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Grace Meng

Congress of the United States

Sixth District, New York

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The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Mark T. Esper
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1300 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

November 15, 2019

Dear Secretaries Pompeo and Esper,

I write to express concern regarding ongoing negotiations over the Special Measures Agreement (SMA) between the United States and South Korea.

Multiple news outlets have reported that, on his visit to South Korea this week, Secretary Esper requested that the next SMA include a financial obligation of \$4.7 billion that Seoul must contribute so that U.S. troops would remain on the Peninsula. To request a 500% increase within one year from Seoul shows no regard for the mutual benefit of this critical alliance, and puts U.S. national security and economic interests in the region in jeopardy. These negotiations should be grounded in deep trust between both parties, and an appreciation for the mutual benefit that they provide. Instead, Secretary Esper's opening position shows an interest only in strong-arming and in embarrassing a critical ally.

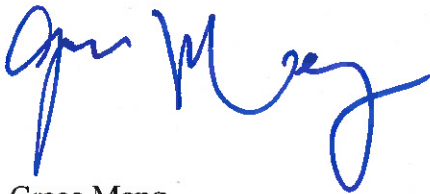
On February 6, 2019 I wrote to Secretary Pompeo expressing support for the conclusion of a robust multi-year Special Measures Agreement (SMA) – the cost-sharing agreement that supports the United States military presence in South Korea. I never received a response from the State Department, although the Trump and Moon Administrations agreed to a preliminary one-year SMA later that month.

The security relationship between Seoul and Washington is perhaps one of the most non-controversial and mutually beneficial relationships in which the U.S. participates. While its value should not require an explanation to either the State Department or to the Pentagon, these

aggressive negotiation tactics imply that its value is underappreciated. The U.S.-South Korean alliance has been the foundation for peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and throughout the region. Our force posture on the Peninsula has enhanced the United States' ability to deter North Korean aggression, contributed to a durable peace in the Indo-Pacific, expanded economic growth among Indo-Pacific countries' economies, and has kept nuclear proliferation among Asian countries at bay for decades.

I urge you to reconsider and engage in good faith negotiations that result in a strong, five-year Special Measures Agreement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Grace Meng", with a stylized, flowing script.

Grace Meng
Member of Congress
