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*Pres file*

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By mg NARA. Date 3-18-92

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Status of Additional Korean Forces for Viet-Nam

This subject is on the agenda for lunch today.

The situation as we know it is:

President Pak some time ago asked his Defense Ministry to report on what additional forces could be supplied, how soon, what problems it would raise, what they needed from us, etc.

We have indications -- but do not know -- that Pak has received the report and is studying it.

Meantime we have held off putting pressure on because of his confused internal political problem (opposition boycott of the National Assembly, etc.).

The political situation now seems to be moving toward normalcy. Ambassador Porter thinks this should soon be no longer over-riding. But he thinks the situation regarding additional ROK forces has changed. He notes:

-- statements regarding a phase-down in two years which may lead Koreans to question the need for additional forces now;

-- increased North Korean sabotage and infiltration into the South and rising incidents along the DMZ;

-- ROK cannot act until early next year because of the need for Assembly action; also, lead time means no troops could be deployed until well into the year;

-- ROK's heavy contribution to date has given most Koreans the feeling that they now have a "special relationship" which will solve all their problems;

-- Pak will have domestic problems with any increase.

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Regarding the size of any additional ROK force, Porter says the Koreans are thinking more in terms of another brigade (and support elements) rather than a division. The brigade would be added to the Marines to make a full division (total of three).

The Embassy in Seoul thinks Pak will also "raise the ante" considerably; his requirements will be "expensive, varied and complicated."

On public impact, Porter thinks the effect of large-scale ROK participation has already been made; further additions may be "an exercise with rapidly diminishing returns."

On balance, Porter thinks additional troops can be obtained. He is ready to open talks as soon as a number of the opposition legislators go back to the Assembly.

State and Defense are working on an instruction cable to Embassy Seoul. It will urge them to find out what Korean thinking is, what the prospects for more forces are, and what the cost will be.

You may wish to get the views of Secretary Rusk and McNamara on:

- how they see prospects for additional ROK forces;
- how much it is going to cost;
- is the additional cost worth the psychological and military advantage?

W. W. Rostow

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