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July 8, 1975
US Department of State Cable, ROKG/Canadian Negotiations on Nuclear Energy

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Summary:

The Canadian government informs the United States that will approach the South Korean government on the rumored sale of a French nuclear reprocessing plant.

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Department of State TELEGRAM

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ACTION SS-25

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MNUC, KS, CA
SUBJECT: ROKG/CANADIAN NEGOTIATIONS ON NUCLEAR ENERGY

REF: (A) SEOUL 4902 (B) STATE 135500

SUMMARY: AS RESULT CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARY PRESSURES, CANADIAN AMBASSADOR STILES HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED TO APPROACH ROKG ON PURCHASE OF FRENCH NUCLEAR REPROCESSING PLANT. END SUMMARY.

1. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR STILES INFORMED AMBASSADOR LATE JULY 7 THAT IN CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARY DISCUSSIONS ON CANDU REACTOR SALE TO ROKG, OPPOSITION HAS PRESSED VERY HARD REGARDING NUCLEAR REPROCESSING PLANT. OPPOSITION HAS CLAIMED NUCLEAR REPROCESSING PLANT PURCHASED BY ROK COULD ONLY BE USED FOR PRODUCTION WEAPONS GRADE PLUTONIUM, BELYING PARK PLEDGE NOT TO DEVELOP NUCLEAR WEAPONS.

2. AS RESULT, STILES WAS INSTRUCTED TO SEEK CLARIFICATION FROM ROKG ON REASONS FOR ITS PURCHASE OF FRENCH NUCLEAR REPROCESSING PLANT. STILES' INITIAL INQUIRY TO KORI PRESIDENT MIN BROUGHT RESPONSE THAT REPROCESSING PLANT WOULD BE USED TO REPROCESS US-PROVIDED SPENT FUEL ELEMENTS FROM US-SUPPLIED

AFR/UN
EUR/CAN
EB
LA
NEA/SA
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SEA
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PGM/ANL
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NUCLEAR POWER REACTORS.
STILES HAS APPOINTMENT WITH FONMIN LATE AFTERNOON
JULY 8 TO SEEK OFFICIAL CLARIFICATION FROM ROKG.

3. WITHOUT GETTING INTO DETAILS, I TOLD STILES THAT WE HAD NOT REPEAT NOT AGREED TO REPROCESSING OF ENRICHED URANIUM FUEL ELEMENTS BY ROKG AND INTENDED TO MAINTAIN FULL CONTROL OVER SPENT FUEL ELEMENTS.

COMMENT: CANADIAN INQUIRY ON FUEL REPROCESSING MAY EXPLAIN, IN PART, ROK DELAY IN RESPONDING TO OUR AIDE MEMOIRE. STILES INDICATED THAT ROKG FAILURE TO EXPLAIN PURCHASE OF FRENCH REPROCESSING PLANT ADEQUATELY COULD RESULT IN CANCELLATION OF CANDU REACTOR SALE. OTTAWA MAY WISH TO COMMENT FURTHER.

RECOMMENDATION: WITH CANADIANS IN FRONT RUNNING, I BELIEVE THAT WE ARE IN A POSITION RIGHT NOW TO PRESS ROKG TO CANCEL FRENCH CONTRACT. EVEN IF ROKG DOES NOT RESPOND AFFIRMATIVELY TO OUR AIDE MEMOIRE VERY SHORTLY, I WOULD SUGGEST GOING AHEAD WITH FURTHER APPROACH ON NUCLEAR REPROCESSING (REF. B), STATING FIRMLY THAT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO SELL FUEL ELEMENTS WITHOUT ACCEPTANCE OF U.S. INTERPRETATION, CLARIFYING OUR UNWILLINGNESS TO PERMIT REPROCESSING OF U.S. FUEL ELEMENTS IN FRENCH PLANT, AND SUGGESTING THAT ROKG CANCEL FRENCH CONTRACT IN INTEREST OF AVOIDING FURTHER SUBSTANTIAL DIFFICULTIES IN DEVELOPMENT OF ITS NUCLEAR POWER POTENTIAL.
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