

E994

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

IS/FPC/CDR TRCB Date: 9/13/93

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598

TEXT OF TELEGRAM 79SEOUL 018095

ADP715
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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-06 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
HA-05 TRSE-00 IO-14 AID-05 /091 W
-----050141 020211Z /73

R 290431Z NOV 79
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2653
INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO
COMUSKOREA SEOUL KS//SJS
CHJUSMAG SEOUL KS
SA CINCPAC KS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 18095

E.O. 12065: ODS 11/29/85 (CLARK, WILLIAM) OR-P
TAGS: PINS, SHUM, KS
SUBJECT: POLICE DEPLOYED IN DOWNTOWN SEOUL; RUMORED
DEMONSTRATION FAILS TO OCCUR

REF: (A) SEOUL 17966 (B) SEOUL 18070

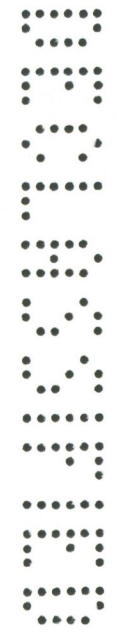
1. (C) ENTIRE TEXT.

2. HUNDREDS OF UNIFORMED AND PLAIN-CLOTHES POLICEMEN ARMED WITH NIGHT STICKS AND WALKIE-TALKIES PATROLLED SEOUL'S KWANGHWAMUN AND DOWNTOWN AREAS THE EVENING OF NOVEMBER 28. POLICE PRESENCE WAS IN RESPONSE TO THE CALL AT LAST SATURDAY'S YWCA INCIDENT FOR DEMONSTRATIONS IN MAJOR CITIES AGAINST THE PLANNED PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. (ALTHOUGH THE MARTIAL LAW COMMAND (MLC) HAD ALLOWED PUBLICATION OF THE DEMONSTRATION CALL, IT HAD FORBIDDEN MENTION OF THE PROPOSED NOVEMBER 28 DATE.) IN ADDITION TO NUMEROUS FOOT PATROLS AT STREET CORNERS, BUILDING ENTRANCES, AND PEDESTRIAN UNDERPASSES, LARGE NUMBERS OF POLICE, CITY, TOURIST, AND COMMUTER BUSES WITH ADDITIONAL CONFIDENTIAL
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POLICE WERE PARKED LESS THAN INCONSPICUOUSLY ON MANY BACK STREETS. THE POLICE BEGAN TO DEPLOY AT 1600 AND WERE ON DUTY THROUGHOUT THE EVENING. THE MOST INTIMIDATING FEATURE WAS THE POSTING OF APPROXIMATELY 20 ARMED AND HELMETED SOLDIERS ON THE STEPS OF THE SEJONG CULTURAL CENTER OVERLOOKING THE MAIN SEJONG-NO THOROUGHFARE.

3. THIS APPARENTLY WAS THE LARGEST SHOW OF POLICE FORCE IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA SINCE OCTOBER 1978, WHEN A DEMON-



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STATION WAS REPORTEDLY PLANNED FOR THE YUSIN SYSTEM'S SIXTH ANNIVERSARY. ALTHOUGH IMPRESSIVE IN ITSELF, LAST NIGHT'S POLICE ACTION WAS MUCH LESS FORMIDABLE THAN THAT IN 1978, WHEN POLICE IN FULL RIOT GEAR STOOD SHOULDER-TO-SHOULDER ALONG THE STREETS. THIS TIME AROUND, POLICE INTERFERED LESS WITH THE PASSERSBY: ALTHOUGH STUDENT-TYPES WERE ASKED TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES AND TO OPEN THEIR BAGS AND PACKAGES FOR INSPECTION, POLICE DID NOT TAKE THE COMMON PRECAUTION OF CLOSING THE AREA BUS STOPS. CONSEQUENTLY, CROWDS IN THE KWANGHWAMUN AREA WERE AS LARGE AS NORMAL FOR THE END OF THE WORK DAY.

4. PRESUMABLY THE AUTHORITIES HAD REASON NOT TO EXPECT ANY REAL TROUBLE, SINCE SOME 160 OF THE PERSONS MOST LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE IN A DOWNTOWN DEMONSTRATION HAVE BEEN DETAINED WITHIN THE LAST WEEK. AS FAR AS WE KNOW, NO INCIDENTS TOOK PLACE LAST NIGHT AND NO ONE WAS ARRESTED. NEVERTHELESS, THE PREVENTIVE ACTION, PARTICULARLY AFTER THE PUBLICATION OF THE CALL FOR A KWANGHWAMUN DEMONSTRATION IN THE PRESS, UNDOUBTEDLY DEMONSTRATED TO A LARGE NUMBER OF SEOULITES THAT THE MLC IS SERIOUS ABOUT ITS REPEATED STATEMENTS THAT IT WILL NOT TOLERATE SOCIAL DISORDER.

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5. COMMENT: WHILE SOME DISSIDENTS CONSIDER MARTIAL LAW AN EXTENSION OF RESTRICTIONS WHICH CHARACTERIZED THE PARK REGIME, MILITARY APPARENTLY VIEW IT AS NECESSARY PRECAUTION TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC ORDER IN TIME OF POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY AND ARE DETERMINED TO PRESERVE RESPECT FOR MARTIAL LAW RULES. GLEYSTEN

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