

US ends seven decades of military presence in Seoul



The United States has formally ended its military base in South Korean capital Seoul's central Yongsan neighbourhood since American troops arrived seven decades ago at the end of World War II. The military base has now been moved at Camp Humphreys, about 70 km south of Seoul and farther away from the tensed North Korean border.

The United States' Yongsan Garrison base headquartered in South Korea's capital Seoul has been seen as a sign of US-South Korea alliance since 70 years - when the World War II had just ended. The purpose of Yongsan base was to perpetuate attack on the tensed North Korean border nearby, whenever and if ever needed - under alliance treaty. However, with time, the US Forces Korea (USFK) which have been headquartered in the prime real estate area of Seoul had been a long running source of anti-American sentiments among civilians in South Korea.

Facing protests, both countries agreed to relocate the Yongsan base to Camp Humphreys, an existing base in Pyeongtaek, around 60 kilometres south of the capital in 1990. But the relocation was continuously pushed back to years because of resident protests, financial issues and extensive construction work in the western South Korean port city of Pyeongtaek and close to a U.S. air base. It was in 2013 when the first unit of USFK was transferred to Camp Humphreys, which is named after a pilot who died in a helicopter accident.

Now that the US has formally ended the headquarters, all of its 28,500 troops stationed in the South to defend it from the nuclear-armed North will move to Pyeongtaek ? farther away from the North Korean border. The new Camp Humphreys is spread in 3150 acres and it is the United States' largest military base overseas - costing an \$11 billion. Perhaps, the location is optimal for the army forces as it will allow quick movement and concentration of troops whenever needed. And it is best to stay a bit farther away from the reaches of North Korean artillery guns that are often targeting Seoul ? maybe that will stop now too.