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# December 3, 1973

# Memorandum for Secretary Kissinger from Richard H. Solomon, “The Korean Situation and the China Element"

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## Summary:

National Security Council staff member Richard H. Solomon advises Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to work with the Chinese in order to respond to North Korea's provocations along the Northern Limit Line

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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

ACTION

~~TOP SECRET~~/SENSITIVE December 3, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: SECRETARY KISSINGER

FROM: RICHARD H. SOLOMON RHS

SUBJECT: The Korean Situation and the China Element

North Korea's provocative action over the islands, coming as it does within a week of conclusion of General Assembly consideration of the compromise resolution on the Korean issue, has the quality of an effort by Pyongyang to assert its case for further action against the U. N. and U. S. presence in Korea. The compromise GA resolution, worked out at Chinese initiative, was highly favorable to the ROK in that it referred neither to the future of the U. N. Command or to the U. S. troop presence in the ROK. We were totally surprised by Peking's willingness and ability to bring the North along on such a favorable compromise, and Pyongyang may now be attempting to act somewhat independently of Peking in calling attention to the remaining issues where it seeks U. N. and U. S. action, or to force Chinese and Soviet hands in support of their position in the Security Council. (The Soviets at one point late in the GA debate made noises about raising the UNC issue in the Security Council. They were probably miffed at the indications of U. S. - PRC cooperation on the compromise.)

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E.O. 12356 (as amended) SEC 3.3
NSC Memo, 3/30/06, State Dept. Guidelines
By ____ NARA, Date 2/4/11

We must assume that the Chinese were able to gain the cooperation of the North Koreans for the GA compromise precisely because they could tell Pyongyang that we had privately indicated a willingness to reconsider the future of the UNC after this session of the GA. The North, not fully trusting Peking, and wanting to keep us off balance in a situation where we clearly have the initiative (only two weeks ago you flew from Peking to Seoul), appears to want to force our hand and impart public momentum to its drive against the UNC and U. S. forces in Korea.

In these circumstances, one of our major objectives should be to keep the Chinese as fully engaged in the evolution of the Korean situation as possible. By all indications Peking has much greater influence in Pyongyang than Moscow. The Chinese undoubtedly see it in their interest to maintain

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stability on the Korean Peninsula even as our posture there evolves. We should take advantage of Pyongyang's provocative action regarding the islands to try to invoke Peking's constraint over the North's game-playing. To the degree that Pyongyang feels that the Chinese are able to move us on the UNC issue, they have reason to continue to follow Peking's lead.

I believe that two messages to the Chinese are now in order. The first, which is intended to engage Peking with Pyongyang regarding its provocation, reiterates our intention to reconsider the future of the UNC now that the GA compromise has been concluded, but raises the prospect that such action will be impeded by any incidents which raise tensions on the Peninsula (see Tab 1). This message should be conveyed to the PRCLO as soon as possible.

A second message should be sent to the Chinese just prior to any unusual resupply move that we may make to reassert our right to access to the west coast islands. Its intent would be to inform the PRC of exactly what we were doing, in effect communicating the limits of our action (yet our determination to act) and implicitly inviting their imposition of restraint on Pyongyang. The exact text of such a message would be based on the specifics of our resupply move, and is thus difficult to draft this far in advance of any action.

Recommendation:

That you approve the message to the PRCLO at Tab 1.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

and

That you approve in principle a second message to the PRCLO, to be delivered a few hours before our resupply effort begins, indicating the extent and objective of our resupply effort.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

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(Draft message for delivery to the PRC Liaison Office)

The U. S. side wishes to advise the Chinese side of its serious concern about recent provocative actions by North Korean authorities off the west coast of Korea, including unusual naval patrol activity, a heightened state of military alert, and a demand presented on December 1 which would interfere with access to five islands. As a signatory to the Korean Armistice, the Chinese side will understand that this demand is unacceptable, being in contravention of both international agreement and past practice.

These actions are all the more disturbing coming as they do less than two weeks after adoption by the U. N. General Assembly of a compromise resolution on Korea abolishing the UNCURK organization. This compromise, which avoided an unnecessary confrontation between the representatives of North and South Korea and their supporters, was worked out in a spirit of accommodation by both sides. This development seemed to establish conditions for further progress in reducing tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

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E.O. 12958 (as amended) SEC 3.3
NSC Memo, 3/30/06, State Dept. Guidelines
By MW NARA, Date 2/14/11

The U. S. side has advised the Chinese side on several occasions, most recently during Secretary Kissinger's visit to Peking in November, that it would be prepared to reconsider the future of the U. N. Command before the 29th session of the U. N. General Assembly. We must state, however, that provocations by the North Korean authorities which risk military confrontation and heighten tension will seriously complicate

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efforts by the U. S. side to consider and put into effect new arrangements affecting the security of the Korean Peninsula.

It is our understanding that normal communication and supply activities will be maintained to the five islands on their usual basis. The U. S. side hopes that no incident will be created which would alter the improved atmosphere which has been created as a result of U. N. General Assembly action on the Korean question.