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TELEGRAM

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DRAFTED BY EA/RHOLBROOK  
APPROVED BY EA/RHOLBROOK  
EA/K:RGRICH  
S/S:RSEITZO 040034Z DEC 79 ZFF4  
FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
TO AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 312340

FROM HOLBROOK FOR AMBASSADOR

E.O. 12065 RDS-1 12/3/99 (HOLBROOK, RICHARD)  
TAGS:PGOV, PEPR, KS, USSUBJECT: KOREA FOCUS - NUDGING ROK POLITICAL LEADERS  
1. SECRET - ENTIRE TEXT.2. WE HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING YOUR REPORTING AND YOUR  
THOUGHTFUL ASSESSMENT (SEOUL 18150) WITH GREAT  
ATTENTION.3. I HAVE BEEN TALKING PRIVATELY WITH KEY SENATORS AND  
CONGRESSMEN, INCLUDING NUNN, GLENN, WOLFF, STONE, AND  
A FEW OTHERS ABOUT OUR STRATEGY. WE HAVE THEIR FULL  
SUPPORT AT THIS TIME. THEIR ATTITUDES, LIKE EVERYONE  
ELSE'S, ARE DOMINATED BY THE IRANIAN CRISIS AND, NEEDLESS  
TO SAY, NOBODY WANTS "ANOTHER IRAN" -- BY WHICH THEY MEAN  
AMERICAN ACTION WHICH WOULD IN ANY WAY APPEAR TO UNRAVEL  
A SITUATION AND LEAD TO CHAOS OR INSTABILITY IN A KEY  
AMERICAN ALLY.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

IS/FPC/CDR

TRB Date. 9/13/93

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Department of State

# OUTGOING TELEGRAM

SECRET

PAGE 02

STATE 312340

4. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE ARE ENCOURAGED BY MANY OF THE THINGS THE KOREAN LEADERSHIP HAS DONE. AT THE SAME TIME, CERTAIN RECENT EVENTS HAVE CAUSED US TO SHARE YOUR CONCERN OVER THE POTENTIAL POLARIZATION THAT EXISTS AS A

RESULT OF THE ACTIONS OF WHAT APPEAR TO BE A RELATIVE HANDFUL OF CHRISTIAN EXTREMIST DISSIDENTS. WE ARE STRUCK BY THE APPARENT NON-ININVOLVEMENT AND NON-ENCOURAGEMENT OF THESE PEOPLE BY SUCH MEN AS KIM KHAN SUK AND CARDINAL KIM, ALTHOUGH THE LATTER'S PATIENCE IS PRESUMABLY LIMITED IF THE MARTIAL LAW COMMAND ARRESTS CONTINUE.

5. WE WOULD LIKE TO PROPOSE TO YOU A DELICATE OPERATION DESIGNED TO USE AMERICAN INFLUENCE TO REDUCE THE CHANCES OF CONFRONTATION, AND TO MAKE CLEAR TO THE GENERALS THAT YOU ARE IN FACT TRYING TO BE HELPFUL TO THEM PROVIDED THEY IN TURN CARRY OUT THEIR COMMITMENTS TO LIBERALIZATION.

6. WHAT WE HAVE IN MIND IS YOUR SENDING A CLEAR MESSAGE TO CHRISTIAN DISSIDENTS WHO ARE NOW STIRRING UP STREET DEMONSTRATIONS AND PROVOKING THE MILITARY INTO THE UNFORTUNATE REACTION THAT HAS BEGUN TO OCCUR AND HAS PUT ALMOST 200 PEOPLE INTO JAIL IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS. THE MESSAGE TO THE DISSIDENTS, WHICH YOU COULD DELIVER THROUGH WHATEVER MEANS YOU FELT WAS MOST APPROPRIATE, SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD AS COMING FROM THE U. S. GOVERNMENT. IT WOULD BE THAT, IN THIS DELICATE TIME IN KOREAN INTERNAL POLITICS, THE UNITED STATES BELIEVES THAT DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE STREET ARE A THROXBACk TO AN EARLIER ERA AND THREATEN TO PROVOKE RETROGRESSIVE ACTIONS ON THE PART OF THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT. EVEN

SECRET



Department of State  
U.S. GOVERNMENT

# OUTGOING TELEGRAM

SECRET

PAGE 03

STATE 312340

WHEN THESE ARE IN FACT NOT DEMONSTRATIONS, BUT RATHER JUST MEETINGS IN DEFIANCE OF MARTIAL LAW, THE U. S. GOVERNMENT VIEWS THEM AS UNHELPFUL WHILE MARTIAL LAW IS STILL IN EFFECT. THE DISSIDENTS, OUR MESSAGE WOULD EMPHASIZE, SHOULD NOT MISUNDERSTAND THE UNITED STATES POSITION: WE FAVOR THE LIFTING OF MARTIAL LAW, AND THE LIFTING OF EM-9, BUT WE DO NOT FAVOR CHALLENGES TO MARTIAL LAW AT THIS DELICATE TIME.

7. THE PURPOSE OF SUCH A BLUNT MESSAGE WOULD BE TWO-FOLD. FIRST, THE CHRISTIANS HAVE EVERY REASON TO BELIEVE, BASED ON THE LAST DECADE AND PARTICULARLY THE EMPHASIS ON THEM DURING THE PRESIDENT'S TRIP, THAT THEY ARE A SPECIAL GROUP WITHIN KOREAN SOCIETY WHO WILL RECEIVE SPECIAL PROTECTION FROM THE UNITED STATES REGARDLESS OF WHAT THEY DO. IF WE UNDERSTAND YOUR REPORTING CORRECTLY, THE MAINSTREAM CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP, INCLUDING CARDINAL KIM AND KIM KWAN SUK, ARE WILLING TO GIVE THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT FOR THE TIME BEING BUT, PREDICTABLY AND UNDERSTANDABLY, CERTAIN PEOPLE FURTHER FROM THE CENTER OF POLITICAL DIALOGUE ARE LESS

SENSITIVE TO THE EFFECT OF THEIR CONFRONTATIONAL APPROACH. THE PURPOSE OF THE MESSAGE TO THE CHRISTIANS IS TO ALERT THEM TO THE FACT THAT THEY SHOULD NOT AUTOMATICALLY COUNT ON THE SAME DEGREE OF AMERICAN SUPPORT NOW THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE HAD A FEW MONTHS AGO. OUR PRIORITY IS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLITICAL PROCESS.

8. SECONDLY, AND EQUALY IMPORTANT, WE WOULD PROPOSE THAT YOU DISCUSS THE MESSAGE YOU ARE GOING TO SEND TO THE CHRISTIAN DISSIDENTS WITH THE KEY MILITARY AND CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP OF THE GOVERNMENT PRIOR TO SENDING IT. THIS WOULD HAVE THE POSITIVE EFFECT OF SHOWING THE

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Department of State

# OUTGOING TELEGRAM

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SECRET

PAGE 04

STATE 312340

LEADERSHIP THAT YOU ARE DEFINITELY TRYING TO HELP THEM TO MODERATE THE SITUATION. IN THESE DISCUSSIONS YOU WOULD STRESS THAT YOUR READINESS TO SEND SUCH A MESSAGE IS LINKED DIRECTLY TO COMMITMENTS OF THE KOREAN LEADERSHIP TO MOVE TOWARD LIBERALIZATION AND TO DO SO IN A CONCRETE AND VISIBLE MANNER.

9. IT IS CLEAR THAT YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE TO LEAN ON THE KOREAN LEADERSHIP ON THESE ISSUES. THE PURPOSE OF THIS APPROACH, QUITE FRANKLY, IS TO ENHANCE U.S. CREDIBILITY WITH THE LEADERSHIP ON THE EVE OF SOME TOUGH DECISIONS. ITS VALUE WITH THE ROKG, THEREFORE, IS QUITE INDEPENDENT OF WHETHER OR NOT THE MESSAGE TO THE CHRISTIANS WOULD HAVE A PRACTICAL EFFECT IN MODERATING THEIR BEHAVIOR.

10. ANOTHER KEY ISSUE WE SEE COMING UP IS THE SPECIFICITY OF THE TIME WHICH CHOI WILL SERVE AS INTERIM PRESIDENT. IF THERE IS NOT A DATE CERTAIN BY WHICH HE WILL STEP ASIDE, THE INCENTIVES FOR DISSIDENT OPPOSITION TO HIS WHOLE APPROACH GROW, AND DOUBTS ABOUT THE REAL COMMITMENT OF THE KOREAN MILITARY INCREASE AT THE SAME TIME.

11. I ASSUME YOU WILL WANT TO GIVE US YOUR VIEWS ON ALL OF THE ABOVE BEFORE PROCEEDING. YOU ARE THE BEST JUDGE OF TIMING AND METHOD IN SUCH AN APPROACH AND, INDEED, YOU MAY SEE SOME SERIOUS FLAWS IN THIS PROPOSAL WHICH REQUIRE ITS RETRINKING. BUT TIME SEEMS TO US TO BE FAIRLY IMPORTANT. WHAT CHOI SAYS PUBLICLY ON DECEMBER 10 WILL BE CRITICAL TO EVERYTHING THAT FOLLOWS, AND IT WOULD BE UNFORTUNATE TO LOSE OPPORTUNITIES WHICH MIGHT NEVER COME AROUND.

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