

## **S. Korea, U.S. Agree on Missile Guidelines, MTCR Membership**

- [Arms Control Today](#)

### **Alex Wagner**

After five years of consultations with the United States, South Korea announced on January 17 that it would develop new guidelines extending the permitted range of its missiles to 300 kilometers, increasing its military capabilities while still allowing it to apply for membership in the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). The same day, the United States declared it would support Seoul's immediate membership in the MTCR.

The MTCR is a voluntary regime of 32 states that seeks to limit missile proliferation by restricting its members' exports of missiles—and missile technology—capable of delivering a 500-kilogram payload 300 kilometers or more. While this threshold typically applies only to MTCR members' missile-related exports, since 1993 the United States has required all new MTCR members—except nuclear-weapon states—to forgo possession of all missiles exceeding the regime's export threshold. Since all MTCR decisions, including membership, must be approved by consensus, new MTCR members must meet the U.S. requirement in order to join the regime.

The new guidelines will allow South Korea to build missiles capable of reaching most targets in North Korea, including Pyongyang. The guidelines also allow Seoul to build missiles with ranges exceeding 300 kilometers for research purposes and to develop rocket boosters of unlimited range for civilian purposes. Once it becomes a member of the MTCR, South Korea will be able to obtain civilian rocket technology from other regime members.

South Korea restricted its missile range to 180 kilometers in a 1979 agreement with the United States, in which Washington offered technology to support Seoul's prescribed missile systems. Wary of advances in North Korean missile capabilities, Seoul notified the United States in 1995 that it wished to adjust these restrictions, and bilateral negotiations ensued.

Amid the ongoing negotiations, in the fall of 1999, press reports claimed that South Korea was developing missiles that violated the 1979 arrangement—charges that South Korean and U.S. officials strongly denied at the time.

In October 2000, South Korean media reports indicated that a deal was imminent, but the South Korean embassy in Washington said that the parties were still working out "the modalities of the announcement." It appears likely that the parties postponed announcing a deal until after then-President Bill Clinton decided not to visit North Korea to work out a separate missile deal, since U.S. endorsement of longer-range South Korean missiles could have disrupted those negotiations.

While the new deal still has the potential to exacerbate thawing U.S. and South Korean relations with Pyongyang, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher described the new guidelines as striking "the right balance" between strengthening South Korean security and "respecting regional stability and global non-proliferation principles." Washington plans to support South Korea's MTCR membership at the group's March intersessional meeting in Paris.

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Published on Arms Control Association (<https://www.armscontrol.org>)

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