



[South Korea Remains in Intelligence Sharing Agreement with Japan](#)

South Korea has reversed a decision to withdraw from an intelligence-sharing agreement with Japan. The agreement was predicated on sharing intelligence over North Korea, Russia, and China, but leaders in Seoul decided not to renew the pact three months ago amid growing tensions with Japan. Japan had been opposed to South Korea withdrawing from the deal, and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe expressed relief that South Korea had reconsidered their decision. The United States had lobbied South Korea not to scrap the agreement, as the trilateral alliance between itself, Japan, and South Korea is strategically vital in curbing the influence of Russia, China, and North Korea.

South Korea initially made the decision to withdraw from the agreement after tensions increased between itself and Japan. The two countries have a rocky history, and the legacy of Japanese colonization of South Korea during World War II is still fresh in the mind of many South Koreans. Tensions first flared when South Korea's highest court ruled that Japanese companies who had used South Koreans for forced labor during colonization could be sued for compensation by victims and their families. Japan responded by removing South Korea from its "white list" of preferred trading partners. This impacted the technology industry in South Korea, as vital components of products produced by South Korean companies Samsung and LG are imported from Japan. South Korean leader Moon Jae-in then responded in kind by removing Japan's favorable status as a South Korean trading partner.

The United States was keen for the agreement to remain in place, as without it, South Korea and Japan would have to use the United States to communicate on intelligence matters. This was seen as impractical, as in the case of an emergency, neither South Korea nor Japan would be able to react quick enough. However, the State Department maintained that it was purely a decision for South Korea to make. American envoy to Korea, Stephen Biegun, met with leaders in Seoul to urge them to reconsider their decision, but that was the extent of the action taken by the United States. Some scholars believe that South Korea's decision to halt its withdrawal is as a result of the United States scaling back its presence in the region. Seoul recently rejected a proposal by the Trump Administration which would see South Korea increase its defense payments to \$5 billion annually. The South Korean government criticized this decision when it was announced, saying that the Trump Administration was putting money and business interests ahead of shared values. The United States has long harbored a desire for South Korea and Japan to embrace a larger financial contribution in curbing Chinese, Russian, and North Korean influence in the region.

After South Korea announced that it would not be scrapping the agreement, Shinzo Abe praised the "strategic decision," and emphasized the importance of South Korea and Japan's strategic alliance. South Korea's defense minister said that the decision was conditional, and it reserved the right to withdraw from the agreement in the future. For now though, the continued partnership between Japan and South Korea bodes well for the security of the Pacific region.