

United States-ROK Status of Forces Agreement



The U.S. - ROK Status of Forces Agreement is an international agreement designed to serve the mutual interests of the U.S. and the Republic of Korea to protect the basic rights of U.S. citizens subject to its provisions.

The U.S.-ROK SOFA recognizes U.S. sovereign immunities and balances the American citizen's individual rights with obligations to the ROK government and local laws.

The SOFA applies to members of the U.S. Armed Forces both military and civilian, invited contractors, technical representatives and family members.

Civilian and military personnel of the U.S. Embassy and JUSMAG-K enjoy privileges under the SOFA, but are covered by separate agreements with the ROK government.

SOFA-status personnel must abide by Korean laws except where the SOFA supersedes or abridges Korean law. For example, active duty military per-

sonnel are exempt from passport and visa requirements and SOFA-status personnel are exempt from Korean taxes on wages and salaries paid by the U.S. government.

SOFA-status personnel are obliged to respect the laws of the ROK and abstain from any activity inconsistent with the spirit of the agreement and, in particular, from any political activity.

For SOFA-status personnel entering Korean on a passport, the Korean visa should be a category "A-3" and "multiple entry."

Passport holders must also have "SOFA Verification" stamped next to the visa. Application for "A-3" and multiple entry visa classification and SOFA verification are made at any ROK immigration Office.

Citizens of other countries other than the U.S. should check with the Korean Embassy in their country prior to leaving. Single

entry visas will keep them from traveling outside Korea during their tour.

Contact the local Army Community Service, military or civilian personnel office for information and necessary paperwork.

The SOFA acknowledges the ROK government's right to exercise jurisdiction over USFK personnel accused of violating Korean laws. Accused persons remain in U.S. custody until all judicial proceedings are completed.

SOFA status personnel are permitted to import, during a period of six months from the date of first arrival in Korea, reasonable quantities of personal items, household goods and furniture for their private use.

Certain items are afforded duty free import: privately owned vehicle spare parts and reasonable quantities of personal items and household goods received through the U.S. Military Postal

System. USFK may import and sell duty free goods to authorized patrons through commissaries and non-appropriated fund organizations.

Illegal transfer of duty-free goods is prohibited by Korean laws, SOFA and USFK regulations. USFK personnel may provide limited amounts of clothing and personal items to domestic employees. USFK Regulation 643-2 explains procedures for legal sale/transfer of duty-free goods.

SOFA-status personnel are encouraged to carry a "SOFA Card" at all times. The card includes instructions in case you are involved with Korean law enforcement officials and need assistance.

A statement of SOFA status and emergency telephone numbers are written in Korean and English.

SOFA cards are available through unit orderly rooms and civilian personnel offices.

KATUSA, US soldiers serving side by side

It was about 4 a.m., June 25, 1950. Along every corridor leading to the southern half of the peninsula, night ended in a hail of fire, noise, and destruction. War had come to Korea.

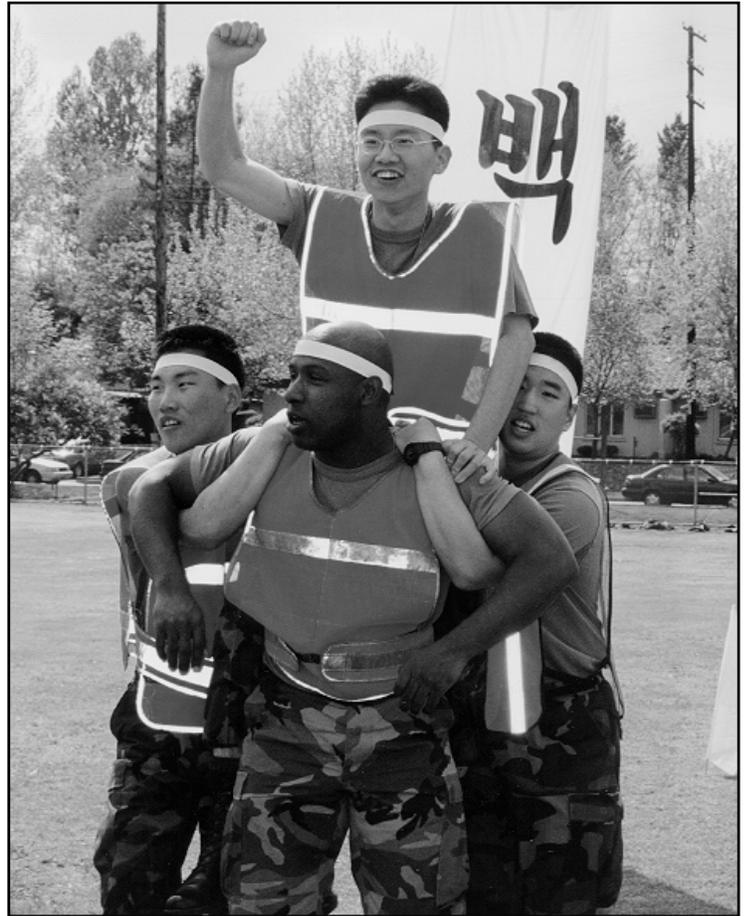
The early days were particularly bleak. The commander of United Nations forces, General Douglas MacArthur, knew that any hope of stopping the aggression rested upon building up the desperately under-strength American units hastily thrown into the fight. He thought the Korean Army might be called upon to provide the additional soldiers.

Securing an agreement from Korea's president, Rhee Syngman, MacArthur directed the assignment of 7,000 able-bodied Korean males. By August 1950, more than 8,500 had joined the U.S. ranks. Thousands more followed, filling out every unit of Eighth United States Army, the main U.S. combat forces in Korea.

At peak strength, 27,000 KATUSAs served with Eighth U.S. Army. That was the birth of the Korean Augmentees to the United States Army Program, a program which continues to this day.

The Korean augmentee fought side by side with his American comrade. He fought hard. He bled. And when death came, as it did for more than 93,000 men and women who fought under the United Nations banner, he met it with the same dignity and courage of people fighting for freedom everywhere.

Today, a new generation of KATUSA soldiers is helping the growth and prosperity of the nation. The proud, productive association with Eighth United States Army continues as a mainstay of peace and stability on the peninsula.





Be aware of dangerous situations

While you have probably seen numerous accounts of violent anti-American protests depicted on the evening news back home, the truth is, very few Americans have been affected by them.

The ROK government has taken steps to ensure the safety of Americans and their property, including the promise of tougher penalties for those who engage in violent protest. But just as in America, citizens have a right to demonstrate against what is perceived to be an unjust law or policy.

Evacuation and relocations

Korea is a potential combat area. Civilians and family members must be prepared to relocate or evacuate to a safe haven in case of hostilities. Civilians, family members and most DoD civilian employees are known as noncombatants and are required to prepare documents and personal items in case of a Noncombatant Evacuation Operation.

During inprocessing, each sponsor should receive a copy of USFK Pamphlet 600-300 which contains a list of documents, clothing, toilet articles and other items that must be taken in case of relocation or evacuation. If not offered this pamphlet, you should ask your NEO warden, unit orderly room or Army

Community Services for a copy.

In case of an actual emergency, the order to relocate or evacuate will be announced on AFN radio and TV, and if the situation permits, each family will be personally notified by their NEO warden. It is imperative that each family be registered with the sponsor's unit or Civilian Personnel Office.

Relocation and evacuation procedures are practiced twice annually. During these exercises, noncombatants are required to bring all documents to the designated processing center for review. This provides an opportunity for questions on what would be expected during an actual relocation or evacuation.

Privately owned firearms and weapons

Privately owned firearms or weapons may be brought into Korea only under strict controls. Firearms are defined as any device that will eject a projectile by an explosive or mechanical means. Sporting rifles, shotguns, match or target revolvers pistols, BB, pellet and air rifles qualify as firearms.

Weapons are defined as any type of knife or sword with a blade in excess of six inches or any other knife or sword shorter than six inches which obviously can be used as a deadly weapon.

All firearms or weapons must be

registered with the Provost Marshal Office within 72 hours after arrival in Korea and must be stored in a unit arms room.

Weapons may be withdrawn for cleaning and specific uses such as hunting, but must be returned to the arms room.

Off limits establishments

U.S. officials have placed some restaurants and clubs off limits because of possible food or water contamination, unsanitary restrooms, history of sexually transmitted diseases or availability of drugs. Safety factors such as fire hazards or no clear evacuation route may also cause a business to be placed off limits.

The use of natural bodies of water for swimming is prohibited for military people in Korea, unless approved by commanders. These places are off limits because of possible contaminated water, lack of adequate lifeguards, and/or enforcement of safety rules/procedures.

Embassy services

The American Embassy is located in downtown Seoul. The Consular Section provides many services to Americans. The most common includes issuing U.S. passports, registering births, authenticating Korean marriage certificates for Americans, notarizing documents, and issuing immigrant and visitor visas to the United States.



North Korea, a historical perspective

The long formal name of North Korea is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The DPRK is a Communist state led by a Stalinist-type dictatorship, with its capital city as Pyongyang. The executive branch of government includes President Kim Jung-il, national de facto leader since July 1994, a premier, two vice presidents, 11 vice premiers, and State Administration Council (cabinet).

In August 1945, the Japanese in Korea surrendered to the former Soviet Union, which gained control of the Korean peninsula south to the 38th parallel. In August 1948, supposedly following general elections throughout the peninsula, the DPRK was established, with Kim Il-Sung heading the central government. These factitious elections are the basis for Pyongyang's claim as the only legitimate government of Korea and make reunifying the country on its terms a national goal. In pressing this claim, the DPRK has engaged in a political,

economic, and military competition with the Republic of Korea. However, in any comparison except military power, Pyongyang is a poor second.

On June 5, 1950, DPRK forces invaded the ROK. The U.S., acting with a mandate from the UN, took the lead in defending the ROK. The Chinese entered into the fighting, and the war's inconclusive end led to a return to the status quo at the 38th parallel. An armistice, signed in 1953, was followed two months later by the signing of a mutual defense treaty between the United States and the ROK.

The DPRK flag is red, blue and white with a single red star centered in a white circle. The white circle is on the far left side of the red strip which runs down the center of the flag, dividing the blue in half with white on both sides.

The Korean peninsula is one of the most heavily propagandized pieces of

geography in the world. In the absence of armed hostilities, North Korea has developed a very sophisticated and responsive propaganda machine which seldom overlooks an opportunity to denounce both the U.S. and ROK governments, and their representatives.

Every day, the centrally-controlled North Korean media is full of outlandish allegations and highly inflammatory anti-U.S. rhetoric. The north's propagandists will not hesitate to twist, distort, or magnify out of proportion even the most trivial incidents involving U.S. military personnel.

Remember, U.S. military presence in Korea is highly visible and you are truly a representative of our country. Everything you say and do contributes to our image. Don't let your actions or those of your unit become propaganda used to damage relations between the U.S. and South Korea.

It's easy to travel throughout the ROK

There are several types of transportation available in Korea. With a little prior planning, soldiers, civilians and their family members can travel anywhere on the peninsula.

Subways

The eight-line Seoul subway is color coded with each line stretching to a different area of the city. Finding your way around is easy with the help of a color-coded subway map, available at many subway stations.

Once inside the proper station, tell the cashier at the window your final destination then request one ticket (han-jang) or hold up the right number of fingers. There are also automatic subway ticket dispensers. Push the amount of the ticket first then put your money in -- won only. The ticket will fall out at the bottom.

Pick up a subway map at the USO, Dragon Hill Lodge information desk or ACS office.

Trains

There are several types of trains around Korea which makes travel easy, relaxing and comfortable. These trains are color coded according to speed and type of service.

Blue Trains are super expresses and take only four hours from Seoul to Pusan. They run every hour from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Orange trains or KNF trains take 30 minutes longer than the blue trains. They run almost every 30 minutes from 8:15 a.m.

The last train leaves at 11:55 p.m. Seats are paired for two people and the coaches are air-conditioned.

Green trains take one hour longer than the blue trains. The first train leaves at 6:10 a.m. and the last leaves at 10:30 p.m. Local trains are bright blue and yellow and travel at 50 km per hour, offering many kinds of seats in standard coaches.

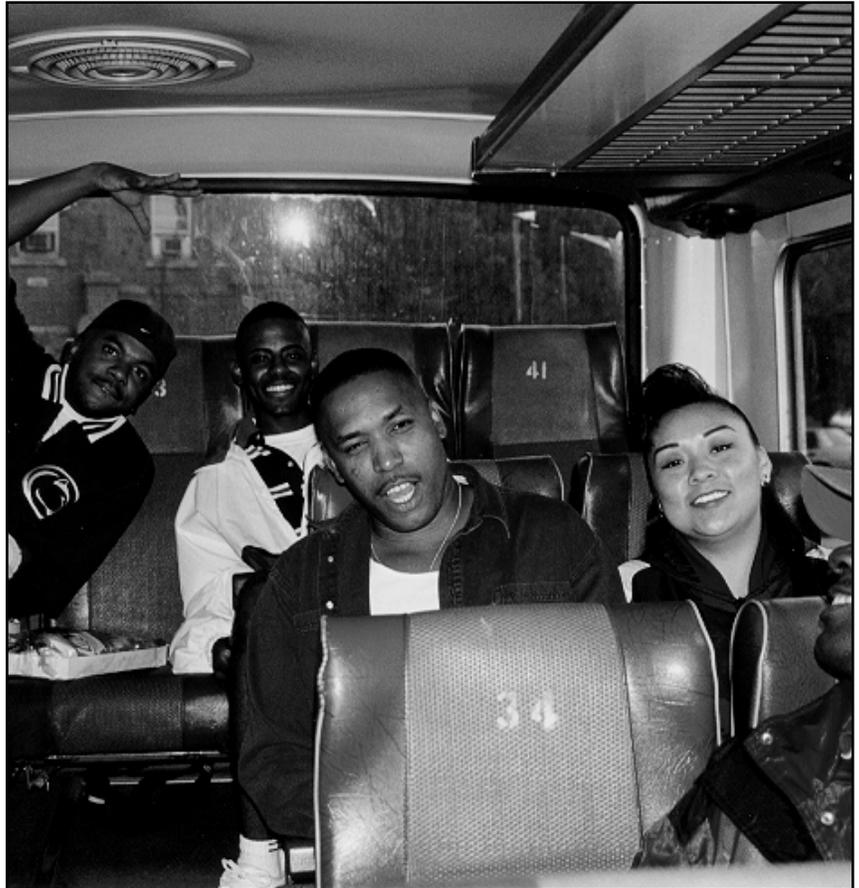
No reservations are required. American service members and DoD civilians who travel at their own expense can obtain a 25 percent discount by going through the Seoul Rail Transportation Office at Seoul Station. Discount tickets can be purchased at other Korean National Railroad stations provided the ticket purchaser has a discount coupon for U.N. Forces (form EATC 89 and a valid ID card).

Automobiles

DA Civilians and military personnel on orders for a two year tour are eligible to ship a privately owned vehicle to Korea. Those on a one year assignment are not authorized to ship a vehicle unless they extend for another year and want to ship a vehicle.

Unleaded gas is available at all AAFES and off post fuel stations. Vehicle repair is limited for newer cars throughout Korea. Another alternative is buying a used car from departing service members at a reasonable price.

The accident rate in Korea is high and insurance rates are high. Using local companies are usually cheaper than most U.S.



companies who can continue service in Korea.

Insurance is absolutely necessary in order to register your vehicle. Additionally, the Republic of Korea law often demands high payment when there is death or injury.

Picking up, registering vehicles

There are two vehicle processing centers in the ROK: Seoul and Pusan. Members must contact the vehicle processing center nearest their installation to arrange pick up of vehicles.

Be sure to have your military ID, POV shipping document and three copies of shipping orders. To make arrangements to pick up your vehicle call DSN 763-7173/7180 for Pusan and 725-7011 for Seoul.

Each individual or family assigned to Korea with a vehicle must have it registered within 10 days of date of purchase or arrival in Korea. Mopeds and motorcycles over 50cc are classified as a POV.

To register a vehicle, you will need your ID card, proof of ownership and insurance, Korean Customs Import Document (3702-55B), a valid USFK drivers license, copy of orders authorizing shipment of POV and a vehicle safety inspection certificate less than 90 days old.

If the vehicle was bought in Korea, you will not need to show the customs clearance documents or orders authorizing shipment. Vehicle registration is good for one year. To renew it, you must present a new vehicle safety inspection to the vehicle recorder.