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RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.5(D)

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 325154
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S E C R E T STATE 325154

EXDIS MILITARY ADDEES HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

FOLLOWING REPEAT BEIJING 9140 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO
MOSCOW SEOUL TOKYO SECDEF WASHDC DEC 17

QUOTE: S E C R E T BEIJING 9140

DECAPTIONED

EXDIS

FOR EA ASST. SEC. HOLBROOKE - DELIVER AT OPENING OF BUSINESS

E.O. 12065: XDS-1 12/17/99 (ROY, J. STAPLESTON) ORM
TAGS: MPOL, PINR, PEPR, KN, KS, CH, JA
SUBJECT: POTENTIAL RISK OF NORTH KOREAN MILITARY ACTION AGAINST
SOUTH KOREA

REF: A) STATE 322415, B) BEIJING9078, C) STATE 321761

1. (S - ENTIRE TEXT).

2. AT DINNER FOR EMBOFFS HOSTED BY [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] DECEMBER 15 TO [REDACTED]

B1, 1.5(D)

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 325154

MARK THE ANNIVERSARY OF U.S.-PRC NORMALIZATION, CHARGE RAISED
SITUATION IN KOREA WITH [REDACTED]

B1, 1.5(B), 1.5(D)

[REDACTED] SAID HE CONCURRED WITH [REDACTED] STATEMENT THAT
HE WAS "ABSOLUTEQY CERTAIN" THERE WAS NO DANGER OF A NORTH

B1, 1.5(D)
B1, 1.5(D)

Current Class: SECRET
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DATE/CASE ID: 8 MAR 2000 199903246

Page: 1

UNCLASSIFIED

KOREAN MOVE TO THE SOUTH AS A RESULT OF CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH KOREA. PRESSED FURTHER, [] SAID HE AGREED WITH THE PROPOSITION THAT THERE WAS NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN U.S. AND PRC VIEWS ON THE NEED FOR PEACE AND STABILITY IN KOREA AND THAT THIS ISSUE DID NOT CONSTITUTE A PROBLEM IN U.S.-PRC BILATERAL RELATIONS. [] ADDED THAT IF THE USG WAS CONCERNED ABOUT NORTH KOREAN INTENTIONS, U.S. SHOULD RAISE MATTER DIRECTLY WITH THE NORTH KOREAN OBSERVERS AT THE UNITED NATIONS IN NEW YORK. CHARGE RESPONDED THAT U.S. VIEWS ON DIRECT CONTACTS WITH NORTH KOREAN REPRESENTATIVES WERE WELL KNOWN TO THE PRC GOVERNMENT. AT SAME TIME, [] COULD THROW NO LIGHT ON WHAT PREMIER HUA GUOFENG HAD IN MIND IN SUGGESTING TO PRIME MINISTER OHIRA THAT THE PRC MIGHT WISH TO DISCUSS WITH THE USG THE QUESTION OF "DEMOCRATIZATION" IN SOUTH KOREA.

B1, 1.5(D)

B1, 1.5(D)

B1, 1.5(D)

3. WE AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT IN REF A PARA 4 THAT THESE STATEMENTS ARE THE STRONGEST EXPRESSION OF CHINESE ASSURANCES ON NORTH KOREA THAT WE HAVE YET SEEN. WE WOULD NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT THESE CHINESE ASSURANCES WERE CAST IN TERMS OF THE ABSENCE OF ANY AGGRESSIVE INTENT ON THE PART OF NORTH KOREA AND NOT IN TERMS OF THE PRC'S ABILITY OR WILLINGNESS TO RESTRAIN NORTH KOREAN ACTIONS, WHICH IS AN ISSUE THE CHINESE HAVE NOT EXPLICITLY ADDRESSED. MOREOVER, THESE CONVERSATIONS ARE ENTIRELY CONSISTENT WITH OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE PRC POSITION ON KOREA IN REF B, IN WHICH WE SPECIFICALLY RECOGNIZED THAT THE PRINCIPAL POINT OF COINCIDENCE IN U.S. AND PRC

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 325154

INTERESTS ON KOREA IS IN PREVENTING SHARP RISES IN TENSION ON THE PENINSULA. WE FURTHER NOTED THAT DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA HAD INCREASED THE PRC'S INTEREST IN LOWERING TENSIONS AND POSSIBLE THREATS TO PEACE AND STABILITY IN NEIGHBORING AREAS INCLUDING KOREA. CONSISTENT WITH THIS READING OF PRC ATTITUDES, WE WOULD EXPECT THE PRC TO USE ITS INFLUENCE WITH NORTH KOREA TO DETER AGGRESSIVE ACTIONS BY PYONGYANG AGAINST THE SOUTH.

4. CHINA OBVIOUSLY HAS SUBSTANTIAL LEVERAGE OVER NORTH KOREA ON MAJOR ISSUES OF WAR AND PEACE, BUT BEIJING IS NOT LIKELY TO USE SUCH LEVERAGE ARBITRARILY OR RESORT TO ECONOMIC OR OTHER SANCTIONS AGAINST PYONGYANG IN THE ABSENCE OF OVERWHELMING EVIDENCE THAT THE NORTH WAS EMBARKED ON A COURSE OF MILITARY CONFRONTATION WITH THE SOUTH. AT THE SAME TIME, NORTH KOREA IS ALMOST TOTALLY DEPENDENT ON CHINA FOR ITS PETROLEUM SUPPLIES, AND NORTH KOREA WOULD PRESUMABLY THINK

Current Class: SECRET

Page: 2

TWICE ABOUT LAUNCHING A MAJOR MILITARY OPERATION AGAINST THE SOUTH WITHOUT SOME ASSURANCE THAT ITS PETROLEUM SUPPLIES WOULD NOT BE INTERRUPTED. WE DOUBT THAT THE PRC WOULD BE INCLINED TO GIVE PYONGYANG CARTE BLANCHE ON THIS SCORE UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.

5. HAVING SAID THIS, WE WOULD AGAIN CAUTION AGAINST ASSUMING THAT OUR COINCIDENCE OF INTERESTS WITH BEIJING ON THE CENTRAL ISSUE OF PEACE AND STABILITY IN KOREA EXTENDS TO OTHER ASPECTS OF KOREAN AFFAIRS. IN THESE AREAS, CHINESE ACTIONS AND ATTITUDES WILL BE HEAVILY, INDEED PREDOMINANTLY, INFLUENCED BY THEIR OWN SENSITIVITIES ON DIVIDED COUNTRY QUESTIONS AND BY THE PRIORITY THEY ATTACH TO MAINTAINING GOOD RELATIONS WITH NORTH KOREA, SINCE THIS RELATIONSHIP PROVIDES BEIJING WITH ITS PRIMARY MEANS OF INFLUENCING DEVELOPMENTS ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA. MOREOVER, IN A SITUATION WHERE EVENTS SEEM DRIVEN MORE BY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SOUTH THAN IN THE NORTH, BEIJING WILL DOUBTLESS FEEL THAT THE ONUS LIES IN US TO KEEP OUR OWN HOUSE IN
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 325154

ORDER. IF THE FOCUS OF OUR CONCERN IS NATURALLY ON ACTIONS THAT NORTH KOREA MIGHT TAKE TO EXPLOIT A POLITICAL/MILITARY CRISIS IN SOUTH KOREA, THE MAIN CHINESE CONCERN IS UNDOUBTEDLY THAT THE SITUATION IN SOUTH KOREA MIGHT COME UNRAVELED IN WAYS THAT WOULD BRING TO POWER A CONSTELLATION OF FORCES MORE INTRANSIGENT TOWARD THE NORTH AND THUS MORE LIKELY TO HEIGHTEN PYONGYANG'S SECURITY CONCERNS. THIS IN TURN COULD TRANSLATE ITSELF INTO MORE ASSERTIVE CHINESE DEMANDS ON US TO CHECK SUCH UNFAVORABLE TRENDS.

6. ON THE QUESTION OF U.S. TROOPS IN KOREA, WE WOULD ADD ONE GLOSS TO OUR EARLIER COMMENTS. WE DO NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT IN A SITUATION OF POETNAI INSTABILITY IN SOUTH KOREA, THE CHINESE MAY VIEW THE U.S. TROOP PRESENCE IN THE ROK BOTH AS A STABILIZING ELEMENT AND AS A LEVER FOR BRINGING U.S. INFLUENCE TO BEAR OVER DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SOUTH. THIS WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH THE PRC'S CURRENT TONING DOWN OF ITS RHETORIC ON TROOP WITHDRAWALS, ALTHOUGH BECAUSE OF SENSITIVITIES IN PYONGYANG, BEIJING IS UNLIKELY TO GIVE EXPLICIT EXPRESSION TO SUCH A VIEWPOINT.

7. IN SUM, WHAT THE CHINESE SEEM TO BE TELLING BOTH US AND THE JAPANESE IS THAT CURRENT PROBLEMS IN KOREA ARE CENTERED NOT IN THE NORTH BUT IN THE SOUTH, WHICH SHOULD BE THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF OUR ATTENTION. WE DO NOT SEE IN THIS EVIDENCE OF A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE CHINESE

Current Class: SECRET

Page: 3

Current Class: SECRET
Current Handling: EXDIS
Document Number: 1979STATE325154

UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 2
Channel: n/a

POSITION ON KOREA. ROY
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Current Class: SECRET

Page: 4

UNCLASSIFIED