

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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O P 220406Z DEC 75 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4592
INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
USMISSION IAEA VIENNA PRIORITY

S E C R E T SEOUL 9813

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 2. SUBPARA A.)

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MNUC, PARM, KS, FR, CA
SUBJECT: ROK NUCLEAR REPROCESSING

REF: . SEOUL 9662 B. SEOUL 9663 C. PARIS 32534
D. SEOUL 9786 E. STATE 299059

1. IN ACCORDANCE WITH INSTRUCTIONS REF E, I AM PREPARED TO PROCEED WITH SEEKING APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT PARK ON ROK NUCLEAR REPROCESSING. I DO NOT REPEAT NOT PERCEIVE ANY SIGNIFICANT GAIN IN PRIOR APPROACH TO NEW PRIME MINISTER CHOI UNLESS REQUESTED TO DO SO SPECIFICALLY BY PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE.

2. WE HAVE NO DISAGREEMENT WITH BYPASSING REPLY DIRECTLY TO YI ON ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL DISCUSSIONS, HAVING ALREADY MADE CLEAR TO YI DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED. HOWEVER I THINK THAT IT WOULD BE TACTICAL MISTAKE NOT REPEAT NOT TO PROVIDE TO PRESIDENT AT LEAST IN BROAD TERMS SOME FORM OF RESPONSE TO YI'S QUESTIONS, WHILE AT SAME TIME MAKING ABSOLUTELY CLEAR ISSUE IS ESSENTIALLY POLITICAL RATHER THAN TECHNICAL. MY REASONS FOR THIS JUDGMENT ARE BASED
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PRINCIPALLY ON FOLLOWING FACTORS:

A. WE HAVE BEEN SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED BY PRESIDENT'S KEY AIDE, KIM CHONG-YOM, TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS BEFORE SEEING THE PRESIDENT, AND THERE IS STRONG POSSIBILITY HE WILL REITERATE REQUEST WHEN I SEEK APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT:

B. REVERSAL OF DECISION ON FRENCH REPROCESSING INVOLVES PERSONAL PRESTIGE OF PRESIDENT PARK AS WELL AS SENSITIVE ISSUE OF NATIONAL PRIDE, AND IT IS OUR JUDGMENT THAT REVERSAL ON OSTENSIBLY TECHNICAL GROUNDS, RATHER THAN RESPONSE TO US FORCE MAJEURE MAY PROVE EASIER TO SWALLOW:

C. WE MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT PARK'S STRONG NATIONALISTIC BENT AND CONTINUED DOUBTS AS TO SUSTAINED US SUPPORT FOR ROKG. REFUSAL TO DEAL IN ANY WAY WITH YI'S QUESTIONS COULD THEREFORE TRIGGER EMOTIONAL AND ADMITTEDLY IRRATIONAL REACTION OF TRYING TO PUSH AHEAD WITH REPROCESSING IN CONFRONTATION ATMOSPHERE, A POSTURE WHICH HAS PREVAILED UNTIL VERY RECENTLY IN RESPONDING TO OUR INITIAL APPROACHES ON NUCLEAR REPROCESSING.

D. US WILLINGNESS TO RESPOND IN PART CONSTRUCTIVELY, WHILE REFUSING COMPLETELY TO GET BOGGED DOWN IN BARGAINING OVER DETAILS, WOULD EMPHASIZE "SPIRIT OF COOPERATION" WHICH AGAIN PROVIDES FAVORABLE ATMOSPHERICS FOR WHAT IS CLEARLY UNPALATABLE DECISION FOR ROKS TO MAKE.

3. RECENT EVIDENCE IS CONSIDERABLY MORE ENCOURAGING ON PROSPECTS FOR ASSURING REVERSAL OF NUCLEAR REPROCESSING DECISION. BUT FOR REASONS STATED ABOVE, WILLINGNESS TO MAKE AT LEAST BROAD RESPONSE TO YI'S QUESTIONS IN TERMS OUTLINED BELOW ENHANCES PROSPECTS FOR ACCOMPLISHING OUR OBJECTIVE WITHOUT BITTER AND UNNEEDED CONFRONTATION WITH PRESIDENT PARK AND WITH DIMINISHED RISK OF EMOTIONAL NEGATIVE REACTION BY PARK. IF THESE TACTICS FAIL, WE ALWAYS HAVE IN RESERVE ULTIMATE PRESSURES OF FORCE MAJEURE.

4. THEREFORE REQUEST INSTRUCTIONS SOONEST TO INFORM PRESIDENT'S OFFICE THAT WE WILL BE RESPONDING TO YI'S QUESTIONS
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DIRECTLY TO PARK AND TO INCLUDE IN BASIC APPROACH SET FORTH STE'S 285640 FOLLOWING ITEMS

A. REITERATION OF INITIAL RESPONSE TO YI (REF A), NAMELY THAT MANY OF THE QUESTIONS RAISED REQUIRE EXTENDED CONSIDERATION AND CONSULTATION WHICH FEASIBLE ONLY AFTER BROAD AGREEMENT REACHED TO EXPAND NUCLEAR AND SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION ON BASIS ROKG DECISION TO CANCEL REPROCESSING

PLANT.

B. US PMHARED TO PROVIDE EXPANDED COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR POWER AND INDUSTRY IN KOREA WITH RECOGNITION THAT THERE OTHER THIRD COUNTRY SUPPLIERS WHO CAN ALSO PLAY CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE TO THIS END.

C. WITH RESPECT REPROCESSING, US PREPARED TO ASSURE ROKG THAT ADEQUATE TRAINING WOULD BE AVAILABLE FROM US AND/OR OTHER SOURCES TO PERMIT MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN MULTI-NATIONAL CENTERS (ASSUME IAEA MAY HAVE SUCH TRAINING PROGRAMS), AND TO ASSURE ROKG OF US EFORTS TO ARRANGE FOR REPROCESSING OF SPENT MATERIAL WHEN SUFFICIENT QUANTITIES AVAILABLE. (ON BASIS INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US, IT WILL TAKE APPROXIMATELY TWELVE YEARS BEFORE ANY MEANINGFUL QUANTITIES OF SPENT MATERIAL COULD BE PRODUCED BY ROK REACTORS AND ASSUME UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES SUCH ASSURANCES CAN BE PRUDENTLY MADE.)
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