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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4680

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY

USMISSION IAEA VIENNA PRIORITY

S E C R E T SEOUL 9928

EXDIS

EO 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MNUC, PARM, KS, FR

SUBJECT: ROK NUCLEAR REPROCESSING

REF: A. STATE 302043 B. STATE 299089 C. STATE 226011

SUMMARY: ROKG HAS MADE COUNTER PROPOSAL ON NUCLEAR REPROCESSING. ROKG IS PREPARED TO RECONSIDER REPROCESSING ASPECT OF FRENCH CONTRACT, TO WITHHOLD ANY FUTURE ACTION ON FRENCH CONTRACT FOR ABOUT SIX MONTHS DURING WHICH DETAILED DISCUSSIONS WOULD BE HELD ON SCOPE OF BROADER US-KOREAN NUCLEAR COOPERATION IN NON-SENSITIVE AREAS, AND TO CANCEL FRENCH CONTRACT IF MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY AGREEMENT REACHED. ROKG CONFIDENT SUCH AGREEMENT CAN BE REACHED. ROKG HAS TAKEN THIS ACTION IN VIEW BROADER CONSIDERATION OF US-ROKG RELATIONS AND SERIOUSNESS OF US APPROACH ON NUCLEAR REPROCESSING. FULL DETAILS AND COMMENTS WILL BE SENT SEPTTEL. END SUMMARY.

1. AT PRESIDENT PARK'S SPECIFIC REQUEST, I MET TODAY (DEC. 26) WITH HIS PRINCIPAL AIDE, PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARY KIM CHONG-YOM, AND CHIEF PROTOCOL SECRETARY CHOI KWANG-SOO, WHO ACTED AS INTERPRETER. I HAD REQUESTED APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT ON RECEIPT REF A, REACHING KIM CHONG-YOM

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ONLY LATE IN DAY DUE TO OTHER PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENTS.

AFTER CONSULTING WITH PRESIDENT, KIM, ON BEHALF OF PRESIDENT, ASKED ME TO MEET WITH HIM FIRST SINCE PRESIDENT OCCUPIED WITH YEAR END MEETINGS AND CEREMONIES AND NOT FULLY FAMILIAR WITH ALL TECHNICAL DETAILS. PRESIDENTIAL MEETING PROMISED BY KIM IF WE COULD NOT REACH SATISFACTORY AGREEMENT. KIM ALSO SAID THAT PRESIDENT PARK FULLY AWARE OF SENSITIVE POLITICAL AND SECURITY INTERESTS INVOLVED, WHICH DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER NAM EARLIER TODAY VERIFIED FROM A PREVIOUS CONVERSATION WITH PARK, BUT NEVERTHELESS WISHED ME DISCUSS PROBLEM WITH KIM INITIALLY. UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES I AGREED.

2. AT OUTSET OF LENGTHY SESSION, I WENT OVER CAREFULLY WITH KIM FULL US POSITION DRAWING FROM REFTELS. EMPHASIS PLACED ON OVERRIDING POLITICAL AND SECURITY CONCERNS AND ON POSITIVE ASPECTS OF US NUCLEAR COOPERATION WITH ROKG IN NON-SENSITIVE AREAS. I SPECIFICALLY STATED DETAILED DISCUSSION OF SUCH COOPERATION WOULD HAVE TO FOLLOW ROKG DECISION TO CANCEL FRENCH REPROCESSING CONTRACT. I ALSO GAVE KIM COPIES OF AIDE MEMOIRE AND ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL PAPER SENT TO FORMER PRIME MINISTER KIM CHONG PIL, TO ASSURE BLUE HOUSE RECORD ABSOLUTELY CORRECT.

3. KIM WAS FULLY PREPARED FOR MY APPROACH AND SPOKE WITH AUTHORIZATION AND APPROVAL OF PRESIDENT PARK. HE READ FROM PREPARED NOTES. HE REVIEWED IN FAMILIAR TERMS BASIS FOR ROKG DECISION TO ACQUIRE FRENCH REPROCESSING RESEARCH FACILITY AND INDICATED THAT HE HAD BEEN COMPLETELY BRIEFED ON MY PREVIOUS APPROACHES. HE STATED AND SUBSEQUENTLY REITERATED AT SEVERAL POINTS ROKG OBJECTIVE WAS LIMITED TO DEVELOPMENT OF PEACEFUL USE OF NUCLEAR ENERGY AND IT HAD NO REPEAT NO INTENTION TO DEVELOP, IMPORT, OR POSSESS NUCLEAR WEAPONS. APPROACH TO FRENCH WAS MADE, HE EXPLAINED, ONLY AFTER ROKG HAD BEEN REBUFFED BY US NOT ONLY ON REPROCESS- BUT IN OTHER AREAS OF TECHNICAL COOPERATION.

4. AFTER ARGUING DECISION ON FRENCH CONTRACT JUSTIFIED, KIM SAID THAT AFTER FULLEST CONSIDERATION, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT BROADER INTERESTS OF US-ROKG RELATIONS AND SERIOUS POSITION US HAD TAKEN ON BOTH ECONOMIC/POLITICAL GROUNDS, ROKG PREPARED
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TO RE-CONSIDER ITS POSITION ON REPROCESSING ASPECT OF FRENCH CONTRACT. FURTHER, ROKG WOULD BE PREPARED TO CANCEL FRENCH CONTRACT IF ITS REQUIREMENTS IN AREA OF NUCLEAR COOPERATION, AS OUTLINED BY VICE MINISTER SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY YI (SEOUL 9662 AND SEOUL 9663) COULD BE SATISFIED. KIM RECOGNIZED IT WOULD TAKE SOME TIME TO WORK OUT DETAILS OF WHAT US COULD PROVIDE IN RESPONSE TO THESE REQUESTS AND ROKG IS PREPARED TO WITHHOLD ANY FURTHER PROGRESS ON FRENCH CONTRACT

FOR THIS PERIOD, BUT NOT REPEAT NOT INDEFINITELY.

5. IN RESPONSE TO MY REQUEST FOR MORE SPECIFIC DEFINITION OF ROKG POSITION, KIM SAID THAT ROKG RECOGNIZED SOME ISSUES, LIKE MULTINATIONAL REGIONAL REPROCESSING, WOULD TAKE TWO TO THREE YEARS, BUT OTHER QUESTIONS RAISED BY YI, SUCH AS COOPERATION ON TRANSFER OF NON-SENSITIVE NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY, SHOULD NOT TAKE MORE THAN SIX MONTHS. AGREEMENT COULD NOT BE EXPECTED EVEN IN LATTER AREAS ON SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS TO ASSIST IMPORT OF ENRICHMENT FACILITIES AND REACTORS, BUT KIM ENVISAGED AGREEMENT ON "SCOPE OF COOPERATION." SUCH AGREEMENT HE CONSIDERED FEASIBLE AFTER EXPERT DISCUSSIONS IN MORE DETAIL OVER PERIOD OF ABOUT SIX MONTHS.

6. I POINTED OUT TO KIM THAT MAJOR DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US WAS US REQUEST TO CANCEL CONTRACT BEFORE ENTERING DETAILED DISCUSSIONS, WHILE ROKG PROPOSED DISCUSSIONS BEFORE CANCELLATION. KIM RESPONDED THAT ROKG, DUE UNIQUE AND SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH US, IS CONFIDENT WE CAN REACH MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY AGREEMENT ON BASIS MUTUAL TRUST. HOWEVER, CANCELLATION IN ADVANCE WOULD SERIOUSLY EMBARRASS RELATIONS WITH FRENCH AND AS SOVEREIGN GOVERNMENT, ROKG WISHES TO HAVE BASIS FOR CANCELLATION BEFORE GOING TO FRENCH. HE FURTHER STATED THAT ROKG IS AWARE OF OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH FRENCH, BUT FRENCH HAVE GIVEN NO REPEAT NO INDICATION OF THEIR RECEPTIVITY TO CANCELLATION: ROKG WOULD NOT INTEND TO FORMALLY NOTIFY FRENCH OF WITHHOLDING ACTION FOR UP TO SIX MONTHS BUT IS CONFIDENT FRENCH WOULD REALIZE DE FACTO ROKG ACTIONS THEREIN. AT CONCLUSION, I TOLD KIM THAT I WOULD REPORT ROKG PROPOSAL, NOTING DIFFERENCES IN POSITION. HE SAID THAT HE WOULD PREPARE FULL MINUTE TO PRESENT TO PRESIDENT PARK.

7. FULLER REPORT AND COMMENTS WILL FOLLOW SEPTTEL.

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8. LATE DEVELOPMENT: ABOUT ONE HOUR AND HALF, AFTER COMPLETION OUR CONVERSATION, KIM CALLED ME. HE SAID THAT HE HAD REPORTED OUR CONVERSATION, PARTICULARLY POINTS I HAD MADE, IN FULL DETAIL TO PRESIDENT PARK. PRESIDENT WAS MUCH IMPRESSED. HE INSTRUCTED THAT ROKG INFORM FRENCH EMBASSY THAT KOREA WOULD HOLD UP REPROCESSING PROJECT UNTIL US AND KOREAN GOVERNMENTS REACH SATISFACTORY AGREEMENT.
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