



Press Release

Date: Apr 8, 2026

Press embargo: 4/8 (Wed) 09:00am

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[Asan Plenum 2026]
Senator Roger Wicker: Alliances Must Be Sustained on
“Collective Responsibility,” Not “Burden Shifting”

U.S. Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS), Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, delivered remarks at the Asan Plenum 2026 on April 8. In his congratulatory remarks, Senator Wicker underscored that the Plenum comes “at a time of disorder,” marked by ongoing wars in Europe and the Middle East, as well as intensifying strategic competition with China. He emphasized that China’s challenge to the global balance of power must not be overlooked, even amid ongoing conflicts.

Senator Wicker also highlighted the growing danger posed by North Korea, noting that Pyongyang is now both nuclear-armed and increasingly experienced in real-world operations. He stressed that this threat remains “front and center” for forces on the Korean Peninsula and must remain the primary focus of allied deterrence efforts.

He reaffirmed that the United States’ network of alliances has long provided a strategic advantage over authoritarian powers such as China and Russia. In the Indo-Pacific, he noted, the United States is working closely with allies—including the Republic of Korea and Japan—to respond to China’s coercive behavior in the Taiwan Strait, the South China Sea, and Northeast Asia. He further emphasized that trilateral cooperation among the Republic of Korea, the United States, and Japan continues to deepen despite North Korea’s attempts to divide them.

At the same time, Senator Wicker expressed concern over emerging calls in Washington to redefine alliances through the concept of “burden shifting.” While reaffirming his longstanding support for “burden sharing” as a mutual and cooperative effort, he cautioned that “burden shifting” represents a fundamental departure from the purpose of alliances. Such an approach, he argued, would shift core conventional deterrence responsibilities away from the United States and risk signaling diminished U.S. commitment to key regions.

“Burden shifting,” he warned, is not about shared responsibility but rather risks amounting to a withdrawal of responsibility. In contrast, he emphasized that the defining principle of the

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U.S.-ROK alliance is “collective responsibility,” reflecting a shared commitment to defense and security.

Senator Wicker noted that the U.S.-ROK alliance, which began as a military treaty, has evolved into a comprehensive partnership encompassing deep cultural ties, robust trade relations, and expanding cooperation in areas such as shipbuilding, critical minerals, artificial intelligence, and energy. Despite this evolution, he stressed that the alliance’s core mission—to deter aggression and defend against threats—remains unchanged.

He further highlighted the unique nature of the U.S.-ROK alliance as the United States’ only fully integrated bilateral military alliance, underscoring the need to modernize it in response to evolving threats and capabilities. However, he cautioned that such modernization must not dilute the alliance’s focus on North Korea, which he identified as the primary adversary on the Korean Peninsula, followed by China as the next major strategic challenge.

Concluding his remarks, Senator Wicker reaffirmed the United States’ commitment to providing credible extended deterrence to the Republic of Korea and other treaty allies. He emphasized that the United States will continue to employ all elements of its national power—including conventional forces, missile defense, and nuclear capabilities—to uphold its defense commitments. He also expressed his appreciation to the Asan Institute and conveyed his anticipation of reviewing the outcomes of the Plenum.

The Asan Plenum 2026, hosted by the Asan Institute for Policy Studies on April 8, 2026, at the Grand Hyatt Seoul, is an international forum held under the theme “*Modernizing Alliances.*” The Plenum convened leading policymakers, military officials, and experts from around the world to discuss how alliances must adapt to an increasingly complex international security environment.

The Plenum served as a timely platform for addressing key policy challenges surrounding alliance modernization, including extended deterrence, roles and responsibilities, and the future of collective defense in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

* **Attachment:** Full text of Congratulatory Remarks by Senator Roger Wicker