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EA/K:R G RICH:AG

EXCISE

DRAFTED BY EA/K:R G RICH:AG
APPROVED BY EA:M H ARMACOST
NSC:D GREGG
S/S:R SEITZ
CIA: W GRAVER

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S E C R E T STATE 122052

NODIS
CHEROKEE - FOR AMBASSADOR FROM ARMACOST AND RICH

E.O. 12065: RDS-3 5/8/00 (ARMACOST, MICHAEL H.)

AGS: PGOV, PINT, PINS, KS

SUBJECT: KOREA FOCUS -- TENSIONS IN THE ROK
REF: SEOUL 5857

1. (S) ENTIRE TEXT.

2. YOUR ANALYSIS IN REFTEL IS HELPFUL BUT UNDERSTANDABLY TROUBLING. DICK IS IN NEW YORK TODAY AND THEREFORE THIS

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NODIS REVIEW
Cat A - Certain Date 9/13/93

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MESSAGE HAS NOT BEEN COORDINATED WITH HIM, BUT WE WANTED YOU TO HAVE OUR PRELIMINARY REACTION BEFORE YOUR MEETING FRIDAY MORNING WITH GENERAL CHUN.

3. WHILE THE ROKG THUS FAR APPEARS TO HAVE HANDLED STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS WITH RESTRAINT AND FINESSE, IT IS DIFFICULT HERE TO ESTIMATE THE DYNAMICS AND REACTIONS TO THESE EVENTS. WE NOTE WITH CONCERN YOUR CONCLUSION THAT TENSIONS ARE NOW RISING AND GOVERNMENT TOLERANCE PERHAPS LESSENING. THERE HAVE BEEN ANOMALOUS ASPECTS TO MANY OF THESE STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS; DO YOU HAVE ANY INDICATION AS TO WHO IS STIRRING THE POT AND WHY?

4. WE AGREE THAT WE SHOULD NOT OPPOSE ROK CONTINGENCY PLANS TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER, BUT YOU SHOULD REMIND CHUN AND CHOI OF THE DANGER OF ESCALATION IF LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES ARE NOT CARRIED OUT WITH CARE AND RESTRAINT.

5. WE ALSO SHARE YOUR FRUSTRATION AT THE ABSENCE OF FORTHRIGHT PUBLIC LEADERSHIP BY PRESIDENT CHOI WHICH COULD GO FAR TO DAMPEN RUMORS AND EASE TENSIONS. THE CONSEQUENT SENSE OF DRIFT IS POTENTIALLY VERY SERIOUS. WITH CHOI ABOUT TO LEAVE FOR HIS MIDDLE EAST TRIP, IF HE IS TO SEEK TO COOL TEMPERS BEFORE HE LEAVES, HE WILL HAVE TO ACT SWIFTLY SINCE HIS RETURN TO SEOUL WILL BE AFTER THE STUDENT-IMPOSED MAY 15 DEADLINE BY WHICH TIME STUDENT ACTION/GOVERNMENT REACTION MAY HAVE ESCALATED TO UNHEALTHY PROPORTIONS. ALTHOUGH CHOI MAY RESENT ADVICE ON POLITICAL TACTICS, WE ASSUME YOU WILL WANT TO USE THE MEETING WITH THE BLUE HOUSE SECRETARY GENERAL TO STATE OUR CONCERNS ABOUT THE POTENTIAL GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION VERY BLUNTLY, INCLUDING YOUR ASSESSMENT THAT ONLY THE PRESIDENT CAN

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SUFFICIENTLY COOL THE SITUATION.

6. WE EXPECT YOU WILL TAKE THESE ACCUMULATING ISSUES INTO ACCOUNT AS YOU ORGANIZE YOUR MEETING WITH GENERAL CHUN TOMORROW MORNING. YOU INDICATED THAT YOU PLANNED TO COMMENCE WITH A DESCRIPTION OF OUR REASONS FOR POSTPONING THE SCM AS YOU EARLIER PRESENTED THEM TO PRESIDENT CHOI. YOU MUST JUDGE THESE TACTICAL QUESTIONS YOURSELF, BUT YOU MAY WISH TO CONSIDER NOT LEADING WITH THIS ISSUE, ABOUT WHICH CHUN IS OBVIOUSLY WELL BRIEFED, BUT RATHER MORE FORWARD LOOKING ISSUES OF THE PRESENT AND FUTURE. CHUN WILL INEVITABLY ASK YOU ABOUT THE SCM POSTPONEMENT AT SOME POINT, BUT LETTING HIM RAISE THAT ISSUE MAY MAKE THE MEETING APPEAR LESS CONFRONTATIONAL ON OUR PART.

7. YOU MAY BE ABLE TO CONVEY TO CHUN A SENSE THAT WE HAVE A SHARED INTEREST IN NOT HAVING A SUDENT/GOVERNMENT CLASH DESTABILIZE THE COUNTRY OR UPSET THE POSSIBILITIES FOR SOUND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT. IN THE PAST THE KCIA HAS HAD FAIRLY GOOD INTELLIGENCE ON STUDENT ACTIVSTS, AND YOU MIGHT ASK HIM WHAT HE BELIEVES IS MOTIVATING STUDENT PRESSURES TOWARD CONFRONTATION. IN ADDITION TO GETTING HIS ANALYSIS, IT COULD AFFORD AN OPPORTUNITY TO STRESS THE ESCALATIVE EFFECT OF OVER REACTION AND THE REAL UNRESOLVED DOUBTS ABOUT THE ROKG WHICH ARE PREVALENT IN KOREAN SOCIETY

8. AS WE LOOK TO THE POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE NEXT TEN DAYS, OUR ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT MOTIVATIONS IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT.

CHRISTOPHER

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