

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
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O P 290815Z DEC 75
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4704
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY
USMISSION IAEA VIENNA PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 9961

EXDIS

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

REF: A. SEOUL 9928 B. SEOUL 9929

1. AFTER CAREFUL REVIEW AND CONSIDERATION MY CONVERSATION ON THIS SUBJECT WITH PRESIDENTIAL CHIEF SECRETARY KIM CHONG-YOM (REFTELS) AND PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS WITH SENIOR ROK OFFICIALS, I HAVE COME TO FOLLOWING CONCLUSIONS:

A. PRESIDENT PARK IS FULLY BRIEFED ON ALL THAT HAS TRANSPIRED AND IS NOW PERSONALLY CALLING THE SHOTS. IT APPARENT, HOWEVER, THAT PRESIDENT IS ENDEAVORING TO AVOID DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN DISCUSSIONS WHICH HAVE ALREADY LED TO POSTPONEMENT AND WHICH WILL PROBABLY RESULT IN ABANDONMENT OF PROGRAM WHICH HE AT MINIMUM APPROVED AND MAY EVEN HAVE CONCEIVED. IN LIGHT OF BASICALLY FORTHCOMING POSITION WHICH HE HAS PUT TO ME THROUGH HIS CLOSEST ASSOCIATE, I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE INADVISABLE TO ATTEMPT TO FORCE HIS PERSONAL PARTICIPATION. UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, I BELIEVE HE MIGHT WELL FEEL STRONGLY COMPELLED FOR REASONS OF PRESTIGE AND FACE TO TAKE HARDER POSITION AND THAT RESULTS WOULD ACCORDINGLY BE LESS POSITIVE, WITH EVERY PROSPECT OF UNWANTED CONFRONTATION.

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B. DESPITE THEIR ATTEMPTS TO CONTINUE TO PLACE REPROCESSING ISSUE

IN ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL FRAME OF REFERENCE, I AM CONVINCED THAT PRESIDENT AND HIS SENIOR ADVISORS ARE UNDER NO ILLUSIONS THAT OUR CENTRAL OBJECTIVE AND CONCERN IS TO PREVENT ROKG FROM EMBARKING ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.

C. FURTHER, I BELIEVE UNDERSTANDING OF SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH WE REGARD THIS PROSPECT HAS LED THEM TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT TO INSIST ON ACQUIRING REPROCESSING FACILITY WOULD NOT ONLY PLACE US/ROK COOPERATION ON NUCLEAR POWER IN JEOPARDY, BUT WOULD ALSO IMPACT ADVERSELY ON ENTIRE RANGE OF US/ROK RELATIONSHIPS.

D. AS EVIDENCED BY CONVERSATION REPORTED REFTELS, PRESIDENT IS AWARE OF THE THREAT THE REPROCESSING CONTRACT POSES TO HIS MOST ESSENTIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH US AND IS SEEKING FACE-SAVING MEANS OF EXTRICATING HIMSELF FROM PURCHASE OF FRENCH REPROCESSING FACILITY. HIS OFFER TO POSTPONE REPROCESSING ASPECT OF FRENCH DEAL FOR SIX MONTHS WAS MADE IN CLEAR ANTICIPATION THAT WE WOULD BE ABLE TO OFFER A FIG LEAF ON TECHNICAL SIDE ADEQUATE TO JUSTIFY ITS EVENTUAL CANCELLATION. HE DOUBTLESS ALSO QUESTIONS WHETHER EITHER FRENCH OR CANADIANS WOULD BE WILLING TO COOPERATE WITH ROK ON MATTERS NUCLEAR WERE HE TO DEFY US PRESSURE AND ATTEMPT TO PROCEED WITH ACQUISITION OF REPROCESSING FACILITY. EARNEST OF HIS INTENTION IS FOUND IN INSTRUCTION TO NOTIFY FRENCH THAT ROKG WILL HOLD UP ON REPROCESSING PROJECT UNTIL US AND ROK GOVERNMENTS REACH SATISFACTORY AGREEMENT. WE ASSUME FRENCH, KNOWING THAT USG WILL NOT CONDONE ROK ACQUISITION OF REPROCESSING FACILITY, CAN ONLY INTERPRET THIS TO MEAN THAT REPROCESSING ASPECT OF THEIR SALE WILL IN DUE COURSE BE CANCELLED.

E. I RETAIN SOME SKEPTICISM ABOUT ROK MOTIVES AND DO NOT DOUBT THAT AT THIS STAGE THEIR MINDS ARE NOT FULLY MADE UP. THERE IS CLEARLY ELEMENT OF BARGAINING IN POSITION THEY HAVE PUT TO US AND WE STILL HAVE CONSIDERABLE WAY TO GO BEFORE WE CAN FEEL REASONABLY CERTAIN THAT THEY HAVE BEEN DIVERTED FROM ACQUISITION OF NATIONAL REPROCESSING FACILITY AND WITH WHAT THAT IMPLIES. HOWEVER, THEY GIVE EVERY SIGN OF BEING WILLING AT LEAST TO PLACE IT IN ABEYANCE. NOR DO I BELIEVE POSITION OUTLINED BY KIM CHONG-YOM REPRESENTS EFFORT TO EXTRACT MAJOR CONCESSIONS FROM US IN SENSITIVE AREAS. ON OTHER HAND, IT VERY CLEAR THAT ROKG KEENLY DESIRES UPGRADE ITS COMPETENCE IN NUCLEAR POWER FIELD, WOULD NOT BE WILLING TO
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CANCEL FRENCH REPROCESSING DEAL WITHOUT SOME QUID PRO QUO, AND DOES EXPECT US TO TAKE THEIR LEGITIMATE SCIENTIFIC AND ECONOMIC AMBITIONS SERIOUSLY. ROKG DESIRE TO TEST US INTENTIONS MUST ALSO BE UNDERSTOOD IN TERMS OF STRONG RESIDUAL DOUBTS ABOUT US RELIABILITY AS ALLY OVER LONGER TERM AND CONSEQUENT THREAT IN ALL ASPECTS OF POLICY FOR SELF-RELIANCE. FURTHERMORE OUR INABILITY TO DELIVER ON BROAD COMMITMENTS, SUCH AS KENNEDY PL-480 COMMITMENT AND MOD PLAN, FOR WHATEVER LEGITIMATE REASONS, HAS

LEFT KOREANS SKEPTICAL ENOUGH TO SEEK MORE SPECIFIC DETAILS
WHEN WE PROMISE SUPPORT.

F. FINALLY, I BELIEVE IT IS IN OUR INTEREST TO ENSURE THAT
THIS DIALOGUE DEVELOPS IN MANNER CONDUCTIVE TO POSITIVE RESULTS
EXTENDING BEYOND PREVENTION OF ROK NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM.
WE SHOULD BE SEEKING TO RESTORE ATMOSPHERE OF TRUST AND MUTUAL
SUPPORT WITH ALLY WHOSE RAPID DEVELOPMENT PROMISES MAKE SUCH AT-
MOSPHERE INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT TO US IN FUTURE. WE SHOULD ALSO
NOT LOSE SIGHT OF DESIRABILITY OF PRESERVING ACCESS FOR US COMMERCIAL
INTERESTS INTO ROK NUCLEAR POWER PROGRAM, WHICH NOT ONLY REPRESENTS
PROMISING SALES POTENTIAL BUT WILL ALSO BE MAJOR DETERMINANT
OF FUTURE ROK INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, WITH ALL THAT IMPLIES IN
TERMS OF FUTURE INFLUENCE OVER ALL NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENTS AND
SPIN-OFF OPPORTUNITIES.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SEOUL 9961

EXDIS

2. IN LIGHT OF FOREGOING CONSIDERATIONS, I RECOMMEND THAT WE
ACCEPT ROKG PROPOSAL FOR DISCUSSIONS ON NON-SENSITIVE NUCLEAR
COOPERATION BEFORE FINAL CANCELLATION AS BASIS FOR TESTING
THEIR ASSERTION OF CONFIDENCE THAT MUTUAL AGREEMENT CAN BE
REACHED. SPECIFICALLY, I RECOMMEND THAT I BE AUTHORIZED TO GO
BACK TO KIM CHONG-YOM AND INFORM HIM:

A. THAT WE APPRECIATE ROKG RECOGNITION OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF
OUR CONCERNS AND OF THE MAJOR BEARING THIS ISSUE HAS ON FUTURE

OF OUR OVERALL RELATIONSHIP;

B. THAT WE NOT IN POSITION TO MAKE SPECIFIC LONG-TERM COMMITMENTS ON NUCLEAR COOPERATION AND THAT, FROM VIEWPOINT BOTH ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESSIONAL ATTITUDES, KORI II LOAN MUST REMAIN PENDING UNTIL WE CAN REACH MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY UNDERSTANDING;

C. THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO DISCUSS SCOPE OF BROAD PROGRAM OF COOPERATION WHICH WOULD BE IN OUR MUTUAL INTEREST ALONG LINES OF YI'S QUESTIONS; AND

D. THAT WE WOULD BE WILLING TO CONSTITUTE TECHNICAL TEAM TO VISIT KOREA IN NEAR FUTURE FOR INITIAL DISCUSSIONS WHICH WE CONTEMPLATE MIGHT BE CONCLUDED DURING A SECOND PHASE TO BE HELD
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IN WASHINGTON.

3. WHILE KOREANS WOULD PROBABLY USE PROPOSED DISCUSSIONS TO ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS, PARTICULARLY IN TERMS OF PARTICIPATION IN FUTURE REPROCESSING ACTIVITIES AND FUEL SUPPLY, WE CAN PUT OURSELVES IN STRONG BARGAINING POSITION BY MAKING CLEAR AT OUTSET THAT WE PREPARED DISCUSS ONLY BROAD SCOPE OF NUCLEAR COOPERATION AND BY MAKING CLEAR THAT NO PROGRESS CAN BE EXPECTED ON KORI II LOAN UNTIL SATISFACTORY AGREEMENT REACHED. IN SHORT, COURSE I RECOMMEND WOULD COMMIT US TO NOTHING THAT IS NOT IN OUR INTEREST TO GIVE, WOULD PROVIDE TEST OF PROFESSED ROK WILLINGNESS TO FOREGO ACQUISITION OF REPROCESSING FACILITY, AND WOULD LEAVE UNIMPAIRED OUR LEVERAGE BOTH OF GOING DIRECTLY TO PRESIDENT PARK AT ANY TIME TO LAY ISSUE DIRECTLY ON LINE TO HIM, AND FURTHER DISCOURAGING FRENCH FROM GOING THROUGH WITH REPROCESSING CONTRACT.
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