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~~SECRET/EXDIS~~

9 September 1967

From: AMEMBASSY SEOUL

To : SECSTATE WASH D.C.

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4  
NEJ 93-367  
By 10, NARA, Date 8-8-94

SECRET SEOUL 1238

EXDIS

REF: STATE 24084

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SEOUL 1121

SUBJECT: Additional Forces for Vietnam

1. Following is text of letter, dated September 8, 1967, from President Park to President Johnson handed to Ambassador by Foreign Minister on the evening of September 8:

"Dear Mr. President:

"I wish to acknowledge with appreciation the receipt of Your Excellency's letter dated July 15, 1967, informing me of the findings of Defense Secretary McNamara's visit to Vietnam and also your letters dated July 20 and August 17, 1967, respectively, which were sent to me before and after the visit to Korea of Mr. Clark Clifford and General Maxwell Taylor.

"It is gratifying to note through your letter that the situation in Vietnam has made a considerable improvement not only on the military, economic and political fronts but also in pacification projects and other fields. I appreciate your thoughtfulness in sharing with me the findings of Secretary McNamara's visit to Vietnam and the explanation of the Clifford-Taylor mission, which were much helpful in grasping accurately the actual situation in Vietnam.

"As you pointed out in your letter, there is as yet no sign that our enemy is prepared to realize the futility of their military efforts, and there still lie ahead many hardships on our path to attaining a solution to the Vietnam issue. In this regard, I am in full accord with your opinion that there is a need for the allies in Vietnam to consider additional effort.

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"I wish to pay a high tribute to you for your extraordinary efforts to lead the war in Vietnam to a complete and speedy victory, and I fully understand your view that an additional deployment of forces by other allies, in response to the increase of forces by the Republic of Vietnam and the decision by the United States to increase its forces in Vietnam, would have a very important effect on our war efforts.

"I have given a very careful thought to what effort we are expected to make at this stage and how to make it. Such thought, however, is inevitably affected by various restrictive factors arising from our special domestic situation, and for this reason, it would need some time before a final conclusion could come out. Of this situation I explained to Ambassador Porter a few days ago.

"With regard to the question of additional dispatch of our forces to Vietnam, I have already instructed my Minister of National Defense to examine and report on the possibility as to what size of forces and how we would be able to contribute if we are to make such an additional dispatch of forces to Vietnam. My decision naturally will be based on such report. As prerequisite to this, however, I am faced with two important problems which I must solve. One problem is the apprehension widely entertained by the general public here that our capability for Korea's own defense might be jeopardized in case additional Korean forces are sent to Vietnam. The other is another apprehension that, in view of the marked increase of infiltration by Communist armed agents from the north, we are not yet psychologically accommodated to feel secure unless some effective counter-measures are taken in this field if we are to send additional forces to Vietnam. The very elimination of such apprehension entertained by the general public in Korea will help create a favorable atmosphere in which I would be able to make a decision on the issue of sending additional forces to Vietnam. I believe this special situation of ours has been reported to you by your Ambassador in Seoul as we have explained to him thereof fully.

"Dear Mr. President:

"I am greatly heartened, as no doubt you are, by the fact that Presidential elections in Vietnam have been carried out smoothly and successfully despite the persistent disturbance and sabotage by Communist agents. Such process of establishing a constitutional government will, I believe, mark a milestone towards solving the Vietnam issue.

~~SECRET/EXDIS~~

- 3 -

"As to the timing of the next Summit meeting of the nations contributing forces to Vietnam, of which you mentioned in your letter, I am of the view that such a meeting, although it has to be decided by a majority opinion of the countries concerned, would be more profitably convened a while after the newly-formed government of the Republic of Vietnam had a sufficient time to get on full gear for normal and effective function. Further contacts on this matter will be made with your government in due course of time.

"With my high respects and warm regards,

Sincerely yours,

(signed) Park Chung Hee  
President"

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