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## Korea, US urged to expand space cooperation into commercial sector

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Korea and the United States should strengthen military and scientific cooperation in the space industry, and also commerce cooperation in launch vehicles, satellites, semiconductors and tourism, as the combination of the U.S.' advanced technology and Korea's strong production capabilities can create synergy in the rapidly emerging industry, experts said during the 2023 Korea Times Forum, Tuesday.

The Korea Times held a forum in central Seoul under the theme "Korea-U.S. Alliance: Security & Space Cooperation" to explore ways for the two allies to bolster cooperation in security and space. The second session of the forum highlighted their growing cooperation in the emerging space sector as the two nations celebrate the 70th anniversary of their alliance this year.

Moderated by Park Si-soo, CEO of Spacemaster, a local space market intelligence provider, the participating experts in the discussion session included Space Policy Research Center research fellow Shin Sang-woo and professor Lee Seung-joo of the department of political science and international relations at Chung-Ang University. Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) associate fellow Makena Young and NASA



Park Si-soo, left, CEO of Spacemaster, a local space market intelligence provider, speaks during the 2023 Korea Times Forum's second session discussing space cooperation between Korea and the United States, at the Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry in central Seoul, Tuesday. The participants include Space Policy Research Center research fellow Shin Sang-woo, second from left, and Chung-Ang University political science and international relations professor Lee Seung-joo. From left on the screen are Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) associate fellow Makena Young and NASA's international program specialist Peyton Blackstock, who joined the session online.

Korea Times photo by Shim Hyun-oh

international program specialist Peyton Blackstock joined the discussion session via videoconferencing.

At the session, experts said it was notable that President Yoon Suk Yeol and U.S. President Joe Biden used the phrase "strengthening U.S.-ROK commercial space cooperation" in their joint statement in Washington, D.C., in April.

While the two countries have a long history of military cooperation, their cooperation in space began only in the 1990s, and has been primarily about scientific exploration.

In recent years, however, the two countries have been expanding their cooperation in the space sector. In 2021, Korea joined the U.S.-led Artemis Accords on the exploration and

use of the moon, Mars and beyond, and the U.S. lifted restrictions on Korea's missile launch range and solid fuel use, opening the door to space rocket launches. In addition, the Danuri lunar orbiter, which settled into lunar orbit last year, is observing the shadowed region of the moon with NASA's ShadowCam equipment.

The experts said that the series of

cooperation demonstrates that the two countries have a mutually beneficial relationship in the space sector. In particular, they said that despite the U.S. having a clear technological advantage over Korea in the space sector, the continued expansion of cooperation with Korea shows that the U.S. cannot sustain this ecosystem alone, but must expand partnerships with various countries — including Korea — in the space industry, which is set to grow tremendously in size in the coming years.

"It is my understanding that the phrase commercial space cooperation is used in a reciprocal sense. I think not only Korea but also the U.S. wants commercial cooperation in space. This is because both countries want to work together to expand into overseas markets," Shin said.

"From a Korean perspective, for instance, U.S. export regulations allow Korean companies to import critical components made in the U.S. to build satellites more quickly, but there have been many delays due to regulations. Korea would like to strengthen commercial cooperation with the U.S. to strengthen this aspect and increase exports to overseas markets."

Young said the commercial applications of the space industry could extend beyond satellites and space tourism to semiconductors.

"There are more ways to be involved in the space sector for

industry not only satellites as there are increasing China's semiconductors smaller parts. Korea has a very innovative workforce that is strong in technology backgrounds and that can really be called upon to be integrated into space capabilities as well. The U.S. tourism space sector is very strong and it's one of our strengths as a nation and I think that other countries do that and we would like to help develop other countries' industries as well," Young said.

Mentioning that "the commercial space economy is booming," Blackstock said that the "U.S. and Korea have a 70-year history of working together and learning from each other, and commercial space is just another sector in which we will continue to use."

Lee Seung-joo, a Chung-Ang University professor, said as we witnessed in the war between Russia and Ukraine, where commercial satellites are utilized for military applications, increased cooperation in the commercial sectors of the two nations means increased cooperation in the military and scientific sectors as well.

"The U.S. can't do it all on its own, which is why we're increasing partnerships like the Artemis Accords. There are over 3,800 companies in the Artemis program. It's not just traditional space companies, but a lot of non-traditional space companies as well. This is a huge opportunity for Korean companies," the professor said.