look forward confidently to further steps in the next few months along the road of political evolution and freedom on which you are embarked.

In closing, I would like to commend you and your government for taking a number of difficult actions designed to overcome some of the strains that have troubled our relations in this last year. These have been very helpful. Through our combined efforts I believe we can fully restore the special friendship and common interest binding our peoples.

Sincerely,

|S|

His Excellency  
Chung Hee Park  
President of the Republic of Korea  
Seoul

President signed letter May 17, 1978--  
ZB has original -- taking on the trip  
for hand delivery