

June 26 / KIPEC website / Current Affairs Note (No.10)

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KIPEC Policy Brief 2026-6

The Enactment of the U.S. Secure America Act and Its Implications for South Korea

June 2026

The **KIPEC Policy Brief** is an in-depth analytical report covering major legislative and policy issues under discussion in Washington, D.C. Published monthly, the series provides analysis of key developments and their policy implications.

1. Overview

On **June 10, 2026 (local time)**, President Donald Trump signed the **Secure America Act (S.2)** into law. The bill, introduced by Senator Lindsey Graham (R–South Carolina) on **May 20, 2026**, passed the Senate (52–47) on **June 5, 2026**, and the House of Representatives (214–212) on **June 9, 2026**, before being enacted.

The Act provides approximately **\$69.5 billion** (about **KRW 104 trillion**, assuming an exchange rate of KRW 1,500 per U.S. dollar) in supplemental funding to expand the personnel, technology, and enforcement capabilities of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), particularly the **U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)** and **U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)**.

The legislation focuses on:

- Expanding immigration enforcement personnel;
- Increasing detention capacity;
- Modernizing border surveillance technologies; and
- Strengthening deportation and removal operations.

The appropriated funds may be used through **September 30, 2029**.

The Act is considered the largest supplemental appropriations package enacted in recent years for U.S. border security and immigration enforcement and is expected to have a significant impact on the nation's border management and immigration enforcement system.

2. Legislative Background

The **Secure America Act** reflects the Trump Administration's emphasis on strengthening border security and curbing illegal immigration.

Republicans argued that existing border enforcement personnel and facilities were insufficient and sought substantial additional funding to expand the enforcement capacity of ICE and CBP.

After negotiations with Democrats failed, Republicans used the **budget reconciliation** process to pass the legislation.

3. Key Provisions and Issues

1) Expansion of ICE and CBP Immigration Enforcement and Border Management Capabilities

The central feature of the Act is the allocation of substantial supplemental funding to DHS and its agencies, ICE and CBP.

The Act appropriates:

- **Approximately \$38.5 billion** for ICE;
- **Approximately \$26 billion** for CBP; and
- **An additional \$5 billion** available at the discretion of the Secretary of Homeland Security.

Using these funds, ICE will:

- Increase enforcement personnel;
- Expand detention facility capacity; and
- Enhance its ability to transport and remove individuals unlawfully present in the United States more efficiently.

Meanwhile, CBP will:

- Increase the number of Border Patrol agents;
 - Expand border barriers and surveillance infrastructure; and
 - Deploy advanced monitoring equipment to strengthen control and surveillance along the southern border.
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2) Expansion of Border Surveillance Technology and AI-Based Control Systems

In addition to personnel expansion, the Act appropriates approximately **\$3.45 billion** for advanced technology designed to strengthen border security.

Major initiatives include:

- Non-intrusive inspection equipment¹;
- Border surveillance systems;
- Autonomous surveillance towers²; and
- Expanded air and maritime response platforms.

These investments are intended to improve the government's ability to:

- Prevent drug smuggling;
- Detect illegal border crossings; and
- Enhance situational awareness in border regions.

In particular, the Act supports the deployment of autonomous surveillance systems utilizing **artificial intelligence (AI)** and **machine learning**³, enabling more efficient detection and analysis of the movement of people and goods across border areas.

The legislation also supports implementation of a **Biometric Entry-Exit System**, improving the government's ability to identify visa overstays and increasing the accuracy of immigration management. This represents a shift from a labor-intensive border management system toward one driven by advanced surveillance technologies.

Notes

1. **Non-intrusive inspection equipment:** Technology such as X-ray or gamma-ray imaging that allows authorities to inspect vehicles and cargo containers without opening or dismantling them.
2. **Autonomous surveillance towers:** Integrated monitoring systems using AI, radar, thermal imaging cameras, and optical sensors to provide continuous, unmanned surveillance of border areas.
3. **Machine learning:** Artificial intelligence technology trained on large datasets to automatically identify people, vehicles, animals, and detect unusual activities.

3. Key Provisions and Issues (Continued)

3) Expansion of the 287(g) Program and Strengthening the Role of State and Local Governments

The Act supports the expansion of the **287(g) program**, authorized under **Section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA)**, to strengthen cooperation between federal immigration authorities and state and local law enforcement agencies.

The 287(g) program allows **U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)** to enter into agreements with state and local law enforcement agencies—including police departments and sheriff's offices—delegating certain federal immigration enforcement authorities.

Under these agreements, participating local agencies may:

- Verify the immigration status of individuals in custody;
- Assist in the execution of ICE administrative warrants; and
- Transfer removable individuals to federal immigration authorities.

By expanding funding and support for the program, the Act seeks to enhance cooperation between the federal government and state and local governments while strengthening overall immigration enforcement capacity.

Republicans argue that the program will improve public safety by enhancing enforcement against individuals unlawfully present in the United States. Democrats and immigrant advocacy organizations, however, have expressed concern that expanding the program could increase racial profiling and erode trust between immigrant communities and law enforcement agencies.

4) Controversy Surrounding the Use of the Budget Reconciliation Process

Rather than proceeding through the regular legislative process, the Act was enacted using the **budget reconciliation** procedure.

Budget reconciliation is a special legislative process designed for bills directly affecting federal revenues, expenditures, or the debt limit. Unlike ordinary legislation, reconciliation bills are **not subject to the Senate filibuster**, meaning they can be passed by a simple majority rather than the 60 votes typically required to advance most legislation in the Senate.

Republicans maintained that securing funding to strengthen border security and immigration enforcement was an urgent priority and therefore warranted the use of reconciliation.

Democrats, by contrast, criticized the decision to use reconciliation for legislation with broad social and political implications, arguing that major immigration policy should not be enacted without bipartisan deliberation through the regular legislative process.

Nevertheless, reconciliation is limited to provisions with a direct impact on federal spending or revenues. Accordingly, the Act is formally a fiscal measure appropriating funding for border security and immigration enforcement. However, because the substantial appropriations directly support expanded Border Patrol staffing, increased detention capacity, and enhanced removal operations, the Act is widely viewed as a significant example of advancing major immigration policy through the budget reconciliation process.

4. Implications for South Korea

Although the Act is a domestic U.S. law intended to strengthen border security and immigration enforcement, it could have important implications for South Korea, given the extensive movement of people and economic ties between the two countries. Korean nationals residing, studying, or traveling in the United States may also be affected.

First, U.S. immigration control is expected to become more sophisticated and increasingly technology-driven.

The Act provides substantial funding for the implementation of a **biometric entry-exit system** as well as border surveillance technologies utilizing **artificial intelligence (AI)** and **machine learning**.

While these measures are primarily intended to combat illegal immigration, they also indicate that the United States will manage the entry and exit records of all foreign nationals more systematically. Although the legislation is not expected to significantly affect lawful entry into the United States, travelers and foreign residents should be aware that compliance with authorized periods of stay and visa conditions is likely to be subject to more rigorous review.

Second, immigration enforcement activities may intensify within local communities across the United States.

As discussed above, the Act provides substantial additional funding to **U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)** to expand staffing and strengthen removal operations.

Individuals who have remained in the United States after their visas have expired, those undergoing adjustment of status, or those with pending immigration court proceedings may be particularly affected by enhanced enforcement efforts.

Within the Korean-American community, interest is expected to grow regarding how increased immigration enforcement may affect daily life. The Act is especially noteworthy because it translates policy objectives into concrete enforcement capabilities through substantial appropriated funding.

Finally, the Secure America Act signals the future direction of U.S. border security and immigration enforcement policy.

By investing in additional personnel, advanced surveillance technologies, and expanded cooperation with state and local governments, the Act may significantly influence the future landscape of immigration enforcement in the United States.

Accordingly, the Government of the Republic of Korea, Korean businesses, and Korean-American communities should continue to monitor how these policy changes are implemented in practice and assess their potential implications.

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