

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION FOR THE UNIFICATION AND REHABILITATION OF KOREA
(UNCURK)CONFIDENTIAL

Seoul, 29 May 1970

Dear Mr. Narasimhan,

The issue of U.S. troops reduction in the Republic of Korea has cropped up again as the main political question facing the present Government. Not until very lately the Government has admitted that such a problem exists and that it had avoided any public comment. However, the recent stream of statements made by U.S. officials in Washington on this issue has led to a renewed debate as to the timing of such a decision. President Nixon's administration has repeatedly hinted over the last few weeks that the reduction of U.S. troops in the Republic of Korea was only a matter of time in view of the severe budgetary reason and that, once a programme of modernizing the ROK Army can be worked out, such a reduction should take place.

On the other hand, President Park Chung Hee and his Government have frequently stated that they will oppose such a reduction because the early withdrawal of the American forces from the Republic of Korea may pose grave political and military problems in the country. They also reason that their opposition to the U.S. troops withdrawal does not stem from military considerations as this reduction would be very well met by pulling out one ROK division from Viet-Nam or by reactivating an additional division, but mainly from the political and psychological points of view. The Government here feels that the U.S. partial military disengagement in South Korea could be interpreted by North Korea as an invitation to take advantage of the U.S. Government's unwillingness to commit itself again to a ground warfare in Korea. This issue is expected to gain prominence in terms of the ROK-US relations since the Secretary of Defence, Melvin R. Laird, stated on 19 May 1970 that his Department has started to plan for removing some troops from South Korea.

Political observers here believe that this important problem could develop into a major issue since it will involve the present structure of the U.N. Command and the operational control it has been exercising on the South Korean armed forces.

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Mr. C.V. Narasimhan
Chef de Cabinet
United Nations
New York

As reported to you on 18 May 1970, President Park has made it very clear to UNCURK's members in the course of the courtesy call that he will oppose such a reduction of forces and that he hopes that the United Nations should be aware of its previous commitment and responsibility towards the Republic of Korea.

In the meantime, it is expected that this question will be a main argument in the National Assembly between the opposition New Democratic Party and the ruling Democratic Republican Party since the former has publicly accused the Government of not fully disclosing the details of the U.S. plan for reducing its troops in the country.

With warm personal regards,

Yours sincerely,

Zouheir Kuzbari

Zouheir Kuzbari
Principal Secretary