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BY J NARS DATE 2/12/99

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9 a.m.

TO: ZB

FROM: Don Gregg

08 1149

SUBJECT: Up-Date on Korea

Ambassador Gleysteen has come in over-night with an over-all assessment of the situation in Korea. I agree with it. IT says basically that:

- we need to work with the current Korean leadership
- we should not try to disengage from our security commitment
- our posture should be low-key

There is now what Gleysteen refers to as an insurrection in Kwangju, the capital city of Cholla-Namdo Province. This province is in the south, is the home of KIM TAE CHUNG, the now-arrested presidential candidate, and is a province with deep historic animosities toward the more central province of Korea from which PARK CHUNG Hee and the current ROK leaders come. The rioting here thus has deep roots, and may be difficult to contain. Even after peace is restored on the surface, resentments will continue to smolder. It is fortunate that Cholla-Namdo is far from the DMZ. If it were not, the situation would be far more explosive.

The new cabinet has been announced. The new acting PM is PAK Chung-Hun. Pak is well known to the US business community, and is former Economic Planning Board chief. His appointment would appear to signal that his main functions will be economic, not political.

In his latest message, Gleysteen suggests that the US issue a statement in Washington, calling for calm on the part of all parties in Korea. He points out that heavy Korean censorship would keep the message from getting through too widely, but still feels that it is worth doing. I agree.

Gleysteen also points out that anti-Americanism lies not too far beneath the surface within both the Government and anti-government camps; the government may attack us for interfering, its opponents may feel equally strongly that we have done too little. This calls for real thought and restraint on our part. If Secretary Muskie has that in mind going into the PRC, we will be

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Talking Points on Korea

Regardless of the justification given, the Korean Government's actions in the last five days heighten rather than reduce the dangers of growing tension, demonstrations, and political turmoil.

This is not only a setback to Korea, but also to our policy. From the President on down, we have made it clear repeatedly that the sorts of actions taken in the last few days would have serious consequences for U.S.-Korean relations.

U.S. Objectives:

1. Maintain security on the Korean peninsula and strategic stability in Northeast Asia. (Do not contribute to "another Iran"--a big Congressional concern).
2. Express a carefully calibrated degree of disapproval, public and private, towards recent events in Korea. (But not in a way which could contribute to instability by suggesting we are encouraging opposition to the Government).
3. Once the situation clarifies work through Ambassador Gleysteen and General Wickham towards a return to political process, etc. (Again, this must be done with care.)

There is a real danger that the situation could get worse rapidly, with growing demonstrations and greater police-army countermeasures. The next week could be critical.

We should discuss all this at the PRC meeting Thursday; no decisions need to be taken until then.

5/20/50